



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**David Dorfman papers**

1980-2017

(S) \*MGZMD 511

Processed by Matthew Snyder in 2021-2022.

## Summary

**Creator:** Dorfman, David

**Title:** David Dorfman papers

**Date:** 1980-2017

**Size:** 6.21 linear feet (17 boxes); 30.3 gigabytes (1873 computer files, 13 disk images)

**Source:** Donated by David Dorfman in 2017.

**Abstract:** David Dorfman (born 1955) is a dancer, choreographer, teacher, musician, and activist, and the artistic director of David Dorfman Dance, a modern dance company. The David Dorfman papers (1980-2017) document Dorfman's performance and teaching career, as well as the activities of David Dorfman Dance, through video and sound recordings; photographs; programs, clippings, and publicity files; and the files of Art Sweats, Inc. (Dorfman's non-profit management company).

### Conditions Governing Access:

Inquiries regarding audio and moving image materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division ([dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org)). Audio and moving image materials will be subject to preservation assessment and migration prior to access.

**Preferred citation:** David Dorfman papers, (S) \*MGZMD 511. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Matthew Snyder in 2021-2022.

## Creator History

David Dorfman (born 1955) is a dancer, choreographer, teacher, musician, activist, and the artistic director of David Dorfman Dance, a modern dance company. Born in Chicago, he earned his bachelor

of science in business administration from Washington University in St. Louis, in 1977; and his master of fine arts in dance from Connecticut College in 1981. A former athlete, Dorfman began dancing in college. He founded David Dorfman Dance in 1985, and joined the faculty of Connecticut College in 2004, where he is a professor and chair of the dance department.

Dorfman's work has explored themes of power and powerlessness, activism, dissidence, and underground movements. His company has performed at many New York City venues, including the Joyce Theater, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Kitchen, Danspace, and P.S. 122. Among his major works are *Underground* (about the Weather Underground), *Prophets of Funk* (set to the music of Sly and the Family Stone), *Out of Season (The Athlete's Project)*, *A Cure for Gravity* (set to the music of Joe Jackson), *Disavowal*, *To Lie Tenderly*, and *Subverse*. In addition to performing with his company, Dorfman has toured as a soloist, and also performs on saxophone, such as in *Live Sax Acts*, a series of duets with Dan Froot.

His choreography has been commissioned by Bedlam Dance Company, d9 Dance Collective, the Tony-award-winning play *Indecent*, the musical *Green Violin* at the Prince Theater in Philadelphia (for which he earned the 2003 Barrymore Award for best choreography), Yale Rep's production of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, and several other dance companies in the United States and Europe.

Dorfman has received multiple fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts; the American Choreographer's award; the first Paul Taylor Fellowship from The Yard; and a New York Dance and Performance Award (a "Bessie").

## Scope and Content Note

The David Dorfman papers (1980-2017) document Dorfman's performance and teaching career, as well as the activities of David Dorfman Dance, through video and sound recordings; photographs; programs, clippings, and publicity files; and the files of Art Sweats, Inc. (Dorfman's non-profit management company).

Series I: Art Sweats, Inc. Files (1990-2012) includes technical staging and lighting information; financial and development files; curriculum development files; and files on events or performances.

Series II: Photographs offers strong documentation of Dorfman and his company from the 1980s to 2009, including performance and rehearsal images for most of his major works, as well as residencies, classes, and publicity images.

Series III: Programs, Clippings, and Publicity holds comprehensive media coverage and performance programs from the mid-1980s to 2017.

Series IV: Video and Sound Recordings (1980-2012) contains the most significant content in the collection, revealing all of Dorfman's major works in rehearsals and/or performances, as well as residencies, workshops, interviews, post-performance discussions, and commissioned music.

## Key Terms

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Business correspondence

Clippings (information artifacts)  
Contracts  
Fliers (Ephemera)  
Personal correspondence  
Photographs  
Programs (Publications)  
Sound recordings  
Video recordings

**Subjects**

Choreographers -- United States  
Choreography -- Study and teaching -- United States -- 20th century  
Dance companies -- United States  
Modern dance -- United States -- 20th century  
Modern dance -- United States -- 21st century

**Occupations**

Dancers.

**Names**

Dorfman, David  
Froot, Dan  
David Dorfman Dance (Company)

## Container List

**Series I: Art Sweats, Inc. Files 1990-2012** (7 boxes 2.25 linear feet 53 computer files, 12 disk images 1.54 gigabytes)

This series documents the activities of David Dorfman and David Dorfman Dance through the files of Dorfman's non-profit management company. It includes technical information for staging, lighting, and sound; financial statements; development and benefit files; information on educational curricula; files on performances, events, or individual works; files pertaining to Rena Shagan Associates, the booking and publicity firm for David Dorfman Dance; letters and cards written to Dorfman; and files on events or performances.

