
Welland Lathrop Papers

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Museum of Performance and Design, Performing Arts Library

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Welland Lathrop Papers

Dates: circa 1930s-2005

Collection Number: 019.001-005.117

Creator/Collector: Lathrop, WellandMann, Crystal

Extent: 2.42 Linear Feet. Number of containers: 2 Records Cartons, 1 Document case.

Repository: Museum of Performance and Design, Performing Arts Library
San Francisco, California 94124

Abstract: Welland Lathrop (1905-1981) was a dancer, teacher, painter, choreographer, and a leader of the West Coast modern and avant-garde dance movement. He was born in upstate New York and trained in costume and scenic design at the Eastman Theatre in Rochester, NY. He relocated to San Francisco in 1928 and shortly thereafter began studying dance with Ann Mundstock of the Laban School. From 1948-1956, Lathrop collaborated with San Francisco-based dancer and choreographer Anna Halprin, forming the Halprin-Lathrop Studio Theatre. Following their professional separation, Lathrop continued to perform under his own studio name while teaching dance at San Francisco State College and Dominican College until his retirement in the late 1960s. During his retirement, he served as advisor and choreographer for local dance groups, choreographing his final work with Xoregos Dance Theatre in 1977. The Welland Lathrop Papers contains biographical information about Lathrop's career and education, including photographs, programs, writings, correspondence, and related documents. The papers also include several workbooks and publications regarding Labanotation, including Lathrop's Elementary and Intermediate certificates from the Dance Notation Bureau. The papers are organized as follows: I: Personal and Professional Work; II: Writings and Instructional Work; III: Correspondence; IV: Programs and Press Materials; V: Photographic Materials; VI: Collected Publications; VII: Audiovisual materials; and VIII: Lathrop Archives Related Documents.

Language of Material: English

Access

Materials created by or pertaining to Welland Lathrop are open for research. Correspondence and notes to/from Crystal Mann are partially restricted due to sensitive information about persons still living. Access will be determined on a case by case basis.

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Preferred Citation

Welland Lathrop Papers. Museum of Performance and Design, Performing Arts Library

Acquisition Information

Items were donated by Joanna Harris in two separate accessions in 2005 and in 2019.

Biography/Administrative History

From the Welland Lathrop Papers, New York Public Library [<http://archives.nypl.org/dan/18472>] Welland Lathrop (1905-1981) was a dancer, teacher, painter, and choreographer and a leader of the west coast modern and avant-garde dance movement. Born in upstate New York, he initially trained in costume and scenic design at the Eastman Theater in Rochester, New York. In 1928 he moved to San Francisco to continue his design education under Rudolph Schaeffer. While in San Francisco, he began studying dance with Ann Mundstock of the Laban School. Later training included the Cornish School in Seattle, Washington (1930-1934) and the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theater (1938-1941) where he was an assistant in dance composition to Louis Horst. During this time Lathrop performed in several Broadway shows as well as with the Martha Graham Dance Company. In 1946 he established the Welland Lathrop School and Dance Company, where he was joined shortly by dancer Anna Halprin. The two collaborated as the Halprin-Lathrop Studio Theater from 1948 to 1955. They presented both solo and duo pieces as well as group works they choreographed for their studio company. After their professional separation in 1956, Lathrop continued his school and dance company under his own name for another 10 years. During this time he taught dance at San Francisco State College and Dominican College. Lathrop referred to his work as "contemporary theatre-dance." His aim was to fully integrate movement, sound, and visual design within his pieces. He believed that any artist must consider all the components of a performance, and took pride in being able to design the visual display of many of his compositions. Lathrop choreographed dozens of modern dance works, including "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Goodnight", "Comment on Space and Freedom", "Partita", and "Pieces of Nothing". In 1960, he married Nina Cummings, a prominent psychotherapist in the Bay Area. In the late 1960s, Lathrop retired and closed his

school, but continued to advise and choreograph for other San Francisco area groups, including the Shela Xoregos Performing Company. In 1977 he choreographed his last work with this group, Endangered Species. In that year he also traveled to Jerusalem to give master classes at the Rubin Academy. Welland Lathrop died in San Francisco in 1981.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Welland Lathrop Papers contains biographical information about Lathrop's career and education, including programs, writings, correspondence, and related documents. The papers also include photographs of Lathrop in performance as well as photographs of colleagues and collaborators, such as Ann Mundstock and Anna Halprin. The papers also include several workbooks and publications regarding Labanotation, including Lathrop's Elementary and Intermediate certificates from the Dance Notation Bureau. Also featured are several video recordings of Lathrop's seminal works, such as "Allemande", "Triptych", "Partita", "Don Quixote", and "Endangered Species" (his final work), among others. Also included is a manuscript copy written by Ann Hutchinson Guest, movement and dance researcher and a preeminent authority on dance notation, titled "Your Move" about Labanotation, with Lathrop's notes and feedback. The collection also includes extensive notes and correspondence with between the late Crystal Mann, a teacher and former member of Lathrop's dance company, and Lathrop's son, Conrad Cummings, on the preservation of Lathrop's archive. This includes detailed inventories, correspondence on filling in gaps in Lathrop's history, and information regarding the digitized objects included in this collection and some of what was donated to the New York Public Library. The Welland Lathrop Papers are organized as follows: Series I: Personal and Professional Work; Series II: Writings and Instructional Work ; Series III: Correspondence ; Series IV: Programs and Press Materials ; Series V: Photographic Materials ; Series VI: Collected Publications ; Series VII: Audiovisual materials ; Series VIII: Lathrop Archives Related Documents.

Indexing Terms

Labanotation

Modern dance.

Modern dance--20th century.

Modern dance--Study and teaching--United States.

Modern dance--United States.

Cummings, Conrad

Photographs

Programs (Publications)

[Welland Lathrop Papers Inventory](#)
