

# PERFORMANCE!



## *The Newsletter of* **the Society of American Archivists’ Performing Arts Roundtable**

**Issue for Fall 2008**

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*[The Performing Arts Roundtable: Encourages the exchange of information on historical and contemporary documentation of music, dance, theater, motion pictures, and other performance media. (from the SAA Web site)]*

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*Visit the Roundtable Web Site: [www.archivists.org/saagroups/performart/](http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/performart/)*

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**Roundtable Leadership (continued)**

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## ***Message from the Roundtable Co-Chair***

### **A New Year, and New Activity**

*By Susan Brady*

As we finish out the old year and ring in the new I want to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you did this year for the Performing Arts Roundtable. Adriana Cuervo completed her term as Roundtable co-chair, and I want to thank her particularly for her leadership and vision. And my thanks go to Scott Schwartz, who completed his term as Roundtable Steering Committee member, for his energy and creative ideas. My gratitude also for their continuing outstanding work goes to Andy Wentink (steering committee), Helice Koffler (web master), and George Bain (newsletter editor).

I am pleased to announce the newly-elected Roundtable leaders. I look forward to working with Peggy Alexander (co-chair), and Lisa Hooper (steering committee). And we welcome Mary Gallant, who is now working with George Bain as the assistant editor of *Performance!*, and our new SAA Council liaison, Rosalye Settles.

Additional thanks go to our hosts during the SAA annual meeting in San Francisco, Kirsten Tanaka, head librarian and archivist of the Museum of Performance & Design, and Joe Evans, archivist of the San Francisco Symphony. Kirsten and Joe provided a great venue and wonderful presentations about which you will hear from Helice Koffler in this issue. I thank all of you who joined us at the business meeting and participated in a lively discussion of future Roundtable endeavors. Several members have volunteered to become involved in a project to identify and contribute form and genre terms for documenting scenic, lighting, and costume design to the standard thesauri (described in the previous issue of *Performance!*). Additional information regarding this project will be sent out soon via the Roundtable list-serv. Please contact me if you are interested in participating in this project which is being conducted in coordination with members of the Theatre Library Association.

Following Roundtable meeting discussions about potential 2009 SAA session proposals, two proposals endorsed by the Roundtable were submitted to the SAA 2009 program committee. As of press time the program committee has not announced which proposals have been accepted. I can announce that Helen Adair, associate curator of Performing Arts at the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas, has graciously agreed to host the Roundtable at the annual meeting next summer in Austin.

I want to highlight two 2008 conference sessions which were endorsed by the Roundtable and which included Roundtable members. “The Future of the Present: Preserving Avant-Garde Art” (Adriana Cuervo, presenter and Leilani Dawson, commentator) and “Getting to the Heart of Performance: Archivists as Creative Collaborators” (Scott Schwartz and Andrew Wentink, co-chairs) were particularly thought-provoking, well-attended, and lively.

Once again I would like to remind you to check your member profile on the SAA web site and confirm that you are on the Roundtable member list. I am happy to report that we have 120 members at last count.

I wish you all the best of the season and look forward to continuing our work together in the new year!

## **Society of American Archivists Performing Arts Roundtable Annual Meeting Report**

The 2008 annual business meeting of the Performing Arts Roundtable was held on August 27, 2008 at San Francisco’s [Museum of Performance & Design](#) (until recently better known as the San Francisco Performing Arts Library & Museum or SF PALM). A capacity crowd filled the new reading room, where paper ballots were distributed to members by co-chairs, **Susan Brady** and **Adriana Cuervo**, for an election to fill two open positions. After introductions were made and announcements given by **Teresa Reilly**, representative for SAA’s 2009 Program Committee,

and Council Liaison, **Rosalyn Settles**, Adriana and Susan solicited input and ideas from those gathered for future Roundtable projects.

As noted in the last issue of the newsletter, Susan is particularly interested in working on an initiative in which the Roundtable would coordinate an effort to identify and contribute form and genre terms for materials documenting costume, lighting, and scenic design. Session proposals for next's year's conference also were briefly discussed. Susan mentioned that she already had conducted preliminary conversations with **Helen Adair**, Associate Curator of the Performing Arts at the [Harry Ransom Center](#), UT Austin about some possibilities. The business segment of the meeting concluded as those PAR members in attendance were given time to fill out their ballots, which then were collected to be tallied.