The technical files contain technical requirements for individual works as well as venue-specific information. The files, which are in both paper and digital formats, comprise lighting plots; stage designs; photographs; video or still-image projections; and correspondence with venues or presenters. Some of the digital files are in software-specific formats such as Expression Off-Line, Vectorworks, Photoshop, and AutoCAD.

The financial and development files contain grant applications and reports, financial reports, and files on event planning for benefits.

The Curriculum Development file holds guides for classes and workshops prepared for the Brooklyn Academy of Music and for public schools.

The letters and cards to Dorfman are concerned primarily with fundraising.

Alphabetical by subject.

- b. 1 f. 1     **Arnstadt, Germany 1995**  
Includes a letter from the presenter with clippings and performance photographs.  
**Benefits**
- b. 1 f. 2     **Brooklyn Academy of Music 2000**
- b. 1 f. 3     **Brooklyn Academy of Music 2006-2007**
- b. 1 f. 4     **Studio 26 2012**
- b. 1 f. 5     **Curriculum Development 1996-2004**
- b. 1 f. 6     **Email List 2005-2006**
- b. 1 f. 7     **Financial Reports 1993-1996, 2002**
- b. 1 f. 8     **Fundraising 1992-1999**
- b. 1 f. 9     **Florida Dance Festival 2000**
- b. 1 f. 10    **Joyce Theater Publicity 2012**
- b. 2 f. 1     **Letters 1992-2003**  
Most regard fundraising, but a few are personal letters or cards to Dorfman.
- b. 2 f. 2-3    ***Live Sax Acts* 1993, 1999, 2002**  
Technical information and publicity material.
- b. 2 f. 4     **Logo Design**
- b. 2 f. 5     **Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art 2000**  
Regarding a performance of *To Lie Tenderly*.
- b. 2 f. 6     ***Out of Season (The Athlete's Project)* 1992-1999**  
Recruitment flyers and clippings.
- b. 3 f. 1     ***Prophets of Funk Poster* 2011**  
**Shagan, Rena**
- b. 2 f. 7     **Dance On Tour Project 1991**

Series I: Art Sweats, Inc. Files (cont.)  
Shagan, Rena (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 8      1991-1992, 2000-2001  
Notes and drafts for publicity literature produced by Shagan.

Technical Files

Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina 2000 January 2  
1 (1 disk image 49.15 kilobytes)  
Lighting console for *Familiar Movements (The Family Project)*, *A Cure For Gravity*, *Subverse*.

- b. 2 f. 9      *Area of Detail* 1990

Brooklyn Academy of Music

2000

2 (1 disk image 306.5 kilobytes)  
Lighting console.

2002 February 7

3 (1 disk image 92.3 kilobytes)  
Lighting console for *To Lie Tenderly* and *Subverse*.

Columbia Dance Center

4 (1 disk image 34.5 kilobytes)  
Lighting console for *No Roles Barred* and *Subverse*.

Connecticut 2006 October 28

5 (1 disk image 34.5 kilobytes)  
Lighting console

- b. 2 f. 10      *Desired Effect*

- b. 2 f. 11      *Familiar Movements (The Family Project)* 1996

Notated music by Robert Een.

Greenville, North Carolina 2001 January 27

6 (1 disk image 34.5 kilobytes)  
Lighting console.

- b. 2 f. 12      *Fielder's Choice*

*Live Sax Acts*

John Harms Center, Englewood, New Jersey 2003

7 (1 disk image 39.4 kilobytes)  
Lighting console.

- b. 2 f. 13      2005, 2008

- b. 2 f. 14      *To Lie Tenderly and Subverse*  
b. 4 f. 1

Tucson, Arizona 2001

8 (1 disk image 98.3 kilobytes)  
Lighting console for *No Roles Barred* and *To Lie Tenderly*.

*Underground*

- b. 5-6      2004-2008

- er. 1      American Dance Festival 2006 June 13  
(20 computer files 1.43 gigabytes)

Brooklyn Academy of Music 2006

- er. 2      Email  
(3 computer files 6.1 megabytes)

- er. 3      Set Designs  
(9 computer files 559 kilobytes)  
AutoCAD, Vectorworks, and .pdf files.

Series I: Art Sweats, Inc. Files (cont.)  
Technical Files (cont.)  
Underground (cont.)  
Brooklyn Academy of Music (cont.)

**Lighting Console**

9 (1 disk image 1.5 kilobytes)

**Lighting Console**

10 (1 disk image 93.87 megabytes)

er. 4 **Technical Riders**

(10 computer files 822 kilobytes)

er. 5 **Set Photographs**

(11 computer files 2.75 megabytes)

**Atlanta 2008**

11 (1 disk image 42.8 kilobytes)

Lighting console.

