

Helen R. Stevenson Collection of the Records of the Windsor Ballet and the Northern Connecticut Ballet of Windsor, Connecticut

Finding Aid

Windsor Historical Society
96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, CT 06095

Creator: Stevenson, Helen R., 1935-2008

Dates: 1976-2008; bulk 1975-1982

Extent: 1 linear foot, 7 scrapbooks, 2 photograph albums

Accession #: 2011.56

Location: Document Storage and Darkroom

Administrative and Biographical History

The Windsor Ballet was founded in 1976 in Windsor, Connecticut, by Helen R. Stevenson. This performing ballet school offered a complete program of ballet classes and performances for children, teenagers, and adults; all students were invited to participate in the semi-annual full-scale ballet productions. The dance program was sponsored by the Town of Windsor Recreation Department and rapidly grew to serve over one hundred students each year. Stevenson was the artistic director of the ballet, taught dance classes, and choreographed and directed the productions. In 1980 Stevenson organized the Windsor Ballet Company, a semi-professional civic ballet company. This small group offered the serious ballet student intensive training and more performance opportunities, including roles as the principal dancers in the Windsor Ballet productions.

The Northern Connecticut Ballet was established in 1986, incorporating the Windsor Ballet Company as a non-profit organization. The newly-reorganized group reached beyond the town of Windsor to attract students and audiences from neighboring communities. The curriculum continued to focus on an appreciation of classical dance and music, but students were also encouraged to develop their own dance personality. By 2008 the activities of the Northern Connecticut Ballet were subsumed by the Connecticut Concert Ballet.

Helen R. (Holbrook) Stevenson grew up in Montreal, Quebec, and was introduced to the ballet at a very young age. She was a graduate of the Trafalgar School and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. At the age of nineteen she opened the Dance Theatre of Cape Cod near her family's summer home in Harwich, Massachusetts. She taught dance classes using the Royal Academy of Dance pedagogy and directed and choreographed the performances of her students. After moving to Windsor, CT in 1960, she began teaching ballet for the town's recreation department during the academic year while continuing to direct her school on the Cape in the summer months. The Windsor Ballet, established in 1976, soon became a full-time commitment and Stevenson closed the Cape Cod school after 22 years of operation.

Helen Stevenson was very active in the performing arts community in Windsor. She contributed her choreographic talent, directing experience, and enthusiasm to a variety of local groups including the Windsor Youth Theatre, the Windsor Jesters, and the Loomis Chaffee Theatre Associates. She enjoyed working directly with the dancers on stage, developing the

dance sequences and encouraging the young performers. By the time of her retirement in 2007, Stevenson had choreographed more than 200 ballets and musical comedies for community theaters in the area. She passed away in 2008.

Scope and Contents

The Helen R. Stevenson Collection of the Records of the Windsor Ballet and the Northern Connecticut Ballet is comprised of seven scrapbooks, two photograph albums, and one linear foot of miscellaneous business records, choreography notes, and photographs. All the materials are from the personal records of Helen Stevenson, Artistic Director of the Ballets. The business records include Northern Connecticut Ballet board minutes for 1987-1997; contracts with principal dancers; publicity materials, and a collection of programs for the *Nutcracker* and Spring Gala productions in Windsor. One series includes Stevenson's resume and her curriculum for beginner levels of ballet instruction.

Although the Society's collection does not include her work on Cape Cod and is unable to document the entirety of Helen Stevenson's career, the scrapbooks and choreography notes do provide a sense of the style and breadth of her work during this time period. Seven scrapbooks contain photographs and mementos from the years 1976-1982. Helen Stevenson was choreographer for all the productions featured in the scrapbooks and she assembled the albums from her collection of personal memorabilia. The productions documented include Broadway shows produced by the Windsor Youth Theatre and the Windsor Jesters, evidence of an active performing arts community in Windsor, CT. The scrapbooks contain performance programs; casual photos of rehearsals, performances, and cast parties as well as professional photographs of the dancers; notes of appreciation and thanks from cast and parents; reviews and announcements published in the local newspaper; birthday and get well cards.

The ballet *Cinderella* is the most completely documented production. The collection contains a detailed choreography, technical notes, some sketches for the set design and costumes, professional photographs, and rehearsal notes regarding the December 1978 performance in Windsor, CT. The collection also includes watercolor sketches for costumes for the *Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Coppélia* and sets of performance photos taken by photographers Richard C. Holbrook, South Yarmouth, MA between 1976-1982; James Fournier of Windsor, CT, in the late 1980's; and Creative Camera of East Windsor Hill, CT, in the 1990's.

Arrangement of the Collection

- I. Records of the Northern Connecticut Ballet
 - A. Incorporation papers and bylaws
 - B. Board minutes 1987-1997
 - C. Contracts and leases
 - D. Financial records
 - E. Fundraising materials
 - F. General operations
 - G. Publicity
- II. Ballet school brochures
 - A. Windsor Ballet 1977-1986
 - B. Northern Connecticut Ballet 1987-1991

- III. Programs
 - A. Windsor Ballet 1976-1986
 - B. Northern Connecticut Ballet 1987-1995
- IV. Choreography
- V. Costume sketches
- VI. Photographs, film negatives, and slides
- VII. Papers of Helen R. Stevenson
 - A. Resume 1987
 - B. History of ballet companies
 - C. Teaching materials
 - D. Personal cards and mementoes
- VIII. Scrapbooks
 - A. December 1976-August 1977
 - B. July 1977-August 1978
 - C. December 1977-June 1978
 - D. December 1978-August 1979
 - E. December 1979-August 1980
 - F. May 1980-August 1981
 - G. December 1981-August 1982