The program portion of the meeting began with a presentation by **Kirsten Tanaka**, Head Librarian / Archivist of the Museum of Performance & Design. In keeping with the conference theme, "Archival R/Evolution & Identities," Kirsten provided an informative history of the development of the museum (which has involved many shifts in location, name, and mission over the years) and its plans for the future. **Joe Evans**, archivist of the [San Francisco Symphony](#), also gave a talk, which focused on the challenges of setting up a new archives program. Symphony records formerly held by the Museum of Performance & Design had recently been transferred back into the Symphony's custody and Joe is actively collecting other relevant materials. According to Joe, the collection currently best documents special events and educational programs of the Symphony. While no physical facility for researchers exists at present, a uniquely Californian solution to the storage situation has been improvised — records are being kept temporarily in wine storage vaults!

Following this discussion, the results of the election were announced. New officers included **Peggy Alexander**, UCLA, as incoming co-chair and **Lisa Hooper**, Western Washington University, as new steering committee member. Susan also announced that **Mary Gallant**, California Western School of Law, had volunteered to serve as assistant editor of the newsletter for one year and would take over as editor when **George Bain** steps down after many years of dedicated service. Kirsten then led the group on a tour through the museum galleries, which also included a sampling of treasures selected by Kirsten and fellow librarian, **Samantha Cairo-Toby**. A special exhibition that was running at the time, [Art & Artifice: 75 Years of Design at San Francisco Ballet](#) also was available for viewing.

Many thanks must go to our hosts, presenters, and organizers for this exciting opportunity to have the PAR meeting take place in one of the premier performing arts collections in this country.

*Reported by Helice Koffler*

## *News Notes*

### **Uncovered Mozart Manuscript Makes News**

As was widely reported in the news media in late summer, a Mozart melody manuscript was uncovered in a library in France. The item was described in an article from the Associated Press as a “previously unknown” single sheet “preliminary draft” that was an “important find.” As always, a story of this type is fun to hear.

### **SAA Launches Mosaic Scholarship Program**

Quoting from the SAA Web site, the Mosaic Scholarship Award has been established to promote diversification of the American archives profession. This new scholarship will provide financial and mentoring support to minority students pursuing graduate education in archival science. Up to two \$5,000 scholarships will be awarded in 2009. Find more information on how to apply [here](#).

## *Reports from the Field*

**Editor’s Note:** This section is intended to be an avenue for the exchange of information to members of the roundtable about collections or other topics of importance for archivists in or with the performing arts.

The reports in this issue explore two differing matters. The first, by Amy McCroy and Beth Kattelman, describes work by two staff members at Ohio State University on a state-wide EAD-compliant finding aid tool and notes performing arts collections featured therein from both OSU and other centers across the state. The second, by Marcellaus Joiner, is a straightforward statement that relates the challenge as well as the joy and pleasure that come with a student’s entry into the archival profession through work on performing arts archival materials.

## **OhioLINK Releases New Finding Aid Creation Tool and Repository**

*By Amy McCroy and Beth Kattelman*

In April of 2008, OhioLINK announced the release of a new finding aid creation

application and searchable repository for the state of Ohio. The EAD Finding Aid Creation Tool and OhioLINK Repository

(EAD FACTORY) enables archivists at libraries, historical societies, museums and other institutions statewide to create finding aids using the EAD standard, and deliver them via a shared repository hosted at OhioLINK.

The Repository and its search engine were built using the open source software XTF, which was created by the California Digital Library (CDL) and is the engine behind the Online Archive of California (OAC). The CDL has generously shared its software with the library and archival community, and

XTF is now used in several EAD projects around the country. The Finding Aid Creation Tool was designed by the OhioLINK EAD Task Force, and programmed in the Kent State University Libraries and Media Services' (LMS) Systems department, which donated significant staff hours to make the project a reality.

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**The creation tool is an easy-to-use application that helps users to create finding aids even if they have no experience in encoding.**

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The goal of the EAD Task Force (EAD TF), formed at the end of 2004 by the OhioLINK Database Management and Standards Committee (DMSC), was to enable all institutions in Ohio, regardless of size or access to systems expertise, to create and share finding aids. The first 18 months of the EAD TF's work was devoted to writing content guidelines that would ensure standardization of encoding practice across institutions. In the process of discussing standards with various archivists from around the state, the EAD TF began to realize that many would not participate in

EAD creation if encoding could not be greatly simplified. For some institutions, the barriers to encoding, in terms of staff and budgetary limitations, were too high.

Accordingly, the EAD TF began to work on creating a web-based encoding interface that could be used by any archivist with an Internet connection. The EAD TF, working with Kent State LMS Systems Application Developer, developed the encoding software throughout 2007 and early 2008. After a round of beta testing, the EAD FACTORY went live in April 2008.