**Chicago and Washington, D.C 2008 September**

12 (1 disk image 94.3 kilobytes)

Lighting console.

b. 17 **T-Shirt 2000**

The shirt, with caricatures of all then-current members of David Dorfman Dance, was created on the occasion of a concert or workshop in Greensboro, North Carolina.

b. 4 f. 2 **World Financial Center Program 1994**

**Series II: Photographs 1989-2009** (3 boxes 1.25 linear feet 1675 computer files 7.6 gigabytes)

The photographs document Dorfman, David Dorfman Dance, and collaborators such as Lisa Race and Dan Froot. They depict individual works in rehearsal and performance; performances of multiple works at specific venues; publicity shots of Dorfman or his company; and residencies at Emory and Duke Universities. Most of the series is comprised of images of individual works dating from the late 1980s onward. Works with significant content include *Live Sax Acts*, *Familiar Movements (The Family Project)*, *Underground*, *Disavowal*, *Approaching No Calm Counting Laughter*, *Out of Season (The Athlete's Project)*, *See Level*, and *Sky Down*.

The images are present as slides, prints, and in digital formats.

Alphabetical by subject. Some sub-headings are arranged chronologically.

b. 8 f. 2-3 **Dorfman, David 1990s-2004**

Solo publicity head and performance shots, and informal photos.

b. 8 f. 4 **Froot, Dan 1990s-2000s**

**Individual Works**

b. 4 f. 3 ***Approaching No Calm Counting Laughter* 1995**

Dorfman and Lisa Race.

b. 4 f. 4 ***Brace* 1995-1996**

b. 4 f. 5 ***Careful Aim***

b. 4 f. 6 ***Chariots***

b. 4 f. 7 ***A Cure for Gravity* 1998**

b. 4 f. 8 ***Dayenu***

b. 4 f. 9 ***Defiance, Ohio* 2000**

A Dorfman/Lisa Race collaboration.

b. 4 f. 10 ***Desired Effect***

***Disavowal***

er. 6 **2005 March 23**

(3 computer files 6.7 megabytes)

Photographer: Robert Matson.

Series II: Photographs (cont.)

Individual Works (cont.)

Disavowal (cont.)

- er. 7      **Connecticut College** 2008 April 19  
(15 computer files 92.6 megabytes)
- er. 8      **2008 October 23**  
(401 computer files 1 gigabyte)  
Photographer: A. Vincent Scarano.
- b. 4 f. 11      **2009**  
*Familiar Movements (The Family Project)*
- er. 9      **2003**  
(28 computer files 30.8 megabytes)
- b. 4 f. 12      **Unidentified Performance**
- b. 4 f. 13      *Gone Right Back*
- b. 4 f. 14      *Fielder's Choice*
- b. 4 f. 15      *Hey*  
With Guy Klucevsek.
- b. 7 f. 1      *Kilter* 1993
- er. 10      *Lightbulb Theory* 2004 September 14  
(9 computer files 42.3 megabytes)  
*Live Sax Acts*  
Choreographed and performed by David Dorfman and Dan Froot, in four sections.
- b. 7 f. 2      *Bull*
- b. 7 f. 3      *Horn*
- b. 7 f. 4      *Job*
- b. 7 f. 5      *Shtuck*
- b. 7 f. 6      *Menne Awn Frauen* 1996
- b. 7 f. 7      *Out of Season (The Athlete's Project)* 1993
- b. 7 f. 8      *The Partial Truth* 1992  
*See Level*
- er. 11      **2003 June**  
(15 computer files 13 megabytes)
- b. 7 f. 9      **Undated**
- b. 7 f. 10      *Sky Down* 1996
- b. 7 f. 11      *Sleep Story* 1989  
*Underground*
- er. 12      **Lincoln Center Out-Of-Doors Festival** 2007  
(68 computer files 23.16 megabytes)  
**University of Notre Dame** 2009  
Debartolo Performing Arts Center.
- er. 13      **January 15**  
(129 computer files 77.6 megabytes)
- er. 14      **January 16**  
(160 computer files 111 megabytes)  
**2009 March 18**  
Photographer: Gary Noel.
- er. 15      **Performance**  
(32 computer files 1.36 gigabytes)

Series II: Photographs (cont.)

Individual Works (cont.)

Underground (cont.)

2009 March 18 (cont.)

- er. 16        **Press**  
              (14 computer files 580 megabytes)

- er. 17        **Question and Answer Session**  
              (13 computer files 602 megabytes)

- b. 7 f. 12    ***What I Know About Cats* 1998**

- b. 7 f. 13-15 **Mixed Works 1990s**

Includes publicity and performance slides for *Approaching No Calm*, *Dayenu*, *Desired Effect*, *The Family Project*, *Gone Right Back*, *Live Sax Acts*, *Sky Down*, *To Lie Tenderly*, and others.

