



The New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Nancy Meehan papers

1953-2011

(S) *MGZMD 482

Processed by Valerie Wingfield, 2018.

Summary

Creator: Meehan, Nancy

Title: Nancy Meehan papers

Date: 1953-2011

Size: 11.21 linear feet (25 boxes)

Source: The collection was donated by Anthony Candido in 2017.

Abstract: Nancy Catherine Meehan (1931-2016), was a choreographer, dancer and founder of the Nancy Meehan Dance Company in New York City. The collection, dated 1953 to 2011, reflects the creative process of Meehan's contemporary dance techniques.

Preferred citation: Nancy Meehan papers, (S) *MGZMD 482. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Valerie Wingfield, 2018.

Creator History

Nancy Catherine Meehan (1931-2016), a choreographer and dancer was born in San Francisco to Thomas and Mildred (Hathaway) Meehan. Upon graduation from the University of California, Berkeley, Meehan returned home to San Francisco. As a professionally-trained dancer, Meehan became a member of the Anna Halprin–Welland Lathrop Dance Company from 1953 to 1956.

In 1961, Meehan moved to New York City to broaden her dance experience with Erick Hawkins (1909-1994), of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company known for its innovative performances. Hawkins took notice of her work and elevated Meehan to the position of leading soloist.

In 1970, Meehan ended her tenure to establish her own company: the Nancy Meehan Dance Company. Its first production, *Hudson River Seasons*, received strong critical reviews. Meehan's residency and performance space was located at St. Mark's Church In-The-Bowery. The Company also danced at

other venues. In 1988, Meehan performed five solo dances in Japan at the Asahikawa '88 Spirit of Design.

Meehan relied on a core group of collaborators. Foremost was her husband, Anthony Candido who designed the dancers' costumes and, the distinctive "black and white" posters and program covers. Two other important collaborators were Eleanor Hovda (1940-2009), an experimental composer and dancer; and Blu, a lighting designer.

Meehan served as an artist-in-residence at New York University; and taught classes at Pratt Institute, Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut; and the American Dance Festival among others. Meehan occasionally published dance-related articles.

In 2016, Meehan died in Manhattan. She is survived by her husband Anthony Candido. The company continues Meehan's legacy at Westbeth in the West Village.

Scope and Content Note

The Nancy Meehan papers, dated 1953 to 2011 (bulk dates 1970s to 2000), reflect her career as a choreographer and dancer. The collection mostly documents the Nancy Meehan Dance Company and, to a much lesser extent, the Erick Hawkins Dance Company. The collection holds choreographic notebooks, promotional materials, photographs, touring files, and sound and video recordings.

The Choreographic Notebooks are Nancy Meehan's contemporaneous notes about productions for the Nancy Meehan Dance Company. They offer insight to her development as a choreographer and dancer. These hand-written notebooks have detailed dance movements, names of dancers, dates, sketches, production names, and narratives about dance techniques. The first choreographic notebook begins with Meehan's tenure with the Erick Hawkins Dance Company and follows through to her company's debut production *Hudson River Seasons*.

The New York Season files mostly reflect the Company's in-house residency productions with box office receipts, invoices, correspondence, assorted newsletters, notes, playbills, performance agreements, press releases, and theatre reservations.

Company Touring files hold correspondence (including contract talks), brochures, clippings, flyers, performance schedules, grant applications, and invitations to apply for an artist-in-residence. The files also hold information regarding Meehan's performance in Japan including copies of the original Spirit of Design portfolio and Candido's design brochures for Meehan's introduction and performance (both in Japanese).

Promotional material for the company consists of Flyers, Programs and Posters used to attract the theatre-going audience. Most of the material focuses on performances held in New York City. These files show samples of Candido's designs for the brochures and posters.

The Photographs span forty years of Company productions. Photographs are of live performances, Meehan dancing solo or rehearsing with other dancers, and cast pictures. The bulk of the pictures were taken by professional photographers.

Identifying information can include production title, performance venue, dancers, photographer credits, and the year photographed. Almost all of the photographs are were taken in black and white film. Related materials include negatives and contact prints.

Commissioned photographers credits include Maryette Charlton, a filmmaker and photographer; Lois Greenfield; Dave Sagarin; and Johan Elbers (principle photographer from the mid-1980s to 2000s).

