



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Ballet Foundation collection of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ballet Theatre photographs

1920s-1980s

*MGZEB 21-0003

Processed by Amy Lau in 2021.

Summary

Collector: Ballet Foundation

Title: Ballet Foundation collection of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ballet Theatre photographs

Date: 1920s-1980s

Size: 3.46 linear feet (10 boxes)

Source: Donated by Irina Pabst, Ballet Foundation, and Michael Subotin in 1984.

Abstract: The Ballet Foundation collection of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ballet Theatre photographs consists of photographic material collected by the Ballet Foundation, Irina Pabst, and Michael Subotin from the 1920s to 1980s. The Ballet Foundation was a New York City based corporation that sought to create interest and support for the growth of ballet in the United States. The material in the collection documents the foundation's support of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ballet Theatre.

Preferred citation: Ballet Foundation collection of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ballet Theatre photographs, *MGZEB 21-0003. 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.

Separated Materials:

Records of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, circa 1936-1978

Creator History

The Ballet Foundation was established in late 1939 in New York City. It was formed to stimulate interest and support for ballet in the United States. The foundation -- sponsored by Universal Art, Inc., owners of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo -- sought to enlarge its support base beyond New York City by creating committees in the various large American cities the company visited during its tours. The initial

trustees were Julius Fleischmann, president of Universal Art, Edward Wardell, patron of the arts, and Watson Washburn, counsel for Universal Art. One of the foundation's first projects was Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo's production of *Ghost Town*. The foundation continued to support the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo until its dissolution in 1962.

Michael Subotin and Watson Washburn continued to maintain the records of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo at the foundation after Sergei Ivanovich Denham, the director of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, died in 1970. Upon Washburn's death in 1974, the two trustees of the foundation, Irina Pabst, Denham's daughter, and John Grey, Washburn's nephew, started an annual donation of the foundation's records and Denham's personal papers to the Dance Division. When Subotin died in 1984, the Ballet Foundation closed and his papers were donated to the Dance Division and added to the foundation's records.

Scope and Content Note

The Ballet Foundation collection of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ballet Theatre photographs documents the foundation's support of the ballet companies. The collection spans the 1920s to 1980s and mainly consists of negatives, proofs, black-and-white prints with some color prints, contact sheets, posters, mounted prints, a few slides, photo postcards, and lists of ballets and dancers. The bulk of the collection is composed of unlabeled negatives, dating from the 1940s to 1960s. The negatives appear to have been created by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ballet Theatre for production programs or publicity purposes. A small portion of the collection consists of Sergei Denham's personal photographs and art that depicts his family life and work as the director of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

The professional performance, rehearsal, and headshot photographs in the collection contain images of the companies and creative teams of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ballet Theatre posing in costume and getting ready backstage during rehearsals and performances. There are some headshots interfiled with the more dynamic shots. This group mainly consists of negatives and proofs with some black-and-white prints and slides dating from the 1940s to 1950s. The back sides of some of the proofs contain inscriptions that identify performers and production titles. Some proofs are filed with lists that identify the ballets and dancers which appear in the proofs and negatives. Approximately a quarter of this material was shot by dance photographer Maurice Seymour. Of note are black-and-white prints of dancers -- Ruthanna Boris, Nina Stroganova, Mary Ellen Moylan -- and a signed portrait of Agnes de Mille.

Social events and school photographs illustrate events attended by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo's company and creative team, as well as images of children taking class at the company's school. Present in the collection are black-and-white prints from 1959 of company members performing at the St. Regis hotel for a party, as well as prints of the company in front of Pan American Airlines planes in the 1960s. The photographs include prints of the studio spaces used by the company as well as prints of drawings of the school's buildings dating from the 1950s to 1960s.

Sergei Denham's personal photographs and art chronicles Denham's private life and work as the director of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. This material mainly contains candid prints of Denham's family life and colleagues. There are a couple folders of prints from fashion exhibitions from the 1930s and 1940s inspired by ballet costumes used by Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. There are also some signed portraits dedicated to Denham from colleagues and friends from the 1930s to 1970s and images of art that inspired the backdrops for some of the company's ballets.

