



# The New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

## **Agnes de Mille photographs**

1860s-1980s [bulk 1910s-1960s]

\*MGZEB 21-0017

Processed by Amy Lau in 2021.

### **Summary**

**Creator:** De Mille, Agnes

**Title:** Agnes de Mille photographs

**Date:** 1860s-1980s [bulk 1910s-1960s]

**Size:** 5.88 linear feet (16 boxes)

**Source:** Bequest from the Estate of Agnes de Mille in 1994.

**Abstract:** The Agnes de Mille photographs, dating from the 1860s to the 1980s, chronicle her professional career as a dancer, choreographer, director, writer, and arts advocate. The photographs also recount de Mille's personal life and the members of the de Mille, George, Prude, and Foy families.

**Preferred citation:** Agnes de Mille photographs, \*MGZEB 21-0017. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Amy Lau in 2021.

### **Creator History**

Agnes de Mille Prude (born Agnes George de Mille; 1905, New York City) was a dancer, choreographer, director, and writer. She was the daughter of William Churchill de Mille (1878-1955), a playwright and film director, and Anna George de Mille (1878-1947). She had a younger sister, Margaret George de Mille (1908-1978), who was a silent film actress. Her uncle was the film producer and director Cecil B. de Mille (1881-1959).

Agnes de Mille attended the Hollywood School for Girls in California, graduating in 1922. In 1926, she graduated with a degree in English from the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1932, de Mille moved to England to study dance with Dame Marie Rambert, joined Ballet Rambert, and choreographed and performed her own work.

In 1939, de Mille began her association with Ballet Theatre (American Ballet Theatre) choreographing

pieces for their first season. She also met her future husband, Walter Foy Prude (1909-1988), through Martha Graham, who was under Prude's management. They were married in 1943. Their son, Jonathan de Mille Prude, was born in 1946 in New York City.

In 1942, Agnes de Mille created *Rodeo*, a ballet staged for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, which brought her critical acclaim and popularity. The next year, she gained more commendations when she choreographed the Broadway musical *Oklahoma!* (1943). She went on to choreograph over a dozen musicals, as well as the film adaptation of *Oklahoma!* (1954). Aside from musicals, De Mille created over twenty-one ballets, mostly for Ballet Theatre and Royal Winnipeg Ballet. She was also an outspoken advocate for dance in America, speaking to Congress three times.

In 1953, de Mille formed the Agnes de Mille Dance Theatre (Heritage Dance Theatre) which performed actively from 1953 to 1954 and 1973 to 1975. In 1975, on the eve of a performance of *Conversations About the Dance* de Mille had a stroke. In 1977, she returned to the stage to realize the performance of *Conversations About the Dance* though she remained partially paralyzed on her right side from the stroke.

De Mille was a prolific writer, publishing books about her family; dance; Martha Graham; and her experience having, and recovering from, a stroke. She was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame in 1973, and received many awards and honorary degrees for her work.

Agnes de Mille Prude died in New York, New York in 1993.

## Scope and Content Note

The Agnes de Mille photographs date from the 1860s to the 1980s, and illuminate her professional work, personal life, and her and Walter Prude's maternal and paternal ancestors. The collection is composed primarily of negatives, slides, prints, contact sheets, and scrapbook pages; it also contains some postcards, lists of the collection's photographic content, holiday greeting cards, three glass plate negatives, and an ambrotype. Most of the photographs date from the 1910s to the 1960s, and recall de Mille's work on various musical, ballet, and television productions as a choreographer, dancer, and director; as well as members of de Mille's immediate family, and uncle, Cecil B. de Mille. A small portion of the collection features candid photographs of de Mille receiving honorary diplomas, awards, and recognitions; as well as speaking as an advocate for the performing arts.

The Dance Companies, Productions, Rehearsals, and Performances grouping spans from the 1910s to the 1980s, and reveals de Mille's professional work as a choreographer, dancer, director, and film extra. The photographs range from de Mille's work as an extra on her father and uncle's silent film sets to her choreographic work with the company of American Ballet Theatre and the original Broadway company of *Oklahoma!* (1943). While the grouping gives a detailed account of her work mostly on musicals and ballets, there are some photographs of the film and television productions that she worked on, including *Seven Lively Arts* (1958) and *Omnibus* (1956). Of note are photographs of de Mille performing *Tally Ho, or the Frail Quarry* (1944) and *Three Virgins and a Devil* (1941); studio photographs of Agnes de Mille Dance Theatre; and photographs of de Mille performing *Conversations About the Dance* (1974) both before and after her stroke.

