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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SUMMER 2014 NEWSLETTER OF THE SAA PERFORMING ARTS ROUNDTABLE
Performance!

Helice Koffler, Editor
Manuscripts & Special Collections Cataloger
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington
hkoffler@uw.edu

Amber D’Ambrosio, Assistant Editor
Special Collections Librarian
Dixie State University Library
St. George, Utah
dambrosio@dixie.edu

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Cover: Full-page advertisement for the Ice Carnival in the Terrace Garden of the Morrison Hotel, Chicago from a 1917 Garrick Theatre Playbill, Roy Blakey’s IceStage Archive

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Thanks to news contributors: Natalia Fernández (Milagro/OALP); Andra Darlington (Rainer); Jan Schmidt (NYPL-Dance); Harry Glazer and Elizabeth Surles (Rutgers); Matt Snyder (NYPL-Music); Dale Sauter (IOT); Tanya Elder (HERE)

Page 2: 1949 postcard with an illustration of the Boulevard Room ice show in the Stevens Hotel, Chicago. Roy Blakey’s IceStage Archive

Page 3: DC Punk Archive, DC Public Library Special Collections, DC Public Library Facebook wall, June 19, 2014

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Page 14-19: Lynne O’Neill Papers, Northwestern University Archives
Greetings PAR members,

We hope that you are all getting ready for our annual meeting in Washington, D.C. This year the Roundtable will meet on Wednesday, August 13th from 5:15-7:15pm. We also are planning to offer a tour of the American Folklife Center earlier that same morning at 11:00 am. Information about signing up will be sent out to the listserv. You can read more about the American Folklife Center at: [http://www.loc.gov/folklife/](http://www.loc.gov/folklife/).

The theme of our meeting will be a different kind of folk: an exploration of the punk rock movement that occurred during the late 1970s and 1980s; specifically, the Washington, D.C. area scene. Our panelists will discuss their work with punk collections. These projects include: doing research for a film and curating a new archive.

Here’s a brief introduction of each panelist:

**Michele Casto** is a Special Collections Librarian at the DC Public Library, where she is in the early stages of creating the DC Punk Archive.

**John Davis** is an archivist at the University of Maryland who grew up in the D.C. punk scene. He started UMD’s punk fanzine collection.

**Vin Novara** is the curator for Special Collections in Performing Arts at the University of Maryland. His band, Alarms and Controls, is signed to the Dischord Records label.

**Caroline Partamian** is the Assistant to the Director of the Eva Dean Dance Company in New York City. She previously worked at New York University’s Fales Library, both as an archival processor and a researcher for the film, *The Punk Singer*.

It’s sure to be an interesting evening, and there will be plenty of time for questions from the audience.

We look forward to seeing you all there!

Stasia Karel and Rachel Rosenfeld
Co-Chairs of the Performing Arts Roundtable
When I watched the film, *The Fabulous Ice Age*, which features your collection, I was surprised to see the grandiose affairs that ice shows were in the early and mid-20th century. Can you tell us a bit about the history of ice shows in the United States?

Well, the focus of my collection has nothing to do with the sport of skating, the Olympics, or any of those things; that has all been documented by other people. But, very neglected has been the history of theatrical ice skating, and we are just about to come into the one hundredth anniversary of the first real professional ice skating group in the United States. It actually began in Berlin, Germany in 1911, and, if you remember from the film, the star of it was the young lady named Charlotte [Oelschlägel], who had the silver skating boots. Remember that part? Well they were so incredible in Germany that a New York producer brought them to the Hippodrome Theatre in New York in 1915. And that was the first time that Americans saw a lavish professional ice skating show. The Germans did three different ice ballets in that New York theatre over a period of about six years. Their last one was 1921; it was called *The Red Shoes*.

Then we had kind of a hiatus from the ice skating shows until 1936 when a group of skaters here in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area formed an ice skating show. It first went to Chicago—in those days it was popular in the five-star hotels to have a theatre restaurant with an ice skating show—and they did it on the very small ice skating surface in the nightclub. From Saint Paul, Minnesota, this small group went to the Hotel Sherman in Chicago. Their contract was to go for eight weeks, and they were such a success, with packed houses every night for eighteen months! And so they got the idea, why don’t we take our show on a tour and bring this show to the people? Their inspiration was the *Ziegfeld Follies*—those lavish productions in New York that were so famous and so popular—they tried to do the *Ziegfeld Follies* on the ice and they called it *Ice Follies*.

Then at that very same time in 1936, the Norwegian skater Sonja Henie won her third Olympic gold medal in figure skating...
and came to the United States. She went right to Hollywood and became a movie star. She ultimately made eleven hugely popular feature films, which brought even more people to see the live performances of *Ice Follies* and her own annual tour of major cities, the *Hollywood Ice Revue*.

**How did you get involved in the ice shows?**

Well in 1940 or 1941, I was either ten or eleven years old, and, as you may remember from Keri Pickett’s film, I saw that Sonja Henie film with the people skating on the black ice that was like a mirror. Sitting in this little movie theatre in Enid, Oklahoma, my hometown, I was so bowled over by seeing the skating! It was so beautifully presented, that I said to myself in that theatre, “I have to do that! I have to become a professional skater and try to get into one of those lavish shows!” The problem was we did not have any ice in my hometown, so I became a roller skater for a few years. Ultimately, I did get to Tulsa, Oklahoma where I went to the university. They did have an ice skating rink there and I finally got on the ice.
Shortly after that, I was drafted into the army, and, thank goodness for fate and God, who sent me to Europe instead of to Korea, where they were all shooting each other. I learned after a while in Germany that the United States Army had a nightclub in a leave and recreation center in Bavaria, which had an ice skating show. Some buddies and I took a three-day pass and went to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, where the ice skating show was. Next door to this nightclub—the Casa Carioca nightclub—was the Olympic ice skating stadium where Sonja Henie had won her 1936 Olympic gold medal. I had taken my skates, so I went for a couple of days on our visit and skated in that big rink. And I left a note at the nightclub saying that I’d like to come and audition for the show. So, I went in, and, having not really had a lot of opportunities to skate while I was in the army for a year and half, I felt a little shaky, but she [Terry Rudolph] did appreciate my skating and said that she thought she could use me in her show. She took the name of the unit that I was attached to in the army, and I went back to that town where I was stationed, and I thought, “Well I am not going to be around here very long. I’m going to go into show business, and be in the ice show and fulfill my dream!” And then I never heard from that choreographer in Garmisch!

When it got to be very close to the end of my military service, I thought, “I don’t want to go back to the States, I want to stay in Europe.” So I wrote her a letter and said that at the time I had auditioned she had said that she thought she could use me, but I had never heard from her. She sent me a contract. And, so, whammo! I became a professional skater! I went to Garmisch. I had never been in a show before. I was as green as a green pepper and was learning all the ropes about how you’re supposed to conduct yourself as a professional and be in a show. Ultimately, she kept putting me more into the show. I stayed there for eighteen months and did two different productions for her.

