

INTRODUCTION

Provenance

Received as a gift from Klarna Pinska on September 21, 1990.

Restrictions

None.

Collection Number

990.088

Size

Number of containers: 2 cartons, 2 boxes

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Klarna Pinska was born Charma Packapinsky in Ukraine, near Kiev, circa 1902-04. Her family was of Polish descent. Around 1904 they migrated to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. As a young girl, Klarna studied folk dancing. Many famous performers came to Winnipeg early in the century, including Pavlova and Ruth St. Denis, who Klarna first saw in 1915. She was so impressed with the dancer that she arranged for an interview-audition. St. Denis admired her native talent, but told her she was not "pretty" enough and, at five feet, was too short. However, St. Denis did invite her to come and see her if she was ever in Los Angeles.

In 1919, the family moved and settled in San Francisco, and Klarna saved her money in order to go to Los Angeles to see "Miss Ruth". After successfully impressing the dancer, she was hired as a maid in return for free dance lessons. Due to her size, Klarna was never able to perform many of the star roles, but she did a number of important parts with the company, and she gradually began to design costumes and assist in choreography for Miss Ruth.

During the next fifteen years she was associated with the Denishawn School of Modern Dance, as a soloist, choreographer and teacher. In 1932 she choreographed "The Synchoric", from an idea of Miss Ruth's, to the music of Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony". This premiered at the Lewisohn Stadium in New York. Another season she choreographed "Rondo" for the Denishawn Dancers. Among her students were Jose Limon and Jerome Robbins. With Miss Ruth, she choreographed and directed the "Sara and Abraham Ballet" featured at the 1940 New York World's Fair.

For a few years in the second half of the 30's, she led her own company, "Klarna Pinska and Group", but it was not financially successful.

Early in World War II, she returned to San Francisco, where she secured work in the Sausalito Navy shipyards and worked enthusiastically with union problems. At the same time she was active in theatrical circles, including the Federal Theatre, and in 1943 with the North Beach Anti-Fascist Players.

She remained a teacher with wide experience and in later years re-created many of the Ruth St. Denis techniques, especially a form which she called "Soaring". She has worked as a therapist training children emphasizing the importance of posture, and developing a method of "oriental" technique. She named her system Posture Through Rhythm and Dance. Early in 1960 she was active in the Telegraph Hill Posture Class, as adviser and teacher in children's classes. In 1964 she was an instructor in dance movement with the Elizabeth Holloway School of the Theatre in San Francisco. By 1968 she was teaching her "soaring" technique in schools in Mill Valley, and in 1978 she taught the soaring technique at Fresno State University.

Klarna had a continuing association with the Xoregos Dance Company, San Francisco, for several years. She revived much of the Miss Ruth material at this time, including "Nautch", "Red and Gold Sari", "Single Scarf Dance", "Sonata Pathetique", and "The Brahms Waltzes".

In 1975, Klarna became director of the Temple of the Dance, a foundation to

preserve and perpetuate the contribution to dance by Ruth St. Denis and Denishawn. She travelled to New York City in 1975 and was associated for a season with the Joyce Trisler Company, re-constructing the "Spirit of Denishawn" for posterity. In addition to performances on both coasts, the program was recorded on Public Television's "Dance in America" series as "Trailblazers of Modern Dance".

In the early 1980's her ballet, "Everyone Wanted to Do the Center", a satire on the Denishawn years, premiered at Dance/LA company at UCLA. In 1982 she instructed at Duke University in Durham for the American Dance Festival.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This is the personal collection of Klarna Pinska, including programs, photographs, manuscripts, correspondence, newspaper clippings and artifacts. A large portion consists of photographs, many of students and classes which Klarna Pinska taught. There are also a number of photos of productions of the Xoregos Dance Company. There is a small amount of personal correspondence, and newspaper clippings on Miss Pinska herself, as well as her various projects.

Of particular interest is material relating to her membership in the Boilermaker's Union during World War II and her work with that union, as well as her association with the Federal Theatre and the North Beach Anti-Fascist Players. Also included in the collection are portions of costumes and other artifacts presumably used by Miss Pinska.

There is material about her association with the Xoregos Performance Company and "The Spirit of Denishawn", but unfortunately there is virtually nothing about the Ruth St. Denis Temple of Dance, aside from some ledger sheets. (The latter are the only financial records in the collection.) Nor are there any personal reminiscences, or information about Miss Pinska's family.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

SERIES I. Biographical

Background material, interviews, World War II activities, miscellaneous programs and press clippings.

SERIES II. Correspondence

Personal letters, letters re Xoregos and Denishawn, and teaching.

SERIES III. Press materials

Interviews, 1961-1982, and miscellaneous clippings.

SERIES IV. Programs

Programs of performances in which Miss Plinska appeared; programs of events attended by Miss Plinska.

SERIES V. Teaching and Schools

Miscellaneous classes and courses, Elizabeth Holloway School.

SERIES VI. Individual Projects

Federal Theatre, Denishawn, Xoregos, S.F. Film Festival.

