



The New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Charles Weidman collection

1800s-1979

(S) *MGZMD 539

Processed by Emily P. Dunne in 2021.

Summary

Creator: Weidman, Charles

Title: Charles Weidman collection

Date: 1800s-1979

Size: 1.92 linear feet (6 boxes)

Source: Donated to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in 1992.

Abstract: Charles Weidman (1901-1975) was a modern dancer, choreographer, and educator. He founded several dance companies and was seminal to the modern dance movement in the United States. He continued to teach and perform until he died in New York City in 1975. The collection dates from the late 1800s, but the bulk of materials are from the 1940s to 1975. The collection contains photographs of Weidman's performances, primarily in the Expression of Two Arts Theatre, and papers related to his close collaborator, artist Mikhail Santaro.

Preferred citation: Charles Weidman collection, (S) *MGZMD 539. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Emily P. Dunne in 2021.

Separated Materials:

These materials were separated from the Charles Weidman papers, 1908-1975. In addition to the removed photographs, the original archivist also removed the materials related to Mikhail Santaro.

Creator History

Charles Weidman (1901-1975) was a modern dancer, choreographer, and educator; he continued teaching and performing until he died in 1975.

Weidman was born in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1901, and moved to Los Angeles in 1920 to study dance at

the Denishawn School. In 1928 he formed the Humphrey-Weidman Concert Company with Doris Humphrey in New York City. Weidman produced some significant works during this period, including *Opus 51* (1938), *Kinetic Pantomime* (1934), a series called *Atavisms* (1936), which consists of three pieces: *Lynch Town*, *Bargain Counter*, and *Stock Exchange*, *On My Mother's Side* (1940), *Flickers* (1942), and *And Daddy Was a Fireman* (1943).

After Doris Humphrey's retirement in 1947, Weidman formed the Charles Weidman Theatre Dance Company and created his most well-known work: *Fables for Our Times* (1947). In 1960, Weidman started another company in his tiny New York City studio, the Expression of Two Arts Theatre, with sculptor Mikhail Santaro. Santaro was an artist, and many of his collaborations with the Expression of Two Arts Dance Theatre involved performing live-action drawing classes and creating illustrations of the dancers in the group. This company further encouraged and pushed Weidman's interest in interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating mime, narration, and fine art into their performances. Some notable work from this period includes *To Make a Form- To Give It Life* (1961), *Christmas Oratorio* (1961), and *Easter Oratorio* (1967). Intending to establish a more sustainable non-profit organization, Nik Vanoff made a significant donation in 1969. The Expression of Two Arts Dance Theatre became The Charles Weidman School of Modern Dance, Inc. In 1972 the name was changed to the Charles Weidman Foundation to help secure more grant funding.

In addition to his personal work, Weidman provided choreography for Broadway and the New York City Center Opera Company and taught college and high school students workshops throughout the United States.

Weidman died in New York City on July 15, 1975. The Charles Weidman Dance Foundation continues to stage works and preserve his choreographic legacy.

Scope and Content Note

The Weidman collection dates from the late 1800s to 1975, with the bulk of materials from the 1940s to the 1960s. There are some materials from his early career at the Bennington and Denishawn schools of dance. The bulk of materials are from Weidman's work in the Expression of Two Arts Theatre. He created new collaborative theatre pieces with artist Mikhail Santaro and restaged his early choreography with dancers in the group.

The collection consists primarily of black and white photographic prints, some negatives, and some paper materials, including illustrations and writing. The majority of photographic material are prints and contains one scrapbook, five rolled 35mm film strips, 120 film strips, and some 8x10 negatives. The non-photographic materials are all related to Mikhail Santaro and include programs from performances, illustrations, correspondence, and writing.

The 8x10 prints in the collection feature restaging and new productions created in the 1960s and 1970s of Weidman's work with the Expressions of Two Arts Theatre. Many of the production titles have been noted, but several photographs of productions have not been identified. The photographs feature imagery of the set, costume, and movement decisions that created his work. The choreography and pieces in this collection seem to complement and fill in the gaps of the material described in the Charles Weidman papers, the Charles Weidman papers, Additions, and the Charles Weidman School of Modern Dance Inc. records. Negatives from the 1961 performance of *To Make A Form- To Give It Life* are noteworthy examples of Weidman and Mikhail Santaro in the early 1960s and demonstrates the sense of collaborative and avant-garde work they were creating.

