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Guide to the

Selma Jeanne Cohen papers

1964-2002

(S) *MGZMD 258

Compiled by Lea Jordan, June 2011

Summary

Creator: Cohen, Selma Jeanne, 1920-2005

Title: Selma Jeanne Cohen papers, 1964-2002

Size: 23.94 linear feet (47 boxes)

Source: Donated by the estate of Selma Jeanne Cohen, 2006

Abstract: Selma Jeanne Cohen (1920-2005) was a pioneering dance historian, writer and educator who helped revolutionize the field of dance research and history. The Selma Jeanne Cohen papers document the intellectual and professional career of this leading dance historian.

Access: To request materials, please contact the Jerome Robbins Dance Division (dance@nypl.org) in advance.

Inquiries regarding audio and video materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation evaluation and migration prior to access.

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Preferred citation: Selma Jeanne Cohen papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note

Cohen's papers are spread over five collections within the library. These include this collection, which concentrates on her later career (1964-2002), the Selma Jeanne Cohen papers (1942-1993), the Selma Jeanne Cohen papers relating to Dance Perspectives (1959-1976), the Selma Jeanne Cohen papers relating to teaching and critical writing projects (1965-1973), and the Selma Jeanne Cohen International Encyclopedia of Dance records (1964-1995). All of the above collections originated with Cohen herself, and users should consider consulting all of the above finding aids as their needs require. Users may need to use more than one collection to thoroughly explore a topic. For example, those interested in the International Encyclopedia of Dance should consult both these papers and the Selma Jeanne Cohen International Encyclopedia of Dance records.

Related collections

Selma Jeanne Cohen International Encyclopedia of Dance records (1964-1995). Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Selma Jeanne Cohen papers (1942-1993). Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Selma Jeanne Cohen papers relating to Dance Perspectives (1959-1976). Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Selma Jeanne Cohen papers relating to teaching and critical writing projects (1965-1973). Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

Creator history

Selma Jeanne Cohen (1920-2005) was a pioneering dance historian, writer and educator who helped revolutionize the field of dance research and history. Cohen received her degree in English from the University of Chicago and began her career teaching English Literature. Upon moving to New York in 1953, she discovered her interest lay in dance scholarship and review. From 1955 to 1958 she was a dance critic at *The New York Times*, assisting John Martin. She was also the dance critic for *The Saturday Review* in 1965 and 1966.

Cohen was a founder and later editor of the magazine, *Dance Perspectives* (1959-1976) and established the Dance Perspectives Foundation, which promoted dance scholarship and publication. *Dance Perspectives* was the first dance publication of its kind. The magazine was published quarterly and was devoted to developing a historical research base for dance scholarship, which at the time had no precedent.

From 1963 to 1977, Cohen held a series of dance-related teaching positions at a number of colleges and universities, including Connecticut College, New York University, Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and University of Massachusetts. She also ran a number of workshops and conferences. Cohen was a pioneer of the very first graduate level accredited programs and courses in dance history.

Cohen served on the boards of the American Society for Aesthetics and the American Society for Theatre Research, received a Rockefeller grant and a Guggenheim Fellowship and became a member of the advisory panel on dance for the National Endowment for the Arts.

She is the author of articles in numerous publications, journals, encyclopedias, and anthologies, and published several books including *The Modern Dance: Seven Statements of Belief*, *Doris Humphrey: An Artist First and Next Week*, *Swan Lake*, regarding dance aesthetics.

The most notable of Cohen's publications is her two decade project: editing the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*. Published in 1998, it continues to be the most comprehensive dance resource of its kind. The encyclopedia became feasible when the Dance Perspectives Foundation received a National Endowment of the Arts grant in 1976. This funding allowed the foundation to move forward on the task of assembling the encyclopedia. Cohen was involved in almost every aspect of the encyclopedia's creation.

After *Dance Perspectives* ceased publication, Cohen focused on conferences and symposiums, lecturing and attending dance history related events all over the globe, including travel to the Soviet bloc during the late 1970s. Much of her travel and conference attendance was related in some way to her research for the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*.

Cohen spent her later years in her home in Greenwich Village, New York City.

Scope and content note

The Selma Jeanne Cohen papers document the intellectual and professional career of this leading dance historian. The papers include professional and personal correspondence, materials from various organizations and conferences Cohen attended, subject files, teaching materials, writings, photographs and slides, and performance and lecture videos.

