The SAA Performing Arts Roundtable encourages the exchange of information on historical and contemporary documentation of music, dance, theater, motion pictures, and other performance media.

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“TU...JE NE VOUDRAIS PAS QU’ON... QU’ON S’ORGANISE DANS LE NOIR?”
Welcome Back!

Welcome to the first issue of Performance! of 2010-2011. We are excited to bring you a revamped version of the newsletter that draws on traditions started and maintained by George Bain (editor from 2001 to 2009). In addition to Performing Arts Roundtable news, we are pleased to bring you three feature-length pieces.

In our opening article, we hear firsthand about performing arts archives being put to creative use as New York City Ballet dancer turned film producer, Ellen Bar, chronicles the long odyssey (and research) it took to bring her film adaptation of the 1958 Jerome Robbins' ballet, N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz, to the screen.

On the international front, we are fortunate to have exhibition co-curator, Jane Pritchard, walk us through the epic undertaking of Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909-1929, held this past fall at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Finally, in a view from the field, Cynthia Tobar interviews Brooklyn Academy of Music Archivist, Sharon Lerner, about new developments at the BAM Archives.

We hope that you will enjoy the expanded coverage and be inspired to send in news, articles, and images from your own collections!

Helice Koffler, Editor
Jeni Dahmus, Assistant Editor

Image Credits

Pages 4, 6, 8-9: All still photographs from the film N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz by Jody Lee Lipes; images from http://opusjazz.com/.
Page 7: N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz shooting script image courtesy of Ellen Bar.
Page 11: Diaghilev and Stravinsky, Spain, 1921. From V&A Theatre & Performance Archive.

Other images from the V&A collections taken from http://collections.vam.ac.uk/.


(Continued on page 23)
Message From the Co-Chair

by Leilani Dawson

Thanksgiving approaches as I write this; I find it fitting given how often I am reminded of all the ways in which my tenure filling in as PAR’s Co-Chair is made thanks to our past officers and the other current members of the Steering Committee. Our former Co-Chairs Peggy Alexander and Andy Wentink and outgoing Steering Committee member Lisa Hooper have my gratitude for the solid foundation they have passed on. I hope you will all join me in welcoming our new Steering Committee members Anastasia Karel and Cynthia Tobar, my fellow Co-Chair, D. Claudia Thompson, and Jeni Dahmus, our new Assistant Newsletter Editor. Finally, Helice Koffler not only returns as Web Liaison, but has also taken up the position of Newsletter Editor and has most recently volunteered to serve as the Roundtable’s representative to SAA’s Standards Committee. I am deeply grateful for their efforts, and look forward to working with everyone in the new year.

I also want to thank everyone who attended the Roundtable’s annual meeting at this year’s SAA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. I found the discussion thought-provoking! While the conference did not feature as many official sessions directly related to the performing arts as some past years’ conferences have, it did feature some hidden gems. I found the graduate student posters particularly interesting in this regard: among the presentations were posters on Richard Altman’s archives, local news radio broadcasts, preservation of 78 rpm discs and cylinder recordings, and a school of music archive. Two of these posters, on the Altman archives and on cylinder recordings and 78 rpm discs, are available on the SAA Web site.

Earlier this fall, the Steering Committee endorsed two session proposals for the 2011 SAA conference. The first, “Changing Trends in Collecting, Preserving, and Accessing Performing Arts Archives,” features our own Cynthia Tobar and D. Claudia Thompson, as well as Kathleen Sabogal from Carnegie Hall and Sharon Lerner of the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Meanwhile I believe that the second — “Hosting a Virtual and Accessible Session at Your Next Conference,” featuring Daria D’Arienzo, Dean Weber, Scott Pitol, and Debra Kimok — will help the Steering Committee plan business meetings that all Roundtable members can access.

The 2011 Program Committee has not yet announced its choices, so I remain hopeful that we will be able to attend these two sessions next year in Chicago!

The Steering Committee will soon start planning our business meeting for Chicago; as always we welcome your input. I like the idea of having several five-minute speed presentations as a few sections and roundtables did in D.C., but if there is something you would like to see presented or addressed at our meeting then please let one of us know!

Best wishes and a very happy holiday season and new year to you all!
In June 1958, Jerome Robbins’ ballet, N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz, choreographed for his newly formed company, Ballets: USA, had its premiere in Spoleto, Italy at the Festival dei Due Mondi. Following closely on the heels of West Side Story, the new ballet, which featured a commissioned score by Robert Prince and backdrops by Ben Shahn, proved to be a hit with audiences both abroad and back at home. In spite of this initial success, Opus Jazz was performed infrequently over the years. In 2005, the New York City Ballet (NYCB) restaged the work, an experience that gave two of its cast members, Ellen Bar and Sean Suozzi, the idea of adapting the ballet for film. One of the first hurdles they faced in getting Opus Jazz to the screen was winning the approval of the Robbins Rights Trust (which licenses the work of the choreographer) — a process that involved extensive archival research.

I spoke with Ellen by phone shortly after the film’s official release on DVD and she was generous in sharing her experiences with using archives as part of the filmmaking process. The DVD package includes the director’s cut of A Ballet in Sneakers: Jerome Robbins and Opus Jazz, a documentary commissioned by PBS that puts the ballet into historic context, as well as a United States Information Department short film, Jerome Robbins’ Ballets: USA, which includes footage of the original cast rehearsing the final movement of the ballet.

**Why did you choose Opus Jazz to film?**

**What was the particular connection you and Sean [Suozzi] felt with the material?**

Sean and I both danced in the revival in 2005. Actually City Ballet had never danced it — it had been presented only by Robbins’ own company, Ballets: U.S.A., and by Joffrey and ABT [American Ballet Theatre]. It hadn’t been performed in a really long time. Sean and I both hadn’t even heard of it, and so when it appeared on the schedule we were totally confused by it. We thought we knew all of Jerry’s ballets that were in the repertory.

It was a really great learning experience. It’s an ensemble piece, and we were dancing with a lot of our friends and colleagues that had been in the company for a long time. The ballet masters really made an effort to allow us to see the connections it had with more universal themes that extended beyond the 1950s. We identified with the idea of being young in New York. Each section had this really different atmosphere and dealt with different emotions and themes. We really responded to that.

The idea to make the film was Sean’s. He just said it to me sort of in passing and I was like, “No, we should really, really do this!” The idea was to put it on location and update it, because once we put on the 1950s costumes it did not seem as connected to us. Sean said, “Wouldn’t it be great if, like West Side Story, this was really out on the street and happening now.”

The fact that it’s a ballet in sneakers makes it totally viable to put somewhere besides the stage, which doesn’t happen with a lot of ballets. And, of course, West Side Story was a precedent. We knew because of what Robbins had done with that — shooting on location — that it could really make sense for the piece. Those were all the kinds of threads that came together.

