

Guide to the La Meri Papers, 1912-1992

(S) *MGZMD 207

Jerome Robbins Dance Division

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York**

Contact Information

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Jerome Robbins Dance Division

40 Lincoln Center Plaza

New York, New York 10023-7498

Phone: 212/870-1657

Email: dance@nypl.org

Web address: <http://www.nypl.org/research/lpa/dan/dan.html>

Processed by: Helice Koffler

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	La Meri Papers
Collection ID:	(S) *MGZMD 207
Creator:	La Meri
Extent:	6 linear feet (8 boxes)
Repository:	Jerome Robbins Dance Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Abstract: La Meri was a dancer of ethnic dances, a teacher of ethnic dance and a writer of poetry. She taught Mexican and Spanish and East Indian dance. She established small companies that both toured and performed at festivals. La Meri's school during the 1940s and 1950s was named Ethnologic Dance Center. She taught at Jacob's Pillow during the 1960s.

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

Publication Rights

For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

Preferred Citation

La Meri Papers, (S) *MGZMD 207, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Custodial History

The La Meri Papers were donated to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in 1993 by William Adams. The collection also incorporates some material accessioned and catalogued previously as La Meri papers, (S) *MGZMD 9 and Miscellaneous Manuscripts, (S) *MGZM-Res. La M.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in January 2008.

Biographical Note

Dancer, teacher, and writer, La Meri (1899-1989) was a pioneer in the field of ethnic dance. Born Russell Meriwether Hughes in Louisville, Kentucky, she moved to San Antonio, Texas at the age of twelve. La Meri (who was known by friends as “Dickie”) studied several art forms as a child, before settling on becoming a dancer after meeting Guido Carreras (who later became her husband) in New York City. After a few years working in local movie theaters in San Antonio, she moved to New York and found work in the company of Spanish dancer, Maria Montero, as well as in vaudeville. It was during an engagement in Mexico City that she adopted the name, La Meri and continued her study of Mexican and Spanish dance forms. Establishing a small company, La Meri began touring the world as an ethnic dancer from 1928 through 1930. In 1940, she established the School of Natya with Ruth St. Denis in New York, where she taught East Indian dance. The school was renamed the Ethnologic Dance Center in 1943 and operated until 1956. In 1960, she retired to Cape Cod, Massachusetts but continued to write extensively and began producing an annual summer ethnic dance festival from 1970-1979. In 1984, La Meri moved back to San Antonio and began her second retirement.

Scope and Content Note

The La Meri Papers contain a wide variety of materials that document aspects of the personal life and professional career of this well-known ethnic dance specialist and writer. Although the collection includes an assortment of personal and professional papers that cover La Meri's school years and early experiences as a performer, the bulk of the collection consists of original manuscripts of La Meri's poetry and prose writings. Some of these works were published under her real name, Russell Merriwether Hughes. There is virtually no material in the collection relating to La Meri's touring days as a dancer or her many years as a teacher and presenter of ethnic dance in New York City. Of particular interest are the photographs, which consist mainly of snapshots covering the period of her two retirements, in Cape Cod, Massachusetts and San Antonio, Texas. Also included in the collection are the numerous condolence letters sent to her companion, William Adams, as well as leaves from a scrapbook of obituary notices compiled by Adams.

Organization

The collection is organized into 3 series. They are:

Series I: Personal and Professional Papers, 1912-1992 and undated

Series II: Writings, 1924-1983 and undated

Series III: Oversized Materials, 1927-1982 and undated

Series Descriptions

Series I: Personal and Professional Papers, 1912-1992 and undated

2 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

The Personal and Professional Papers series contains a wide range of material covering La Meri's school years until the time of her death. Materials that date after her death include condolence letters sent to her companion, William Adams, as well as obituaries collected by Adams, the obituaries of another friend, and a program for a tribute in her honor. Of special interest are La Meri's early letters to her mother. Photographs in this series mainly document her later years in retirement in San Antonio, Texas; a few images that date from an earlier period may be found in the Oversized Materials series.

Series II: Writings, 1924-1983 and undated

3 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

The Writings series is comprised of numerous manuscript drafts and typescripts of La Meri's poetry and prose. Although there are a few dance-related writings among the prose selections, this material chiefly consists of fiction and dramatic works. Many of the items are signed under La Meri's real name, Russell Merriwether Hughes. Also included are Spanish translations of La Meri's poems. Many of the manuscripts are highly fragile and should be handled with care.

Series III: Oversized Materials, 1927-1982 and undated

5 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

The Oversized Materials series primarily consists of photograph albums, but also includes an early contract, a diploma, as well as original artwork most likely used in connection with publicity. One of the albums documents La Meri's first retirement in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Another album contains one leaf with several images dating from the 1930s and 1940s.