Various modern and ballet dancers consist of mounted and unmounted prints dating from 1939 to the 1980s. These prints were physically separated from the other material with no indication that they were part of the Ballet Foundation donation. While some of the mounted and unmounted prints have inscriptions that identify dancers appearing on the print, most are unidentified. Some of the identified dancers are Martha Graham, Margot Parsons, and Ethel Winter. All unmounted prints were photographed by Zachary Freyman. The source of acquisition for this grouping is unknown.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged chronologically within the following four groupings: Professional Performance, Rehearsal, and Headshot Photographs; Social Events and School Photographs; Sergei Denham Personal Photographs and Art; and Various Modern and Ballet Dancers.

Key Terms

Subjects

Ballet -- Costume
Ballet companies
Ballet companies -- Photographs
Dance schools

Occupations

Dancers.
Theatrical directors.

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Negatives (photographs)
Photographs

Names

Pabst, Irina
Subotin, Michael, 1895-1984
Ballet Foundation
Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo
Ballet Theatre (New York, N.Y.)

Container List

- Professional Performance, Rehearsal, and Headshot Photographs 1930s-1960s
 - b. 6 f. 19 Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo 1930s-1960s
 - b. 7 f. 4
 - b. 9 f. 1-2 Ballet Theatre--Proofs and Negatives 1930s-1940s
 - b. 7 f. 6, 18, 20 Ballets 1930s-1960s
 - b. 6 f. 16 Makand, Ruth 1930s
 - b. 1-5 Negatives 1930s-1960s
 - b. 7 f. 5 *The Nutcracker* 1930s-1940s
 - b. 7 f. 7, 23 Prints 1930s-1960s
 - b. 8 f. 5
 - b. 7 f. 14 Unidentified Men 1930s-1960s
 - b. 7 f. 15 Unidentified Women 1930s-1960s
 - b. 6 f. 5-6 Backstage 1940s-1960s
 - b. 7 f. 8
 - b. 7 f. 25 *Ballet Theatre--Bluebeard* 1940s
 - b. 9 f. 5-7 Ballet Theatre--Individuals 1940s-1950s
 - b. 9 f. 3-4 Ballet Theatre--Various Ballets 1940s-1950s
 - b. 7 f. 12-13 Contact Sheets 1940s-1960s
 - b. 7 f. 19 Dancers 1940s-1960s
 - b. 7 f. 10 Negatives and Slides 1940s-1950s
 - b. 6 f. 7-12 Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo--Proofs 1959-1962
Photographed by Maurice Seymour.
 - b. 6 f. 14 Novak, Nina--Proofs 1959-1960
Photographed by Maurice Seymour.
- Social Events and School Photographs 1940s-1960s
 - b. 6 f. 20 Social Events 1940s-1960s
 - b. 7 f. 22
 - b. 7 f. 17 Studios 1940s-1950s
 - b. 7 f. 16 Children Dancing at School 1950s-1960s
 - b. 6 f. 18 School Drawings--Prints 1950s
 - b. 6 f. 21 School 1950s-1960s
- Sergei Denham Personal Photographs and Art 1920s-1970
 - b. 7 f. 24 Photographs 1920s-1970
 - b. 8 f. 2
 - b. 6 f. 1 Family and Landscape 1930s-1960s
 - b. 6 f. 13 Marquees 1930s-1940s
 - b. 7 f. 21 Photographs and Art 1930s-1970
 - b. 6 f. 15 Portraits of Friends and Family 1930s-1970
 - b. 8 f. 1
 - b. 6 f. 17 Bonwit Ballet Exclusives--Prints 1939
 - b. 6 f. 4 Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo--Art 1940s-1950s
 - b. 8 f. 3-4
 - b. 7 f. 2, 9 Candida 1940s-1960s
 - b. 7 f. 1 Lord and Taylor Window Displays 1940s

Sergei Denham Personal Photographs and Art (cont.)

- b. 7 f. 3 Los Angeles County Museum Exhibition 1940s
- b. 7 f. 11 Appreciation Award 1943
- Various Modern and Ballet Dancers 1939-1980s
- b. 8 f. 6 1939-1980s
- b. 8 f. 7-9 1940s-1980s
- b. 10 f. 1-2
- b. 10 f. 3-6 1960s