**When the piece was first restaged at NYCB, did you mainly learn it through people who had performed in it previously? Did you also watch earlier recorded performances?**

Yeah, we did both. We learned it from Eddie Verso, who had danced it in Ballets: U.S.A. He came in and staged it on us, and we also watched both the Ed Sullivan and Granada TV broadcasts. We watched both of those, logistically, just to remember certain steps — even though Eddie pretty much knew everything. But he would only consult the tape every now and then just to make sure he was right. Also, just to get a sense of the style and things like that. It was really cool to see the way those dancers danced it, but, obviously we all sort of made it our own.
Before you started working on the film, did you have any experience with research using archival materials?

Um [laughs], no! Nothing more extensive than you would do for a ten-page paper at school or something like that. Nothing as extensive or as specific as what I did with Opus Jazz. Going to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and really sorting through Robbins' personal papers, which we were lucky enough to have access to. Watching all the broadcasts — because the Ed Sullivan broadcast came from three different ones — and listening to Jerome Robbins read a letter that he had written to someone about Opus Jazz. There were a lot of different things — video, audio, and personal papers [with] original notes from the staging of it. He had made all these really great drawings of patterns, which, unfortunately, we didn’t get to show in the documentary. But it would have been really cool to see that.

Was the documentary short, directed by Anna Farrell and Matt Wolf, which accompanies the film part of your original vision?

We needed to make the documentary to fill the hour for PBS, but we had started research before even we knew we had to make this documentary because Sean and I created a proposal to show to the Robbins Trust to get their backing. We did a lot of research just to draw connections between Opus Jazz then and now. We talked about his inspirations, the Ben Shahn backdrops, and why it made sense to put it back in the city. We wrote a whole proposal about where we wanted to put those locations and why, what the choreography meant, and, what the themes were, so that we could make a strong case that we understood the ballet well enough. We used it both to make a case to even get the film made and used it in the documentary to provide background. I did go back and do more research once we knew we had to do the documentary, but it was definitely helped by the fact that I had already started and sort of knew where to find things from the earlier round of research.

When you were doing research did you use any other sources than the New York Public Library?

I don’t think so, other than just personal resources. Amanda Vaill, who wrote the biography of Robbins, Somewhere, had done a ton of research. We were able to benefit from the fact that she had a lot of things just handy, and was willing to share that knowledge with us. The documentary director visited with her, and she made it a lot easier to sort of pinpoint photographs. Also, the Robbins Trust had things in hand that they hadn’t turned over to the Library — just a few photographs here and there. But those were the major sources. I’m lucky that a lot of the people who danced in it were in New York and had their own photos. Everything was kind of centered here, so it was lucky that I didn’t have to go all over the country trying to gather it.

So, a lot of the original cast members still have their own collections — of scrapbooks or photographs?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I can’t remember if we ended up actually using any of them in the documentary, but we definitely looked at them and asked people to send things if they wanted to. The Library was definitely the main hub of everything. When we found archival photographs, they had all the information so that we could license them. They were extraordinarily helpful.

Did you enjoy the research process?

I did. The only thing that's wrong with research in my opinion is that you just never feel like you have enough time! Dealing with the time constraint is the stressful part. Doing the research is great. If I had all the time in the world to luxuriate in it, I would love it.

It was exciting especially to go through Robbins' papers and see letters between him and the composer. His little maps and sketches of the formations — from his mind, to the page, to the ballet, to the film — were amazing to look at! I also learned a lot about his feelings on Opus Jazz that didn’t make it into any of the biographies. He said in one of his letters that the pas de deux from Opus Jazz was one of the few times that he choreographed in literally half an hour. He was very notorious for taking a long time with things, for making endless versions, and for tinkering, and that was one of the few times he said it just all came together in a way that was not typical of the way he worked — and it was because he had choreographed everything else before then, and he felt his ideas were so worked out, and so honed, that the choreographing of the pas de deux took half an hour. The only way I found it was by listening to an audio record of Jerome Robbins reading a letter. He had obviously recorded that for posterity, which I thought was pretty amazing. There were little tidbits you really couldn’t get unless you were there in the Library doing the research yourself."

“Those were little tidbits you really couldn’t get unless you were there in the Library doing the research yourself.”
It’s hard to know. I think Robbins was pretty great at saving a lot of things. Of course I would love to have seen more letters like the one I just described (a personal letter in which someone had asked him about certain aspects of his work and he had responded in a really candid way), but that’s not an archival thing or something anyone can really control.

I found everything really easy to find with the way the Library was set up. That was never a problem. It could have been a lot more complicated and confusing than it was. His personal letters were just categorized by who they were from; they weren’t really categorized by subject, which would probably have been great. Each folder [that had] his personal letters with the people he related to in Opus Jazz [had] so little material, that it really was not hard to sort through.

As to the making of the film, one big decision you made right away was to update or get rid of the original costumes. Did the Robbins Trust impose any kind of restrictions on your artistic vision? Are there any other elements in the production you might have wanted to change as well?

They were pretty amazing about giving us a free hand. Because we shot “Passage for Two” in 2007 and used it to raise money for the rest of the film, they were able to see an example of what we did on our own. I think once we did that they were much more willing to let us have free rein.

We had a ballet master on set with us so that if there was anything he thought would be wrong for the choreography, he could say something.

But Robbins knew the medium of film was so different from stage — he was always willing to restage or reshape something so it would work for camera. Robbins would never have wanted to keep some formation exactly the way it was on stage if that meant it was going to look bad on camera. He knew how to restructure things so the intent would come across, and we worked with a ballet master on that. Because Sean and I know the dance so well, we were thinking about that every time we chose a location. I mean, we made small spacing adjustments, but nothing was really that big.

As far as our costume choices, our location choices — we showed the Trust what we hoped to do or what we meant, but they were not micromanaging by any means. PBS also was the same way.

Did the ballet master teach the choreography to the new cast members or were you and Sean involved with that?

It was mostly the ballet master, and then if the ballet master couldn’t be around, or if the dancers had a question, Sean and I, of course, would help. And so would all the other dancers. There was a handful of new cast members — only one or two of them had maybe never done it on the stage. So we actually didn’t rehearse it very much because the dancers are really, really fast and we knew they were going to have plenty of time to rehearse on set — on location — because we would shoot in small pieces at a time. So, we were never really worried about the dancers not knowing what they were doing. It was kind of like the least of our worries [laughs]. They’re super fast. You know, they’re professional. Even if they learned it the day of, they would do an amazing job. I mean, not to discredit the ballet master’s contribution, obviously. He was the one with the counts and the real definitive version.

How did you work with the film’s co-directors to overcome difficulties in capturing dance on film?