The Personal and Family grouping dates from the 1860s to the 1980s, and documents individuals from de Mille's personal life; as well as the members of the de Mille, George, Prude, and Foy families. The de Mille family file, the largest of the grouping, is mainly made up of Agnes de Mille's immediate family members: Margaret, William, and Anna; and includes a photograph of the de Mille family tree. Along

with photographs of Henry George, the George family file also consists of three glass plate negatives of Annie Fox George, Anna George de Mille's mother, and an ambrotype. Present are personal candid photographs from de Mille's childhood, youth, marriage, travels, homes in New York City and Merriewold, New York, and twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Also featured are holiday greeting cards from de Mille's family and friends; and photographs of Jonathan Prude as an infant, child, and young adult. Of note photographs of Anna George de Mille with members of the Tolstoy family; and prints of Agnes de Mille's first professional performance in New York City.

The Accolades and Advocacy grouping spans from the 1930s to the 1980s, and covers de Mille's performing arts advocacy efforts, as well as the honors and recognition that she received over the course of her life. Photographs from de Mille's book projects and prints from her television interviews are well represented. Of note are photographs of de Mille meeting President Lyndon Johnson and President Ronald Regan.

**Arrangement:** This collection is arranged alphabetically in the following three groupings: Dance Companies, Productions, Rehearsals, and Performances; Personal and Family; and Accolades and Advocacy.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Albums (books)  
Negatives (photographs)  
Photographs

### **Occupations**

Authors.  
Dancers.  
Theatrical directors.

### **Subjects**

Ballet  
Ballet -- Production and direction  
Ballet companies  
Choreography  
Dance companies  
Musical films  
Musicals -- New York (State) -- New York  
Women choreographers -- United States

### **Names**

De Mille, Agnes  
De Mille, Anna George, 1877-1947  
De Mille, Henry Churchill, 1850-1893  
De Mille, William C. (William Churchill), 1878-1955  
DeMille, Cecil B. (Cecil Blount), 1881-1959  
George, Henry, 1839-1897  
Prude, Jonathan  
Prude, Walter  
Agnes de Mille Dance Theatre  
American Ballet Theatre

## Container List

- Dance Companies, Productions, Rehearsals, and Performances 1910s-1980s
- b. 1 f. 1 *110 in the Shade* 1963
  - b. 11 f. 1 Adolph Bolm Ballet 1930s
  - b. 1 f. 2-5 Agnes de Mille Dance Theatre 1953-1954, 1973-1975
    - b. 1 f. 6 *Allegro* 1947
  - b. 11 f. 2-3
    - b. 1 f. 7 *Ballade* 1964
  - Ballet Theatre
    - b. 1 f. 8 1944-1948
    - b. 1 f. 9 Gala 1975
    - b. 1 f. 10 Russia Trip 1966
    - b. 1 f. 11 *A Bridegroom Called Death* 1977
    - b. 1 f. 12 *Brigadoon* 1947-1980
    - b. 11 f. 4
    - b. 1 f. 13 *Carousel* 1945
    - b. 1 f. 14 *Come Summer* 1969
    - b. 1 f. 15 *Conversations About the Dance* 1974-1978
    - b. 1 f. 16 Curtain Calls 1970s-1980s
    - b. 1 f. 17 *Dance in America* 1985
    - b. 2 f. 1
      - b. 2 f. 2 *Fall River Legend* 1966
    - b. 11 f. 5 *La Finta Giardiniera* 1928
    - b. 2 f. 3 Gala Farewell 1939
    - b. 2 f. 4-5 *The Harvest According* 1952
    - b. 2 f. 6-7 *Joan the Woman* 1916-1920
    - b. 2 f. 8 New York City Ballet 1940s-1950s
      - Oklahoma!*
    - b. 2 f. 9-10 Film Version 1954
    - b. 11 f. 7
    - b. 11 f. 6 Stage Version 1943
    - b. 2 f. 11 *Omnibus* 1956
    - b. 2 f. 12 *One Touch of Venus* 1943
    - b. 2 f. 13 *Paint Your Wagon* 1951-1952
    - b. 11 f. 8
  - b. 2 f. 14-15 Performance Photographs 1921-1940s
  - b. 11 f. 9-10
    - b. 2 f. 16 *Rodeo* 1942
  - b. 11 f. 11
    - b. 2 f. 17 Royal Winnipeg Ballet 1940s-1950s
  - b. 2 f. 18 *Seven Lively Arts* 1958
  - b. 11 f. 12
  - b. 11 f. 13 *Tally Ho, or The Frail Quarry* 1943
  - b. 2 f. 19 Television Productions 1988-1989
  - b. 2 f. 20 *Texas Fourth* 1973-1976