The Reviews files hold published critical reviews (mostly from The New York Times) of Meehan's productions such as *Live Dragon* (1973), *Bones Cascades Scapes*, which features Candido's hemp design costumes (1974); *Threading the Wave* (1977), created to evoke Meehan's childhood experiences of visiting the wharfs of San Francisco; and *Guest To Star* (1985) a piece that implies an eternal contrast between the eternal (star) and the transient (guest).

Erick Hawkins Dance Company material is significant for the six choreographic notebooks created by Meehan during her tenure. Her notebooks document the early phase of Meehan's dance techniques before establishing her own company. The files also contain photographs, programs, reviews of the Company's performances, and copies of some early interviews of Hawkins and company.

Meehan also documented her Company's productions on audio and moving image recordings. Productions were recorded on a wide variety of formats. Pending digitization the material is unavailable.

Key Terms

Occupations

Choreographers -- United States

Subjects

Dance -- United States -- History

Performing arts -- Photographs

Women choreographers -- United States

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Design drawings

Notebooks

Photographs

Sound recordings

Video recordings

Names

Blu

Candido, Anthony, 1924-

Hovda, Eleanor, 1940-

Meehan, Nancy

Erick Hawkins Dance Company

Nancy Meehan Dance Company

Container List

Choreographic Notebooks 1966-2008

See also: Choreographic Notebooks under Erick Hawkins, box 21.

The notebooks are arranged chronologically by season.

- b. 1 f. 1 1966-1970
- b. 1 f. 2-3 *Hudson River Seasons* 1970
- b. 1 f. 4 *Hudson River Seasons; Whitip* 1970-1971
Two productions.
- b. 1 f. 5 *Live Dragon* 1972
- b. 2 f. 1-2 *Live Dragon* 1972
The files hold music cues and sheet music.
- b. 2 f. 3 *Bones* 1973
- b. 2 f. 4 *Split Rock* 1973
- b. 3 f. 1 *Split Rock* 1974
- b. 3 f. 2 *Yellow Point* 1974
- b. 3 f. 3 Nancy's Solos, And Miscellaneous Notes 1974
- b. 2 f. 5 *Grapes And Stones* 1975
- b. 2 f. 6-7 *Threading The Wave* 1976
- b. 4 f. 1 *Ptarmigan Wall* 1977
- b. 4 f. 2 *How Near* 1978
- b. 4 f. 3 *White Wave* 1978
- b. 5 *One Eye's* 1979 (The notebook is housed in a large binder.)
- b. 4 f. 4 *Coastal Traces* 1980
- b. 4 f. 5 *Seven Women* 1980
- b. 6 f. 1 *Dreams Of Leaves* 1981-1982
- b. 5 1982 (The notebook is housed in a large binder.)
- b. 6 f. 2-3 *Swift Garden* 1983
- b. 6 f. 4-5 *Cloud Roots* 1984
- b. 6 f. 6-8 *Guest To Star* 1985
- b. 7 f. 1 *Into Summer* 1987
- b. 7 f. 2 *Coastal Traces* 1988
- b. 7 f. 3-4 Multiple Productions 1988-1990
This notebook refers to productions: *Switchback*; *Beginnings*; *Moments* and others.
- b. 7 f. 5 *9 Leaf Window* 1989
- b. 7 f. 6 *The Other Side; Record Of An Ocean Cliff* 1993-1994
- b. 7 f. 7-8 *Night Suspension* 1996-1997
- b. 8 f. 1-2 *Bending The Mountain* 1999
- b. 8 f. 3 *Towards The Pass* 1999
- b. 8 f. 4-5 *Timings* 2000-2001
- b. 8 f. 6-9 *12 Feet On A Wooden Plane* 2002-2003
- b. 9 f. 1 Multiple Productions 2004
Productions cited: *12 Feet On A Wooden Plane*, *Unconscious Conversations*, and a premiere.

Choreographic Notebooks (cont.)

