



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Ruthanna Boris papers

1935-2007 [bulk 1965-2007]

(S) *MGZMD 561

Processed by Heather Halliday in 2022.

Summary

Creator: Boris, Ruthanna

Title: Ruthanna Boris papers

Date: 1935-2007 [bulk 1965-2007]

Size: 0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Donated by Robert Gottlieb in 2017.

Abstract: Ruthanna Boris (1919-2007) was an American ballet dancer and choreographer who performed with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and choreographed works for the New York City Ballet. The Ruthanna Boris papers date from 1935 to 2007 and document Boris's work on an unpublished book through draft manuscripts, correspondence, clippings, and notes.

Preferred citation: Ruthanna Boris papers, (S) *MGZMD 561. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Heather Halliday in 2022.

Creator History

American ballet dancer and choreographer Ruthanna Boris was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1919. Studying under George Balanchine, she was among the first students at the School of American Ballet when it opened in 1934. The following year, Boris performed in the debut season of American Ballet. In 1936 and 1937, she danced with Lincoln Kirstein's Ballet Caravan. From 1937 to 1942 she danced with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet. Boris was the first American ballerina to achieve star status with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, with which she performed from 1942 to 1950, appearing in *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Frankie and Johnny*. Leon Danielian was her primary dance partner with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

Ruthanna Boris was one of very few American women ballet choreographers in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1950, when a hip injury sidelined her performing capabilities, she focused on choreography, most

notably with the New York City Ballet. Boris's choreographic works are known for their subtle humor and include *Cirque de Deux*, *Cakewalk*, and *Ragtime*. In 1956 and 1957 she served as director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

A marriage to cellist Maurice Bialkin ended in divorce. A later marriage to fellow Ballet Russe dancer, Frank Hobi ended with Hobi's death in 1967.

From 1965 to 1983, Boris taught dance at the University of Washington in Seattle, where she developed an interest in dance and movement as a physical and psychological therapeutic tool. Around this time, Boris's friend and mentor, movement therapy pioneer Marian Chace, encouraged her dance therapy inquiries. Boris served on the board of the Seattle Psychoanalytic Institute from 1975 to 1982. After moving to the Bay Area in the 1980s, she served as president and executive director of the Center for Dance Development and Research and as president of the California chapter of the American Dance Therapy Association. In later years, Boris wrote a book about her experiences learning from George Balanchine and Marian Chace, as well as her experience of teaching dance and movement therapy titled "Theme and Variations: Stories About Learning." The book was never published.

Ruthanna Boris died of cancer in El Cerrito, California in 2007.

Scope and Content Note

The Ruthanna Boris papers, which date from 1935 to 2007, consist primarily of manuscript drafts of "Theme and Variations: Stories About Learning," and related supporting material, including correspondence with Marian Chace and Robert Gottlieb, with whom Boris was working to get her book published.

The Draft Manuscript files, dating from the 1990s, comprise the bulk of the collection. These files document Boris's development of her unpublished biographical book about learning, teaching, and dance, centering around her mentors, George Balanchine and Marian Chace. Various draft iterations of the three-part manuscript, often marked with editing notes, and shorter excerpts are included.

The collection includes correspondence between Boris and Chace and between Boris and writer/editor Robert Gottlieb. The Chace correspondence files date from 1965 to 1968, and also include some of Boris's writing about Chace subsequent to Chace's death in 1970. The Gottlieb correspondence files date from the 1990s through 2007 and include Gottlieb's editing notes, Boris's resume, as well as her will. Also held among the Gottlieb files are two publicity photographs of Boris with Ronald Reagan and his young daughter Maureen Reagan, who was appearing in a production of *The Nutcracker* with Boris sometime in the 1940s.

A few files of clippings, articles, and miscellaneous notes are also present in the collection.

Arrangement: The Ruthanna Boris papers are arranged in the following groups: "Theme and Variations" Draft Manuscripts; Marian Chace files; Robert Gottlieb files; Clipping and Articles; Other Correspondence; and Miscellaneous Notes.

Key Terms

Subjects

Ballet
Choreography
Movement therapy

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Correspondence
Manuscripts (documents)

Occupations

Dancers.
Teachers.

Names

Balanchine, George
Boris, Ruthanna
Chace, Marian, 1896-1970
Gottlieb, Robert, 1931-
Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1-11 "Theme and Variations: Stories about Learning" Draft Manuscripts 1990s
Marian Chace
- b. 1 f. 12-16 Correspondence 1965-1970
 - b. 2 f. 1 Memorial Fund 1986-1993
American Dance Therapy Association and Center for Dance Development Research.
 - b. 2 f. 2 Boris's Writing Regarding 1992-circa 1996
 - b. 2 f. 3-5 Robert Gottlieb 1998-2007
 - b. 2 f. 6 Clippings and Articles 1935, 1990s
 - b. 2 f. 7-8 Other Correspondence 1990-2006
 - b. 2 f. 9 Miscellaneous Notes 1990s-2000s