Documenting Dance Traditions and Individual Artists With Emphasis on East Asia

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The Dance Collection is the largest and most comprehensive archive in the world devoted to documenting the art of dance. It is a division of the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library, and is located at Lincoln Center. A fact sheet on its public service appears at the end of this article.

The scope of the Collection is broad. Every type of dance is documented: ballet, modern, social, folk, and ethnic. Due to the Collection's experience in archival development, it was awarded two grants by the JDR 3rd Fund to develop the first archive of materials on Asian dance and dance-theatre, an archive created to serve an international body of scholars, researchers, critics, choreographers, dancers, and students.

The development of the Asian archive followed the basic philosophy of the Collection, and I will discuss later the East Asian materials represented, but first, how does one document this elusive art? Dance lives at once in time and space, but time passes - indeed passes as soon as the curtain falls or the performance ends. What are the materials, how do we assemble them? How do we create the records that can transmit the great performances, the dance of today?

From its beginning in 1965, the Collection has had to innovate and expand the usual concepts of collecting, and has assembled every type of material which can tell about dance: clippings, reviews, programs, books, periodical articles, films, videotapes, drawings and prints, posters, scrapbooks, scenic and costume designs, oral tapes, photographs, diaries, manuscripts, and letters. To further preserve the choreography and its performance, the Collection has found it necessary to produce film records, where no records existed before. With special funding, the Collection has recorded over 300 works in the repertoires of America's major companies. For as far as dance is concerned,
with printed literature we are still talking about externals, but with film
and videotape we are able to provide the researcher and artist with a facility
that those working in the fields of music and drama have taken for granted for
centuries, the ability to study the repertoire of their art.

The Asian dance archive, although on a more modest scale, was developed
accordingly. Multi-media materials, with an emphasis on film and videotape,
were acquired from sources throughout the world. Original motion picture
films and videotapes were made of forms not previously documented. These ma-
terials have been cataloged for inclusion in The Dictionary Catalog of the
Dance Collection, the published bibliography of its holdings. The catalog
unifies material, regardless of the medium, by author, subject, title, country,
and type of dance. To give an example of the research value of the catalog,
I have attached as an appendix two pages of citations under "Japan." This ten-
volume Catalog (published in 1974 by G.K. Hall and Co., 70 Lincoln Street,
Boston, Massachusetts 02111) has been sold to universities, libraries, and
institutions both in the United States and abroad. It has been updated with
annual supplements in the same format, also published by G.K. Hall and Co.,
under the title Bibliographic Guide to Dance, for each year from 1975 through
1980. Owing to financial constraints, the continued publication of these
annual supplements was in doubt at the time when this paper was completed.

The East Asian dance and dance-theatre traditions, in particular those of
Japan, are well represented in the Collection, with over 300 hours of perfor-
manace on film and videotape, 165 manuscripts, 400 books and periodical articles,
250 photographs, and over 1,500 reviews, clippings, programs, and posters. In
addition to the newly acquired materials, 3,200 manuscripts, sketchbooks, ink,
watercolor and gouache drawings, picture scrolls, woodblock prints, books, and
articles owned by the Library, but housed in the Spencer Collection, and the
Oriental, Music, Theatre, Art, and social science divisions, were indexed and
cataloged for their dance values.

As it is a multi-media archive, it is possible to view on film and tape the
changes which have occurred in the Kabuki, its acting style as well as the
dramatic interpretation of the text, from 1925 to 1977. A study of the tech-
nique of Matsumoto Kōshirō VII in the role of Lady Sarashina in Momiji-Gari
with that of Onoe Kuroemon II, in performance of the same role, reveals these
changes as well as the difference between the Ichikawa and Onoe schools of
acting. Further analysis of these legendary performers is provided with ex-
cerpts of Kuroemon in Kamugai Jinya and Kōshirō in Kanjinchō, filmed in 1940
in its entirety. The famed onnagata of the Kabuki stage are documented,
Nakamura Utaemon VI in an excerpt from Musume Dōjoji and Onoe Baiko VII in
the full-length film of Sukeroku, acquired through the courtesy of Faubion
Bowers.