- b. 9 f. 2-4 Multiple Productions 2004-2008
 - New York Season
 - See: Water color sketches for 1996 Season in Box 24.
- b. 9 f. 7-14 1971-1987
- b. 10 f. 1-16 1988-1999
- b. 11 f. 1-13 2000-2006
- b. 12 f. 1-7 2007-2010
- Touring Files 1973-2008
 - b. 12 f. 8-19 American Dance Festival 1973-1980
 - b. 13 f. 1-9 American Dance Festival 1981-1982
 - b. 13 f. 10 American Dance Guild Conference 1996
 - b. 13 f. 11-16 Asahikawa '88 Spirit Of Design 1988
 - b. 13 f. 17-18 Dance Chicago II 1977
 - b. 13 f. 19 Montclair State College, New Jersey 1976
 - b. 13 f. 20 New York Dance Festival 1976
 - b. 13 f. 21 Rites Of Spring Dance Festival (Weston Connecticut) 2008
 - b. 13 f. 22-23 Spring Moves '89 (Mount Vernon College) 1989
 - b. 13 f. 24 State University College at Potsdam, New York 1977
 - b. 13 f. 25 State University at Purchase, New York 1978
 - b. 13 f. 26 Trinity Alive Summer Arts Festival 1978
- Flyers, Posters And Programs 1971-2011
 - b. 14 f. 1-13 Flyers 1973-2011
 - The files includes postcards.
 - b. 24 f. 1-3 Posters 1971-2004
 - b. 25 f. 1-4
 - b. 14 f. 14-21 Programs 1971-2011
- Photographs Of Productions 1971-2005
 - The photographs were previously arranged by the year of the production. Some images also indicates the date the productions were created.
 - b. 15 f. 1 *Hudson River Seasons* 1971
 - b. 15 f. 2 *Whitip* 1971
 - b. 15 f. 3 *Live Dragon* 1973
 - b. 15 f. 4-5 *Bones Cascades Scapes* 1974
 - b. 15 f. 6 *Live Dragon* 1974
 - b. 15 f. 7-8 *Split Rock* 1974
 - b. 15 f. 9 *Whitip* 1974
 - b. 15 f. 10 *Grapes And Stones* 1975
 - b. 15 f. 11 *Yellow Point* 1975
 - b. 15 f. 12-13 *Grapes And Stones* 1976
 - b. 15 f. 14 *Split Rock* 1976
 - b. 15 f. 15-19 *Threading The Wave* 1976
 - b. 15 f. 20 *Yellow Point* 1976
 - b. 15 f. 21-23 *Ptarmigan Wall* 1977-1978

Photographs Of Productions (cont.)

- b. 15 f. 24 *White Wave* 1978
- b. 15 f. 25 *How Near* 1979
- b. 15 f. 26 *One Eye's Higher Than The Other* 1980
- b. 15 f. 27 *Seven Women* 1980
- b. 15 f. 28 *Dreams Of Leaves* 1982
- b. 15 f. 29 *Seven Women* 1982
- b. 15 f. 30 *Hudson River Seasons* 1983
- b. 15 f. 31 *Swift Garden* 1983
- b. 15 f. 32 *Clouds...Roots* 1984-1985
- b. 15 f. 33-34 *Guest To Star* 1985-1986
- b. 15 f. 35 *Asahikawa International Spirit Of Design* 1988
- b. 15 f. 36 *Coastal Traces* 1988
- b. 15 f. 37 *Into Summer* 1988
- b. 15 f. 38 *Meehan's Solo Performance* 1989
Meehan demonstrated the solo performances that she danced in Japan in 1988, at St. Marks Church In-The-Bowery.
- b. 15 f. 39 *Switchback* 1989
- b. 16 f. 1 *9 Leaf Window; Seven Women* 1990
- b. 23 f. 1 *9 Leaf Window, Switchback* 1990
- b. 16 f. 2 *Crossing In A Mountain Dream (premiere)* 1995
- b. 16 f. 3 *Night Suspension* 1997
- b. 16 f. 4 *Bending The Mountain* 1998-1999
- b. 16 f. 5 Unidentified Performances 1998
- b. 16 f. 6-9 *Timings* 2001-2003
- b. 23 f. 2
- b. 16 f. 10-11 *12 Feet On A Wooden Plane* 2003
- b. 16 f. 12 *Unconscious Conservations* 2003
- b. 23 f. 3
- b. 16 f. 13 *Half Moon Breakers* 2005
- Photographs--Assorted
- b. 16 f. 14 Halprin, Anna Deck With Dancers 1950s
- b. 16 f. 15 Hovda, Eleanor
- b. 16 f. 16 Meehan, Nancy 1950s
A series of snapshots of Meehan relaxing on Anna Halprin's deck and home in California.
- b. 16 f. 17-19 Meehan At Rehearsal 1973-1983
- Contact Prints, Various Productions
- b. 16 f. 20-25 1973-1976
- b. 17 f. 1-18 1977-1989
- b. 18 f. 1-14 1990-2002
- b. 18 f. 15-18 Slides 2001-2003
Productions represented are *Timings*, *Twelve Feet On A Wooden Plane*, and *Unconscious Conservations*. There are also slides of various productions.
- b. 23 f. 4-5 Negatives
- b. 18 Rehearsals (album) 2001