- b. 8 f. 1     **Unidentified Works**

**Performances**

- er. 18        **Duke Theater 2004**  
              (1 computer file 22.86 megabytes)  
              Photographer: Star Reese.

- er. 19        **Joyce Theater 2005 May 31**  
              (68 computer files 1.4 gigabytes)

- er. 20        **Connecticut College 2008 April 18-21**  
              (204 computer files 1.23 gigabytes)  
              Workshop and performances.

**Publicity**

- er. 21        **2002**  
              (1 computer file 85.72 megabytes)

- er. 22        **2004**  
              (3 computer files 29.6 megabytes)  
              Photographer: Julie Lemberger.

**Residencies**

**Emory University 2007-2008**

**Classes**

- er. 23        **2007 October**  
              (63 computer files 2.2 megabytes)

- er. 24        **2007 October 17**  
              (58 computer files 121 megabytes)

- er. 25        **North Atlanta 2007 October 18**  
              (56 computer files 68.6 megabytes)

- er. 26        **North Springs 2007 October 18**  
              (4 computer files 4.9 megabytes)

- er. 27        **2008 February 19**  
              (50 computer files 109.5 megabytes)

- er. 28        **Friends of Dance Lecture 2008 February 19**  
              (8 computer files 8.35 megabytes)

- er. 29        **Rialto Schooltime Performance 2008 March 28**  
              (23 computer files 41.48 megabytes)

- er. 30        **Duke University 2008 November 11-14**  
              (249 computer files 565.4 megabytes)  
              Photographer: Michael Zirkle



Series III: Programs, Clippings, and Publicity 1986-2017 (9 boxes 3.54 linear feet)

This series contains a deep collection of documentation and media coverage of the activities of David Dorfman and David Dorfman Dance from the mid-1980s to 2017. The programs are for David Dorfman Dance performances at New York venues such as Danspace/St. Mark's Church, the Dance Theater Workshop, the Kitchen, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the Joyce Theater, and at arts centers, universities, and theaters across the United States and abroad; benefits; solo performances by Dorfman or with other performers, such as Dan Froot; lectures; workshops; dance festivals; and performances of Dorfman's work by other dance companies or students.

Chronological.

b. 8 f. 5-11	1986-2017
b. 9 f. 1-5	1994-1996
b. 10 f. 1-5	1997-1998
b. 11 f. 1-5	1998-1999
b. 12 f. 1-4	2000
b. 13 f. 1-5	2000-2002
b. 14 f. 1-5	2002-2004
b. 15 f. 1-6	2005-2011
b. 16 f. 1-6	2012-2017

**Series IV: Video and Sound Recordings 1980-2012** (145 computer files, 1 disk image  
21.1 gigabytes)

This series, comprising the bulk of the collection, holds thorough documentation of Dorfman's career from the early-1980s forward.

The video portion has several main divisions: Individual Works, Dorfman Solo Performances, Full Performances of Multiple Works, Excerpts (for use in publicity or fundraising), Workshops, and Interviews.

Much of the series consists of video of works performed by David Dorfman Dance, or by Dorfman with other collaborators. Works with significant content include *Abused Women and Children*, *Approaching No Calm Counting Laughter*, *A Cure For Gravity*, *Disavowal*, *Familiar Movements (The Family Project)*, *Gone Right Back*, *Live Sax Acts*, *Out Of Season: The Athletes Project*, *Prophets of Funk*, *See Level*, *Subverse*, *To Lie Tenderly*, and *Underground*, among many others.

Some works also include workshops or discussions with audiences and dance students, and multi-media content projected behind dancers during performances. Some content of this nature can also be found in the technical files in Series I.

The rest of the video consists of collaborations with other artists or companies, such as Ballethnic, Mickey McLaughlin, and Stuart Pimsler; student performances; David Dorfman Dance rehearsals and run-throughs at various venues; dance festivals; panel discussions; and work by other choreographers, such as Art Bridgman, Myrna Packer, Trisha Brown, Doug Elkins, Joe Goode, and Gabrielle Lansner.

The sound recordings contain music or sound effects commissioned for Dorfman's work, pre-show music, and music submitted to Dorfman that may never have been used. Composers featured include Amy Denio, Guy Klucsevsek, Robert Een, Iain Johnstone, Chris Peck, Michael Wall, and Hahn Rowe. The sound recordings also hold a 1990 radio interview with Dorfman.

The arrangement of this series is based on the available description of the audio or video. Earlier items in the container list are described best, while those at the end have no description.

Inquiries regarding audio and moving image materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division ([dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org)). Audio and moving image materials will be subject to preservation assessment and migration prior to access.