As noted above, the EAD FACTORY consists of a creation tool and a searchable repository. The creation tool is an easy-to-use application that helps users to create finding aids even if they have no experience in encoding. It contains a series of fill-in-the-blank screens that ask for basic information about a collection. Once the user fills in the required information, the application applies all necessary tags to create the finding aid. An accompanying starter packet can be downloaded that offers a brief explanation of Encoded Archival Description and outlines the required content for a minimally encoded finding aid in the OhioLINK repository. The creation tool also provides numerous help screens that can be accessed directly from within the tool to help users navigate and correctly fill in the various required fields. The OhioLINK EAD Task Force is also currently creating online tutorials that will make using the tool even easier. Users can try out the tool using a guest account or can have their institution obtain a permanent account by filling out and submitting the Contributor Registration Form. While use of the tool does not require membership in OhioLINK, contributing institutions must be based in Ohio. Once a finding aid has been encoded it can be uploaded to the OhioLINK Repository using the creation

tool. Existing EAD finding aids can also be verified and uploaded to the Repository using the creation tool. For more information visit the creation tool site at <http://ead.library.kent.edu>.

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**Here at the Ohio State University's Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute (TRI) we are very excited about the possibilities of the increased exposure the OhioLINK Repository will provide.**

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The number of finding aids contained in the EAD Repository has grown steadily since its release in April 2008. There are now over 130 finding aids contributed by universities, public libraries, and historical societies throughout Ohio. The finding aids cover a wide range of subjects. For example, the repository currently contains a finding aid for the Paul Laurence Dunbar Collection contributed by the Dayton Metro Library as well as one for the Mansfield Tire & Rubber Company Construction Collection at the Ohio Historical Society. Several of the finding aids will be of particular interest to those in the performing arts as well. For example, the repository contains the finding aid for the Ohio Theater Glass Slide Collection, an Ohio Historical Society archive of 458 glass slides of song lyrics used at the Ohio Theater, the records of the Dayton Bach Society contributed by the University of Dayton, and the records of the Cincinnati Men's Chorus held by the University of Cincinnati, Archives and Rare Books Library.

Here at the Ohio State University's Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute (TRI) we are very excited

about the possibilities of the increased exposure the OhioLINK Repository will provide. We have already contributed finding aids for several of our collections, including: The Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Collection, The Charles H. McCaghy Collection of Exotic Dance From Burlesque to Clubs and the Robert Wachsman Papers, and are dedicated to eventually putting all of our XML finding aids into the Repository. We have a wealth of performing arts materials just waiting to be "discovered" and this tool will help us to reach those in all parts of the world. Through the OhioLINK Repository, performing arts researchers will be able to find materials on our scripts, set designs, costume designs, musical scores, models, original manuscripts, and other items that make up our collections. Finding aids that are added to the repository are recognized by the Google search engine, so this enhances the possibility that researchers may serendipitously become aware of our materials, and we're looking forward to an increase in collection usage and better customer service as a result.

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Browsing the repository gives one a sense of just how rich and varied Ohio's collections and archival holdings are. In addition to offering this overview of Ohio's historical resources, perhaps the most exciting aspect of the Finding Aid Repository is that it

allows researchers to search across collections held by a wide variety of institutions. Now, instead of having to visit numerous websites to search individual institution catalogs, a researcher can plug a few key words into the Repository search engine and find numerous collections that have information related to his/her topic. Those interested in performing arts collections now have a direct point of entry

into Ohio's diverse holdings in this area of study. Whether you're looking for information on Shakespeare, vaudeville, or Edward Albee, you'll find something of interest in OhioLINK's Repository. The Repository search engine can be found at <http://ead.ohiolink.edu>.

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## Who's in This Picture?: Identifying Performers in Unlabelled Photographs

By Marcellaus Joiner

This summer I scanned, enhanced and cropped surrogates of and created metadata for performing arts photographs contained within the North Carolina State Visual Arts Collections in the North Carolina State University Libraries' University Archives. I found the mass of photos to be very diverse and very interesting. The main challenge presented by the collection was the creation of metadata since many photos were lacking the necessary information to identify who was in the photograph.

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**So one of the first things that I learned about metadata description was that when you have only the photograph and no additional information, you can only describe what you see.**

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Throughout this essay, I will briefly describe the collection, speak to my experience processing it, and discuss whether the time spent trying to identify performers in these photos delayed the goal of expediting researcher access. NC State's Visual and Performing Arts collection spans the time period of 1899-1997. These photos document the progression of activities of students in the arts programs under the supervision of the North Carolina State University Division of Student Affairs, which includes the Music Department, the Crafts Center, the Dance Program, and the University Theater program. There is also an array of professional visual and performing arts events such as concerts, dance performances, and theater performances by artists and companies from outside the University.