It was a very collaborative process and not always easy by any means. They would come to rehearsals and shoot footage of the dancers rehearsing it and sort of use that as a reference.
We had talked about each movement's style beforehand. Each movement is shot in a different camera style—like one is on a crane, one is handheld, one is mostly dolly, one is all static shots. We had these limitations that we had imposed on each movement.

We only had one camera—which was a money thing—but also forced us to have a really, really strong vision of what it was going to look like going into it. So it was very planned—which shots were going to be where—and the close-ups. Everything was very thought out beforehand. Literally every step of the process was a huge collaboration. I mean, even [with] West Side Story, Jerome Robbins had a co-director. You know what I mean?

I think that that kind of precedent was in our minds too. Jerome Robbins was an extraordinary genius and knew so much about film and really innovated the way dance was shot. Sean and I are not Jerome Robbins. We’re not geniuses [laughs], so it’s even that much more necessary to have people who could really explain film to us. Because of everyone’s experience level it was important to argue every creative choice and to know that we were making the right one.

How did the directors learn how to deal with dance and get to know the piece? Did you just talk about it a lot? Did they view the prior recordings?

Well, they watched it a lot. Jody [Lee Lipes] came and watched a lot of ballet, not just Opus Jazz. He got very fascinated with Jerome Robbins because Jody is a perfectionist [laughs] and is often the one fighting the good fight of not taking the easy route and really doing what’s best for the project. I mean, we fought to shoot it on film, which got a lot of resistance from a lot of people, but we’re really glad that we did.

I think the one thing that the whole film crew was unprepared for just how professional the dancers were going to be. There were very few times we had to do something again because a dancer had a performance issue. The dancers would just do it perfectly time after time. It was quite amazing. If you would tell them to move an inch to the right, then they would move an inch to the right, and they would hit that mark every time. We never could have finished the film if they hadn’t been like that. It just saved so much time and money.

So, the camera department would have to get used to—if the dancers are rehearsing—that once the camera is turned on, they’re probably going to move slightly more, they’re going to jump slightly higher. Everything’s going to be slightly bigger. The camera people had to learn to account for that in rehearsals, because we just couldn’t have the dancers do it full out over and over again that many times. They would have just died. So, there was just a lot of learning in that respect.

Our editor was also our script supervisor, which was

Opus Jazz shooting script, pages 2-3. Script for interludes by Jody Lee Lipes, with Ellen Bar’s interpolated descriptions of the dance (in green). Her “conversion” of the dance into descriptive prose was used as a reference for the directors in early planning and was added into the interlude script to make one definitive script.
great because he was on set the whole time. He worked with the assistant director, who arranges which shots we'll do in what order, and how much will get done each day, and stuff like that. The dancers were surprised at how well the editor and the assistant director knew the ballet. They had studied it from our rehearsal footage and gotten to know it really well because they needed to. I mean, there would sometimes be funny miscommunications over what they would call a step and what we would call a step, but other than that they had to learn the ballet really well. The ballet, in a sense, was a part of the script of the film.

**Did any of the existing photographs or Jerome Robbins’ own version for the Ed Sullivan Show influence decisions about how things were shot?**

There were certain inspirations from the Ed Sullivan. Like the lines painted on McCarren Park came from Ed Sullivan — they had a floor pattern that looked just like that, so that was one cool thing. I think Ed Sullivan was pretty useful in knowing what didn’t work — that there were certain overhead shots that didn’t work. But we didn’t really study it that much. There ended up being some similarities in it. Some of them just turned out to be coincidences — or, maybe not coincidences — but just how someone with a good eye would want to film a particular section. And Jerome Robbins came up with the same thing — 50 years earlier! The directors hadn’t seen all of every single broadcast. They had seen some of it, but they kind of tried to take a new approach and not get too influenced by that. But then some things ended up being kind of eerily similar, which we laughed about later.

**Okay, so to wrap up a little, has your experience with the film had an impact on your thinking about documenting your own work either as a performer or a producer?**

Yeah, it’s made me sort of more focused on cataloging and backing up things. So much is digital now and of course I have files of everything. I mean, it’s definitely made me much more careful about what I keep and what I don’t keep. Because knowing that things might seem like a waste of space right now — especially in city apartments, you’re so tempted to just throw everything out sometimes because you just want to make space — but I’ve been thinking now and holding onto more.

Of course with Jerome Robbins, he was a genius — people are going to be looking at what he scrawled on a napkin for years and years — and it’s always going to be useful. And that’s obviously not going to be the case with us [laughs]! I hope that people will be interested in the movie for a long time — they’ll want to
know how it came about. I think it’s really important to have all that stuff, especially in a digital age. So much happens on the Internet, I’ve really taken the time to print all the press and to keep that in a hard copy and also to have digital copies saved. It seems like it’s a lot easier to let things slip away and just assume that the URL is always going to be there and it might not be.

**No, right, right. Even things like that blog [We Are Opus Jazz] Adam Hendrickson [New York City Ballet soloist] kept during the filming.**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Do you have any future projects planned?**

I mean, we’re thinking about things. You know, that was a very special project and a very special inspiration. But now that Sean and I sort of forged this far ahead and learned so much about dance and film together, it would be great to be able to use that knowledge again. But, at the same time, knowing that something’s going to take five years probably, you don’t want to enter into a new thing lightly. You want to make sure that it’s an idea you will be happy to work on for five years, and that you’ll be proud of at the end of the day. You definitely don’t want to force anything, or do anything just to do another project. You definitely would want it to be inspired very organically.

Yeah, well that really showed through in this project and you can be really proud of that.

Great. Thank you!

**Well, those were about all the questions I had, but if you had anything you wanted to add.**

Just that we’re grateful for what you guys [i.e. archivists] do. It’s really important. I’m really happy we had all those resources available to us and that it was so relatively easy. I mean, to be able to do that kind of research in just a matter of a couple of days spent at the Library was pretty amazing.

**Well, I’m glad you had a positive experience.**

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

**OK, thank you so much for your time.**

Thank you!

Interview by phone between Helice Koffler and Ellen Bar took place on November 29, 2010.

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Born in Houston, Texas, Ellen Bar received her dance training at the School of American Ballet in New York City. She was invited to become an apprentice with the New York City Ballet in the fall of 1997. She joined the company’s corps de ballet in June 1998 and was promoted to soloist in March 2006. She also is a student at Columbia University’s School of General Studies.

For more information on the N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz project, including how to purchase your own copy of the DVD, as well as news about upcoming screenings, please see [http://opusjazz.com](http://opusjazz.com/).

N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz will be performed during the New York City Ballet’s 2011 winter season on January 19, 23, 25 & 27. For further details, see [http://www.nycballet.com/index.html](http://www.nycballet.com/index.html).