- b. 19 f. 1-22 Reviews 1971-2000
 - b. 24 f. 4 Water Colors Sketches Of Costumes. New York Season 1996
- Assorted Materials
- b. 19 f. 23-30 Applications, Contracts And Grants
 - b. 19 f. 31 Biographical Information About Meehan
 - b. 20 f. 1-7 Correspondence 1974-2008
 - b. 24 f. 5-6 Music Scores 1971-1972
- Writings
- b. 20 f. 8-10 Drafts Regarding Interviews With Meehan 1985-2006
- b. 20 f. 11 Notes About Dance 1980s-1990s
- b. 20 f. 12 Amelkin, Elizabeth. "Concept And Interpretation...Margie Gillis And Nancy Meehan" (paper) 1988
- b. 20 f. 13 *Duncan, Erika. Nancy Meehan's Dances. Video City* 1976
- b. 20 f. 14 Letson, Dawn. Kay Adkins Gilbert Tumelty. An Oral History Project 2007
- Meehan, Nancy
- b. 20 f. 18 Notebook Of Definitions
- b. 20 f. 16 Notes On Choreographers And Dance Dictionary 2000s
- b. 20 f. 17 Notes On Reviews 2002-2003
- b. 20 f. 15 *Undefinable Reality. Dance Life* 1975
- b. 20 f. 19 Schneider, Jo Ann. Welland Lathrop. A Biographical Investigation 1989
- b. 20 f. 20 Sewing Patterns For Costumes
- Erick Hawkins Related Material 1953-2010
- Choreographic Notebooks
- b. 21 f. 1 Book I 1960s
 - 1. Now: The; 2. Now: Inside Wonder Or Whales; 3. Vulnerable Male Is Magic; 4. Now: Here Made Of Falling.
- b. 21 f. 2 Book II 1960s
 - 5. Invisible House; 6. Multiplicity; 7. Clowl; 8. The (Effortless) Now.
- b. 21 f. 3 Book III 1968
 - Tightrope*. Hawkins premiered this production at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1968.
- b. 21 f. 4 Floating Notes, Azure 1960s
- b. 21 f. 5 Floating 1960s
- b. 21 f. 6 Geography 1964
 - Meehan wrote Geography on the cover that most likely references *Geography Of Noon*.
- b. 21 f. 7 de Groot, Pauline. Letter 1966
- b. 21 f. 8 Erick Hawkins Dance Foundation. Gala Benefit 1993
- b. 21 f. 9-10 Erick Hawkins Memorial Celebration 1994
- b. 21 f. 11 Obituary. Dlugoszewski, Lucia 2000
 - Composer and artistic director of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company. Dlugoszewski was the secret wife of Hawkins.
- b. 21 f. 12 Obituary. Hawkins, Erick 1994
- b. 21 f. 13-15 Photographs 1960s
- b. 21 f. 16-17 Dlugoszewski, Lucia. Writings And Interview 1960s-1978
- b. 22 f. 1-4 Hawkins, Erick. Essays 1962

Erick Hawkins Related Material (cont.)

- b. 22 f. 5 Moore, Ben. Erick Hawkins And The Theatre Of Surprise
- b. 22 f. 6 Sabin, Robert. What Comes After The Avant Garde
- b. 22 f. 7-15 Programs 1953-2010
- b. 22 f. 16-20 Reviews 1959-1995

Audio and Moving Image 1971-2011

The bulk of the media originals kept the original arrangement by performance season. The files also include some interviews of Meehan.

Unidentified Productions

760145, 760146,
760147, 760199 1987, 1994

Interviews

- 760265 Jennifer Dunning Interview of Meehan (?) 2003
- 760150 Eleanor Hovda Interview? 1987
- 760097 Meehan [talks about] Erick Hawkins 1976
- 760098, 760102,
760103 Meehan Interview With Gregory Reeves At WBAI 1977-1989
- 760117 Meehan Interview With Linda Schor For Westbeth 1980
- 760179, 760261,
760082, 760327,
760328, 760329,
760330, 760336,
760337, 760348 Nancy Meehan Interviews 1991-2008
- 760226 Connie Kreemer Interview of Meehan (?) 2005