Artists of the Juitamai, the female classical dance counterpart of the Kabuki,
are also represented, among them, Takehara Han in her premiere solo work,
Yuki, and Fujima Chikuyū in Hokushū. To further document the Juitamai tech-
nique, repertoire, make-up, and dressing, the Collection produced a two-hour
tape program on Suzusetsu and Suzuki Hanayagi, with commentary pro-
avided by Beate Gordon. The response to this program was so great that it
was aired twice on public television.
The illuminated eight-volume manuscript of the Kaden Sho, the 17th-century Noh teaching manual written by Zeami—or its translation—can be consulted to evaluate the performance of Kita Sadayo in Hagoromo, or Kanze Hisao in Ama and the kuse section of Hanjō.

If one is not familiar with the Kabuki or Noh texts which the dance gestures intensify, it is possible to study the translations of these plays by Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound, Yukio Mishima, Donald Keene, and James Brandon, available for use in Japanese, English, Spanish, French, and Italian. The earliest Noh scroll in existence, the text of Matsukaze Murasame, dated approximately 1520, can also be examined.

The picture scroll narrative of the Noh play, The Sumida River, written and illustrated in 1618 by the Noh actor Jinnemon Fukuo for his daughter; the Noh and Kyogen scenes drawn by the 18th-century actor of the Kanze school, Sesshin Fukuo; and the woodblock prints of Kabuki scenes, drawn by Okumura Masanobu in the early 18th century, bring to life—in an often humorous way—the dance traditions and individual dancers being studied. So do the manuscripts, memoirs, and autobiographies of Hanayanagi Shōtarō, Ōnoe Kikugorō VI, and Mei Lanfang, the foremost representative of the Peking Opera tradition, whose performances, unfortunately, were never recorded on film.

The printed literature written by so many illustrious scholars—almost too innumerable to mention—gives us the technical manuals, biographical data, a history of the art through the recorded genealogies of the major acting families and their exponents. Did you know that there was a ballroom-dancing craze in Tokyo in the 1950’s?

What of the dances which preceded the refined and stylized forms of the Noh and Kabuki? From what sources did they develop and evolve? From the Kagura, the sacred Shinto dances of supplication. Due to the efforts of Professor Yasuji Honda and those of the NHK Center for the Preservation and Documentation of the Traditional Performing Arts, these ancient dances have been documented on film, for the benefit of the scholars of today and tomorrow. The precursor of the Noh, the Yamabushi kagura mai of Ama Kudari "Descent of God from Heaven" and Yama No Kami "Dance of the Mountain God," have been filmed. Predating the prototype of the Kabuki, the Onna Kabuki, are the Ayako mai from the Furyū repertoire of the 15th century. After ten years of research in the countryside, scholars finally located and recorded in the remote villages of Takaharada and Shimono, Niigata Prefecture, what they considered to be the true and pure forms of these ancient dances.

Notation manuscripts documenting the oldest extant dance tradition in the world, the Bugaku, were acquired from the Library of the Imperial Household on microfilm, in 73 volumes written in the 13th, 16th and 17th centuries. We will be receiving the Left and Right Dance Notations, recorded in the 19th century, but as they are so heavily used by the Bugaku of today, it has been difficult to arrange a time when microfilming would not interrupt their rehearsal schedule. These technical manuals are given color and weight, are robed and masked, when used in conjunction with the two volumes of gouache costume drawings presented by the Gagaku to Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis at the conclusion of their 1925-26 Asian tour. They are the only hand-painted replicas in existence of the drawings housed in the Imperial Household Library.
Preserving the Bugaku as a living art of movement in time and space are the films produced by the Shimonaka Memorial Foundation, records of, for example, the Bugaku left-side dance quartet of Manzairaku "Music of Ten Thousand Years," and Genjōraku "Music of the Return to the Palace," a right-side dance solo.