The Jerome Robbins holdings at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are extensive and complex. To see the finding aids for two of the main portions, [Jerome Robbins Papers](http://collections.nlb.org/nypí/Robbins_papers) and [Jerome Robbins Personal Papers](http://collections.nlb.org/nypí/Robbins_papers), click on the finding aid link in each catalog record.

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*Finale (visible are Georgina Pazcoguin, Amar Ramasar, and Adam Hendrickson)*
Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909-1929 is the major exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) for the autumn 2010. Curated by Geoffrey Marsh (Head of the Theatre & Performance Collections) and Jane Pritchard (Curator of Dance), it is one of the V&A’s largest exhibitions in recent years, filling the three principal exhibition galleries. The design concept was by the eminent stage and screen designer, Tim Hatley, who undertook the project because he was excited by seeing material surviving from Ballets Russes productions, and he was supported in its realisation by Angela Drinkall and Paul Dean of Drinkall Dean.

In mounting the exhibition we had a number of concerns. It was to be an exhibition about theatre rather than a display of art. It included some paintings and sculpture, as well as designs, costumes, and even set cloths, but the material recorded, or had once contributed to, stage productions of which we could never show the final product. This of course is the eternal challenge for any exhibition about aspects of theatre. Diaghilev’s stage productions were mounted between 1908 and 1929; his ballets from 1909 and his year-round company essentially came into existence in 1911. His was, therefore, a company that operated from the end of the Belle Époque through to the Jazz Age, with the disruptive major war (1914-1918) in its background. We knew we had to place the innovative ballet company in its social and political context.

The very title of the exhibition (selected by a market research process) presented two challenges. Firstly who was Serge Diaghilev? His is certainly no longer a household name and we were in the curious situation in which the star of our show was far less well-known than several of the supporting cast. Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Igor Stravinsky, Serge Prokofiev, Vaslav Nijinsky, George Balanchine, Coco Chanel are names that resonate more widely than that of Diaghilev. The second challenge – was the word “ballet” a turn-off for many, a word (quite unreasonably) that has become associated with an elite entertainment?

Beyond the title there were various other challenges, including how to present music and movement in an exhibition; how to cope with the great scale and variety of objects selected; how to keep Diaghilev himself present given he was our focal point; how to keep the visitor interested throughout the large scale exhibition. Each of these issues will be considered along with the range of material selected for inclusion and its sources.

There was no doubt that working with a theatre designer was of great importance and Hatley understood the significance of the use of colour, light, and surprise. One of the delights of the exhibition is that there are plenty of corners to turn and around each a new world opens up. The most notable of these corners comes when the visitor walks up to four versions of Natalia Goncharova’s design for the final scene of the 1926 Firebird with its kremlin of gilded onion-domed churches and then turns and sees the actual cloth. The designer’s eye was also of great value in placing the mannequins in position. With fragile costumes it is not possible to arrange them in dancing poses, but a twist of the torso, a tilt of a head, the angling of the bodies of individuals in a group, helped by changing lights, leaves them appearing not to be too static. This was particularly true of the group of nine costumes from The Rite of Spring where their positions on three levels could easily have left them looking like a football
team waiting to be photographed. Here the bright green setting (inspired by Nicolas Roerich’s set designs) and a gobo of cloud effects, together with nearby film, helped to enliven the display.

So who was Serge Diaghilev? He has been described as a dictator, a charlatan, a devil, a charmer among many other appellations. Diaghilev was, in fact, a true artistic director with the ability to recognise emerging talent and use it for the productions he created. He was a genius whose driving ambition caused a ferment in European culture. His greatest achievement was his dance company, the Ballets Russes, which revolutionised early twentieth-century arts and continues to make an impact on cultural activity.

Born in 1872 near Novgorod, Serge Pavlovich Diaghilev grew up in a family that was passionate about music. When he was 18 his family, which had held the vodka monopoly in the Perm region, went bankrupt and as a student he settled in Saint Petersburg.

Diaghilev first came to prominence by co-founding Russia’s first quality art periodical, Mir Iskusstva (The World of Art, published 1899-1904) and in mounting a series of related art exhibitions. These promoted both Russian arts and crafts and European fine arts. As a young man he travelled extensively in Europe, and in 1906 (after the political upheavals in Russia) focused his attention on taking Russian art to new audiences in Western Europe. He promoted Russian painting, music, and opera, and, from 1909, ballet. While retaining an interest in the other arts, and including operas in his seasons whenever possible, it was with dance Diaghilev found his role. His productions of a high quality enlarged the dance vocabulary, and provided an exciting platform for fine artists and innovative composers to reach new audiences.

In the exhibition we include a brief display on Diaghilev’s career in Russia as co-editor of The World of Art, as curator of a succession of major art exhibitions, and, with a copy of the Imperial Theatre’s yearbook he edited, his introduction to theatre. Throughout we include images of Diaghilev — caricatured by Jean Cocteau as the Young Girl in Le Spectre de la Rose; with colleagues sitting around café tables discussing productions; portrayed by Laura Knight watching Le Chant du Rossignol from the wings; working on a music score in bed. The portrait by Elizabeth Polunin was the only painted image we were able to borrow, but towards the end of the exhibition is a copy of Diaghilev’s death mask, poignantly displayed with his penultimate hotel bill from the Grand Hotel des Bains, Venice Lido. In our labelling we emphasise Diaghilev’s role with his company.

We also felt the need to establish Diaghilev’s position in the wider world of the arts as one of the giants of
the cultural scene in the 1910s and 1920s. One device we used was to include a display on the post-premiere dinner at the Majestic Hotel, Paris, on 18 May 1922. On this occasion the sponsor, Sidney Schiff, offered to pay for the celebration on the understanding he could sit at a table with the five men he most admired. Along with Diaghilev these were Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce. Our means to include this is with a display case showing page proofs of À la Recherché du Temps Perdu loaned by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France; pages of the autograph manuscript and annotated proofs of Ulysses lent by the Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia; and, as at the same time Schiff supported T. S. Eliot’s publication of The Waste Land, pages of the annotated typescript of the poem lent by the New York Public Library.

Music was of great significance for the Ballets Russes, with almost half the ballets having new musical scores commissioned from the leading composers of the day — but how to convey the significance of the score? Yes, Stravinsky manuscripts are exciting to see and the British Library was generous in lending some from their holdings (including the Pulcinella score that Stravinsky gave to Picasso), but that is hardly enough.

When Richard Buckle mounted his famous exhibition on Diaghilev at the Edinburgh Festival (and subsequently in London) in 1954, one of the elements that excited the visitors was hearing the scores played on gramophone records. However, these days when we are surrounded by “muzak,” recordings are hardly going to make an impact. Our solution was to invite the composer/broadcaster, Howard Goodall, to make four short AVs which would discuss the development of music for the Ballets Russes and consider the challenges of...
composing for dance.

