



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**New York International Ballet Competition records**

1943-2011

(S) \*MGZMD 509

Processed by Matthew Snyder in 2020.

## Summary

**Creator:** New York International Ballet Competition

**Title:** New York International Ballet Competition records

**Date:** 1943-2011

**Size:** 5.3 linear feet (14 boxes, 1 tube, 1 oversize folder); 11.8 gigabytes (284 computer files)

**Source:** Donated by James Goldstein, 2020.

**Abstract:** The New York International Ballet Competition, which ran from 1984 to 2009, was a three-week artistic education, professional training, and performance program for about 50 young, scholarship-sponsored dancers from around the world. The New York International Ballet Competition records, dating from 1943 to 2011 (the bulk dates from 1983 onward), document the history of the competition through photographs, video recordings, programs, publicity literature, costume designs, competition applications, administrative files, posters, and audio recordings.

**Preferred citation:** New York International Ballet Competition records, (S) \*MGZMD 509. 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 2020.

## Creator History

The New York International Ballet Competition (NYIBC), which ran from 1984 to 2009, was a three-week artistic education, professional training, and performance program for about 50 young, scholarship-sponsored dancers from around the world. Founded in 1983 by Ilona Copen (1940-2010) and Igor Youskevitch (1912-1994), the competition was staged every two or three years. It had affiliations with both the American Ballet Theatre and the Joffrey Ballet, both of whom offered one-year contracts for winners in different categories.

NYIBC was unique in that it strictly defined the music and choreography performed and costumes worn by all competitors, providing a more even playing field than in other competitions. The program provided

dancers with coaching, mentoring, housing, food, medical attention when necessary, exposure to cultural activities, and other amenities.

Copen was the competition's executive director from its inception until her retirement in 2009; Youskevitch was the artistic director until his death. Over 500 dancers participated in the competition, including Victoria Mazzarelli, Barry Hughson, Barbora Kohoutková, Kathleen Breen Combes, Harald Uwe Kern, and Roddy Doble, each of whom went on to have notable careers as performers and instructors, some leading their own dance companies or schools. The last competition was held in 2009; the next was scheduled for 2013, but was cancelled due to insufficient funding. The competition shut down in 2014.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The New York International Ballet Competition (NYIBC) records, dating from 1943 to 2011 (the bulk dates from 1983 forward), document the history of the competition through photographs, video recordings, programs, publicity literature, costume designs, competition applications, administrative files, posters, and audio recordings.

The competition is most clearly represented by video recordings and photographs. Both formats document classes, rehearsals, coaching sessions, dress rehearsals, multiple rounds of stage performances, and the awards ceremonies that climaxed the competition. In addition, videos feature interviews with dancers and coaches, as well as stories in news media.

The photographs date from 1984 to 2003, but the bulk of the material is from 1984, 1987, and 2003. They include informal shots of rehearsals and classes, as well as professional photography of the performances and award ceremonies. The photographs primarily show dancers, but also include judges, coaches, fundraising galas, and professional headshots of Ilona Copen. Many of the prints note the year, the dancers, their country of origin, and other information. The 1984 photos include many large performance prints, while most other years mainly have proof sheets and negatives only. The files for the 2003 competition include prints in digital form.

In addition to the classes, rehearsals, and performances, the videos include interviews with dancers, documentaries on the competition, and media news features. Competition video is present for 1984, 1987, 2000, and 2003. Media coverage spans 1984 to 2007. The videos also contain two applicant auditions.

The Programs and Publicity files offer fairly complete coverage of the competitions, and include press kits, fliers, advertising copy, and clippings.

The Administrative files include dancer applications; notes on competition choreographers; meeting minutes and agendas; a 1983 work calendar; and official city and state proclamations honoring NYIBC. The applications, which specify the music and choreography for the dancers' prepared auditions, date from the 1984, 1987, 2000, and 2005 competitions.

The Costume Designs contain notes, drawings, sketches, and final designs for the required costumes for all years of the competition.

The folder of Igor Youskevitch photographs and obituaries contain prints of him in performance, as well as coaching NYIBC dancers.

The collection also holds the personal papers of Ilona Copen. They include professional notes and letters from colleagues and dancers, family letters, and programs from Copen's performance career.

Posters date from the 1984 and 1987 competitions.

The audio recordings comprise music used for the 1987 and 1990 competitions, and a 1984 interview with Gwen Verdon, who served with Tony Randall as a master of ceremonies for that year's competition.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged in its received order.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Ballet

Dance -- Competitions

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Clippings (information artifacts)

Fliers (printed matter)

Programs (documents)

Sound recordings

Video recordings

### **Names**

Copen, Ilona

Youskevitch, Igor, 1912-1994

New York International Ballet Competition

## Container List

- Administrative Files 1983-2009
  - b. 1 f. 1-8 Applications 1983-2005
  - b. 1 f. 9 Brunch for United Nations Ambassadors 1987
  - b. 2 f. 1 Calendar 1983
  - b. 1 f. 10 Choreographers 1986-1987, 1990
  - b. 2 f. 2 City and State Proclamations 1984-2009
  - b. 1 f. 11 Meeting Minutes and Agendas 1988-1990
- Programs and Publicity 1983-2011
  - b. 1 f. 12-13 1983-1984
  - b. 3 f. 1 1987-1990
  - b. 3 f. 2-3 1993-2011
- Costume Designs 1984-2009
  - b. 3 f. 4 1984
  - b. 4 f. 1-2 1987-1990
  - b. 3 f. 5-7 1993-1996
  - b. 4 f. 3-5 2003-2007
  - b. 3 f. 8 2009
  - b. 4 f. 6 Sheet Music 1987, 2002-2003
  - b. 5 f. 1 Igor Youskevitch Photographs and Obituaries 1952-1994
- Ilona Copen Personal Papers 1943-2005
  - b. 5 f. 2-3 Professional Letters 1990-2005  
The letters include a list of Copen's correspondents.
  - b. 5 f. 4 Inter-American Dance Confederation Event 2005
  - b. 5 f. 5 Programs 1960-1973
  - b. 5 f. 6 Family Letters 1943-2003
  - b. 6 f. 1-2
    - o. 1 Caricature 1993  
A drawing of Copen and her husband James Goldstein.
- Photographs 1984-2003
  - b. 6 f. 3-4 1984-2003  
Both folders contain lists of dancers and others appearing in the photographs.
  - b. 4 f. 7-9 1984
    - b. 6 f. 5
    - b. 7 f. 1-5
    - b. 8 f. 1-2
    - b. 9 f. 1
  - b. 6 f. 6 1987
    - b. 8 f. 3-5
    - b. 10 f. 1-5
    - b. 11 f. 1-4
    - b. 12 f. 1-2
  - b. 12 f. 3 1989  
"Shall We Dance" gala benefit.
  - b. 12 f. 4-5 1990  
Contains slides, contact sheets, and negatives only, no prints.

Photographs (cont.)

- b. 12 f. 6 1993
- b. 13 f. 1-3
- b. 13 f. 4-5 1993-1996  
Includes photographs of judges and workshop teachers. Most 1996 photographs are contact sheets only.
- b. 13 f. 6-7 2000
- b. 14 f. 1
- b. 14 f. 2-5er. 1 2003  
(173.3 megabytes 265 computer files)  
The negatives in folder 5 appear as prints in the digital file package.
- b. 9 f. 2 t. 1 Posters 1984-1987
- Video and Audio Recordings 1984-2007  
Inquiries regarding audio and video materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division ([dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org)). Audio and video materials will be subject to preservation assessment and migration prior to access.
- b. 14 f. 6 Lists of Videotape Contents 1984