Box and Folder List

Box 1. Series I. through Series VII. (Additional photos in Box 3)

Series I. Records of Northern Connecticut Ballet

- A. Incorporation & Bylaws
- B. Board minutes 1987-1997
- C. Contracts – Bell School
- C. Contracts – Karen Agnello
- C. Contracts – Todd Cook
- C. Contracts – Chris DeRoches
- C. Contracts – Wendy Fish
- C. Contracts – Jung Kim
- C. Contracts – David Lawrence
- C. Contracts – Todd LeClaire
- C. Contracts – Steve Suty
- C. Contracts – Rob Thornton
- D. Financial Records 1987-1987
- D. Financial Records 2004-2005
- E. Fundraising – Grants
- E. Fundraising – New ideas
- E. Fundraising – Loomis
- F. Operations – Apprentices
- F. Operations – Nutcracker
- F. Operations – Awards
- G. Publicity – Artwork

- G. Publicity – Paste-ups
- G. Publicity – Press and posters
- G. Publicity – In print
- G. Publicity – Clara article

Series II. Student brochures

- A. Windsor Ballet 1977-1986
- B. Northern Connecticut Ballet 1987- 1991

Series III. Programs

- A. Windsor Ballet 1976-1986
- B. Northern Connecticut Ballet 1987-1995

Series IV. Choreography

- A. A Funny Thing.... 1977
- B. West Side Story 1977
- C. Brigadoon 1978
- D. Cinderella – Master choreography
- D. Cinderella – Windsor choreography 1978
- D. Cinderella – Music and tech
- E. Funny Girl 1979
- F. Fiddler on the Roof 1980
- G. Grease 1981
- H. Classical Symphony 1982
- I. Babes in Arms 1982

Series V. Costume sketches

- A. Nutcracker
- B. Coppélia
- C. Sleeping Beauty
- D. Cinderella

Series VI. Photographs

- A. Cinderella 1978
- B. Nutcracker 1988
- C. Nutcracker 1998
- D. Palisado Green 1981 (set of 35 mm slides, #2011.56.10)
- E. Photographs separation sheet

Series VII. Helen Stevenson papers

- A. Resume
- B. Histories of the ballet companies
- C. Teaching -- Syllabus
- C. Teaching – Curriculum
- D. Cards and tributes

Box 2. Series VIII Scrapbooks

Black scrapbook with gold lettering (#2011.56.1)

Windsor Ballet	The Nutcracker
Windsor Ballet	The Magic Toyshop

December 1976
May 1977

Windsor Youth Theatre	My Fair Lady	August 1977
Red scrapbook with gold snowflakes and decorative border (#2011.56.2)		
Windsor Youth Theatre	A Funny Thing Happened...	July 1977
Windsor Youth Theatre	West Side Story	August 1977
Windsor Jesters	Kiss Me Kate	March 1978
Windsor Jesters	Brigadoon	March 1978
Windsor Youth Theatre	Guys & Dolls	August 1978
Dark orange scrapbook with gold decorative border (#2011.56.3)		
Windsor Ballet	The Nutcracker	December 1977
Windsor Ballet	Graduation Ball	April/May 1978
Windsor Ballet	Spring Gala	June 1978
Red scrapbook plain with gold decorative border (#2011.56.4)		
Windsor Ballet	Cinderella	December 1978
Windsor Youth Theatre	Funny Girl	August 1979
Navy scrapbook with red lettering and border (#2011.56.5)		
Windsor Ballet	The Nutcracker	December 1979
Windsor Youth Theatre	Fiddler on the Roof	August 1980
White scrapbook with gold decorative border (#2011.56.6)		
Windsor Ballet	A Spring Gala	May 1980
Windsor Ballet	The Nutcracker	December 1980
Windsor Ballet	A Spring Gala	May 1981
Windsor Youth Theatre	Grease	August 1981
Black scrapbook with gold decorative border (#2011.56.7)		
Windsor Ballet	The Nutcracker	December 1981
Windsor Ballet	Spring Gala	May 1982
Windsor Youth Theatre	Wizard of Oz	August 1982
Windsor Youth Theatre	Babes in Arms	July/August 1982

Box 3. Series VI Photographs

- A. Clamshell box of photographs 1971 – 1982 by Richard C. Holbrook (#2011.56.8)
- B. Album of photographs 1981 Nutcracker by Richard C. Holbrook (#2011.56.9)

Related Materials in Windsor Historical Society Mollections

Subject files: Organizations and Clubs – Windsor Jesters

Subject Terms

Ballet companies – Connecticut
 Ballet dancing--Study and teaching—Connecticut
 Community theater – Connecticut – Windsor
 Stevenson, Helen R., 1935- 2008
 Cirillo, Ernest P., 1934- 1998
 Northern Connecticut Ballet Company
 Windsor Ballet

Windsor Youth Theatre

Administrative History

WHS volunteer Sandy McGraw did the preliminary sorting and inventories of the scrapbooks, choreography, and photographs during August and Sept. 2011. WHS librarian Barbara Goodwin appraised and selected the Windsor materials, arranged and described the collection, and prepared the finding aid in November 2011. Stevenson sketched and outlined her choreography notations in spiral bound student notebooks; these scattered pages of diagrams were removed from the notebooks and placed in individual archival folders.

The Society only retained materials which directly pertained to Stevenson's work in Windsor, CT. Two scrapbooks documenting the activities of the Loomis Chaffee Theatre Associates for the period 1972-1975 were transferred to the Loomis Chaffee School Archives. Scrapbooks, choreography, and photographs documenting the activities of Stevenson's ballet programs on Cape Cod in the 1960s and 1970s were offered to the Harwich Historical Society, Harwich, MA.