There was a similar challenge with how to introduce movement into an exhibition on dance. Light and mirrors certainly helped to animate the displays, but we also used film clips. Each gallery included two large screens on which images were projected. These included rarely-seen film of ballet before Diaghilev, as well as twinned recordings of old and newer productions. The Millicent Hodson-Kenneth Archer evocation of Nijinsky's 1913 Rite of Spring (mounted on the Joffrey Ballet in 1987) was followed by Pina Bausch's 1974 production; a collage of images of the 1924 Les Biches — presented in parallel with Peter Darrell's 1964 television ballet, Houseparty (which used the same music by Francis Poulenc and a similar theme) — very 1960s, while the original Les Biches was the essence of the 1920s. Around the back cloth for The Firebird were vast projections on the theme of the ballet. Obviously the fact that Diaghilev prevented his company from being filmed was a handicap, but we could include footage of ballerinas, Lydia Lopokova (dancing in her can-can costume from La Boutique Fantasque, alongside the costume), Tamara Karsavina, and Lubov Tchernicheva.

The scale of objects we selected to exhibit ranged widely. Theatre cloths are huge (indeed, the back cloth for the final scene of The Firebird is claimed to be the largest object in the V&A). Next to it, Nijinsky's drop pearl earrings worn in Schéhérazade are miniscule.

There was physically only one space in the V&A's exhibition gallery large enough to hang the cloths, which, helpfully, dictated the shape of the whole exhibition. The Firebird is displayed on one side of a rig with the front cloth for the 1924 Olympic season at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in Paris, and also used for the ballet Le Train bleu, on the other. A front cloth is a visual overture, seen as the "tabs" open, serving to establish the mood of a season or production. The 'Train bleu' cloth shows the enlargement by Prince Alexandre Schervashidze of Picasso's Two Women Running on the Beach, or The Race (1922). Because of their size, the two cloths had to be hung, wrapped for protection in Tyvek, and then the entire exhibition built around them.

Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909-1929 is a large exhibition and the fact it fills three galleries has taken many visitors by surprise. There are
...it is remarkable that nearly 70% of the material comes from the V&A..."
In respect of the material from the Theatre & Performance Collections, the exhibition both draws on core collections (including programmes, photographs and costumes), as well as specially identified collections. The Cyril Beaumont bequest contributed prints, sculpture, and costumes; the Valentine Gross Archive, lively pencil sketches, illustrations, and pastels; the Ekstrom Collection business archives, contracts, and the account book for the 1913 season.

Most of the costumes from the Ballets Russes had been acquired at auctions between 1967 and 1973. Some had suffered from earlier conservation, some are too weak ever to display and two of those we did include could only be shown flat rather than on mannequins. The remainder are on a variety of mannequins to show them to best effect while being concerned for cost. Only the two costumes which needed to be displayed with tights were specially sculpted figures. Selecting costumes from the over 500 in our store was somewhat like an audition. What was the condition of the costume? What role did it serve in telling our story? In making the final selection, curators have to work closely with conservators who carefully work out just how many hours the work of conservation and mounting will take.

Coming at the end of a three-year run of exhibitions focusing on Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes (brought about by the centenary of the first evenings of ballet presented by Diaghilev in Paris), there was a sense at the V&A that we should mount an impressive exhibition. At the V&A we are lucky to have the resources to do this and ensure that it is far more than a “library” display of documents or simply a show of costumes. The Ballets Russes has been very influential on the subsequent British dance scene and it must be remembered that 45% of all performances by Diaghilev’s company were presented in London. The V&A’s exhibition has tried to give the visitor as complete an experience as possible. It has been gratifying to receive so many favourable comments, not least of which was by Paul Levy in the Wall Street Journal, 1 October 2010: “You’ll want to go more than once to the V&A’s big autumn show. Even if you have no interest in ballet or modern dance….its stunning installation makes visiting this exhibition the most fun you can have in London on a damp autumn day.”

Jane Pritchard is Curator of Dance for the Theatre & Performance Collections, Victoria & Albert Museum. She has been the company archivist for Rambert Dance Company, English National Ballet, and the Contemporary Dance Trust.

Although Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets 1909-1929 closed to the public on 9 January 2011, you still can enjoy the exhibition catalogue of the same name (V&A Publishing, 2010). Edited by Jane Pritchard, the volume is lavishly illustrated and includes numerous essays.

The exhibition also lives on in the extensive Web site (http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/theatre_performance/past%20exhibitions/diaghilev-ballet-russes/index.html) hosted by the V&A, which includes the blog kept by Jane Pritchard during the run of the show.

Closer to home for some of us, Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes: When Art Dances with Music, featuring items from the V&A collections, will run from 9 June to 5 September 2011 at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec before touring to venues in Spain.
Documenting Ephemeral Performance at the BAM Archives
An Interview with Sharon Lerner by Cynthia Tobar

Founded in 1861, the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) is one of the foremost performing arts centers in the world. The BAM Archives documents the innovative performances and artists whose BAM appearances and creative careers exemplify the spirit of American inventiveness, mapping the evolution of the performing arts in the United States. It also contains a wealth of material on international writers, filmmakers, composers, and choreographers who, having performed at BAM, have left indelible marks on American audiences.

BAM is undergoing an expansion with the current construction of the new Hamm Archives Center at 230 Ashland Place. SAA Performing Arts Roundtable Steering Committee Member Cynthia Tobar met with BAM Archivist Sharon Lerner to discuss the changes taking place at this renowned performing arts institution’s archives, and current efforts to make its collections available to researchers.

What is the purpose and scope of the BAM Archives?
The mission is to serve first of all the institution itself because we are an institutional archives, and then to serve researchers, artists, audience members, book authors, students — everything from elementary school students to people working on their post docs.

What are the current issues relating to collection, documentation, access, and storage, particularly of performing arts materials?
It’s actually sort of counterintuitive in a way. People think of performances as being ephemeral and therefore sort of difficult to document. What keeps us from being able to give people access has to do more with wading through years and years of accumulated material rather than having some lack of documentation. In the early years of this institution, 1861 through 1903, we have very little because it all burned up in a fire in 1903. So that is a question of trying to actually acquire materials. Then the kinds of records that we have from 1908 — when the second building was built — through 1967 — when Harvey Lichtenstein came to BAM — are extensive. All the items that you think of as documenting performance — including everything from production stills to video documentation — all of the promotional materials, programs, and publications (which we consider a part of archives here) — that we create as sort of addendums or study guides, or things that have to support the programming. So in terms of how to give people access to those materials, this is a fairly young archive. We have only been in existence since 1995. Mainly what we have been trying to do is just wade through this stuff, get some kind of control over it, and put some kind of preservation plan in place. At the same time, of course, we give people access. We have open hours: 10:00 to 6:00, Monday through Friday, by appointment for researchers, and we serve the institution. We deliver everything, the entire history written plus all the photographic documentation, video, whatever the institution needs. We tend to sort of treat researchers like that too because we are used to serving the institution that way.