I have to describe to you what the Casa Carioca Nightclub was like. It was something out of a 1940s movie musical. They had four tiers of tables on three sides of the ice looking down onto the ice rink. Above, where the skaters made their entrances, was an orchestra—an eighteen-piece, live orchestra, playing for the show. Before the show, a big dance floor covered the ice and people could dance to the live music, have their dinner, and enjoy all of that. Then when it came time for the show, they pushed a button and the big dance floor slid away under the tiers of tables to reveal the ice stage. After the show, they pushed the button, and the dance floor came back out, and the people could dance.
again. It was just incredible. Even though I had never been in a show, I knew that was something unbelievably special, and I was so lucky that was my first show.

And the woman who ran the show—she was the choreographer, she was the director, and her mother had a sewing room full of Bavarian ladies who made the costumes! Terry Rudolph, the choreographer/director: she picked the music, she did the lighting, she did everything! She was a totally amazing person and she had never been a skater. She was a dancer for many years—a ballet dancer—and she had danced in Chicago in the opera house. Her career even took her as far away as China for performances. She came to Germany after the war, to visit her brother [who was a lawyer who had been sent there to assist in the reconstruction efforts]
and saw an advertisement in the newspaper for a choreographer for the ice show. She contacted them, and even though she hadn’t been a skater, they gave her the job. She was the best person they could have found at that time; she was so knowledgeable about theatre and dance, and the things you need to incorporate into the skating to make a show.
She was quite a taskmaster and a real stickler. She hated that the ice skaters didn’t know about pointing your toes, using beautiful arm movements, or expressive hand movements. That was a real education for us! Word got around the ice skating business—all around the world—there was this wonderful woman who was teaching aspects of theatrical skating that no one knew about before. Soon people were contacting her from all over the world and coming to Garmisch—to this little village in Germany—for her to help them in their presentation. To be more beautiful, more elegant, more expressive, and to relate to the audience. Ice skaters had never been taught that before. The ones who had become superstars had that kind of built into themselves. [It was] personally part of their DNA for a Sonja Henie or a Charlotte. The regular skaters were so involved with the technique of skating that they didn’t learn those beautiful movements until Terry instilled it in them. To make their fingers look attractive, she would give them a ping pong ball to hold between their thumb and their middle finger while they were skating so that they would know which way their hand should be shaped. When the skaters she had worked with were given jobs in the big ice skating touring shows, even more skaters contacted her to come for training. It was really a wonderful experience and that is something I will always treasure.

What do you think we can learn from ice show history? What will the legacy of these shows be?

Well, the thing that I want more than anything [now] that we are going through a very fallow period, where there are so few ice shows in existence any more, is that that era did happen. Those shows were so spectacular; they became an event. This was pre-television, so it was like bringing an ice skating Broadway show to your town. I hear over and over again the older people say, “Oh, we went every year to see the Ice Capades. We loved those shows!” They looked forward every year to when they would come. The shows would come to a city and stay ten days, two weeks. They had 12,000 people in one performance, so in one night the shows in the big arena would play to as many people as a Broadway show would play to in a week!

[For many] it was their first time of seeing live entertainment. It was a great spectacle. In addition to the beautiful skating, there were gorgeous costume sketches by Freddy Wittop for “Mazurka Imperial” number in the Ice Capades.
costumes. There was wonderful, very inventive, choreography. There was beautiful music by a live orchestra. Those were just memorable experiences. I miss them more than anything, and I am so happy to still have the memorabilia from that great, wonderful era.

What drove you to start collecting?

When I saw that movie with Sonja Henie and decided right there I was going to have to do that, I began collecting all the newspaper clippings and the magazine articles. When an ice skating show would come near where I was, I would get on the train or bus and go to Wichita, Kansas or Tulsa, Oklahoma. My sister and I even went to Fort Worth, Texas to see the ice show. My father did make us take a note with us that we would show to prove that we had their okay. But I don’t think anybody ever asked to see it. It was a whole other kind of world in those days.

That’s what got me started collecting—all the programs of the shows that I saw. I began writing off to the St. Regis Hotel in New York, which had a very glamorous nightclub with an ice show. I wrote and asked if they had any souvenirs and they sent me their programs and things. In the late 1940s, I would send off to various skating stars for autographed pictures. I had no thought that this was ever going to become a monument to those ice shows, but that is where it all started.

Where is your collection housed?

My niece, who made the documentary, The Fabulous Ice Age, is also a terrific still photographer. She and I have shared a studio here in Minneapolis since 1993. The building is large enough that I have an area that is for the skating collection, although I have vastly outgrown it. I have hung up posters in the studio, which I have to cover up or take down when she has a big assignment! But I really have taken up the studio area as well as the area that was always designated as the ice show room.

How many items are in the collection?

Well, I just even startled myself to tell you this! I have a young man who has been working with me for two years. He types ninety-words a minute and is a real whiz, who has helped me so much in documenting all the things. We photograph everything, and he puts it in the computer. He tells me I have 30,000 items! Which go from ticket stubs, lapel pins, and little things
like that, to big tour and movie posters that are seven-feet wide and five-feet tall. So, I’ve got some very tiny things, medium-size things, and some enormous things.

That’s amazing!

It is amazing.

**How do you organize your collection, or are you in the process of organizing your collection?**

Oh, I have been in the process of organizing for years and years. As I say, we are now documenting everything, and we have done a pretty good job of it. Although it’s kind of a system that I devised myself, having observed what libraries do. Everything is getting in the computer and everything has a picture. We have worked really hard in documenting everything.

**How do you preserve the artifacts?**

I don’t have the big bucks that you really need to have everything in archival boxes and archival sleeves [for] as many as I want. All that stuff is so very expensive, and it’s something that is absolutely necessary to have, but I don’t have the funds at all. I have financed this whole thing by myself, although I have received so many gifts from so many people, such as the Terry Rudolph material, which was passed down to me after she passed away. I think I am the person who has the most wide-ranging coverage of the whole world of theatrical ice skating. A lot of people have collected a particular show that they were in, or the years of that show, or a particular area, but I have things from everywhere in the world—from Australia, South Africa, Korea, and Japan, all over Europe.

I have found that people I have approached, or people who have approached me about becoming the recipient of this collection, only want a section of it. The University of Minnesota would love to have all the Minnesota material, of which there is a lot. We have not only the *Ice Follies* show that I mentioned earlier, coming out of Saint Paul, but, for many years, the *Holiday on Ice* show, which toured everywhere on the face of the world, [operated] from an office in Minneapolis. So there is a huge Minneapolis connection. For many years we had something called, *Champions on Ice*, which, after every year’s World’s or Olympic championship, took the champions on tour of the United States, and was wildly popular during the 1980s and 90s. That came out of this city as well. A dear friend of mine was the producer and owner of that show and was very generous in giving me a lot of material from his tours.

