



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Robert Pagent collection on Colonel de Basil's Original Ballet Russe

1933-2009 [bulk 1941]

(S) *MGZMD 425

Compiled by Heather Halliday, 2016.

Summary

Creator: Pagent, Robert

Title: Robert Pagent collection on Colonel de Basil's Original Ballet Russe

Date: 1933-2009 [bulk 1941]

Size: .21 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Donated by William J. Schneider, 2012.

Abstract: The Original Ballet Russe was a ballet company created in 1938 that toured North America widely under the direction of Colonel Wassily de Basil. The Robert Pagent collection on Colonel de Basil's Original Ballet Russe primarily document a dancers' strike that took place in Havana, Cuba in 1941. Pagent, one of the dancers who participated in the strike, kept records of correspondence, clippings and photographs relating to the strike and to the dance company.

Access: Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

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Processing note: Compiled by Heather Halliday, 2016.

Creator History

The Original Ballet Russe was a ballet company created in 1938 following a legal battle for control of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo between its cofounders, Colonel Wassily de Basil and René Blum. Blum won control of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo name and went on to direct it with Sergei

Denham and Leonide Massine. De Basil ran a new company under the name Original Ballet Russe, touring it widely around North America and other parts of the world. In 1941, just before opening night in Havana, Cuba, the performers of the Original Ballet Russe went on strike. Having sought assistance in negotiating salaries from the American Guild of Musical Artists, the dancers went on strike when de Basil refused to pay salaries they believed he had agreed to with the union in New York. Robert Pagent, also known as Robert Weisser and as Anton Vlasoff, was a dancer in the company and one of the organizers of the strike, acting as secretary and treasurer for the dancers' group as the dispute played out over the course of several months.

Scope and Content Note

Pagent's records of the Havana Original Ballet Russe strike principally comprise this collection and include correspondence; theater programs; Pagent's contract with the dance company; notes from an interview with Betty Low, a dancer in the company who performed under the name Ludmila Lvova; and photographs. The greatest share of this small collection consists of correspondence, which documents communication among Pagent and other dancers in Havana, and the American Guild of Musical Artists and Colonel Wassily de Basil in New York City. Some original handwritten and typewritten letters and many photocopied letters are included. Letters are written in English and in French, with most of the French letters being filed together with English translations. Clippings and other records relating to the dance company in general are also included in the collection.

Arrangement: Collection includes correspondence, clippings and photographs relating to the strike and to the dance company.

Key Terms

Subjects

Ballet companies
Strikes

Occupations

Ballet dancers

Names

Low, Betty
Schneider, William J.
American Guild of Musical Artists
Ballets russes
Ballets russes du Col. W. de Basil