



The New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Harold Lang papers

1917-1986 [bulk 1940-1965]

(S) *MGZMD 339

Compiled by Weatherly Stephan, 2013 and Valerie Wingfield, 2017.

Summary

Creator: Lang, Harold, -1985

Title: Harold Lang papers

Date: 1917-1986 [bulk 1940-1965]

Size: 3.56 linear feet (11 boxes)

Source: Gift of Lenore Lang, 2002.

Abstract: Harold Lang (1920-1985) was an American dancer in ballet and on Broadway. The Harold Lang papers date from 1917 to 1986 and document his personal life as well as his career in ballet companies, in Broadway musicals, and as a professor of dance at California State University, Chico.

Preferred citation: Harold Lang papers, (S) *MGZMD 339. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Processing note: Compiled by Weatherly Stephan, 2013 and Valerie Wingfield, 2017. Scrapbook pages were removed from the binding and placed in folders. Loose items from the scrapbook were placed in a legal sized folder. The finding aid was revised in 2017.

Creator History

Harold Lang (1920-1985) was an American dancer in ballet and on Broadway. Born in Daly City, California, Lang began ballet training at age 18 and debuted with the San Francisco Opera Ballet in 1940. From 1941 to 1943, he was a lead dancer with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Lang joined Ballet Theatre, predecessor to the American Ballet Theatre, in 1944, and was cast in Jerome Robbins's choreographic debut *Fancy Free*. He danced as a principal with Ballet Theatre and the New York City Ballet until 1949.

Lang debuted on Broadway in 1945 as a soloist in *Mr. Strauss Goes to Boston*, beginning his transition from ballet to theatre. He appeared in *Look Ma, I'm Dancin'* (1948), *Make a Wish* (1951), and originated the role of Bill Calhoun in *Kiss Me, Kate* (1949). Lang starred in the 1952 Broadway revival, national tour, and London production of *Pal Joey*. He continued dancing and acting in Broadway and Off-

Broadway productions through the mid-1960s, namely *I Can Get It For You Wholesale* (1962) and *The Decline and Fall of the Entire World as Seen Through the Eyes of Cole Porter* (1965).

In the early 1970s, Lang returned to California and began his undergraduate studies at California State University, Chico. Upon graduating, he taught dance in the Department of Physical Education at Chico until his death in 1985.

Scope and Content Note

The Harold Lang papers date from 1917 to 1986 and document Lang's personal life as well as his career in ballet companies, in Broadway musicals, and as a professor of dance at California State University, Chico. The collection contains programs, clippings, correspondence, and photographs. Materials are arranged as personal files, show files, teaching files, photographs, and a scrapbook.

Personal files primarily consist of letters to Lang's mother and brother, with clippings, programs, and photographs intended to inform his family of his professional activities. Many items are annotated by Lang, providing his personal recollections about the shows or performances represented. Personal ephemera such as Lang's passport, cabaret employee identification card, and Equity card are present, as are patent documents for a telescoping dog carrier that Lang invented. Materials dating after Lang's death include obituaries, a funeral book, and letters from friends to his brother and sister-in-law Al and Lenore Lang. Interviews conducted by Helene Vandenplas with Lang about his career are enclosed with a letter of condolence from Vandenplas to Al Lang.

Teaching files date from Lang's work at California State University, Chico, and contain notes on dance exercises, course outlines, program review documents for the performing arts curriculum, departmental memos, teaching schedules, and Lang's resume. Also filed here are Lang's own writings and assignments from his undergraduate studies at California State University in the early 1970s.

Show files feature programs, clippings, photographs, fliers, cast album publicity materials, and other promotional items for Lang's ballet and Broadway productions. The files are organized by production title or ballet company, with most of Lang's performances from his debut to the late 1960s represented. Files for *The Time of Your Life* and *Ziegfeld Follies* contain mounted Al Hirschfeld caricatures of Lang and his castmates.

Photographs comprise the bulk of the collection and document both personal and professional activities. Photographic prints include headshots and publicity photographs for Broadway shows and ballet performances, and pictures of rehearsal and exercises at California State University, Chico. Headshots and formal portraits are also present from Lang's fellow actors and dancers. Many of these portraits are signed, including several by Bette Davis. Personal photographs span Lang's life, with elementary school pictures, physique modeling portraits from the 1950s, and informal shots of social gatherings throughout his adulthood. In addition to prints, the collection holds mounted stereographic slides, which depict scenes from Lang's vacations to the Virgin Islands and Southern California; casual shots of Lang and friends, including many professional dancers; and backstage scenes from *Pal Joey*. Some subjects and locations are identified on the slide mount.