My big problem is that this is so all-encompassing, around-the-world material, it is hard for me to find a place that can house such a collection. I live in hope that I will find some place, a home for my collection ultimately. I don’t want them to have it right away because I love it so much I want to have it myself, but I am definitely looking for a home. Keep your fingers crossed!
Can you tell us about your favorite pieces?

Oh my, oh my! Well that is like [asking], which of your children is your favorite? I love the posters, the graphics. Some of those early ones you just go, "Oh!" I have this little rule in judging the posters. If the poster is up on the wall outside on a building, and you are riding by on a bus a block away, it has to tell you right away what the poster is all about. You have to know right away this is an ice skating show. Boom! They did that so well early on. Sometimes, in more recent years, you have to study it to find out it's an ice skating show. I think that works against the poster, if it doesn’t just immediately convey the message. Those are the posters that I really love, the ones where the graphics are so beautiful that you say: “Mmm, I want to see that!”

What would you say is your most historically significant piece?

I do have beautiful hand-painted postcards from those ice ballets in Germany from 1911 to 1921. The earliest ones are kind of ordinary. And then, after a year or two, they started making the costumes more elaborate. Around 1915—and I have never been able to find out who the costume designers were—but some of them look like Erté had designed them. I don’t know how the skaters skated in them! They weren’t doing any big spins and jumps like we do today, especially in those costumes, but they were just awe-inspiring. They are so beautiful.

I don’t know if you ever heard of the Canadian ice skating champion, Toller Cranston! He was very, very popular in the 80s and the 90s, and he is also an artist, who sells and exhibits his paintings. They are all very rococo and elaborate. I showed him some of those postcards and I said to him, “I think you designed these costumes in a previous life!” And he said to me, “You know, it’s all been done before. I don’t know why we even try any more!” Those are my earliest pieces. They are just so rare and so precious to me. I think those would fit into that category of things that are very rare.

How can we visit or view your collection?

I am so thrilled when people who are interested contact me! We set a time for them to come and see the collection. I welcome people if they email me or contact me by phone when they’re going to be in the area and would like to come and see the collection. I definitely encourage that.

Thank you so much for your time. One of the things I still am wondering about: how was the transition from roller skates to ice skates? Was it easy?

It's really kind of the same technique except you don’t have those clunky eight-pound rollers on your feet! And the fact is that with the ice skating blade you are able to do much more of kind of a lean, which turns you to the right or turns you to the left. Roller skating is just clunky, even though there was—back in the 1950s and 40s—a roller skating extravaganza that toured the United States. It also was produced by a man from the Twin Cities—so even that was a part of the history of this area. I used to get on the bus every year in Enid, Oklahoma and go to Oklahoma City to see the Skating Vanities, the roller skating show. It was a beautiful show. It was produced and choreographed by people who had great theatre backgrounds. The costumes were designed by famous designers. But you know what was missing was the ice. It’s a stage that is shimmering already. The magic of these people going around on that ice is not quite the same when they are on roller skates, skating on wood.

But it was a beautiful show, and I think it lasted twelve years and had great success in Europe. You may remember from the documentary that I was a huge fan of the roller skating star Gloria Nord. Gloria was so popular that when the roller skating
show went to Europe, the English people in London said to her, “We want you to get onto ice skates and come to London and we will build these big ice shows around you.” So she did that. I think she starred in two shows—two huge productions at Wembley Arena every year—for about seven or eight years. She was the first ice skating star to be invited to be in the annual Royal Variety Performance, performing for the Queen. That was a big feather in her cap.

In her later years we became friends. Every year I would go visit one of my friends, who lives in the Palm Springs area, and we would drive to Mission Viejo—where Gloria was living. Before one of my trips, I called her and said, “We are coming out, we are taking you to dinner, and, you know, Gloria, I have never seen anything from your command performance.” She said, “I’ll see what I can find.” I was thinking it might be a picture of her with the Queen, a program, or something like that. So we arrived at her home, and she took me to her bedroom, and there was her costume that she had worn for skating for the Queen. And she gave it to me! I was dumbfounded. It’s just incredible to have that gift from her. I felt that it was a great honor to me.

I also have ten of Sonja Henie’s original touring show costumes. Not from the films, but from her live performances. But I also have other beautiful costumes, and those are great treasures in my collection. Although, there again, what is the proper way to be absolutely certain to take care of them? The feathers have become a little droopy and need to be cleaned and I don’t know how to do that. Although every time I go to Las Vegas, I go to see a show at Bally’s called Jubilee!—and it’s nothing but feathers, the old style costumes. I keep thinking that I should take some of these costumes and have those people—who must know how to take care of costumes that have feathers on them—clean them for me.

What would you like to see happen with your collection? Do you want it to stay together?

Oh absolutely, absolutely! I think it must be kept as a whole. One of my thoughts was Lincoln Center, the [New York Public] Library for Performing Arts, which I visit every time that I go to New York. But it would just be a teeny, teeny, little thing in their collection and maybe once every five years they would be able to show a little bit. I need a place that would have a display that could be changed all the time.
The Lynne O'Neill Collection was acquired for the Northwestern University Archives in 2013. The materials were donated by private collectors or acquired at auction from various vendors. O’Neill led a colorful life, being at times a noted burlesque dancer, model, and Northwestern student, and, later, magazine contributor and realtor. The collection comprises eight boxes and two posters. It spans the years 1931 through 2000 and consists of O’Neill’s biographical and professional documents, fan mail, publications, photographs, a phonograph record, a calendar, and three posters. The collection, with its documents on burlesque dancing, casts light on a subculture of the American entertainment industry.

O’Neill was born Elaine Jose Nolan in Baltimore, Maryland, on March 8, 1918. Her father, Allan Nolan, was a house painter and her mother, Josephine, a cafeteria waitress. At the beginning of the 1930s, the Nolan family moved to Evanston, Illinois, where O’Neill attended Evanston Township High School. She graduated in June, 1935. At an
early age, she learned baton twirling and took dance classes, particularly ballet, which she kept up after graduating from high school. She earned money as a model for commercial photography, posing in stockings, lingerie, hats, and bathing suits. A profile card lists, among other things, her hair color ("golden blonde"), eyes ("hazel"), height ("5'8 without heels"), and costume options ("Spanish," "Cuban," and "South American").

For the next five years, O’Neill participated in musical revues at the Eighth Street Theater in Chicago, North Beach Country Club in Wisconsin, and other locations throughout the Midwest. During World War II, O’Neill toured several Midwestern states as an entertainer for the United Service Organizations (USO). After the war, she took engagements in various opera productions, such as the Citizens Opera Company and Midwest Opera Company. In June 1947, she matriculated to Northwestern University’s School of Speech Summer Session. In the following years she continued performing as a singer, model, and dancer.