That is a really good segue into the third question, which is how the archive is currently providing access to its treasures outside, to research, and what research policies are in place for researchers when they inquire about the collection?
I think we are really accommodating to researchers, and we have a lot of international interest in the collection.

And what about outreach activities?
We already serve so many researchers without doing any kind of outreach. I think that outreach is something that is going to happen when we move into our new space. We do a number of displays and exhibits each year and also enhance many of the current programs by providing historical materials as content, and I think that can be considered a kind of outreach.

What portions of your holdings do you have on-site?
Everything is on-site currently. We have about 3,000 feet of material here and I would say everything has been surveyed. A third of the collection is processed and described at the folder level. We have spent a lot of energy lately on digitization. We are concentrating on providing access digitally because that is really what our researchers want.

**Can you talk more about what database you use?**

Yes, we use Collective Access. It’s an open source online database. We worked with the Roundabout Theatre Archives and Whirl-i-Gig [software development firm] in order to develop a resource for describing performance-based materials.

**What challenges are you facing with your current relocation plans and how do you plan to serve those researchers in the midst of the move?**

When we moved here we were only closed for a couple of weeks; we planned the move pretty carefully.

**And what about your next move to your new facilities?**

Well, we’ve moved this archives three times now. BAM has purchased a new building, and the schedule has not yet been determined.

**The second time you moved was from where?**

I moved from the Williamsburgh Bank Building at One Hanson Place. I was on the sixteenth floor there and then moved next to BAM in the old Salvation Army building and now to the MetroTech complex in downtown Brooklyn.

**Is it closer to the BAM’s Howard Gilman Opera House?**

Yes, it’s right next door to the Harvey [Theater].

**Do you think that is going to be more advantageous in regards to not only dealing with researchers but also for dealing with the public?**

It’s kind of exciting because the plan is to have a street level archives — it is going to have really amazing visibility. The storefront and stacks will be behind UV glass so you can actually walk by and see people working. We will be situated right at the center of BAM’s campus, between the Howard Gilman Opera House and the Harvey and the new Fisher building.

**What are your aims for increasing public access to the collection’s holdings via digitization? More importantly, at what stage of the digitization process are you in?**

“...the plan is to have a street level archives — it is going to have really amazing visibility.”

BAM Archives office area
We have written a number of grants for digitization that we have been lucky to get. We are a small archives and don’t have the kind of profile of larger institutions, but we have been able to raise some funds, and have digitized selected images and other records from various productions and festivals. For example, we have digitized significant items from the Next Wave Festival, including programs, photos, slides, and other promotional materials. We are in the process of cataloging in Collective Access so that we can make these materials available online.

**Through BAM’s Web site?**

Yes, through BAM.org. Demand for these materials has led us to provide access to them first. There are going to be copyright issues involved. So what we want to do now is go back and look at contracts with the artists, both photographers and performers themselves, and see if we can cobble out agreements that make sense to everybody in terms of educational access — giving access via the digital realm. We feel like there is the possibility for some change. We have long-standing relationships with a lot of these artists. So that is the hope. I don’t know that it is going to work because artists can be very — understandably — protective of their material. So we will see what happens.

**What are the questions that arise when applying traditional archival definitions to performing arts preservation and digitization? I know you had mentioned something about that when you were talking about your Collective Access database. Maybe you want to elaborate.**

**Do the traditional archival definitions apply when you are talking about performing arts?**

Well, it depends. I mean, I guess we have to look at it as one media object at a time. But we found that we needed to develop a new schema to describe materials so that it reflects how we think performance researchers search. And again I should point out that the nature of contemporary performance and the way in which our researchers want to search these collections drove the development of this descriptive metadata. Some of these are really obvious, like dates. Some of them are less obvious. For example, for us, the boundaries between genres are blurred.

**Yes, and maybe you could solidify that by providing an example — something that this would apply to — like a video performance, for instance?**

So let’s say we are looking at *Einstein on the Beach*, a seminal Next Wave Festival production done in the fall of 1984. Principal artists include Philip Glass, Robert Wilson, and Lucinda Childs, and the production is a mash-up of theater, dance, and opera. The piece really resists a narrative. So already there you have very significant people working in very different genres coming together for this piece — just in terms of what you would think of as the kind of overarching metadata, like “who was involved in this thing?” before we even get to any objects that are associated with the performance. Then, associated with that event, you have multiple kinds of digital objects — 8 x 10 glossies, slides, video, audio, and oral histories that have been done with some of these people — and print materials, programs, posters, publications, and Education Department content, and marketing materials. We want to find a way so that anybody can search for these artists, events, dates, genres, etc. A search for Lucinda Childs, for example, will lead the researcher to all of these associated objects. We arrange and describe materials in this way to reflect the relationships between artists and performances — the pastiche manner in which many of these performances are constructed. This is what we hope for.
Meet the PAR Steering Committee

Leilani Dawson, Co-Chair
I have a long-standing interest in the performing arts and collections of documentations thereof. My MSI is from the University of Michigan’s School of Information, and I also hold a BFA in Theater and an MA in Performance Studies, both from New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts.

D. Claudia Thompson, Co-Chair
I have been an archivist at the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, since 1984. The American Heritage Center has been collecting performing arts-related materials since the 1960s. I am the manager of the Arrangement & Description Department and a specialist in entertainment industry acquisitions. In 2009 I delivered a paper on “Collecting Popular Culture” at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association Annual Conference. I have been on the Steering Committee of the Society of American Archivists’ Description Section since 2005 and also currently serve on the DACS Technical Subcommittee of the SAA Standards Committee.

Stasia Karel, Steering Committee
An archivist since 2003, I graduated from Drexel University with an MLS. My first professional job was as a music archivist at the New York Public Library, where I processed several hundred linear feet of performing arts collections for the Wilson Processing Project. In 2008 I moved across the country for a project job at the University of California, Berkeley, and in 2010 obtained my dream job at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio. I am the Assistant Archivist for the Hall of Fame’s new Library + Archives, which is due to open in January 2012.

Cynthia Tobar, Steering Committee
I am an Assistant Professor/Metadata Librarian at the Mina Rees Library at the CUNY Graduate Center. Prior to my time at the Graduate Center, I was Senior Metadata Creator for the Museum of the City of New York and a cataloger, archivist, and metadata creator for the Wilson Processing Project, where I processed archival materials from the collections of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. I was also a project archivist for the Lighting Archive © Project, which digitized the theatrical lighting documents of: Tharon Musser, A Chorus Line (1974); Richard Nelson, Sunday in the Park (1984); and Jules Fisher, HAIR (1968). I received my MA in Political Science from New School University and an MLS, with a certificate in Archival Management, from Pratt Institute.