One scrapbook covers the peak of Lang's stage career from 1949 to 1962, with publicity photographs of Lang and other actors, clippings, promotional show cards, and telegrams. Shows and companies best represented in the scrapbook are the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, the New York City Ballet, *Make a Wish*, and *Pal Joey*. Loose items from the scrapbook were moved to a separate legal-sized folder. Researchers should request both boxes identified in the container list to view the scrapbook in its

entirety.

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts' dance research collection includes additional materials related to Harold Lang. Sound recordings, video recordings, photographs, and clippings can be found by conducting separate author and subject searches for "Lang, Harold" in the library's catalog.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged by subject or format: personal files, teaching files, show files, photographs, and scrapbook.

Key Terms

Subjects

Ballet -- United States -- 20th century
Dance -- United States -- 20th century
Theater -- United States -- 20th century

Occupations

Ballet dancers
Dance teachers
Dancers

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Correspondence
Photographs
Programs (documents)
Scrapbooks
Stereographs

Geographic Names

New York -- New York (N.Y.)

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-6 Personal Files 1917-1985
- b. 2 f. 1-2 Personal Files 1985-1986
- b. 2 f. 3-5 Teaching Files 1971-1985
- Show Files
- b. 2 f. 6 American National Theatre and Academy Album 1949-1952
- b. 2 f. 7 Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo 1941-1946
- b. 2 f. 8 Ballet Theatre 1943-1945
- b. 3 f. 1-2 Ballet Theatre 1943-1946, 1975
- b. 3 f. 3 *Borned in Texas* 1945
- b. 3 f. 4 Colonel W. de Basil's Covent Garden Ballet 1939-1940
- b. 3 f. 5 *The Decline and Fall of the Entire World as Seen Through the Eyes of Cole Porter* 1965
- b. 3 f. 6 *Funny Girl* 1967
- b. 3 f. 7 *The Gershwin Years* 1973
- b. 7 f. 5 *The Gershwin Years* 1973
- b. 3 f. 8 *Guys and Dolls* 1964
- b. 3 f. 9 *I Can Get it for You Wholesale* 1962
- b. 3 f. 10 *Kiss Me, Kate* 1949-1955
- b. 7 f. 3-4 *Kiss Me, Kate* 1948
- b. 3 f. 11 *Little Me* 1964
- b. 3 f. 12 *Look Ma, I'm Dancin'* 1948
- b. 4 f. 1 *Look Ma, I'm Dancin'* 1948
- b. 4 f. 2 *Mr. Strauss Goes to Boston* 1945
- b. 4 f. 3 New York City Ballet 1950-1951
- b. 4 f. 4 *No Strings* 1964
- b. 4 f. 5 *On the Town* 1959
- b. 4 f. 6 *Once upon a Mattress* 1961
- b. 4 f. 7 *One Damn Thing After Another* 1964
- b. 4 f. 8 *Over 21* 1945
- b. 4 f. 9-10 *Pal Joey* 1952-1955
- b. 4 f. 11 San Francisco Opera Ballet 1939
- b. 4 f. 12 *Shangri-La* 1956
- b. 4 f. 13 Television Appearances 1950-1951
- b. 4 f. 14 *The Threepenny Opera* 1968
- b. 4 f. 15 *Thunderbird* 1951
- b. 4 f. 16 *The Time of Your Life* 1955
- b. 4 f. 17 *Ziegfeld Follies* 1957
- b. 5 f. 1-2 *Ziegfeld Follies* 1957
- Photographs and Stereo Views
- b. 5 f. 3-7 1920s-1960s

Photographs and Stereo Views (cont.)

b. 6 f. 1-5 1940s-1985

b. 7 f. 1-2 1940s-1950s

Stereo Slides

b. 8 1940s-1960s

b. 9 1940s-1960s

b. 10 1940s-1960s

b. 11 1940s-1960s

b. 6 f. 6 Scrapbook 1948-1962

b. 7 f. 6-8 Scrapbook 1948-1962