

Guide to the Maria Tallchief Papers, 1948-2005

(S)*MGZMD 215

Jerome Robbins Dance Division

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York**

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	Maria Tallchief Papers
Collection ID:	(S)*MGZMD 215
Creator:	Tallchief, Maria
Extent:	2 linear feet, 4 boxes
Repository:	Jerome Robbins Dance Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
Abstract:	Maria Tallchief, was a prima ballerina, and an original member of the New York City Ballet. Her papers consist of material after her retirement from dancing.

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited. Advance notice may be required.

Publication Rights

For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

Preferred Citation

Maria Tallchief Papers, (S)*MGZMD 215, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Custodial History

The Maria Tallchief Papers were donated to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in 2005 by Elise Paschen.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in October 2007.

Biographical Note

Maria Tallchief was born Berry Marie Tall Chief on January 24, 1925 to Alex Tall Chief and Ruth Porter Tall Chief. She later changed the spelling of her last name to Tallchief. She grew up in Fairfax, Oklahoma on the Osage Indian reservation until the family moved to Los Angeles in 1930. The family also included a sister Marjorie (also a ballerina who danced mostly in Europe) and a brother, Jerry. Her early life consisted of both piano and dance lessons, and Maria later chose between ballet and career as a concert pianist.

In 1942, when she was 17 and just graduated from the Beverly Hills High School, Tallchief joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and was dancing principal roles within a few years. George Balanchine, who was associated with the Ballet Russe, was enchanted with the young American dancer when he first saw her. They were married in 1946. In 1947, Balanchine brought his wife home to the New York City Ballet. The couple's marriage was annulled in 1952.

Tallchief then married Elmourza Natirboff and they divorced in 1954. Her third marriage was to Chicago-based construction magnate Henry "Buzzy" Paschen, Jr. in 1956. They have one daughter Elise Paschen.

Maria Tallchief was teacher and artistic director of the Chicago Lyric Opera Ballet from 1975 to 1980 and artistic director of its successor company, the Chicago City Ballet, from 1981 to 1987. Although both companies folded for lack of funds, Tallchief is still associated with the Chicago Lyric Opera.

In 1996, Tallchief was presented with the Kennedy Center Honors. She also received the National Medal of the Arts and Humanities from President Bill Clinton.

Tallchief is the author of an autobiography, co-written with Larry Kaplan, entitled, *Maria Tallchief, America's Prima Ballerina*, 1996.

Scope and Content Note

The collection is important for documentation of the post-dancing career of Maria Tallchief, the first prima ballerina in the United States. The material includes many awards and honors that she has received over the years. Also among the papers are clippings from magazine and newspaper articles documenting her dancing career and her life after professional dancing. In addition to the photographs of Maria Tallchief, there are some never-before-seen shots of George Balanchine.

The collection is lacking any personal material and concentrates mostly on the time after her retirement from professional dancing.

Organization

The collection is organized into 2 series. They are:

Series I: Professional Material, 1948-2005

Series II: Oversized Material, 1950-2003

Series Descriptions

Series I: Professional Material, 1948-2005

3 Boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains awards given, honorary doctoral degrees awarded, family snapshots, publicity stills and other photographs, choreographic notes from one of her dances created by George Balanchine, clippings from newspapers and periodicals which include performance reviews and human interest stories, and professional correspondence.

Series II: Oversized Material, 1950-2003

2 Boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains oversized material, including awards, honorary degrees, photographs, programs and advertisements.

Series I: Professional Material, 1948-2005

Awards, 1956-2002

Box 1

- F 1 Beverly Hills High School Alumni Association Hall of Fame,
1999, June
- F 2 Dance Educators of America, 1956
- F 3 Kennedy Center Honors, 1997
- F 4 Making History Awards, Chicago Historical Society, 1999 May, 13
Oklahoma City University School of Music and Performing Arts,
1980
- F 5
- F 6 Presenter, 1998
- F 7 Recipient, 1965-2001
- F 8 U.S. Navy, Native American Heritage Festival, 2002

Clippings, 1956-2005

Box 2

- F 1 1956 and undated
- F 2 1960-1969
- F 3 1970-1979
- F 4 1990-1996
- F 5 1996, Kennedy Center Honors
- F 6 1996, Paschen, Elise
- F 7 2000-2005
- Magazines and Programs, 1956-2003
- F 8 *Chicago History*, 2000 Spring, page 54
- F 9 *Chicago's Today Northwest*, 1980, March, page 48
Dance Magazine, 1956-1960
- F 10 1956, Feb.
- F 11 1960 Jan. (cover only)
- F 12 *The Fonteyn Phenomenon*, 1999 (souvenir brochure)
- F 13 *Nedequhoe Obepo*, undated
New York City Ballet, 1998-1999
- F 14 50th Anniversary Year, 1998-1999 (*Playbill*)
- F 15 The Nutcracker Family Benefit, 1998
Oklahoma Today, 2000-2003
- F 16 2000, May/June, p. 34
- F 17 2003, Nov./Dec., p. 39
- F 18 Ravina International Festival of Arts, 1997
- F 19 *Time Magazine*, 2002, July 8

Professional Material, 1948-1999

Box 3

- F 1 Bahiser-choreography notes, undated
Correspondence, 1948-2005
- F 2 A-K, 1959-1999
- F 3 Hamlin, Faith, 1998 (manuscript)
- F 4 L-Z, 1948-2005
- F 5 Reynolds, Nancy, 1995 (The George Balanchine Foundation)
- F 6 Tallchief, Marjorie, undated
- F 7 Divorce-Natirboff, 1954
- F 8 Griggs, Jeff, undated (artist)
- F 9 Invitation to the White House, 1999
- F 10 Manuscript contract, 1993
- F 11 Membership cards, 1956-1967
Photographs, 1980-1999
- F 12 Balanchine, George, undated
- F 13 Family, undated
- F 14 Greene, Milton H, The Archives of, undated
- F 15 Negatives, undated
- F 16 Other Dancers, undated
Tallchief, Maria
- F 17 Coaching, undated
- F 18 In performance, undated
- F 19 Portraits, undated
- F 20 Public events, undated
- F 21 With the President, ca. 1980-1999
- F 22 Unidentified, undated (photocopies)
- F 23 School of American Ballet, undated (curriculum brochure)

Series II: Oversized Material, 1950-2003

Box 4

- F 1 American Indian Cultural Society, 2002
- F 2 Honorary Doctoral Degrees, 1971-1997
- F 3 Honors and Awards, 1953-2002
- F 4 Magazine Covers, 1950-2003
- F 5 Photographs, undated
- F 6 Record (LP) cover, ca. 1952

Separated Materials

- Dance Magazine Award, 1960
- Shoes (2 pair), undated