Arrangement

The Selma Jeanne Cohen papers are organized into the following series:

- Series I: Correspondence, 1966-2000
- Series II: Organizations and Conferences, 1973-1999
- Series III: Subject Files, 1964-2002
- Series IV: Teaching, 1969-1997
- Series V: Writings, 1968-1998
- Series VI: Photographs and Slides, 1973-1995
- Series VII: Performance and Lecture Videos, 1977-1998

Key terms

Subjects

Dance -- Study and teaching
Dance critics -- United States -- 20th century

Names

Cohen, Selma Jeanne, 1920-2005
Dance Perspectives Foundation
Society of Dance History Scholars (U.S.)

Special formats

Photographs
Programs
Slides
Video recordings

Container list

Series I: Correspondence, 1966-2000

This series is composed of correspondence from other dance historians and arts scholars, as well as family cards and birthday greetings. The professional correspondence is arranged by correspondent and by date. This system was kept by Cohen and has been retained here. The user should check both arrangements when seeking information on a specific individual or topic. For example, there may be correspondence from an individual listed in the alphabetical arrangement within the chronological arrangement if there were letters by different correspondents that Cohen wished to keep together. Topics covered in the correspondence include lectures, advice and editing of scholarly works, conference planning, and general scholarship in dance theory and history. Notable correspondents include Christena Schlundt and Francis Sparshott. Cohen mingled business with her personal relationships, and often the professional correspondence contains both scholarly and personal references within one letter. Arrangement is in two major sections, alphabetical by correspondent and chronological by date. The family cards and correspondence are placed at the end of this series.

By Correspondent

b.1 f.1-2	A-F
b.1 f.3	Alba, Patricia
b.1 f.4	Alderson, Evan
b.1 f.5	Arnheim, Rudolf
b.1 f.6	Archer, Hodson
b.1 f.7	Aschengreen, Erik
b.1 f.8	Baer, Nancy
b.1 f.9	Berleant, Arnold
b.1 f.10	Biliski-Cohen, Rachel
b.1 f.11	Brinson, Peter
b.1 f.12	Brunel, Lise
b.1 f.13	Carley, Jacalyn
b.1 f.14	Cavrel, Holly
b.1 f.15	Chapman, John
b.1 f.16	Christait, Marie-Francoise
b.1 f.17	Clark, Eburn
b.1 f.18	Clarke, Mary
b.1 f.19	Craig, Valda
b.1 f.20	Crockett, Christine
b.1 f.21	Dallal, Alberto
b.2 f.1	Donohue, Joe
b.2 f.2	Dienes, Gee
b.2 f.3	Dorris, George
b.2 f.4	Ehrmann, Hans
b.2 f.5	Einasto, Heidi
b.2 f.6	Faro, Antonio
b.2 f.7	Fonteyn, Margot
b.2 f.8	Foster, Susan

Series I: Correspondence (cont.)

By Correspondent (cont.)

b.2 f.9-10	G-M
b.2 f.11	Genne, Beth
b.3 f.1	Goellner, Ellen
b.3 f.2	Grelinger, Els
b.3 f.3	Grolier, Inc
b.3 f.4	Grut, Marina
b.3 f.5	Guest, Ivor
b.3 f.6	Hartong, Corrie
b.3 f.7	Heale, Pippa
b.3 f.8	Hoskova, Jana
b.3 f.9	Hunt, Marilyn
b.3 f.10	Ichikawa, Miyabi
b.3 f.11	Ingber, Judy
b.3 f.12	Joffe, Nigel
b.3 f.13	Kant, Marion
b.3 f.14	Kravoskaya, Vera
b.3 f.15	Kreemer, Connie
b.3 f.16	Lokko, Sophia
b.3 f.17	Manning, Susan
b.3 f.18	Manor, Giora
b.3 f.19	Milhous, Judith
b.3 f.20	Muller, Hedwig
b.3 f.21	Murgiyanto, Sal
b.3 f.22	N-S
b.3 f.23	Naslund, Erik
b.3 f.24	Neubauer, Heinrik
b.3 f.25	Odom, Selma
b.4 f.1	Ou, Jian-ping
b.4 f.2	Pritchard, Jane
b.4 f.3	Pudelek, Janina
b.4 f.4	Raftis, Alkis
b.4 f.5	Ralph, Richard
b.4 f.6	Reynolds, Bill
b.4 f.7	Ries, Daryl
b.4 f.8	Robinson, Jacqueline
b.4 f.9	Roehm, Renate and Ulrich
b.4 f.10	Schlundt, Christena
b.4 f.11	Scholl, Tim
b.4 f.12	Schuller, Gundi

Series I: Correspondence (cont.)