At some point garters became O’Neill’s signature. According to the Lynne O’Neill Web site, “she started her career as a dancer appearing at the Club 500, where at her mother’s suggestion she threw her garters into the audience […]. Since then she has been 'The Original Garter Girl' and has her garters designed and created individually for her and offered $50.00 to anyone if they can be matched.” In many performances O’Neill included her skills in baton and hat twirling. She also engaged the audience. In an article for the magazine, Man to Man (February 1, 1974 issue), she wrote:

At one point in my dance I would approach the audience kneeling down on the runway so that some daring patron in the front row had only to stand up and pull down my side zipper on my brasselette, adding a touch of spice to my act. This show I selected a tall handsome Midshipman who responded willingly, jumping to his feet, and volunteering to do the honor by shaking both hands high overhead in a motion of loosening up his wrists, and, with great flourish, slowly began to pull down my zipper, savoring every moment, and with me whispering instructions to take it easy while the audience howled their suggestions.

In the following years, O’Neill, in newspaper articles often dubbed the “Dazzling Danseuse,” traveled throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico,
where she refined her burlesque acts. In the mid-1950s, she moved to Lynbrook, New York, initiating a particularly busy period of her career. Many engagements took her to clubs, casinos, and theatres in New York City and New Jersey. In addition, she had minor roles and appeared in skits in musicals, television and movie shorts, and in radio shows.

Fan letters, which were written to O’Neill between the years 1955 through 1977, are authentic documents, which to some extent reflect the ambivalent position of a female burlesque dancer in a patriarchal society. In post-war America, the audience in burlesque houses consisted almost entirely of working-class males. The letters are arranged in two broad categories: mail from civilian admirers and from military personnel, mainly during the Vietnam War. The mail reflects correspondents’ interest in O’Neill, and some letters consequently contain explicit and graphic language and illustrations. Letters from soldiers sometimes make reference to combat and other features of military life.

Even though many burlesque dancers had a background marked by poverty or abuse, photographs of O’Neill’s performances reveal additional, rather unexpected aspects of the genre: female self-empowerment and the obvious joy of the performer. Four folders filled with black and white vernacular, as well as professionally made photographs in this collection show O’Neill as an apparently self-confident woman. Several of the photographs, which were taken backstage in O’Neill’s dressing room and an unidentified location (possibly her living room) show her partially undressed and cheerfully posing for an unknown photographer. O’Neill’s costumes included selected components like pasties, hats, batons, gloves, G-strings, stockings, feather boas, negligees, and garters. Those outfits, paired with the charismatic femininity she expressed in her performance acts, display her as a self-assured artist.

She was one of the subjects depicted by the celebrated photographer, Diane Arbus, who published an image of O’Neill staying at a nudist camp. The photograph, entitled “Nudist lady with swan sunglasses, Pa. 1965,” was taken in the same year O’Neill was filming the movie, Secrets of an Uncover Model. In an article for the column “Burlesque Backstage” she wrote:

I was to do a sequence at a nudist camp and so was asked by the
director to make a tour of inspection of
several in order to find a suitable locale
with a swimming pool the right size for my
nude veil dance. I didn’t know anything
about nudist camps or where they were
situated so I telephoned a friend in Miami
and told him of my predicament. … Shyly
at first, but later with real enthusiasm, I
discovered after I had played a few games
[of volleyball] that this was wholesome fun
and really a healthy, zestful way to relax. I
was also awakened to a new sense of
values. These people [at the nudist camp]
really have something, for when speaking
to a stranger in the altogether your eyes
never leave his face and you are much
more able to relate.”

By the 1960s, with the decline of burlesque and her
own advancing age, O’Neill found fewer opportuni-
ties to perform and sought additional sources of
income. In March 1960, she was arrested in her
home and accused of possessing nude photographs
of herself and distributing them through the mail.
Neighbors, friends, business owners, and clients
sent letters of reference to the Nassau County
Probation Department offering testimony in sup-
port of O’Neill. She was regarded by these associ-
ates as: “an upstanding, honorable, American citi-
zen;” “completely ladylike;” “a credit to the neigh-
bourhood;” “of the highest moral character;” and “a
trustworthy and a perfect lady.” Her podiatrist
stated: “she has always conducted herself in a lady-
like manner and I have the highest regard for her
integrity and moral character.” She was convicted
and served four days of a 10-day jail sentence.

For a while, O’Neill worked with Barbara Nichols, a
fellow burlesque performer and model, and had a
role in the aforementioned Secrets of an Uncover
Model. By the late 1960s, O’Neill had become a
regular contributor to the risqué men’s magazine.
Man to Man. A good portion of the collection
consists of these and similar magazines, in which
O’Neill had published articles about her experience
as a burlesque dancer. Her column, “Burlesque
Backstage,” chronicled her experiences in the
profession. Those columns often ended with en-
treaties to fans, particularly soldiers serving in the
Vietnam War, to write her letters. Many took her
up on that suggestion. She made a point of respond-
ing to these correspondents and included photo-
graphs of herself in her replies.

O’Neill took her career seriously, as documented
by several folders filled with advertisements, busi-
ness cards, and announcements for upcoming
shows. She hired an agent to book performances in
various burlesque venues in and around New York
City. A detailed list with expenses and expenditures
for the year 1948 shows the economic side of this
entertainment genre. However, O’Neill’s biograph-

DEAR AGENT:

Will be appearing at ...................................
.............................................................., in
..............................................................
opening ................................................., 19......

What have you in vicinity? Contact me at
..............................................................

Yours truly, LYNNE O’NEILL
‘The Garter Girl’
ical materials are incomplete and partially incorrect, and the documentation of her life fragmentary. One sheet, which appears to be a paragraph of an autobiography, states that she was divorced in 1967.

O’Neill’s long career as a performer and chronicler of burlesque ended at around the same time. In 1972, she and her widowed mother moved to Hempstead, New York and opened their own real estate brokerage office, covering both commercial and residential sales and rentals throughout Nassau County. O’Neill, working under her given name, Elaine Nolan, served on the board of the Hempstead Chamber of Commerce and was the president of the Country Club Estates Civic Association. She also was a member of the Nassau County Historical Society, Hofstra University Club, and Hempstead Historical Society, as well as a supporter of many animal, environmental, and veteran’s organizations. The donor of the Lynne O’Neill collection was a former neighbor, who confirmed the high regard in which she was held in the local area. Apparently her former career as burlesque dancer did not damage her reputation in her adopted community.

O’Neill died on August 5, 2010 in Hempstead, New York. Before her death, perhaps she may have experienced the rejuvenation of burlesque shows, which began reappearing under the name of neo-burlesque or New Burlesque during the
1990s, partially as a reaction to Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani’s closings of sex shops in New York City. The growth of the neo-burlesque movement demonstrates that there is a strong interest in this small sub-genre of performance, which exists on the borderline between striptease, comedy, music, dance, vaudeville, cabaret, midway, and circus.