The earlier materials include documentation of some productions at the Denishawn School, including photographs of Weidman in a show *Boston Fancy* with fellow dancers Geordie Graham (Martha Graham's sister) and Doris Humphrey. A scrapbook from this period documents a farmhouse in New Jersey that Weidman shared with choreographers Doris Humphrey and José Limón; however, most photographs feature the interior without any people. Photographs of the Bennington School of Dance include candid photographs of students, productions, and a scrapbook of photographs and clippings.

The Mikhail Santaro materials contain a brief biography and some sketches and illustrations created in collaboration with productions created for the Expression of Two Arts Theatre. The materials are from a very abbreviated period of time and were all created in collaboration with Weidman or during his time working at the Expression of Two Arts Theatre.

The collection is arranged into two series, Charles Weidman Photographs and Mikhail Santaro papers.

Key Terms

Subjects

Artistic collaboration

Choreography -- Study and teaching -- United States -- 20th century

Dance -- Photographs

Modern dance -- United States -- 20th century

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs

Names

Santaro, Mikhail

Weidman, Charles

Container List

Series I: Charles Weidman photographs 1800s-1975 (1.545 linear feet)

Productions 1910s-1970s

- b. 1 f. 1 *Atavisms: Bargain Counter* 1971
- b. 4 f. 3
- b. 1 f. 2 *Atavisms: Lynchtown* 1970-1971
- b. 4 f. 3
- b. 1 f. 3 *Brahms Waltzes (Liebeslieder Waltzes, Opus 39)* 1960s-1970s
- b. 4 f. 3
- b. 1 f. 4 *Cathédrale Engloutie (Submerged Cathedral)* 1960s
- b. 4 f. 3
- b. 1 f. 5 *Christmas Oratorio* 1960s-1970s
- b. 4 f. 3
- b. 1 f. 6 *Easter Oratorio* 1970
- b. 4 f. 3
- b. 5 f. 2
- b. 1 f. 7 *Et Vous Mers* 1963
- b. 1 f. 8 Evanston Illinois performance 1960s
- b. 2 f. 1 *Fables For Our Time* 1960s
- b. 4 f. 4
- b. 2 f. 2 *Image, Peter Hamilton* 1960s
- b. 2 f. 3 *Kinetic Pantomime* 1960s
- b. 4 f. 4
- b. 2 f. 4 *Letter to Mrs. Bixby* 1972
- b. 2 f. 5 *Opus 51* 1971
- b. 4 f. 4
- b. 5 f. 1 *Ringside* 1927
- b. 2 f. 6 *Saint Matthew Passion* 1973
- b. 2 f. 7 *Saints, Sinners and Scriabin* 1963
- b. 2 f. 8 *Salome* 1974
- b. 2 f. 9 *To Make a Form-- To Give It Life* 1961
- b. 4 f. 4
- b. 2 f. 10 *Visualization, From a Farm in New Jersey* 1974
- b. 2 f. 11 *The War Between Men and Women* 1972
- b. 5 f. 1
- b. 5 f. 2
- b. 2 f. 12-13 Unidentified productions 1910-1970s
- b. 4 f. 4
- b. 5 f. 1
- b. 3 f. 1 Portraits of Weidman 1930s-1960s
- b. 3 f. 2 Denishawn School 1910s-1920s
- b. 5 f. 1
- b. 3 f. 3-4 Bennington School of the Dance 1930s
- b. 4 f. 4
- b. 5 f. 3-6
- b. 3 f. 5 "Party after the Y" 1960s
- b. 5 f. 1
- b. 3 f. 6 Rehearsals in the Expressions of Two Arts Theatre 1960s-1970s
- b. 5 f. 1
- b. 3 f. 7 Personal 1800s-1970s
- b. 4 f. 4
- b. 6 f. 1

Series II: Mikhail Santaro papers 1960s-1970s (0.375 linear feet)

- b. 3 f. 8 Biographic Information 1960s
- b. 3 f. 9 Correspondence 1960s-1970s
- b. 3 f. 10 Productions 1960s-1970s
- b. 3 f. 11 Sketchbook 1964
- b. 3 f. 12 Illustrations 1960s
- b. 5 f. 1
- b. 6 f. 2
- b. 4 f. 1 Publications 1960s
- b. 4 f. 2 Photographs 1960s-1970s