By Correspondent (cont.)

- b.4 f.13 Serre, Jean-Claude
- b.4 f.14 Shelton, Suzanne
- b.4 f.15 Shennan, Jennifer
- b.4 f.16 Sowell, Debra
- b.4 f.17 Sparshott, Francis
- b.4 f.18 Stahle, Anne Greta
- b.5 f.1 Suhonen, Tiina
- b.5 f.2 Swift, Sister Grace
- b.5 f.3 T-Z
- b.5 f.4 Tavis, Anna
- b.5 f.5 Uzbek Dance Society
- b.5 f.6 Vatsyayan, Kapila
- b.5 f.7 Van Shaik, Eva
- b.5 f.8 Van Zile, Judy
- b.5 f.9 Wilde, Nancy
- b.5 f.10 Wolz, Carl
- b.5 f.11 Zhu, Liren

By Date

- b.5 f.12-13 1966-1977
- b.5 f.14 1978-1979
- b.6 f.1 1980-1981
- b.6 f.2 1982-1983
- b.6 f.3 1984-1985
- b.6 f.4 1986-1987
- b.6 f.5 1988-1989
- b.6 f.6 1990-1993
- b.6 f.7 1994-1995
- b.6 f.8 1996-2000
- b.7 f.1-4 Family and Personal, 1975-2000
- b.8 f.1-5 Family and Personal, 1975-2000

Series II: Organizations and Conferences, 1973-1999

Series II contains materials reflecting Cohen's interest in attending and participating in scholarly conferences and organizations. The materials not only contain programs and itineraries from conferences and organizational meetings, but correspondence pertaining to Cohen's participation in conferences, lecture notes, and local maps and paraphernalia. Though the bulk of the documents may have been produced by the organizations themselves, the files are kept in such a way that Cohen's level of participation within each organization can be ascertained. Arrangement is alphabetical by name of conference or organization.

- b.9 f.1 American Council of Learned Societies, undated

Series II: Organizations and Conferences (cont.)

- American Dance Festival
 - b.9 f.2 1989
 - b.9 f.3 1993
 - b.9 f.4 American Dance Guild, 1996
- b.9 f.5-6 American Society for Aesthetics, 1982
- b.9 f.7-9 American Society for Theatre Research, undated
- b.10 f.1 Art and Dance, 1982
- b.10 f.2 Boston Ballet, undated
- b.10 f.3 Bournonville Festival, 1979
- b.10 f.4 British Society for Dance Research, 1982
- b.10 f.5 Centre of Polish Ballet, 1983-1985
- b.10 f.6 Checkov Conference, 1996
- b.11 f.1-4 Congress on Research in Dance, 1982-1994
 - b.11 f.5 Cross Cultural Dance Resources, 1990
 - b.11 f.6 Dance Critics Association, undated
 - b.11 f.7 Dance History Conference, 1973
- b.11 f.8-9 Dance Perspectives Foundation, 1997-1998
 - b.12 f.1 Dance Theater Workshop, undated
 - b.12 f.2 Danspace Project, undated
- b.12 f.3-4 Doris Humphrey Conference, 1994-1995
 - b.12 f.5 The Early Years: American Modern Dance 1900-1930, 1981
 - b.12 f.6 English Art and Aesthetics in the 18th Century, 1983
 - b.12 f.7 Ethnomusicology, 1973
- b.13 f.1-4 European Association of Dance Historians, 1991-1997
 - b.13 f.5 Hong Kong International Dance Conference, 1990
 - b.13 f.6 Institute for Scientific Information, 1979-1988
 - b.13 f.7 International Association for Aesthetics, 1992
 - b.13 f.8 International Congress of Aesthetics, 1980
- b.14 f.1 International Congress of Theater Associations, undated
- b.14 f.2 International Council for Traditional Music, 1983
- b.14 f.3 International Dance Alliance, 1985
- b.14 f.4 International Dance Council, 1992-1996
- International Federation for Theatre Research
 - b.14 f.5-7 1992-1994
- b.15 f.1 1995
- b.15 f.2 International Organization of Folk Art, 1990
- b.15 f.3 International Research and Exchanges Board, 1989-1995
- b.15 f.4 International School of Theatre Anthropology, 1996
- b.15 f.5 International Seminar on the Bible in Dance, 1979

Series II: Organizations and Conferences (cont.)