Today’s burlesque shows no longer attract a primarily working-class male audience looking for distraction and eroticism. A major shift has been the active agency of women, who now make up a sizeable part of the audience at neo-burlesque shows (many of whom also take burlesque dance classes). The self-confident attitude of Lynne O’Neill, as reflected in some of the documents within the collection, might be seen as a historic foreshadowing of the current interest many women have taken in studying and participating in burlesque performance.

Notes
The Arts Club Theatre Company is western Canada’s largest theatre company, with over fifteen major productions per year across three stages. Celebrating its 50th season in 2013-14, it is also the region’s longest-running professional theatre company. As an archival studies student at the University of British Columbia, I was hired in the winter of 2013 to implement an archival program for the company. It was hoped that establishing a working archives would help the company celebrate their history and engage the theatre community in Vancouver with online and physical exhibitions throughout the season. As unique as the Arts Club is to the city, the challenges that presented themselves over the course of my ten-month term are ones that easily could arise in similar institutions. Overcoming them was an eight-month-long journey that proved as fruitful for the company as it was for me. The experience highlighted not only the importance of an archives in helping to commemorate institutional milestones, but also the significance of the theatre’s material history to the social, cultural, and artistic history of the city of Vancouver.
The Company: 50 Years of Expansion

In 1958, under the leadership of Yvonne Firkins and Otto Lowy, the Arts Club was formed as a private members club for musicians, painters, actors, directors, and writers to discuss and practice their trades with like-minded people over drinks. They dreamed of creating their own professional theatre company with a permanent home, to act as a venue for concerts and theatrical productions. Following considerable interest from members and audiences, their dream was realized in 1964 with the creation of the Arts Club Theatre Company. Their venue was a converted gospel hall at 1181 Seymour Street in the heart of downtown Vancouver, which seated an audience of 161 people.

Two years after the first curtain was drawn, Yvonne Firkins passed away. The company continued its mission of pleasing audiences and employing local talent. It wasn’t until 1972, when the theatre hired Bill Millerd as the Artistic Managing Director, that the expansion began. Taking up the baton laid down by Yvonne Firkins, Millerd also dreamt of creating a theatre company that could support local Vancouver talent. To this day he remains the central figure around which popular theatre in Vancouver revolves.

Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris (1972) was the first musical performed by the Arts Club Theatre Company. It became their signature production and has been remounted many times. Its unprecedented success cemented the Arts Club’s place as Vancouver’s primary theatre attraction and the appetite of those audiences who packed the fire escape at the Seymour Street Theatre could not be satisfied with one small stage. In 1979, the Arts Club opened the 450-seat Granville Island Stage on the shores of False Creek. The opening of this theatre proved highly valuable to an area which was formerly an industrial hub, helping to transform the island into a hotspot for tourism and entertainment.

The new space allowed for the production of large-cast musicals like John Kander and Fred Ebb’s Cabaret (1983) and Ann Mortifee’s Reflections on Crooked
Walking (1983), both of which proved popular with Vancouver theatregoers. A short couple of years later, the 225-seat Revue Stage, a cabaret-style space, was opened in a building next door. This stage was home to the immensely successful, Ain’t Misbehavin’ (1994), before it was reimagined as a “black box” theatre in 1995, focusing primarily on modern Canadian work.

In 1998, the Arts Club underwent its largest expansion to date. The Stanley Theatre, on South Granville Street, was first opened in 1930 as a vaudeville venue. With an Art Deco exterior and neo-classical interior, the theatre is one of the area’s most attractive structures. It closed down in 1991 and was sold to developers. The “Save Our Stanley” campaign was set up by local residents opposed to the use of the space for retail purposes. Over several years, with the help of local, provincial, and federal government, the Arts Club raised the funds to purchase the building. They expanded the stage, reconfigured the balcony, and fully restored the theatre’s original gold leaf plaster decorations, earning the building heritage status.

The Stanley reopened as the Arts Club’s third stage in October of 1998 with a production of Dean Regan’s Swing to an audience of 650.

Over the past fifteen years, the Arts Club Theatre Company has consistently brought in the crowds, increasing its audience each year through a combination of season ticket sales and box office sellouts. Having owned all its venues from the beginning, the company has been able to keep popular productions running for as long as audiences wanted to see them and this has undoubtedly given them stability. The three stages each offer something different, which allows the theatre to vary the style of its productions and maintain an eclectic repertoire. Large musical productions have been the backbone of the company’s success, with shows like Evita (2004), Beauty and the Beast (2006), and Avenue Q (2013), setting box office records. However, the Arts Club’s dedication to Canadian theatre cannot be overstated. Of the 500-plus productions presented during the Arts Club’s 50 seasons, over 100 of these have been Canadian premieres. Sherman Snukal’s Talking Dirty (1982), Nicola Cavendish’s It’s Snowing on Saltspring (1985), and Morris Panych’s 7 Stories have been local smash hits and have been reprised many times since their original production.
Commentators have observed that Bill Millerd is a populist and this is undoubtedly the case.¹ Since the beginning of his long career with the theatre, he has had an uncanny knack for knowing what theatregoers in Vancouver want to see. Naturally, tried and tested Broadway and West End hits make up a large portion of the ticket. Space on any season’s schedule, however, is always given to new and sometimes controversial material. As Malcolm Page, Professor Emeritus at Simon Fraser University, and one of Canada’s foremost theatre minds, has noted, Millerd “succeeds in almost everything, giving his loyal audience what it wants, then gently taking it a little further.”²

Millerd has stated that the most enjoyable and memorable aspects of his theatre career has been working with people and seeing their careers unfold as they pass through the Arts Club.³ Although not a repertory theatre, Bill Millerd has a reputation for sticking to a group of regular actors, and, in his choice of casts, he is also a populist. He knows his audience and who they want to see on stage, which often results in cast members returning year after year. He has fostered the careers of some of Canada’s brightest stars, including: Michael J. Fox, Winston Rekert, Brent Carver, Nicola Cavendish, and Michael Bublé.

Bill Millerd, has himself said that he doesn’t like to dwell on the past, but prefers to focus on the future and what it might hold for the theatre he has built.⁴ However, the 50th season is an opportunity to look back and honor those who have helped create such a successful company. One of the important aspects of theatre for Millerd is that it is live and ever-changing. To capture the experience is impossible and when it is done, all that is left are remnants. These remnants form the archives of the Arts Club, which have been accumulated over its 50-year history.

The Collection: 50 Years of Aggregation

It was envisioned that the archives would be used during the 50th season as a means of looking back over the long history of the company and honoring those who made it possible. This retrospective would take the form of physical and online exhibitions, which would primarily display visual material, such as photographs and posters. Setting up an archival program for the theatre was to serve as a means to the end of telling the story of the 50 years of the Arts Club and was to encompass preservation, conservation, digitization, as well as establish policies and procedures for the archives. Emphasis was placed on making the most visually-pleasing archival material available to the public in time for the opening of the 50th season.

