



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Hugh Laing papers**

circa 1943-1988

(S) \*MGZMD 64

Processed by Henley Haslam.

## Summary

**Creator:** Laing, Hugh

**Title:** Hugh Laing papers

**Date:** circa 1943-1988

**Size:** 1.7 linear feet (4 document boxes, 1 portfolio 69 folders, 415 items)

**Source:** Gift of Isabel Brown. Received: 1987, 1988, 1989.

**Revision History:** Finding aid revised to remove restriction on Isabel Brown/Laing correspondence.

**Abstract:** The Hugh Laing Papers, c.1943-1988, contain almost nothing written by Laing himself, except for two brief undated notes to his mother (in her folder #10) and a letter to Isabel Brown (in her folder #12). The strength of the collection lies in the documentation of the Skinner family and Laing's birth and baptism, 18 letters from his father and mother (1956-1970), and in the outpouring of letters and notes to Laing from friends on the occasion of Antony Tudor's death in April 1987. (These letters include ones from Anne S. Palmer and Mollie Cook, relatives of Tudor). There are also examples of Laing's preliminary sketches for set and costume designs for Tudor ballets, including *Gala Performance*, *Judgment of Paris* and *Pillar of Fire*.

**Preferred citation:** Hugh Laing papers, (S) \*MGZMD 64. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Henley Haslam.

### Separated Materials:

The following items were received with the original gift but have been separated from the manuscript collection. The current location of these items (as of September 1990) is indicated.

Set and Costume Designs:

4 designs by Laing for the Royal Danish Ballet production of *Judgment of Paris* - Location: \*MGZGA Lai

H Jud 1-4

6 designs by Laing for *The Divine Horsemen* - Location: \*MGZGA Lai H Div 1-6

10 designs for *Gala Performance* - Location: \*MGZGA Lai H 1-10

1 design for *Pillar of Fire* - Location: \*MGZGA Lai H Pil 1

3 designs for *Shadow on the Wind* - Location: \*MGZGA Sha 1-3

Photographs and Snapshots:

c.465 photos and contact sheets - Location: (unprocessed)

c.15 boxes of 35mm slides - Location: (unprocessed)

c.340 envelopes, strips and rolls of negatives - Location: (unprocessed)

1 album, early childhood photographs- Location: unprocessed

1 baby's book done by Laing's Mother - Location: unprocessed

Set renderings by Laing - Location: unprocessed

## Creator History

Hugh Laing (Hugh Morris Alleyne Skinner) was born on June 6, 1911, in Barbados, British West Indies. He was of English and Irish background, the son of Donald M. and Beatrice A. Skinner.

Laing went to London in 1931 to study art, and there began taking ballet classes. He became associated with Marie Rambert's Ballet Club (later Ballet Rambert) in 1933, where he met Antony Tudor. He accompanied Tudor to New York City in 1939 and danced with Ballet Theatre in its first season, January 1940. He continued to dance with Ballet Theatre for most of his performing career, with the exception of 1950-1952, when he was a member of New York City Ballet.

Laing danced on Broadway in the 1945 Lerner and Loewe musical comedy, *The Day Before Spring*, which was choreographed by Antony Tudor. He performed the role of Harry Beaton in the 1954 MGM film of the Lerner and Loewe musical *Brigadoon*.

Laing married dancer Diana Adams in 1947; they were divorced in 1953.

Laing was a dramatic dancer, known for his good looks and the intensity of his stage presence. He created leading roles in many of Tudor's ballets, including *Dark Elegies*, *Jardin aux Lilas*, *Pillar of Fire*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Undertow*. He later helped restage Tudor ballets for American Ballet Theatre, and designed the scenery and costumes for some productions of Tudor's works. Laing was Antony Tudor's friend and artistic collaborator until Tudor's death in 1987.

Hugh Laing died of cancer in New York City on May 10, 1988.

## Scope and Content Note

The Hugh Laing Papers, c.1943-1988, contain almost nothing written by Laing himself, except for two brief undated notes to his mother (in her folder #10) and a letter to Isabel Brown (in her folder #12). The strength of the collection lies in the documentation of the Skinner family and Laing's birth and baptism, 18 letters from his father and mother (1956-1970), and in the outpouring of letters and notes to Laing from friends on the occasion of Antony Tudor's death in April 1987. (These letters include ones from Anne S. Palmer and Mollie Cook, relatives of Tudor). There are also examples of Laing's preliminary sketches for set and costume designs for Tudor ballets, including *Gala Performance*, *Judgment of*

### *Paris and Pillar of Fire.*

In the individual correspondence folders, correspondence is mainly from the person listed, although letters to, from and about the correspondent listed may be included.

The Index of Correspondents lists alphabetically by name only those correspondents in the chronological folders and gives the folder number where the letter is located. If a surname could not be ascertained, the name is given as signed, i.e. Merle & Sidney, Honor. This index does not include correspondents in the individual folders, or those in the Cards/Notes or Christmas Cards categories.

Photographs in the collection, under the heading Miscellaneous, include snapshots of Laing and Tudor at an airport and 1986 snapshots of Laing and Tudor footprints in concrete. There are also autographed photographs of "Mitch" and Irene Dunne.

Information to clarify entries on the Folder List is given in brackets after the entry.