The work of choreographers working in what is termed syncretic dance styles such as ballet, modern and post-modern, is also well documented. Outstanding among these artists are: Suzushi and Suzusetsu Hanayagi, who work both in the classical Juitamai and modern dance traditions; Saeko Ichinohe; Akira Kasai; Akiko Kanda; Toshiko Okuda; Hyo Takahashi; Kei Takei; Shigeru Yoko; the Grand Camelia Dance Company; Kimie Sasamoto; Kim Mae Ja; Al Huang; Lin Hwi-min—who, you may remember, concluded a very successful season last year at the Brooklyn Academy of Music; and of course, the work of Chiang Ch'ing and the China Ballet Troupe.

Although documentation of Japanese dance-drama predominates—possessing as it does, perhaps the richest and most diversified dance culture in the world—we do not want to give the impression that Korea and China have been neglected. The work of the National Classical Music Institute in the preservation of traditional Korean performing arts is represented. The films of Robert Garfias, for example, recorded at the Institute, of the Yi Dynasty court dances—a 500-year-old tradition—have been acquired, as have multi-media materials on the satirical masked dance, the tal ch'um, from Pongsan and Cholla-Do. The celebrated performances of Kim So-Hi and Kim Ji-Soo in the salp'uri, improvisational dance, are available for study on film and videotape. P'ansori, the Korean operatic form, can be studied by itself, or comparatively, with the materials assembled on the Peking Opera. The vigorous "Dance of the Warriors" from the opera Mount Yentangshan, filmed in 1957, can be studied in conjunction with The Red Detachment of Women, or videotapes on the Shenyang Acrobatic Troupe.

At this stage in the archive's development, it can be said that the materials assembled offer a unique opportunity to scholars and performing artists. While university archives offer collections of greater depth for the study of individual forms, few can supply the level of range of multi-media materials now represented.

An extensive resource file of scholars; specialists; film, videotape, and publishing companies; cultural, educational, and government officials; and choreographers and dancers has been created. Many have recognized the need to preserve and make possible an in-depth study of these traditions in the West; they have contributed substantially to our work, and continue to make recommendations. A pattern of communications has emerged that will enable the Collection to keep informed of developments in the future.
Fact Sheet

Name: Dance Collection

Address: Library and Museum of the Performing Arts
The New York Public Library at Lincoln Center
111 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, New York 10023

Access: The Dance Collection is open to the public free of charge, and provides reference service in its reading room, by telephone, and by mail. Film and videotape viewing is by advance appointment only, and can be scheduled by calling the Collection's reference service. Group screenings for classes and companies are held in a room which seats 20 in the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound, adjacent to the Collection. Photoduplication services are available, and materials which are not fragile may be copied. The staff of this office is trained in the handling of archival material, and the cost is thirty cents per page, sixty cents for clippings. As with all divisions of The Research Libraries, the Collection's materials may be studied and viewed only within the Collection; they may not be loaned.

Hours: 12:00 - 5:45 Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday
12:00 - 7:45 Monday and Thursday

Telephone: (212) 799-2200, Ext. 228, 229 Reference service, film and videotape appointments
(212) 799-2200, Ext. 218, 219 Group screening appointment, Mr. George Lamboy

(This paper was presented to the panel entitled "Archival and Library Resources on East Asia in the Metropolitan New York Area," MAR-AAS Conference, Drew University, Madison, NJ., October 25, 1980)

Note:

1 Notable published bibliographies of the materials available for study are:
Frederic Lieberman's Chinese Music: An Annotated Bibliography (1976);
To obtain an item, write on call slip author/title and the information which appears in brackets accompanying the listing, e.g. ["MGZR Nob d

For items such as periodicals give only the information which appears within the brackets.