Prior to my arrival, photographs were organized alphabetically by production and were stored in non-archival quality boxes and folders in the attic of the rehearsal space at the Granville Island facility. There were over 30 boxes full of photographic prints, negatives, slides and printed materials housed together. Hundreds of posters were stored in an offsite storage facility, stacked on top of one another in two large boxes. Many posters hung on the walls of the administrative offices of the theatre. Other interesting material included: production renderings, set design drawings, 3D set design models, and original Arts Club publications, such as magazines, newspapers, and anniversary material.

Given the poor state of preservation of these materials and the complete lack of documentation, the goal of making the entire archive available for
public viewing within my time there was going to be an impossible task. As I unearthed more material, the larger the project became, and the full scale of what needed to be done to establish a working archives was driven home. Furthermore, the archives were located in a very small space which was inaccessible during rehearsal times, limiting the amount of access I had to the material. In light of these discoveries, reassessing the goals of the project was something that took place a number of times in the initial months of my tenure.

To counteract the deterioration of the visual material, some initial preservation measures were taken to ensure that the materials would remain for as long as possible. Through the company’s Facebook page, we put out a call for volunteers to help make this process as speedy as possible. Potentially damaging material, off-gassing negatives, and sticky prints were isolated from the other materials in the collection. New archival quality photographic sleeves, folders, and boxes were used to rehouse the materials. The posters were recovered from the storage facility and stored alphabetically in archival quality folders.

The 3D set models were taken off the shelves high above the rehearsal hall, cleaned up, photographed, and documented. Some models were damaged beyond repair and these were disposed of. Others were in immaculate condition and served as wonderful examples of the craftsmanship of the set designers of seasons past. Foamcore photographs also were cleaned and organized alphabetically. The set design drawings were removed from their dusty corner of the attic and transferred to more appropriate shelving. These measures were undertaken as a short-term solution to slow down the deterioration of the material that was stored in the space. For long-term storage and preservation, I recommended making a donation to the City of Vancouver Archives.

Gathering knowledge of the contents of the collection was my initial goal and learning about the history of the organization was central to achieving this objective. Upon my arrival at the theatre there was a single Word document that listed each production by season and venue. There also was a binder booklet maintained by the receptionist that listed cast members, as well as an incomplete collection of programs contained in twelve binders. The rest of the knowledge about the company was contained in the heads of those who worked there.

To get a better grasp of the company’s production history, I recommended completing a database that contained a comprehensive listing of productions and the individuals associated with them. We chose to modify an existing ticketing database to record this information. Once complete, this database would be used to store and access Arts Club production information and could be maintained for following seasons. Another group of volunteers was trained to input this data using the existing sources of information. Hundreds of hours were spent on documenting over 500 productions. This database proved an invaluable tool for me in understanding the production history of the company and in arranging and describing the material that these productions had generated.

As a short-term solution to the access issues presented by the storage area, a digitization program was devised for the most important and at-risk material. Following discussions with Bill Millerd, the artistic liaison, the marketing team, and the production team, a list of the most significant shows in the history of the theatre was drawn up. These productions were prioritized by those that had the longest runs, the most cultural significance, the most popular, and those that were most likely to be revived. From this list of productions, we handpicked the most important and visually-compelling material from each show. These materials included: photographs, posters, programs, and production renderings.
A group of skilled volunteers was selected to digitize this material using flatbed scanners and digital cameras. I developed a workflow and procedures manual for them to follow. Training volunteers to undertake these tasks was an aspect of the job that I particularly enjoyed, although keeping track of their work became a real challenge. As a part-time student archivist, my time was limited, and the level of oversight on my part was not as complete as I had envisioned. Finding work space in the theatre for these volunteers also proved difficult.

Combining the digitized material with the production database and providing online access to both was the final goal of the project. The database manager at the organization devoted her time to learning API and linking the archival information in the database with the company’s Web site. She also added a feature on the site which linked the digitized images housed on a server with the production information in the database. What resulted was a fully searchable online production history complete with archival images for the most important shows.

A number of other options were explored to further highlight the rich history of the Arts Club through its archives. We had initially envisioned an online timeline that would visually represent the journey of the company through its four stages and numerous productions. Although the images and information for the timeline were gathered, the skills to generate such a feature on the Web site did not exist within the company and no funds became available to hire a developer for the project. A physical timeline was also considered and worked on, but again the resources to complete such a large task were not in place to see it to completion.

**Conclusion**

As the Arts Club Theatre Company moves into its 51st season, the emphasis will be on looking toward the future—further expanding audiences, promoting Canadian theatre talent, and bringing the unique experience of live theatre to the people of Vancouver. It is their success in achieving these goals over the past 50 years that has made them the biggest theatre company in the region, and long may their success continue. Given these achievements, the Arts Club plays an incredibly significant role in the social, cultural, and artistic life of the city of Vancouver. The wealth of the archival material at their disposal could be used in many different ways to promote the history of the theatre whilst honoring those who made the company what it is today. A well-established, working archives would not only benefit the company in achieving their own goals, but also open up an invaluable resource to all those interested in the history of Canadian theatre.

**Notes**

1 Max Wyman quoting Malcolm Page in his [Arts Club Anniversary Essay](#).
2 Ibid.
3 An interview with Bill was issued on [YouTube](#) this year to celebrate his role in building the theatre.
4 Ibid.
In 1962, America's young space program launched Ranger 3 to study the moon, Johnny Carson took over as the host of NBC's Tonight Show, and Richard M. Nixon lost the California governor's race, stating in his concession speech that "you won't have Dick Nixon to kick around anymore."

1962 was also the year that saw the Utah Shakespeare Festival produce its first three plays: The Taming of the Shrew, Hamlet, and The Merchant of Venice. The idea for a "festival" began when a young Fred Adams, recently hired as an Assistant Professor of Theater Arts at the College of Southern Utah (now known as Southern Utah University) and his then-fiancée, Barbara Gaddie, sat in the Fluffy Bundle Laundromat in Cedar City, Utah waiting for their clothes to dry. Fred and Barbara envisioned a Shakespearean festival that would draw tourists into their community—tourists who would stay in motels, eat at restaurants, buy gas for their cars, and shop in the local stores.