My experience creating the metadata for this collection was not a smooth ride. This project was my first experience with archival description and I found it challenging to come up with descriptions when the photographs offered no written information as to the identity of the performer or artist in the photograph. On the one hand, some photographs had information on the back such as the time period they were taken, the performers' names, what was being performed, and which part of the Visual and Performing Arts program facilitated this particular event. On the other hand, some photographs showed unidentified performers, performances, and art work which I had not the foggiest idea of how to identify. So one of the first things that I learned about metadata description was that when you have only the photograph and no additional information, you can only describe what you see. I did not particularly like this lesson, but wrestling with the problem helped me acclimate to doing descriptive work within the access program of the Archives. I know that generally we leave it to the researcher to do the research and that our job as archivists is to organize, identify, and facilitate discovery of the material for the researcher. Even knowing this, I still found myself asking the question, "Am I giving enough description for the researcher to find what he/she needs?" My solution to providing more description may be controversial to most librarians and scholarly researchers. When I had absolutely nothing to go on I used Google to find information. While I do not consider Google to be an infallible research source, I do find it helpful when one is pressed for time and needs to identify a person, place, or thing. How did it help me to identify performers in this collection? Within the performing arts photographs at N.C. State, for example, are images from a concert performed by the 1960s musical

group Peter, Paul, and Mary. Since I was starting with a somewhat unfamiliar subject, in order to identify the photo I searched for concerts at NC State and this led me to a picture of Mary Travers that was on file.

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**I feel that the question of whether less processing and quicker access is better than more processing and detailed description will eventually be answered by the researchers themselves.**

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This particular situation gave me a better understanding of why experience in a specialized subject is beneficial to processing in an archive that may hold collections covering very specific collection foci. Realizing that I could definitely put my B.A. in History to use, the question I had to ask myself for each photo was, "How much time do I spend researching items that are not already well identified?" I know that there is a trend in the archives field today pushing towards less processing and quicker access to materials by researchers. I feel that vital historical information may be getting lost in the shuffle when you follow that particular way of thinking. I always have the following question when this topic is discussed in my archives class: "If you have little information to go on regarding who is identified within a photograph, how much more information is the researcher going to find?" Sure, he/she has more time to focus on a particular item in a collection, but that does not make it any easier for him/her to identify someone in a photo. The name of a subject is critical to the researcher's efforts in investigating a photograph. After all, it is the archivist's duty to make sure that the researcher is provided with enough information to find what he/she is looking

for. I know that this hot topic has been discussed by archivists in the past and recently, but in order to eventually create a universal way of processing collections we have to keep revisiting these topics.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I am very happy to be on the verge of entering the field of archives during a time of critical transition, when intellectually stimulating issues like this are up for discussion. With

technology constantly growing and changing the way we do things, we as archivists have to figure out ways to use these new innovations to our advantage. I feel that the question of whether less processing and quicker access is better than more processing and detailed description will eventually be answered by the researchers themselves. Regardless of the outcome, my goal is to make more collections available to those who want to explore the past.

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## ***News of Roundtable Members and Associates***

Congratulations to **Danna Bell-Russel** of the Library of Congress who was named a Fellow of the Society at the San Francisco meeting in August.

## ***Editor's Corner***

**An Additional Name—Mary Gallant Appointed Newsletter Assistant Editor**  
Co-Chairs Susan Brady and Adriana Cuervo announced at the San Francisco the appointment of Mary Gallant as Associate Editor of *Performance!* during the 2008-09 year.

### **The New Distribution System Moves into Gear**

This issue of *Performance!* is being distributed only through the new discussion group structure put into place by SAA Headquarters. The roster now stands at more than 120 members. As usual, the issue of the newsletter will also be posted shortly on the SAA Performing Arts Roundtable web site [www.archivists.org/saagroups/performart/](http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/performart/).

### **Some Fascinating Reading**

The *Harper's Magazine* issue for November 2008 has a very interesting review essay on the blues that provides a great discussion pulling together the importance of the roles of performing artists, serious collectors (who are frequently the sources for top notch collections), and scholarly users who interpret the holdings of performing arts collections. The fuller citation is John Jeremiah Sullivan, "Unknown Bards: The Blues Becomes Transparent about Itself," p. 85 ff. (G. Bain)

### **The Next Issue**

The next issue should include a new **Reports from the Field** article or two and other regular features. Look for it to appear in April 2009.

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