Series I: Personal and Professional Papers, 1912 -1992 and undated

Box 1

- F. 1 Appraisal inventory, 1977
Biographical information, undated
- F. 2 Compiled by others, 1973 and undated
- F. 3 Notes by La Meri, 1973 and undated
- F. 4 Certificates, 1924-1937
- F. 5 Choreographic notes, undated
Condolences, 1988
- F. 6 A-L
- F. 7 M-V
- F. 8 Cards
- F. 9 Contracts, 1933-1939
Correspondence, 1916-1970 and undated
- F. 10 General, 1926-1970 and undated (Includes items in Spanish and Italian.)
- F. 11 Christmas cards, 1930 and undated
- F. 12 Enclosure cards, undated
- F. 13 Mother, 1916-1917 and undated
- F. 14 Telegrams, 1948 and undated
- F. 15 Driver's permit, 1912
- F. 16 Ethnological Dance Center prospectus, undated
- F. 17 Horse show program, 1924 (La Meri was a rider.)
- F. 18 Identification card, 1922
- F. 19 Leaves from ledger books, undated (Includes list of countries in which La Meri studied and performed.)
- F. 20 *The Maoris and their Arts*, 1945
- F. 21 Marcel Dekker publications brochure, undated
Obituaries, 1988-1992 (Leaves from a scrapbook album; includes two obituaries for Olivia Matteson.)
- F. 22 Original artwork, undated (Pen and ink sketch of Ruth St. Denis; signature illegible.)
- F. 23 Photographs, 1982-1986 and undated

Box 2

- F. 1-4 Unidentified album contents, 1983-1986 and undated
- F. 3 Loose prints from front of oversized album, 1982-1983 and undated
- F. 4 Program listing drafts, undated
- F. 5 San Antonio Festival, 1990 (Event included a posthumous "Homage to La Meri.")

F. 6 School documents, 1915-1919

Series II: Writings, 1924-1983 and undated

Poetry, 1924-1983 and undated

Manuscripts, 1924 and undated

Box 3

- F. 1 *Armistice Day*, 1924, undated
- F. 2 *Below the Rio*, undated
- F. 3 *The Captured Bandit*, undated
- F. 4 *The City of Lost Dreams*, undated
- F. 5 *Cowboy Song*, undated
- F. 6 *Dance Poems*, undated
- F. 7 *Extasy* [sic], undated
- F. 8 *A Farmer's Prayer*, undated
- F. 9 List of poems, undated
- F. 10 *Pat Buccaneer*, undated
- F. 11 *Silent Nite, Holy Nite*, undated
- F. 12 *Texas*, undated
 Untitled poems, 1959-1978 and undated
- F. 13 1959-1978
- F. 14 Undated
 Typescripts, undated (Also some carbon copies and mimeographs.)
- F. 15 *Adios*, undated
- F. 16 *Afriad* [sic], undated
- F. 17 *The Alamo Has Fallen!*, undated
- F. 18 *Apologia*, undated (A booklet of "doggie poems" with original pencil drawings.)
- F. 19 *April Seventh*, undated
- F. 20 *As Man was Created*, undated
- F. 21 *Because My Love Has Passed*, undated
- F. 22 *Behind the Herd*, undated
- F. 23 *Below the Rio*, undated
- F. 24 *Bill Van Winkle Rides in from the Ranch*, undated
- F. 25 *The Buckskin*, undated
- F. 26 *By Way of Introduction*, undated
- F. 27 *China Poblana*, undated
- F. 28 Christmas verse, 1978-1983 and undated (Title from folder.)
- F. 29 *The City of Lost Dreams*, undated
- F. 30 *Consolation*, undated
- F. 31 *Cowboy Song*, undated
- F. 32 *The Coyote Hide*, undated
- F. 33 *Cross Hill*, undated

- F. 34 *Crossed Trails*, undated
F. 35 *Cultivated Land*, undated
F. 36 *Dawn on the Far Plains*, undated
F. 37 *Day's End*, undated
F. 38 *Death of Art*, undated
F. 39 *The Deserted House*, undated
F. 40 *Down in Texas*, undated
F. 41 *Dream*, undated
F. 42 *The Dream (Silver Cy)*, undated
F. 43 *Empty Little Houses*, undated
F. 44 *The Eyes of You*, undated
F. 45 *First Christmas*, undated
F. 46 *Fragment*, undated
F. 47 *Fraternity?*, undated
F. 48 *From a Letter*, undated
F. 49 *From a Pullman Window*, undated
F. 50 *Gifts*, undated
F. 51 *The Great God Pan*, undated
F. 52 *I Love Too Much!*, undated
F. 53 *In Other Days*, undated
F. 54 *In the Patio*, undated
F. 55 *Incident*, undated
F. 56 *The Last Night Trail*, undated
F. 57 *Lilith*, undated
F. 58 *Little Things*, undated
F. 59 *The Little Trails*, undated
F. 60 *Love Gives*, undated
F. 61 *The Lover's Flight*, undated
F. 62 *Memories*, undated
F. 63 *Miscast*, undated
F. 64 *Mother*, undated
F. 65 *My Love is a Strange Bird*, undated
F. 66 *Nacni*, undated
F. 67 *The Ocean*, undated
F. 68 *The Old-Time Hotel Clerk Ruminates*, undated
F. 69 *The Old Woman's Advice*, undated
F. 70 *On Evolution*, undated
F. 71 *On the River*, undated
F. 72 *On the Southbound's "Sunshine Special"*, undated
F. 73 *The One Who Feared the Disillusion of Matrimony*, undated
F. 74 *One Year*, undated