Although it started small and sometimes has gone unnoticed outside of Utah, the Utah Shakespeare Festival has had tremendous staying power. This year marks the fifty-second year of the Festival, which has grown from an attendance of 3,726 visitors during its first year, to over 160,000 in 2013. The Festival has become known across the country and is admired by the theatre world. It has earned numerous awards, including the much-coveted Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

Approaching its sixth successful decade, the Festival had grown to the point where the

**Utah Shakespeare Festival Archives: “A Preserving Sweet”**

*by Paula Mitchell*

Paula Mitchell was hired as the first University Archivist at Southern Utah University in 2004. In 2011, in conjunction with the Utah Shakespeare Festival’s 50th Anniversary, Paula was instrumental in borrowing from the Folger Library one of William Shakespeare’s First Folios to be on display in Special Collections. She has taught several workshops on archival techniques and on conducting oral histories, as well as courses in the Southern Utah University’s Information Literacy Program. Effective July 1, 2014, she became Director of Special Collections and University Archives at Southern Utah University.
construction of a much-desired “Shakespeare Centre”—complete with a theatre that has a retractable roof and an administration suite—had become a justifiable necessity. In order to accommodate this new “Centre,” the Festival’s existing building would need to be demolished. With the development of these plans, came the realization by the Festival that something needed to be done with the accumulation of programs, photographs, artifacts, press releases, promotional items, brochures, posters, newsletters, and other records that had been created over the course of over 50 years. A phone inquiry to Southern Utah University’s Special Collections and Archives was placed to see if we could be of assistance. Thus began the process of negotiating the transfer of the Utah Shakespeare Festival materials, which had been previously housed in offices, closets, and storehouses, to our Special Collections and Archives in the Gerald R. Sherratt Library.

After meeting with Utah Shakespeare Festival administrators to discuss the transfer of Festival materials, our next step became one of gathering items together into one place so that a rough inventory could be made. I was concerned with what kinds of materials they had, how much space would be needed to house them in the Archives, and exactly how they would be moved from one place to another. Festival administrators were concerned with how long the move would take because they had a short time frame to evacuate the building before its demolition. With the help of library staff, Festival staff, and student workers, items were quickly boxed up and moved.

Processing new collections always seem to take more time than expected, but we found some wonderful treasures along the way. In addition to some phenomenal photographs, a beautiful quilt was discovered that had been made with fabric from each costume used in the plays that were produced for the 25th anniversary celebration. Intricate set designs done in miniature also are included in the collection. Prompt books, in particular, make a fascinating read. Each page of the play is on a sheet of paper with added notes, actors’ blocking, and lighting cues. We also enjoyed the list of “Festival Facts” that an unknown staff member had kept about the actors, which included the following facts:

The Festival cast a young actor for the 1975 season. Two days into the casting process he asked to be released. He had received a call from his agent notifying him he had been cast in a film he had auditioned for earlier. Festival producers let him go and wished him well. The actor was Mark Hamill; the role, Luke Skywalker in Star Wars.

Ty Burrell, who played Oberon in A Midsummer Night’s Dream would go on to star in the Emmy-winning television comedy, Modern Family.


In thinking about how to make this collection more accessible, staff of Southern Utah University Special Collections and Archives wrote and received a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant to digitize materials from this collection. After receiving the grant, one of the first tasks was to decide from among the thousands and thousands of slides, which to digitize and make available online. It was fortunate that about this same time a photography student looking to do an internship approached us and offered her skills to help with this selection process.

Photographs, programs, study guides, and other important documents were scanned and have been added to our online digital library for easy accessibility. VHS tapes are being converted to DVDs and will be cataloged.

The Utah Shakespeare Festival is a unique cultural icon of Utah that has made artistic and scholarly contributions of international significance for over 50 years. Southern Utah University Special Collections and Archives feels fortunate to be able to have this exceptional collection and to be able to provide access to some of its materials online.
Milagro Theatre and Obo Addy Legacy Project Collections Now Available for Research

Last year the Oregon Multicultural Archives (OMA) acquired the collections of two Oregonian performing arts groups: the Milagro Theatre and the Obo Addy Legacy Project. This April the OMA curated an exhibit to showcase the histories of both organizations and to celebrate that the collections are now accessible to the public for research.

Milagro (officially known as the Miracle Theatre Group) is a non-profit organization based in Portland, Oregon. Its mission is to “provide extraordinary Latino theatre, culture, and arts education experiences for the enrichment of all communities.” Founded in 1985 by José González and Dañel Malán, Executive and Artistic Directors, Milagro produces classical and contemporary performances, both Spanish and bilingual, through its main stage in Portland and “Milagro Tour,” a national touring group previously known as Teatro Milagro. Milagro strives to raise awareness and address the issues that matter to the Latino community through partnerships with schools and social service organizations.

The Milagro collection includes materials documenting the theatre’s administration and board, building history, outreach and education endeavors, staff and artists, grants and finances, and creative programming. In addition to textual documents, the collection also contains photographs, posters, and audiovisual materials. The collection currently consists of seventeen cubic feet with an addition expected this summer. For more information visit: bit.ly/milagro-archives.

The Obo Addy Legacy Project (OALP) is a non-profit organization based in Portland, Oregon, with the mission to “offer authentic experiences with the music and dance of Ghana, West Africa, and to create cultural awareness and understanding through educational offerings, an annual festival, and performing groups that tour the world.” The OALP was originally established in 1986 as the Homowo African Arts and Cultures organization by Obo and Susan Addy, who served as artistic and executive directors. Obo Addy was a Ghanaian master drummer who performed all over the world, wrote music, and taught at both the K-12 and college level. Addy passed away in 2012; however, led by Susan Addy, the OALP is committed to continuing his
legacy of creating, performing, and teaching African arts. The OALP collection is nineteen cubic feet and includes administrative records, promotional materials, and media related to the Homowo African Arts and Cultural organization. The archival collection also includes Obo Addy’s personal papers, such as correspondence, promotional and teaching materials, and photographs. For more information visit: http://bit.ly/oalp-archives.

For the joint exhibit featuring the two collections, both organizations loaned numerous artifacts including instruments and textiles from the OALP and costumes and props from the Milagro Theatre. To give viewers a sample of the groups’ performances, the exhibit includes two listening stations with concert and play footage. The exhibit is located in the library on the Oregon State University campus in Corvallis and will be available through September.

Yvonne Rainer: Dances and Films

On view at the Getty Center in Los Angeles through October 12, 2014, Yvonne Rainer: Dances and Films surveys Rainer’s performance works through photographs, scores, journals, ephemera, and audiovisual presentations. Drawn largely from the Yvonne Rainer Papers at the Getty Research Institute, the exhibition includes a complete retrospective of Rainer’s avant-garde films.

Yvonne Rainer’s work has been foundational across multiple disciplines and movements: dance, cinema, feminism, minimalism, conceptual art, and postmodernism. Rainer first came to prominence as a leading figure in the Judson Dance Theater, an informal collective of composers, dancers, and visual artists that began in 1962 with a performance at Judson Memorial Church in New York City.

Over time, Rainer’s works became increasingly personal and political. By the early 1970s she had begun producing experimental films, and in 1975 turned her focus entirely to film. In 2000, Rainer returned to choreography, and has continued to produce provocative new works to the present day.

See the Getty Web site for more information about the exhibition and to browse the finding aid for the Yvonne Rainer Papers.

