

**The New York Public Library
The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
Jerome Robbins Dance Division**

Gertrude Shurr Papers
1906-1992
(S) *MGZMD 76

Jay Parks and Charles Perrier
February 2009

Table of Contents

Summary	iii
Biographical note	iv
Scope and content note	v
Arrangement note	v
Series descriptions and container list	1
I. CORRESPONDENCE, 1925 -1992	1
II. PRINT MATERIALS, 1930-1992	3
III. PERSONAL PAPERS	4
IV. PHOTOGRAPHS	5
a. Dancers	5
b. Teaching	5
c. Personal	6

Summary

Main entry:	Shurr, Gertrude
Title:	Gertrude Shurr papers, 1906-1992
Size:	11.25 linear feet (9 boxes)
Source:	Donated to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division by Rachael Dunaven Yocom, 2001.
Abstract:	The professional papers of modern dance performer, teacher, and writer Gertrude Shurr.
Access:	Collection is open to the public. Advance notice may be required.
Copyright information:	Library policy on photocopying will apply. For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.
Preferred citation:	Gertrude Shurr Papers, (S) *MGZMD 76, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
Special formats	Photographs

Biographical note

Gertrude Shurr was born in Riga, Latvia on August 13, 1903. She moved to the United States as a child, becoming a United States citizen in 1913. Shurr began her formal dance training at the Denishawn School with Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. Her concert career began with solo performances of the early Denishawn dances (1925-1927). She then danced with the original Humphrey-Weidman Concert Company (1927-1929). Shurr joined the Martha Graham's dance troupe in 1930, dancing many of the Graham classics during her eight years working with the choreographer. Among them was "Primitive Mysteries", which she helped Miss Graham recreate in 1982. In 1939 she joined with May O'Donnell, co-founding the San Francisco Dance Theatre. New York City became the home of the Shurr-O'Donnell Modern Dance Studio in 1943. Among the notable students at this studio were Gerald Arpino and Robert Joffrey.

In the early 1940's Shurr received a bachelor's degree from San Francisco State College and a master's degree from the University of Oregon. During this period, she was a modern dance instructor at the American Negro Theatre in Harlem, New York City's Neighborhood Playhouse, and Utah State University.

Like other modern dance performers, she also worked on Broadway, serving as assistant dance director for the musical "Sadie Thompson" in 1944 and again for "Top Banana" in 1951.

In 1949 Shurr co-authored with Rachel Yocum, the book "Modern Dance: Techniques and Teaching", which documented Martha Graham's movement philosophy.

From 1956 until 1973, Shurr was a modern dance instructor and also chairman of the dance department at the well-known High School of the Performing Arts. Notable students included Ben Vereen, Liza Minnelli and George de la Pena.

Miss Shurr retired from active teaching to Logan, Utah in the mid-1970s. The winter months were spent in Tucson, Arizona where she served on the Arizona Commission on the Arts and as a master teacher at the University of Arizona and Arizona State University. Gertrude Shurr died on Jan 2, 1992 in Tucson, Arizona.

Scope and content note

The papers of modern dancer, teacher, choreographer and writer, Gertrude Shurr, pertain to both her career and her private and family life. The collection includes correspondence with major dance personalities, such as Martha Graham, May O' Donnell, Doris Humphrey, and Norman Walker, as well as correspondence from family and friends.

The papers include print materials consisting of press, programs and writings by and about Shurr. The collection also consists of an extensive amount of pictures of Shurr as a performer, teacher and lecturer, as well as many pictures of the dance personalities who were a part of her life and of her family and friends.

Arrangement note

The Gertrude Shurr Papers are organized in the following series:

- I. Correspondence, 1925 -1992
- II. Print Materials, 1930-1992
- III. Personal Papers
- IV. Photographs