Helice Koffler, Newsletter Editor & Web Liaison
I currently am Manuscripts and Special Collections Materials Cataloging Librarian with the University of Washington Libraries. I have worked at a variety of libraries, archives, and museums, including the New York Public Library (where I also was part of the Wilson Project), the King County Archives (Seattle), New York University (Fales Library/Special Collections) and the American Museum of Natural History. I received a BA (Art History and English) and MA (English) from Hunter College of the City University of New York, as well as an MLIS from the Palmer School of Library & Information Science, Long Island University. I have been a Certified Archivist since 2004. I am a past co-chair of the SAA Performing Arts Roundtable and have served on the Steering Committee of the Manuscript Repositories Section.

Jeni Dahmus, Assistant Newsletter Editor
I have been archivist of The Juilliard School since 1999. Previously I held positions in the Music Division of the Library of Congress, archiving for the National Digital Library and Dance Heritage Coalition, and at the University of Maryland’s Special Collections in Performing Arts. I received a BA in Music (classical guitar) and a BA in Arts Studies from Shenandoah Conservatory in Winchester, Virginia, and an MLS from the University of Maryland, College Park.
Members’ News compiled by Jeni Dahmus

American Theatre Archive Project (ATAP) Launched and Seeking Additional Volunteers

The American Theatre Archive Project is an initiative of the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) to support theatre makers in archiving records of their process and product, which can be shared with scholars and other theatre makers on premises, online, and/or in a repository. As we know, since theatre is an ephemeral art, establishing archives helps to preserve theatrical activity, disseminate best practices, and increase opportunities for study and scholarship.

GOALS:
- To preserve records of current theatrical activity for future generations.
- To promote a better understanding and appreciation of theatre and its preservation.
- To encourage scholarly research in contemporary American theatre.
- To increase funding for theatre archival repositories.

The Theatre Library Association (TLA) and the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA) have joined ASTR in officially endorsing and supporting ATAP. Past PAR Roundtable co-chairs Peggy Alexander and Andy Wentink also expressed their support for the project. Our kickoff committee has applied for an NEA grant to support the development of a Web site and database, as well as archival training sessions. We’re continuing to recruit individuals interested in joining local “teams” comprising at least one dramaturg, one archivist, and one scholar who will work together to advise local theatre companies on preserving and sharing evidence of their work.

Since announcing the project at the last Roundtable meeting at SAA’s annual conference and sending out a call via the Roundtable listserv, we’ve had a good response from fellow Roundtable members and others. If this project sounds like something you’d enjoy participating in — and building from the ground level — please contact Susan Brady at susan.brady@yale.edu.

Curtis Institute of Music Goes Digital

Through a partnership with Lyrasis and the Sloane Foundation, the Curtis Institute of Music of Philadelphia entered the realm of digital archives last summer. Named as one of Time magazine’s Top 50 Web sites of 2009, the Internet Archive is host to hundreds of thousands of digital records from participating institutions. Users from across the globe are now able to access early Overtones (the Institute’s internal publication, including the 1974 50th Anniversary edition), course catalogs and recital programs up to 1971. Participation in the Mass Digitization Project ensures that records will be maintained, in perpetuity, by Internet Archive, making it an economically viable solution for getting Curtis on the web. At Curtis, the selected items were packed and shipped to a scanning center in Princeton, where trained professionals created high resolution images, enhanced by Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for easy searching. The Archives has seen an increase in research requests since going online; one researcher said the recital programs read like a “who’s who” in the classical music field. Since uploading the items last summer, a number of volumes have been downloaded over 500 times, with the most interest culminating in the 50th Anniversary of Overtones and various recital programs. To visit the archive, go to http://www.archive.org/details/curtisinstituteofmusic.

Houston Symphony Recorded Sound Collection Benefits from Mellon Foundation Award

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded the Houston Symphony $200,000 to preserve through digitization its sound archives. Based on the results of its 2009 assessment grant, this award by Mellon’s Scholarly Communications and Information Technology Program is an effort to digitally preserve an important collection of sound recordings that has been carefully evaluated and is currently on deteriorating or obsolete media. The Houston Symphony’s recorded sound archives are maintained at the University of Texas at Austin. Leading the project is Dr.
David C. Hunter, Music Librarian and Curator of the Historical Music Recordings Collection at the University of Texas Fine Arts Library.

The recordings of the Houston Symphony reflect the artistic development of Texas and the Southwest. Although the first tapes in the collection were made in 1945, the majority of the holdings date from 1975 to the present. Specialists will conserve and digitize the most historically and artistically significant audiotapes in its collection. The resulting digital files will be stored on servers under restricted access at the University of Texas Fine Arts Library in Austin. It is estimated that digitization and archiving of the selected recordings will take two years, with work to begin on January 15, 2011. Completion of the project is scheduled to coincide with the orchestra’s centennial celebrations in 2013.

Seattle Symphony Orchestra Completes Archives Assessment Project

The Seattle Symphony Orchestra (SSO) recently completed an archives assessment project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. As a result of this 9-month initiative, project staff, headed by Archival Consultant, Nicolette Bromberg, SSO Associate Principal Librarian, Rob Olivia, and Project Leader, Hannah Palin, identified and rehoused 44 collections of organizational records and archival materials, created and implemented a records management system and procedures, entered information about the existing collections using the Archivists’ Toolkit data management system, and recommended future preservation actions for the collections. Archival records from the SSO’s over 107-year history include an extensive sheet music and score collection, legacy audio, scrapbooks, as well as material relating to the construction and opening of Benaroya Hall, the home of the Symphony since 1998.

Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale Exhibition at The Juilliard School

The Juilliard School Library and Archives has mounted an exhibition of selections from the Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale Papers. The exhibition celebrates the generosity of longtime Juilliard board member Susan W. Rose, who recently endowed the Juilliard Archives and has made possible the processing of the Gold and Fizdale Papers and other archival collections in the future.

Duo pianists Gold and Fizdale met at Juilliard in the 1930s, where they began a partnership that resulted in an international performance and recording career that spanned over forty years. The Gold and Fizdale Papers, bequeathed to Juilliard after the death of Fizdale in 1995, document the duo’s musical pursuits as well as their later careers as biographers and lecturers. The collection includes extensive material compiled for their research projects, writings, and publications such as *Misia: The Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (1981), *The Divine Sarah: The Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (1991), and *The Gold and Fizdale Cookbook* (1984). The Library houses the Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale Music Collection of nearly one hundred manuscripts of scores they commissioned and performed, by such composers as Luciano Berio, Paul Bowles, Alexi Haieff, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Germaine Tailleferre.