- b.15 f.6 The Joffrey Ballet, 1987
- b.15 f.7 The Miami Balanchine Conference, 1984
- b.16 f.1 Movement Theatre International, 1992-1993
- b.16 f.2 National Resource Center for Dance, 1984
- b.16 f.3 Philosophical and Cultural Research Centre, 1995
- b.16 f.4 The Rockefeller Foundation, 1987
- b.16 f.5 Roehampton Institute, 1997
- b.16 f.6 Society for Dance Research, 1994
- b.16 f.7 Society for Research Into Higher Education, 1982
- b.16 f.8-9 Society of Dance History Scholars, 1980-1999
- b.17 f.1-5 Society of Dance History Scholars, 1980-1999
- b.17 f.6 Theater and Ritual Symposium, 1982
- b.17 f.7 Welsh Dance Theatre, 1974
- b.17 f.8 Wisconsin Dance Council, 1977
- b.18 f.1-3 World Dance Alliance, undated
- b.18 f.4 World Shakespeare Congress, 1986

Series III: Subject Files, 1964-2002

The subject files contain a broad range of materials relating to Cohen's personal life and scholarly interests. Dance programs, correspondence relating to the awarding of the Bueno Prize, articles and interviews written about Cohen, subject files pertaining to areas of interest, souvenirs from her world travel, and a collection of photographs and birthday letters from her 80th birthday are all included in this series. This series also contains Cohen's collection of papers and articles by other dance historians. These articles are arranged by author and there is often more than one article by each author within a file. Occasionally, Cohen has retained correspondence regarding the writings within the files as well. Topics include European dance history, retrospectives on the work of individual choreographers, and studies of trends and developments in dance forms over time. Arrangement is alphabetical by subject.

- b.19 f.1-5 Aesthetics, undated
- b.19 f.6-7 Addresses
- Appointment Books
 - b.20 1964-1975
 - b.21 1975-1979
 - b.22 1980-1984
 - b.23 1985-1988
 - b.24 1989-1991
 - b.25 1992-1995
 - b.26 1996-1999
 - b.27 2000-2002
- b.28 f.1 Awards, undated
 - Bueno Prize

Series III: Subject Files (cont.)

Bueno Prize (cont.)

- b.28 f.2 1972-1973
- b.28 f.3 1978-1980
- b.28 f.4 1981-1983
- b.28 f.5 1990-1991

Cohen, Selma Jeanne

- b.29 f.1 80th Birthday Party, 2000
- b.29 f.2 Articles About, undated
- b.29 f.3 High School Reunion, 1987
- b.29 f.4 Diaghilev Exhibit, 1975-1990
- b.29 f.5 Fulbright Association, 2001
- b.30 f.1 Gifts, 1985-2002
- b.30 f.2-3 Programs, 1966-1990
- b.30 f.4 Projects, undated

Russian Ballet

- b.30 f.5-6 General, undated
- b.31 f.1 General, undated
- b.31 f.2-3 Krasovskaya, Vera, 1975
- b.31 f.4 Siberia, undated

Souvenirs

- b.31 f.5-6 Eastern Europe, 1973
- b.32 f.1 Germany, 1983
- b.32 f.2 Paris, undated
- b.32 f.3 Scandinavia, undated
- b.32 f.4 Travel, undated

Writings by Others

- b.32 f.5 Ambegaokar, Saga
- b.32 f.6-7 Bennahum, Ninotchka
- b.33 f.1 Carter, Curtis
- b.33 f.2-3 Chapman, John
- b.33 f.4 Clarke, Mary
- b.33 f.5-6 Costons, Maureen
- b.34 f.1 Devers, Lisa
- b.34 f.2 De Wilde, Nancy
- b.34 f.3 Dils, Ann
- b.34 f.4 Franko, Mark
- b.34 f.5 King, Kenneth
- b.34 f.6 Jordan, Stephanie
- b.34 f.7 Manning, Susan
- b.35 f.1 Noy, Jim

Series III: Subject Files (cont.)

Writings by Others (cont.)

- b.35 f.2 Nyman, Ruth
- b.35 f.3 Pudalek, Janina
- b.35 f.4 Rader, Patricia
- b.35 f.5 Scott, Gregory
- b.35 f.6 Souritz
- b.35 f.7-8 Sowell, Debra
- b.36 f.1 Sowell, Debra
- b.36 f.2 Sparshott, Francis
- b.36 f.3 Van Camp, Julie
- b.36 f.4 Velenchik, Cathy
- b.36 f.5 Walther, Suzanne
- b.36 f.6-7 Winstead, Jennifer

Series IV: Teaching, 1969-1997

Series IV documents Cohen's work as an educator and includes files on institutions where she was either a permanent or guest lecturer, correspondence from advisees, and recommendations she wrote for her students. The institutional files consist of contracts and lecture agreements, correspondence with university officials and other educators at each institution, and notes as to what each course or lecture session would cover. Arrangement is alphabetical by institution or subject.