Series descriptions and container list

I. Correspondence, 1925 -1992

Personal and professional arranged A-Z. Includes miscellaneous personal correspondence with full names and first names only; miscellaneous professional correspondence; condolence letters; obituaries, and tributes after Gertrude Shurr's death.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	Arizona Commission on the Arts, 1981-1985
	2	Becker, Bruce
	3	Board of Education, 1942-1971
	4	Cahan, Cora, 1965-1968
	5	Capucilli, Terese, 1991
	6	Carkin, Susan, 1990-1991 (Niece)
	7	Carter, Harold S., 1956-1960
	8	Davis Jr., Sammy , 1984 (Christmas card also signed by his wife, Altovise)
	9	Dance Magazine, 1988-1991
	10	Dance Notation Bureau, 1978
	11	DeMille, Agnes, 1976-1988
	12	Dyer, Carolyn, 1988
	13	Fletcher, Ron, 1953-1989 Includes The Pilates-Fletcher Method of Conditioning pamphlet
	14	Gill, Agnes, 1980-1991 (Dancer with the May O'Donnell Company)
	15	Graham, Georgia (Geordie), 1984-1992 Includes financial information about Geordie from Rache Yocum
	16	Graham, Martha, 1928-1985
	17	Hamilton, Howard, 1983-1990
	18	Hancock, Claire Falkenstein, 1952-1991
	19	Harnick, Margie, 1991 (Mrs. Sheldon Harnick)
	20	High School for the Performing Arts, 1964-1973
	21	Horst, Louis, [Undated] Includes information regarding the Louis Horst Centennial
	22	Humphrey, Doris, 1958
	23	Jewitt, Pat, 1955
	24	Johansson, Ronny, 1934 Includes envelope from 1934 and an undated picture with a note
	25	Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance, 1969-1991
	26	Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, 1988
	27	McDonough, Donald, 1974 (Critic for Dance Magazine)
	28	Mendini, Shauna, 1985-1986
	29	Minelli, Liza, 1980
	30	Nielson, Doug, 1989-1991
	31	O'Donnell, May, 1951-1993 Many letters are also signed by O'Donnell's husband, Ray Green
	32	Orin, Dale, 1981-1986
	33	Ryan, Loretta, 1944
	34	Saddler, Donald, 1988
	35	Schmidt, Gladys, 1954-1958
	36	Shannon, Terry, 1986
	37	Shawl, Frank, 1985-1991
	38	Shawn, Ted, 1925, 1966 Includes a Christmas card from Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn
	39	Sherman, Jane, 1986-1992
	40	Shurr, Gertrude, 1965-1991

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>		
1	41	Shurr, Lester, 1944-1951 (Brother)	
	42	Shurr, Rose and Rhea, 1934 (Sisters)	
	43	Sokol, Susan, 1979-1990 Niece - Includes family photo and photo of Sokol's son, Jake	
	44	State University of New York, 1980-1982	
	45	Taufer, Maurine, 1979-1983	
	46	Travel Agency (Thalia Targa), 1972	
	2	47	University of Arizona, 1980-1991
		48	Utah State University, 1962-1991
		49	Verlezza, Sabatino, 1987, 1990
		50	Victor, JoAnn B., 1999-1991 (Performing Arts High School Student)
51		Walker, Norman, 1958-1990	
52		Warren, Larry, 1988	
53		Wayne, Dennis, 1991	
54		Weidman, Charles, 1932-1974 Includes a 1932 Christmas card with a picture of Weidman	
55		Wilson, John, 1984-1991	
56		Wolf, Hamilton, 1944-1966 (Includes personal artwork by Hamilton)	
57		Yocum, Alice, 1991 (Sister of Rachel Yokum)	
58		Yocum, Rachel, 1946-1992 (Includes Valentine and Hannukah cards to Shurr)	
59		Yocum, Raymond, 1991 (Brother of Rachel Yocum)	
60		Yocum, Richard (Buzz), 1991 (Brother of Rachel Yocum)	
		Miscellaneous personal correspondence	
61		Full names	
62		First name only	
63	Miscellaneous business correspondence, 1959-1991		
	Condolence letters, 1992		
3	64	Adair-Koner	
	65	Malinka-Zumwalt	
	66	First name only	
	67	Gertrude's "Wake", March 18, 1992	
	68	Obituaries, 1992	
	69	Thank you notes from Rachel Yocum, 1992	
	70	Tributes, 1992 Includes programs and articles written after Shurr's death and pictures of Shurr and memorial	

II. Print Materials, 1930-1992

Includes programs and press clippings regarding Shurr and many of her contemporaries with an extensive amount of Martha Graham material.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
3	71	Cahan, Cora, 1990 Includes drafts of speech about Eliot Feld for Dance Magazine Awards
	72	Denishawn, 1974-1990
	73	Farr, Michele, 1986 (Shurr's goddaughter)
	74	Fletcher, Ron, 1998
	75	Graham, Georgina (Geordie), 1988 (Obituaries)
	76	Graham, Martha, 1930-1991 (Clippings)
	77	Graham, Martha - Miscellaneous List of Honors and awards, biography, material from the Young Martha Graham Exhibit
	78	Graham, Martha, 1965-1988 (Programs)
4	79	Green, Ray, 1954
	80	Harnick, Sheldon and Margery, 1990
	81	High School of Performing Arts, 1956-1987
	82	Horst, Louis, 1955
	83	Humphrey, Doris, 1985
	84	Jacob's Pillow, 1966-1988
	85	Martha Graham Dance Company Schedules, 1979
	86	Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, 1979-1988
	87	May O'Donnell Dance Company, 1951-1984 (Includes attached handwritten notes)
	88	Morrow, Scott, 1989-1991
	89	Nirenska, Pola, 1982-1990
	90	Shurr, Gertrude, 1945-1991
	91	St. Denis, Ruth, undated
	92	Teaching - Freelance, 1945-1986
	93	Utah State University, 1963-1988 Includes Utah Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Schedule
	94	Vereen, Ben, 1991-1992
	95	Walker, Norman, 1958-1990 and undated
	96	Wayned, Dennis, 1986-1989
	97	Weidman, Charles, 1985-1990
	98	Yocum, Willis Herbert, 1991 (Obituary)
	99	Yocum, Rachel, undated
	100	Miscellaneous