- F. 75 *Open Door*, undated
- F. 76 *The Overland Mail*, undated
- Box 4**
- F. 1 *Pals*, undated
- F. 2 *Panel*, undated
- F. 3 *Parables and Poetry*, 1946-1978 and undated (Contents of binder stamped with this title.)
- F. 4 *The Patriot*, undated
- F. 5 *The Phantom Horse*, undated
- F. 6 *Philosophy*, undated
- F. 7 *Poppa Hill*, undated
- F. 8 *Prairie Voices*, undated
- F. 9 *Prayer*, undated
- F. 10 *The Price*, undated
- F. 11 *Realism*, undated
- F. 12 *Requium* [sic], undated
- F. 13 *The Return*, undated
- F. 14 *Rhymes*, 1978-1979 (Title from folder.)
- F. 15 *The Road to Spain*, undated
- F. 16 *The Shooting Star*, undated
- F. 17 *The Song of the Open Trail*, undated
- F. 18 *Song to Mr. Khan/Incident*, undated
- F. 19 Spanish translation of poems, undated (Various translators credited.)
- F. 20 *Sunday Morning—Summer*, undated
- F. 21 *Texas*, undated
- F. 22 *They Are So Far Away*, undated
- F. 23 *To Renate Magni*, undated
- F. 24 *Toi et Moi*, undated (In Spanish.)
- F. 25 *Tribute to Texas*, undated
- F. 26 *Twelve Little Dance Poems*, 1980
- F. 27 *Two Songs*, undated
- F. 28 *Uncas*, undated
- F. 29 *Venezuela*, undated
- F. 30 *Voyage*, undated
- F. 31 *Why Should We Shed Our Tears?*, undated
- F. 32 *Wounded*, undated
- F. 33 *Yellow Butterflies*, undated
- F. 34 *Yesterday*, undated
- F. 35 Set of titled poems, undated
 Untitled poems, 1946-1949 and undated
- F. 36 1946-1949

F. 37 Undated
Prose, circa 1928 and undated

Box 5

F. 1 *Back Stage*, undated
 F. 2 *Bluebonnets*, undated
 F. 3 *East Indian Dance*, undated
 F. 4 *Ensayo al Medio*, undated
Femme Fatale, undated
 F. 5 Pages 1-25
 F. 6 Pages, 26-28, 30, 32-43, 45-50
 F. 7 Pages, 51-75, undated (Additional page numbered 58 inserted after page 60.)
 F. 8 *Hawaiian Mythology*, undated
 F. 9 *His Darling*, undated
 F. 10 *Huascar, the Last of the Inca Kings*, circa 1928
 F. 11 *I Know a Bank...*, undated
 F. 12 *Impressions of Sevilla and Her Exposition*, undated
 F. 13 *La Meri, Pioneer*, undated (Article by Lilian Newcomer.)
The Moon's Cargo, or, How the Triplets Cruised to the Land of Borealis, undated
 F. 14 Chapters 1-6, undated
 F. 15 Chapters 7-10, undated
 F. 16 Chapters 11-14, undated
 F. 17 Chapters 15-19, undated
 F. 18 Chapter 20, undated
 F. 19 *Notes on Within-Techniques*, undated
 F. 20 *Out of the West*, 1926
 F. 21 *The Parable of the Perfume-Bottle*, undated
 F. 22 *Prologue to the Thief of Bagdad*, undated
 F. 23 *Seven Wives of Soloman*, undated
 F. 24 *Subways and Southerners*, undated
 F. 25 *Technique of the East Indian Dance*, undated
 F. 26 *The Worship Dance*, undated
Zona Makes Her Choice, undated (Possible chapter from *Out of the West*.)
 F. 27
 F. 28 Untitled play, undated
 F. 29 Unidentified leaves, undated

Series III: Oversized Materials, 1927-1982 and undated

Box 6

F. 1 Contract, 1927
 F. 2 Diploma, 1930
 Original artwork, 1980-1982 and undated

- F. 3 Charcoal drawing, undated
F. 4 Ethnic Dance Festival, undated (Probably used for a poster or program cover.)
F. 5 La Meri portrait, 1980
F. 6 Poster layout, 1982
Photograph albums, 1933-1964 and undated

Box 7

- F. 1 Cape Cod, 1965-1981

Box 8

- F. 1 Album VIII, 1957-1964
F. 2 Untitled album, 1933-1983 and undated (Final leaf includes several older black and white prints.)

Separated Materials

2 audiocassettes

- **La Meri at Hyannis and New York City, 1981**
- **Music for Super 8mm Dance, undated**

Decorative hair comb, undated (Probably for Spanish dance performances.)

Jewel box/business card case, undated

Portrait miniature, undated (Of Spanish dancer.)