Institutions

- b.37 f.1 Ball State University, 1992-1997
- b.37 f.2 New York University, 1969-1979
- b.37 f.3 Princeton, 1973
- b.37 f.4 University of California, Los Angeles, 1972
- b.37 f.5 University of California, Riverside, 1989-1990
- b.37 f.6 University of Illinois, 1973
- b.37 f.7 University of Maryland, undated
- b.37 f.8 University of Michigan, 1972
- b.37 f.9 University of Wisconsin, 1969-1973
- b.37 f.10 Vassar College, 1982
- b.38 f.1 York University

Students

- b.38 f.2-4 Advisee correspondence
- b.38 f.5 Recommendations
- b.39 f.1-3 Recommendations

Series V: Writings, 1968-1998

Series V holds articles (both written and edited by Cohen), correspondence with publishing houses, and some material relating to her work on the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, as well as her lesser known work for major encyclopedias such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and *World Book*. Of interest is the clear documentation of the process of editing and putting together just one encyclopedic article. Questions of layout, sources, permissions, and the editing of the encyclopedias as a whole are covered. Arrangement is alphabetical by subject or publication title.

Articles and Books

- b.39 f.4-6 Articles
- b.40 f.1-7 Articles
- b.40 f.8 Permission Letters
- b.40 f.9 Publicity
- b.40 f.10 Publishing Correspondence
- b.41 f.1-2 Publishing Correspondence
- b.41 f.3 Royalties
- b.41 f.4 Editing and Reviews

Encyclopedias

- b.42 f.1-3 Articles
- b.43 f.1 Encyclopedia Britannica, 1977-1978
- b.43 f.2 Encyclopedia Judacia, 1968-1969
- b.43 f.3 Encyclopedia of Aesthetics, 1986
- b.43 f.4-6 International Encyclopedia of Dance, 1993-1998
- b.44 f.1-4 International Encyclopedia of Dance, 1993-1998
- b.44 f.5 World Book Encyclopedia, 1968
- b.45 f.1 World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre, 1995

Series VI: Photographs and Slides, 1973-1995

This series includes dance history photographs and personal snapshots. The dance history photographs and slides are composed of hundreds of images of dance from copies of 18th century etchings to modern dance and Broadway productions. The slides are labeled in Cohens hand and were a part of many of her dance history lectures, both in universities and at conferences and symposiums. The personal pictures are primarily photographs of Cohen along with other historians at various conferences around the world. Images are conference shots as well as tourist-related. Arrangement is alphabetical by subject.

Dance History

- b.45 f.2 Photographs, undated
- b.45 f.3-5 Slides, undated

Personal

- b.46 f.1 Bueno Prize, 1977
- b.46 f.2 Chicago, 1976
- b.46 f.3 China, undated

Series VI: Photographs and Slides (cont.)

Personal (cont.)

- b.46 f.4 Dakar, undated
- b.46 f.5 Estonia, undated
- b.46 f.6 Family, undated
- b.46 f.7 Hong Kong, undated
- b.47 f.1 Indonesia
- b.47 f.2 International Federation for Theatre Research, 1973
- b.47 f.3 Jian-Ping
- b.47 f.4-5 Korea
- b.47 f.6 Leningrad, 1976
- b.47 f.7 Madrid, 1992
- b.47 f.8 Mexico City, 1985
- b.47 f.9 Paris and Berlin, 1986
- b.47 f.10 Society of Dance History Scholars
- b.47 f.11 Spain
- b.47 f.12 Stockholm, 1986, 1989
- b.47 f.13 United Soviet Socialist Republic, 1978-1979
- b.47 f.14 Vancouver, 1989
- b.47 f.15 Warsaw, 1985

Series VII: Performance and Lecture Videos, 1977-1998

Series VII includes videos of dance performances, retrospectives, and lectures given by various groups at conferences, symposiums, and other venues. Examples include performances by cultural dance groups, groupings of the work of a certain choreographer such as Isadora Duncan, and lectures accompanied by dance examples. The videos are a mix of professionally produced recordings and home videos.

Inquiries regarding audio and video materials in the collection may be directed to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. Audio/visual materials may be subject to preservation, evaluation and migration prior to access.