III. Personal Papers

Includes legal and medical documents; awards; diplomas; Shurr's writings and writings about Shurr.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>		
4	101	Awards, 1984-1991	
	102	Diplomas Includes San Francisco State College and University of Oregon	
	103	Education Records	
	104	Family Memorabilia Includes Family Tree, Eulogy of Abraham Shurr and Eulogy of Louis Shurr given by Bob Hope	
	105	Legal Documents	
	106	Medical Documents	
	107	Resumes	
	108	Shurr Interview Transcripts	
	5	109	Shurr Writings
		110	Thesis (1941)
111		Writings About Shurr Includes writings by Cora Cahan, Alice Gill and Dale Best	
112		Gertrude Shurr: Portrait of a Modern Dance Teacher by Shauna Thelin Mendini	
113		Yearbook (High School Senior Year), 1927	

IV. Photographs

Shurr as a performer, dancer and teacher; many of Shurr's contemporaries; and a vast amount of Shurr with family and friends.

a. Dancers

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>		
5	114	Anthony, Mary [Undated]	
	115	Cahan, Cora, 1953-1963	
	116	Denishawn, 1920's Includes Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Georgie Graham and company dancers	
	117	Farr, Michelle, 1987 (Goddaughter - Includes resume)	
	118	Fletcher, Ron, 1958	
	119	Graham, Georgina (Geordie), 1926-1927	
	120	Graham, Martha, 1920-1925 Includes Lamentations, Frontiers, Dances with Denishawn	
	121	Graham, Martha, 1937-1978 Includes Primitive Mysteries, Frontiers and the company's first trip to Mexico	
	6	122	Green, Ray, 1940
		123	Herd, Kermit, 1958
		124	Humphrey, Doris, 1924-1928
		125	Humphrey Story, The [Undated]
		126	Hylton, Richard, 1940
127		Johansson, Ronny, 1920's	
128		Loman, Hal, 1951, 1965	
129		Martha Graham Dance Company, 1935-1937 Includes Bennington (1935-1936) and the company's first transcontinental tour (1937)	
130		May O'Donnell Dance Company, 1943-1980	
131		Morrow, Scott, 1983-1984	
132		O'Donnell, May, 1931-1977 (includes photos dancing with Jose Limon)	
133		Shawn, Ted, 1920-1970	
134		St. Denis, Ruth, 1906-1927	
135		Shurr, Gertrude, 1912-1990	
136	Silva, Rodolfo, 1965		
137	Sokolow, Anna, 1920		
138	Walker, Norman, 1944-1986 Includes photos with Cora Cahan, Robert Powell, Wesley Fata, Jane Kosminsky, Joann Bruggerman, Bonnie Mathis and Tim Harum		
139	Weidman, Charles, 1927-1932		
140	Woodlands (Camp Woodlands), 1931		
141	Miscellaneous		

b. Teaching

7	142	Bennington (Includes Pioneer's Weekend Schedule)
	143	1946-47?- 1950
	144	1950
	145	1950
	146	1962 (Includes young Cora Cahan)
	147	SUNY New Paltz, 1981
	148	University of Arizona Master Class, 1986 (Susan Carkin is the demonstrator)
	149	University of Arizona Gymcats
	150	Utah State University Includes Gertrude Shurr at leisure, dancing and teaching

Box Fol

c. Personal

		Family
8	151	Carkin, Susan, 1963-1971 (Niece)
	152	Sharp, James, 1938-1941 (Husband)
	153	Shurr Family, 1917-1971 (Siblings)
	154	Shurr, Gertrude, 1940-1983
	155	Shurr, Gertrude, 1984-1991
	156	Sokol, Susan, 1984-1988
		Friends
	157	Cahan, Bruce, 1953
	158	Cahan, Cora, 1978-1991 (Includes her husband, Bernie Gersten)
	159	Falkenstein, Claire, 1972
	160	Graham, Georgina (Geordie), 1985, 1988 and undated (87th Birthday)
	161	Lushington, Nancy, 1987 (Wedding Pictures)
	162	Mendini, Shauna, 1990
	163	O'Donnell, May, 1977-1991 (Includes O'Donnell's 85th birthday)
	164	Sheldon, Alice Gill, 1986 (Includes daughter, Anita)
	165	Vereen, Ben, 1984, 1991
	166	Yocum, Rachel, 1943-1971
	167	Miscellaneous Family and Friends, 1974-1991
		Birthdays
9	168	1968-1986
	169	1988-1991
		Vacations
	170	Amsterdam, 1985
	171	Florida, 1964
	172	Hollywood, California, 1965-1966 (Visit to brother, Lester Shurr)
	173	Paris, 1965
	174	Travel Itineraries (Includes Mexico and Europe with Susan Carkin)
	175	Vacations with May O'Donnell, 1933, 1948 Includes Panama Canal, Crater Lake National Park and Yosemite
		Homes
	176	17 W. 9th St., New York, NY, 1950, 1951
	177	Tucson, Arizona, 1986, 1989 (Includes Medicine Bow, Wyoming)
	178	Logan, Utah, 1959-1979
	179	Logan, Utah, 1980-1988