



ArchivesSpace

Marilyn Smithson Hodgson's School of Dance and Expression Photograph Collection

An inventory of the Marilyn Smithson Hodgson's School of Dance and Expression Photograph Collection at DC Public Library

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on October 19, 2020.

English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

People's Archive, MLK Library

901 G Street NW

Washington, DC

archives.dcpl@dc.gov

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical / Historical	3
Scope and Contents	4
Arrangement	4
Administrative Information	5
Related Materials	5
Controlled Access Headings	6
Collection Inventory	6
Series 1: Singles	6
Series 2: Groups	7
Series 3: Non-Dance	7
Series 4: Painted Photographs	8
Series 5: Clippings and Programs	9

Summary Information

Repository:	People's Archive, MLK Library
Creator:	Marilyn Smithson Hodgson School of Dance
Title:	Marilyn Smithson Hodgson's School of Dance and Expression Photograph Collection
ID:	P003
Date [inclusive]:	1913-1941
Physical Description:	5 Boxes
Physical Description:	1.5 Linear feet
Language of the Material:	English
Language of the Material:	English

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Biographical / Historical

The Marilyn Smithson Hodgson School of Dance was established around 1912 and existed as late as 1956. As a District resident, Marilyn Smithson trained and performed with a local dance troupe in her youth. Around 1912, she began giving dance lessons at "academies" located throughout the city, among them was the Naval Lodge Hall at 4th and Pennsylvania Avenue. Miss Smithson married Joseph F. Hodgson around 1918. Her younger sister Lilla Smithson became an instructor at the school in the early 1920s. She choreographed and continued to perform prominent roles in the schools' annual shows throughout the 1920s. Lilla Smithson married and became Lilla S. Hipsley around 1925. The school appears to have been primarily a dance school for children but also taught young women in ballet, tap, and modern dance. Annual well-attended spring recitals took place in a number of nationally known as well as community-based District establishments, including the National Theater, the Belasco Theater, Willard Ballroom, Masonic Auditorium, and the Takoma Park Pool. The school's residence studio, established in the late 1910s was at 1320 Longfellow Street, N.W. with instruction also provided at other locations such as Masonic temples and parish halls. In 1933, the school opened a new larger studio at 1200 Delafield Place, N.W where it stayed until closing.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

The collection consists primarily of photographs of dancers from the school with some dance programs and clippings about the school's performance recitals. The photographs depict a wide range of dance costumes and dance styles, including ballet, tap, modern, ethnic, and exotic. The photographs are stylized and staged shots and appear to have been taken after or before, rather than during performances. The collection contains mostly black and white photographs, but also has a sizable amount of painted black and white photographs. A few non-dance individual portraits and snapshots are also included. Performance programs provide interesting information about the range of performances, performers, and venue for the schools' annual spring recital. The recital was first titled the Annual Spring Carnival but was known at various times as the Children's Spring Revue, the Juvenile Spring Revue, and the Annual Spring Recital. Names of dancers mentioned often in the records are Lilla Smithson (Hipsley), Jane Howard, Lorraine Mae Nicholson, Ruth Schenkle, Cush family members, Mayerhoffer family members, Ronnie Cunningham, Dorothy Schenken, Zelda Wightman, Jack Hodgson, and Elmer Hipsly, to name a few.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Series 1: Singles, ca. 1910s-1940s, 1 box. Contains photographs of individual dancers in ballet, tap, and modern dance costume. Of particular significance are photographs of Lilla Smithson, dancer with the troupe and sister of Mrs. Hodgson. The photographs are arranged by date, individual dancer, age range, and similar stage design. See Series 4: Painted photographs for additional individual shots. Series 2: Groups, ca. 1920s-1940s, 1.5 boxes. Contains photographs of large and small dance ensembles and couples in ballet, tap, modern, and ethnic costume. The photographs are arranged by decade and then by similar, dance style, stage design, or performance. See Series 4: Painted photographs for additional group shots. Series 3: Non-Dance Portraits and Snapshots, ca. 1930-1940s, ½ box. Consists of studio portraits, snapshots, and miscellaneous photographs of individuals in street clothes, rather than dance costumes. Included are a photograph of World War II soldiers on review at Camp Carson, Colorado in 1943; snapshots of WWII enlisted men and women; a Christmas card with a painted photograph (undated); and a wedding portrait. Painted portraits were placed in this series, not Series 4: Painted photographs. Photographs are arranged by date and then type. Series 4: Painted Photographs, ca. 1920s-1940s, 1 box. Consists of hand-painted black and white photographs of dancers in costume, both in groups and individually. The photographs are arranged by group or single shots, by date, and then by dance style. Some painted photographs are still attached to original album pages due to preservation concerns -- these appear at the end. Series 5: Clippings and Programs, 1 box. Consists of original clippings and programs (some still attached to scrapbook pages) for the company's annual spring recitals. Of interest is a program for "The 1940 Red Cross Aquafette," a popular local fundraiser for the Red Cross during WWII. The clippings and the programs provide the names and accomplishments of dancers at the school.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Washington, DC
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Revision Description

Finding aid revised to be more evergreen. 2020-06-29

Custodial History

There is no Deed of Gift for this collection and it is uncertain how the Library acquired the collection. The collection was accessioned into the Library's holdings in 1999.