Highlights of the Gold and Fizdale exhibition include correspondence from Milhaud to Fizdale regarding the premiere of his *Carnaval à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, a “Gold and Fizdale” acrostic written by Leonard Bernstein after he visited their country home, a letter from Jean Cocteau to his friend Misia Sert, a George Balanchine recipe card, and photographs of Gold and Fizdale, Cocteau, Sert, Serge Diaghilev, Sarah Bernhardt, and Rosina and Josef Lhévinne.

The Gold and Fizdale exhibition is open to the public by appointment through early February. For more information, please contact Juilliard Archivist Jeni Dahmus, curator of the exhibition, at library@juilliard.edu.

Robert Schumann Bicentennial Exhibition at the University of Maryland

In celebration of the Robert Schumann Bicentennial, the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library of the University of Maryland is exhibiting materials illuminating the life and orchestrations of the nineteenth-century German composer and critic. Items of particular interest include a recently discovered letter from Clara Schumann to her daughter and son-in-law; an annotated score of Schumann’s Third “Rhenish” Symphony, with revisions by Boston Symphony Orchestra conductor Karl Muck; and materials from the Asher G. Zlotnik Collection, which explore musical responses to Schumann’s symphonies.

As a doctoral student, Zlotnik solicited opinions from prominent composers and conductors regarding the prevalent (and controversial) practice of re-orchestrating Schumann’s symphonies. Among the responses on display are those from Benjamin Britten, Pierre Boulez, Aaron Copland, and Nicolas Slonimsky. Exhibit materials are drawn from the library’s Special Collections in

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Performing Arts and the International Piano Archives at Maryland. The exhibit, which is open to the public, will remain on display through the spring.

Tennessee Williams Exhibition at the Harry Ransom Center

Becoming Tennessee Williams,
February 1, 2011 — July 31, 2011

"Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion."
Tom in The Glass Menagerie

With his plays The Glass Menagerie and A Streetcar Named Desire, Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) reinvented the theater. He claimed the province of transformation, and memory was the fertile ground from which his plays originated.

Williams peopled the theater with characters grafted from life onto imagination. As he explained to his literary agent Audrey Wood: "I have only one major theme for my work which is the destructive impact of society on the non-conformist individual."

His keen insights gave rise to an astonishing body of work, unequalled by almost any other twentieth-century playwright. Although he was also a gifted poet and short-story writer, it was the metamorphic possibilities of live performance that most inspired him. That writing remains fresh and startling, and his plays are still produced around the world.

This centenary exhibition draws on the Ransom Center’s extensive collection of Tennessee Williams manuscripts, correspondence, photographs, and artwork to explore the idea, act, and process of artistic creation, illuminating how Thomas Lanier Williams became Tennessee Williams.

University of Maryland Acquires The Studio Theatre Archives

Special Collections in Performing Arts at the University of Maryland, College Park is now home to the archives of The Studio Theatre, the Washington, D.C.-based contemporary theatre company. The first set of materials was transferred to the university this fall. The collection documents the administrative and production history of the company as well as the company’s relationship with the surrounding community in northwest D.C. Materials in this ongoing acquisition include the papers of the company’s artistic founders, the records of the Theatre’s board of directors, and the Theatre’s artistic and production records, including three-dimensional set models and paper renderings, photographs, prompt books, press materials, and programs.

The university will also acquire the papers of Joy Zinoman, Founding Artistic Director of The Studio Theatre.

The Studio Theatre, founded in 1978, is an artist-run company that also boasts the Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory, the experimental Studio 2nd Stage, and the Special Events series, bringing new works and new artists to the nation’s capital. The Studio Theatre and the university’s Special Collections in Performing Arts joined forces over a year ago to prepare the archives for acquisition. The Theatre hired an archives intern to assist university curators with preliminary assessment and inventorying. Over forty linear feet of materials are now at the university, and the collection will continue to grow.

For more information about The Studio Theatre Archives, please contact Vincent Novara, Curator for Special Collections in Performing Arts at vnovara@umd.edu.
Editor’s Corner

Picasso is everywhere it seems — even in Seattle. Although I was sad not to be able to make a trip to London in time for the Diaghilev exhibition at the V&A, I at least could console myself with the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) show, Picasso: Masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris, which features the iconic image of Two Women Running on the Beach, or The Race quite prominently in its advertising. It is both amusing and touching to see how tiny the original painting is in comparison to the massive banner decorating SAM (and, of course, the famous front cloth for the Ballets Russes production of Le Train bleu).

Speaking of icons and images, it is exhilarating to salute Patti LuPone on the occasion of the publication of her new book, Patti LuPone: A Memoir (with Digby Diehl; Crown Archetype) with our cover, which reproduces a never before published photograph from one of her early performances while a student at The Juilliard School. The photograph is from a 1970 production of Jean Genet’s The Maids. Its caption is a line from that play which should speak to archivists everywhere: “You don’t…don’t want us to…organize things in the dark?”

Never one to remain in the dark for long, the multi-talented Ms. LuPone (whose personal archives, sources inform me, are in good hands), just concluded a run on Broadway in the musical version of Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, but will be making her New York City Ballet debut during the company’s 2011 spring season in an eagerly-anticipated new production of The Seven Deadly Sins with choreography by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. The Kurt Weill-Bertolt Brecht work was first performed in Paris at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées by the short lived company, Les Ballets 1933, with choreography by George Balanchine. He would create another version of The Seven Deadly Sins for New York City Ballet in 1958.

In another coincidence of sorts, N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz was not part of Jerome Robbins’ plan for the first program of Ballets: USA. The choreographer wanted to create a new version of Les Noces (originally choreographed for Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in 1923 by Bronislava Nijinska) and to put on the work of his colleague, Herbert Ross. Perhaps a more familiar name today as a filmmaker than a choreographer, Ross devised his own adaptation of The Maids for a 1957 American Ballet Theatre workshop. Ross had hoped to follow Genet’s original intention and cast male dancers in the roles of Claire and Solange, but, in the end, female dancers were nervously substituted. Although The Maids had been well-received in New York, the Ross ballet ultimately was considered too controversial to be served up as an example of American culture for foreign consumption. It was not performed again until Eliot Feld revived it in 1969 for his fledgling American Ballet Company. The Maids, with John Sowinski in the role of Claire, and Bruce Marks as Solange, was presented not only at Spoleto, but as part of the Feld company’s inaugural season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Helice Koffler

Image Credits -continued-

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Page 16: Brooklyn: Hanson Place - Ashland Place [Brooklyn Academy of Music], circa 1929. New York Public Library Digital Library ID# 704788F.

Pages 17-18: Images of BAM Archives courtesy of Cynthia Tobar.

Page 19: Additional images taken from http://collections.vam.ac.uk/.


Page 23: Photograph of façade of Seattle Art Museum with Picasso exhibition banner courtesy of Helice Koffler.