Dance Companies, Productions, Rehearsals, and Performances (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 21     *Three Virgins and a Devil* 1941-1975
- b. 2 f. 22     Various Productions 1910s-1980s
- b. 3 f. 1-5
- b. 14 f. 1
- b. 3 f. 6     Various Rehearsals 1960s-1970s
- b. 3 f. 7     The Vic-Wells Ballet 1930s
- b. 3 f. 8     *The Wind in the Mountains* 1965
- Personal and Family 1860s-1980s
- b. 3 f. 9-10     25th Wedding Anniversary 1968
- b. 3 f. 11     Childhood 1890s-1935
- b. 4 f. 1-4
- b. 11 f. 14-15
- b. 14 f. 2-3
- b. 11 f. 16     Childhood and Youth 1917-1919
- b. 4 f. 5-7     Christmas 1950s, 1980s
- b. 11 f. 17
- b. 11 f. 18     College and Post-College Years 1926-1934
- b. 4 f. 8     De Lappe, Gemze 1980s
- De Mille Family
- b. 4 f. 9-12     1889-1950s
- b. 5 f. 1
- b. 11 f. 19-20
- b. 12 f. 1
- b. 5 f. 2-5     De Mille, Anna George 1880s-1930s
- b. 12 f. 2
- b. 15 f. 1
- b. 5 f. 6     De Mille, Cecil B 1900-1910s
- b. 12 f. 3
- b. 5 f. 7-9     De Mille, Margaret 1910s-1965
- b. 12 f. 4
- b. 14 f. 4
- b. 5 f. 10-13     De Mille, William 1878-1950s
- b. 6 f. 1
- b. 6 f. 2-4     Family and Friends 1890s-1960s
- b. 12 f. 5-6
- b. 6 f. 5     Friends 1915-1940s
- b. 6 f. 6-7     Hollywood, California 1914-1922
- b. 6 f. 8-9     Lasky Studio 1985
- b. 6 f. 10     Takamine Family 1890s-1910s
- b. 6 f. 11-12     Family 1940s-1970s
- b. 12 f. 7
- b. 14 f. 5
- b. 6 f. 13-15     Family and Friends 1930s-1980s
- b. 7 f. 1-4
- b. 12 f. 8-9
- b. 7 f. 5     Foy Family 1890s-1930s
- Friends
- b. 7 f. 6-9     1935-1970s
- b. 12 f. 10
- b. 7 f. 10-12     Holiday Greetings 1933-1985
- George Family

Personal and Family (cont.)

George Family (cont.)

- b. 8 f. 1      **1860s-1910**
- b. 16      Three glass plate negatives and an ambrotype are enclosed in folder 1.  
Glass plate negatives and ambrotype are fragile. Please use caution when handling these materials.
- b. 8 f. 2      **George, Henry 1890s-1940s**
- b. 8 f. 3      **Graham, Martha 1960s**
- b. 12 f. 11      **Marriage, Honeymoon, and Travels 1943-1945**
- b. 8 f. 4-5      **Merriewold, New York 1940s-1980s**
- b. 8 f. 6      **New York, New York 1940s**
- b. 8 f. 7-8      **Portraits 1930s-1980s**
- b. 9 f. 1-2
- b. 13 f. 1-3
- b. 9 f. 3      **Prude Family 1921-1962**
- b. 9 f. 4-7      **Prude, Jonathan 1946-1960s, 1987**
- b. 13 f. 4-5
- b. 9 f. 8-9      **Prude, Walter 1940s-1990**
- b. 13 f. 6
- b. 9 f. 10      **Research 1960s**
- b. 9 f. 11      **Shearer, Sybil 1970s**
- b. 9 f. 12      **Silent Film Stars 1910s-1920s**
- b. 13 f. 7
- Travel**
- b. 9 f. 13-14      **1959-1979**
- b. 9 f. 15-16      **Yucatan, Mexico 1973**
- b. 9 f. 17      **Tudor, Antony 1930s-1943**
- Accolades and Advocacy 1930s-1980s**
- b. 10 f. 1-2      **Awards 1945-1986**
- b. 10 f. 3-7      **Book Photographs 1930s-1981**
- b. 13 f. 8
- b. 10 f. 8      **Book Signings 1970s-1980s**
- b. 10 f. 9      **Honorary Degrees 1960s-1980s**
- b. 10 f. 10      **Interviews 1950s-1970s**
- b. 15 f. 2
- b. 10 f. 11      **Speaking 1970s-1980s**