Processing Information

The photographs, clippings, and programs were originally in scrapbooks. Photographs and some of the programs were removed from scrapbook pages to enhance their physical preservation. Clippings were photocopied onto acid free paper and the originals were discarded. Photographs are arranged in envelopes by similar stage design, performance, single and group performers, and non-dance portrait photos and snapshots. Since none of the photographs are dated, dates are approximations based on clippings, styles of dance, costume, and fashion.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Materials

Greg Reynolds Dance Quintet (022)

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Performing Arts
- Photographs
- Dance companies
- Dance
- Dance teachers
- Scrapbooks

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Singles

Scope and Contents

Contains photographs of individual dancers in ballet, tap, and modern dance costume. Of particular significance, are photographs of Lilla Smithson, dancer with the troupe and sister of Mrs. Hodgson. The photographs are arranged by date, individual dancer, age range, and similar stage design. See Series IV: Painted photographs for additional individual shots.

Title/Description	Instances	
Lilla Smithson, ca. 1910s	Box 1	Folder 1
Girls - miscellaneous, ca. 1920s	Box 1	Folder 2
Scope and Contents (2 envelopes)		
Women, ca. 1920s-1930s	Box 1	Folder 3
Boys and men only, ca. 1930-1940s	Box 1	Folder 4
Individual women dancers, ca. 1940s	Box 1	Folder 5
Scope and Contents (4 envelopes)		
Women - similar design/performance, ca. 1940s	Box 1	Folder 6

Scope and Contents

(5 envelopes)

Girls - similar design/performance, ca. 1940s

Box 1

Folder 7

Scope and Contents

(6 envelopes)

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)**Series 2: Groups****Scope and Contents**

Contains photographs of large and small dance ensembles and couples in ballet, tap, modern, and ethnic costume. The photographs are arranged by decade and then by similar, dance style, stage design, or performance. See Series IV: Painted photographs for additional group shots.

Title/Description	Instances	
Womens' ensembles, ca. 1930s	Box 2	Folder 1
Couples and trios with boys and girls, ca. 1920s-1930s	Box 2	Folder 2
Women's ballet, ca. 1930s	Box 2	Folder 3
Wedding scenes with children, ca. 1920s	Box 2	Folder 4
Groups with similar design/performance, ca. 1920s-1930s	Box 2	Folder 5
Tap, ca. 1930s-1940s	Box 2	Folder 6
Girls' ballet, ca. 1930s-1940s	Box 2	Folder 7
Groups with similar design/performance, ca. 1940s	Box 3	Folder 8

Scope and Contents

(11 envelopes)

Children, ca. 1940s	Box 3	Folder 9
Ethnic dance, ca. 1940s	Box 3	Folder 10
Modern and miscellaneous, ca. 1940s	Box 3	Folder 11
Couples, ca. 1940s	Box 3	Folder 12

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)**Series 3: Non-Dance**

Scope and Contents

Consists of studio portraits, snapshots, and miscellaneous photographs of individuals in street clothes, rather than dance costume. Included are a photograph of World War II soldiers on review at Camp Carson, Colorado in 1943; snapshots of WWII enlisted men and women; a Christmas card with a painted photograph (undated); and a wedding portrait. Painted portraits were placed in this series, not Series IV: Painted photographs. Photographs are arranged by date and then type.

Title/Description	Instances	
Portraits, ca. 1920s-1930s	Box 3	Folder 13
Portraits, ca. 1940s	Box 3	Folder 14
Miscellaneous, ca. 1940s	Box 3	Folder 15
Snapshots, ca. 1940s	Box 3	Folder 16
Wedding portrait, ca. 1940s	Box 3	Folder 17

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Painted Photographs

Scope and Contents

Consists of hand-painted black and white photographs of dancers in costume, both in groups and individually. The photographs are arranged by group or single shots, by date, and then by dance style. Some painted photographs are still attached to original album pages due to preservation concerns -- these appear at the end.

Title/Description	Instances	
Groups, ca. 1920s-1930s	Box 4	Folder 1
Groups, ca. 1940s	Box 4	Folder 2
Scope and Contents (2 envelopes)		
Singles - girls' toe, ca. 1930s-1940s	Box 4	Folder 3
Scope and Contents (3 envelopes)		
Singles - girls' tape and other, 1930s-1940s	Box 4	Folder 4
Singles - Women's tap, ca. 1930s	Box 4	Folder 5
Singles - Women's toe, ca. 1940s	Box 4	Folder 6

Scope and Contents

(4 envelopes)

Original pages with painted photographs from album, ca. 1920s-1940s	Box 4	Folder 7
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[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Clippings and Programs

Scope and Contents

Consists of original clippings and programs (some still attached to scrapbook pages) for the company's annual spring recitals. Of interest is a program for "The 1940 Red Cross Aquafette," a popular local fundraiser for the Red Cross during WWII. The clippings and the programs provide the names and accomplishments of dancers at the school.

Title/Description	Instances	
Programs, 1913-1941	Box 5	Folder 1
Copies of clippings, ca. 1907-1942	Box 5	Folder 2
Original scrapbook pages, ca. 1907-1942	Box 5	Folder 3

Scope and Contents

(2 folders)

Original cover to scrapbook, undated	Box 5	Folder 4
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[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)