New York Public Library Digitizes Over a Thousand Hours of Dance Videos from the Jerome Robbins Archive of the Recorded Moving Image

Over a thousand videos and recordings from the Jerome Robbins Dance Division’s Archive of the Recorded Moving Image have been digitized and are now managed through NYPL’s Digital Collections at digitalcollections.nypl.org/dancevideo. This web portal serves as the new digital repository for NYPL’s dance videos. Funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation also allowed NYPL to improve and develop new web features, including
an innovative juxtaposition tool that allows users to compare multiple videos side-by-side.

This tool transforms how videos can be watched and used throughout the Library’s collections, giving users the ability to combine videos from multiple sources (initially NYPL’s Digital Collections and YouTube) into the same workspace, and allows them to edit, annotate, and share their own “mashup” of multimedia content. Researchers now can easily compare two performances of the same piece, or watch a single production from two camera angles. As with many of their other projects, NYPL Labs has released all of the code for this multi-source video player and research space under an open source license so that other software developers, libraries, and institutions can use and help to improve this new research tool.

One of the stunning new collections now available freely on the Library’s public website is the Khmer Dance Project (KDP), which contains nine performances and rehearsals of the Royal Ballet of Cambodia, and more than 40 related interviews from the region.

**Women in Jazz at Rutgers**

The Institute of Jazz Studies (IJS) at Rutgers University–Newark welcomes jazz researchers and enthusiasts to view the collections of five prominent women in jazz that have been processed and are now open to the public. Work on the collections of singers Ella Fitzgerald, Abbey Lincoln, Annie Ross, and Victoria Spivey, and the journalist/promoter Wilma Dobie was underwritten by a two-year grant by the Council of Library and Information Resources. These collections were processed by archivist, Anders Griffen, who is also a busy working drummer in the New York City area.

**Abbey Lincoln** (1930-2010) was best known as one of jazz’s leading song stylists and was also a composer, actress, writer, and civil rights activist.

**Annie Ross** has appeared in stage productions, in movies, and on television, but most of all she is recognized as one of the great jazz singers of all time.

**Ella Jane Fitzgerald** (1917-1996) started her career at age 17 when she won the Apollo Theater’s Amateur Night contest in 1934, after which she joined the Chick Webb Band and recorded under the Decca label.

Blues singer **Victoria Spivey** (1906–1976), was an instant hit with her very first recording, *Black Snake Blues*, made in St. Louis in 1926 and released by Okeh Records.
Wilma Dobie was a journalist and lifelong jazz enthusiast, advocate and promoter.

For more information on these collections or others at IJS, please visit the Institute online.

NYPL Acquires Collections of George Avakian and Anahid Ajemian

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts has acquired the archives of George Avakian and Anahid Ajemian, the husband and wife whose remarkable careers each helped shape the music industry, as well as produce and record some of its greatest stars. The Avakian Collection will provide the most complete documentation of the work of a 20th-century recording executive, whose career with Columbia Records and other labels encompasses a golden age of recorded jazz, popular, and classical music. The Ajemian Collection offers access to one of the foremost violin and piano duos of its time, which commissioned, premiered, and recorded works by some of the most prominent classical composers of the 20th century. Together, their collections form an extraordinary resource for the study of jazz, popular, and modern classical music, the recording industry, and more.

The Avakian and Ajemian Archives amount to more than 160 linear feet of correspondence, papers, photographs, commercial and non-commercial sound recordings, a large number of which have never been available to the public before. The Avakian materials alone include hundreds of recordings, broadcasts, live venue recordings, studio takes, and complete recording sessions of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Sonny Rollins, Bing Crosby, Johnny Mathis, Peggy Lee, Keith Jarrett, Chet Baker, Dave Brubeck, and Ravi Shankar. The Ajemian portion of the collection is equally rich in unreleased recordings by composers and performers such as John Cage, Henry Cowell, Alan Hovhaness, Aram Khachaturian, and Lou Harrison.

After the collections are processed, they will be made available for researchers at the Library for the Performing Arts in Lincoln Center.

Above: William P. Gottlieb portrait of George Avakian

Left: Annie Ross
East Carolina University’s Joyner Library Grant Award Leads to Archival Project

The National Archives’ National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHRPC) has awarded a grant to the Special Collections Division at East Carolina University’s Joyner Library to process the archives of the Institute of Outdoor Theatre (IOT). With matching funds from ECU, Joyner Library, and the IOT, the total project budget exceeds $119,500, according to Dr. Michael C. Hardy, director of the IOT, which is located at the university.

The one-year, $56,290 grant is part of the Commission’s Documenting Democracy: Access to Historical Records program which funds projects that promote the preservation and use of the nation’s most valuable archival resources. The grant will also allow for the creation of a comprehensive online Encoded Archival Description (EAD) finding aid that will enable worldwide access to a guide of the contents of the IOT archive.

“The archival materials accumulated by the Institute of Outdoor Theatre over the past 50 years provide a unique view of a distinct movement in American Theatre history,” said Hardy. “We are very pleased to have received this important recognition of the quality of our archives from the National Archive’s panel of experts, and we look forward to making them available to future researchers when this project is complete.”

The audience for these materials includes set builders, regional and social historians,
folklorists, those concentrating on performing arts history, tourism history, and those interested in the general origin of historical outdoor drama in the United States, as well as Shakespeare and Renaissance festivals and all other forms of outdoor theatre nationally and abroad.

For more information about the grant, please contact Dale Sauter, principal investigator and interim head of service, at 252.328.0275 or sauterd@ecu.edu.

**HERE Archives Project**

HERE Arts Center, located in New York City, is embarking on an ambitious archival project to document the evolution of this downtown theatre and performance space from its beginnings out of New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts as the Tiny Mythic Theatre Company and its subsequent merger with another downtown theatre company, HOME for Contemporary Theatre and Art. HERE has been involved with the American Theater Archive Project (ATAP) for some time, but due to funding considerations has had to branch out on its own in order to process its approximately 50 linear feet of archival material housed in container storage in Connecticut. Individual artists who created shows at HERE include: Philip Seymour Hoffman, Eve Ensler, Camryn Manheim, and Basil Twist. Many theatre companies, such as Elevator Repair Service, Clubbed Thumb, and Target Margin Theater also got their start at HERE.

Artistic Director Kristin Marting and Resident Dramaturg Pete McCabe enlisted the aid of archivist Tanya Elder to survey and minimally process the collection in order to digitize materials regarding the history of the organization, with the goal of ultimately developing a repository for the collection. HERE has utilized archival interns from the University of Michigan Alternative Spring Break program to assist in executing these plans, and this coming fall will work with interns from the New School.

HERE is currently looking for a volunteer to configure Collective Access, with the possibility of a small stipend and entry to performances. Please contact Tanya Elder at elderta@mac.com for more information.

Be sure to visit HERE’s stunning online oral history and documentary series devoted to the lives of New York City performing artists, *MADE HERE*.

Scene from Kamala Sankaram’s *Miranda* (2012) at HERE