**Arrangement:** The collection is divided into the following series: I. Personal Documents II. Correspondence A. Letters - Personal B. Letters - Business C. Cards/Notes D. Christmas Cards E. Fan Letters/Tributes III. Manuscripts/ Transcripts IV. Miscellaneous V. Artwork

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Costume designs -- 20th century  
Manuscripts -- Collections  
Set designs -- 20th century

### **Names**

Laing, Hugh  
Tudor, Antony, 1908-1987

## Container List

### I. Personal Documents

- b. 1 f. 1 Genealogical Records [Skinner Family]
- b. 1 f. 2 Birth/Baptism Certificates
  - b. 1 f. 2 Donald Morris Skinner, baptism
  - b. 1 f. 2 Male Child [Laing], birth
  - b. 1 f. 2 Hugh Morris Alleyne Skinner, baptism
- b. 1 f. 3 Marriage Certificate [Laing Adams]
- b. 1 f. 4 Immigration/Naturalization Papers 1950, 1957
- b. 1 f. 5 Passports
  - b. 1 f. 5 British 1949
  - b. 1 f. 5 USA 1970
  - b. 1 f. 5 USA 1975

#### Contracts

- b. 1 f. 6 AGMA 1955
- b. 1 f. 6 Ballet Theatre Foundation 1957

### II. Correspondence

#### A. Letters - Personal (193 items)

Arranged by correspondent in individual folders if more than 3 items, and arranged chronologically within these folders; the remaining letters are arranged chronologically, with an index of correspondents included in these folders located at the end of the Folder List

- b. 2 f. 7 Father 1956-1960
- b. 2 f. 8-10 Mother 1956-1970, n.d.
- b. 2 f. 11 Barbados friends
- b. 2 f. 12 Brown, Isabel
- b. 2 f. 13 Burr, Mary
- b. 2 f. 14 Chazin-Bennahum, Judith
- b. 2 f. 15 Cook/Palmer [Tudor's family]
- b. 2 f. 16 Honor
- b. 2 f. 17 Horner, Therese and Charles
- b. 2 f. 18 Manning, Gloria and family
- b. 2 f. 19 Maynard, Olga
- b. 2 f. 20 Mitchell, Dorothy and family
- b. 2 f. 21 Sinckler, Bea ["BieBie"]
- b. 2 f. 22 1940's
- b. 2 f. 23 1950's
- b. 2 f. 24 1960's-1970's
- b. 2 f. 25 1980-1986
- b. 2 f. 26 1987
- b. 2 f. 26 Jan.-Mar
- b. 2 f. 27 Apr. 1-20
- b. 2 f. 28 Apr. 21

## II. Correspondence (cont.)

### A. Letters - Personal (cont.)

1987 (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 29 Apr. 22-26
- b. 2 f. 30 Apr. 27-30, n.d
- b. 2 f. 31 May 1-7
- b. 2 f. 32 May 13-29
- b. 2 f. 33 June
- b. 2 f. 34 July-Nov
- b. 3 f. 35 Dec
- b. 3 f. 36 n.d
- b. 3 f. 37 1988
- b. 3 f. 38 n.d

### B. Letters - Business

Arranged chronologically; also contains a contract and a contract cancellation, and a list of Tudor ballets noted by the Dance Notation Bureau

### C. Cards/Notes

Arranged chronologically

- b. 3 f. 40 1940's-1950's
- b. 3 f. 41 1960's-1980's
- b. 3 f. 42 n.d

### D. Christmas Cards (28 items)

Arranged chronologically; some cards containing letters or long notes are included in the individual correspondence folders

- b. 3 f. 43 1940's-1970's
- b. 3 f. 44 1980-1986
- b. 3 f. 45 1987-1988
- b. 3 f. 46 n.d

### E. Fan Letters/Tributes

Arranged chronologically.

## III. Manuscripts, Transcripts

Arranged chronologically

- b. 3 f. 48 *Article by Margaret Lloyd for Christian Science Monitor, A Tudor Hero* 1943 "
- b. 3 f. 49 Transcripts of Radio Interviews, WFUV, Artists and Actors" Series 1951 "
- b. 3 f. 50 Transcript of Lucia Chase memorial 1986
- b. 3 f. 51 Manuscript by Olga Maynard, [?] Tudor, "A Loving Memoir" 1987

## IV. Miscellaneous

- b. 3 f. 52 1947 pocket engagement calendar with ABT tour information
- b. 3 f. 52 Page of Chalouer family history
- b. 3 f. 52 Page of addresses in England
- b. 3 f. 53 Invitations, Kennedy Center Honors 1986  
Gap in numbering
- b. 3 f. 55 Maps [Barbados]
- b. 3 f. 56 *Dance Magazine calendars* 1945, 1946, 1987
- b. 3 f. 57 *Page from The Tatler, [Picture of Laing and Pearl Argyle in show "The Flying Trapeze"]* 1935

IV. Miscellaneous (cont.)

b. 3 f. 58      Photographs

V. Artwork

Arranged in groups as received.

Misc. Items

- b. 4 f. 59      pen ink portrait of Laing by Austin
- b. 4 f. 59      photo, contact sheets, Laing in ad for a tuxedo
- b. 4 f. 59      pencil drawing of Laing by Peirce
- b. 4 f. 60      Oil Portrait, Collage of Diana Adams
- b. 4 f. 61      Set Costume Sketches  
includes Judgment of Paris, Divine Horsemen [?], Shadow of the Wind [?]
- b. 4 f. 62      Figure Head Studies
- b. 4 f. 63      *Set Costume Sketches [ Pillar of Fire]*
- b. 4 f. 64      Set Costume Sketchbooks  
includes  
Divine Horsemen, Gala Performance, Judgment of Paris, Pillar of Fire
- b. 4 f. 65      Set Costume Sketchbook  
includes *Gala Performance*
- b. 4 f. 66      Set Costume Sketchbook  
Gala Performance, Judgment of Paris, Pillar of Fire
- b. 4 f. 67      Set Costume Sketchbook  
Judgment of Paris, Pillar of Fire
- b. portfolio f. 68      Sketchbook  
figure study, sets, *Pillar of Fire*, watercolor of evening gowns
- b. portfolio f. 69      Set Costume Sketches  
includes *Gala Performance*