SERIES VII. Financial

Ledger sheets for Ruth St.Denis Temple of Dance.

SERIES VIII. Photographs

Xoregos, students and classes, portraits of K.Plinska

SERIES IX. Costumes and Artifacts

2 over-size boxes ("cartons") with portions of costumes, jewelry, tambourine, "soaring" fabrics.

CONTAINER LIST

SERIES I. Biographical

Box	Folder	Contents	Dates
1	1	Background material; includes list of concerts by Ms. Pinska, and "Posture Through Rhythm and Dance" written by her.	
	2	World War II-period activities. Includes membership certificate in Boliermakers Union. (See also Series 6, Folder 1)	

SERIES II. Correspondence

Box	Folder	Contents	Dates
1	1	Personal correspondence, including letters from Russell Hartley; Anna Kisselgoff (dance critic, NYTimes) and Ruth St. Denis, (See also Series 1, Folder 2)	19Aug1982; 9May1966.
	2	Correspondence regarding Xoregos Dance Co. (See also Series 6, Folder 2)	1975-1976.
	3	"Spirit of Denishawn" and Joyce Trisler Danscompany. (See also Series 6, Folder 3)	
	4	Teaching-related correspondence. (See also Series 5)	
	5	Eugene O'Neill Choreographers Conference, including application for fellowship.	

SERIES III. Press materials

Box	Folder	Contents	Dates
1	1	Articles about Klarna Pinska, including reviews.	
	2	Interviews with Klarn Pinska	

SERIES IV. Programs

Box	Folder	Contents	Dates
1	1	Programs, brochures, announcement of Pinska performances.	

SERIES V. Teaching and Schools

Box	Folder	Contents	Dates
1	1	Miscellaneous classes and courses. (See also Series 2, Folder 4)	
	2	Elizabeth Holloway School, circa	1964

SERIES VI. Individual Projects

Box	Folder	Contents	Dates
1	1	Federal Theatre, circa 1940, and North Beach Anti-Fascist Players, 1943. (See also Series 2, Folder 2)	
	2	Xoregos Performance Company. (See also Series 2, Folder 2)	
	3	"The Spirit of Dienishawn" and the Joyce Trisler Danscompany. (See also Series 2, Folder 3)	
	4	San Francisco Dance Film Festival, 1979.	
	5	"Three Faces of Marys" - script.	

SERIES VII. Financial

Box	Folder	Contents	Dates
1	1	Ledger sheet for Ruth St. Denis Temple of Dance.	

SERIES VIII. Photographs

Box	Folder	Contents	Dates
1	1	Photos of Klarna Pinska.	
2	2	Photos of Klarna Pinska teaching.	
	4	Unidentified student photos and class exercises.	
	5	Telegraph Hill Posture Class, 1960.	
	6	Mill Valley Class, 1968. ("Soaring" technique and Scarves)	
	7	Fresno State University, March 1978 -- "Soaring".	
	8	Isadora Duncan Dance Award, 1985.	
	9	Xoregos Dance Co. -- "Single Scarf Dance", 1975.	
	10	Xoregos -- "Sonata Pathetique", 1975.	
	11	Xoregos -- "First Brahms Waltz", 1975.	
	12	Xoregos -- "Second Brahms Waltz", 1975	
	13	Xoregos -- "Third Brahms Waltz", 1975	
	14	Xoregos -- Jean Gilmore in "Red and Gold Sari", 1975	
	15	Xoregos -- Unidentified and miscellaneous photos.	
	16	Rudolph von Leban's swings.	
	18	Miscellaneous and unidentified photos.	
	19	List of photos stored in Series 9, Box 1.	

ITEM LIST

SERIES IX. Costumes and Artifacts

Location	Item Desc.	
oversized box 1	Artifact, 1 tambourine	
	Artifact, 4 strap leg bells	
	Artifact, 1 brass flat necklace	
	Artifact, 1 half-circle brass piece encrusted with colored stones	
	Artifact, 1 long strip of gold lace, possibly a belt	
	Artifact, 1 metal necklace with beads	
	Artifact, 2 small folding fans, one in its own box	
	Photo, 11"x14" of Plinska students in dance positions, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Inscriptions and signatures of each student in the frame of the photo.	
	Photo, 11"x14", of Ruth St. Denis "White Jade" 1927 (2 copies)	
	Photo, 11"x14", St. Denis in formal pose in foyer of Museum of the City of New York, 1961 (2 copies)	
	Photo, 2 color, 16"x19", of Pinska and photographer Imogene Cunningham	
	Artifact, 2 set of castanets (made in Syria)	
	oversized box 2	Artifact, 1 blood-red cropped Indian blouse embroidered and studded with mirror rounds
		Artifact, 1 red silk "soaring" fabric, 16"x4"
Artifact, 1 tan silk sari-type scarf with hand-painted floral design embroidered with French knots		
Artifact, 1 white silk parachute-shaped "soaring" fabric, top stitched in black with grommet holes		
Artifact, 2 black chiffon sari-type scarves, bordered in 3-inch wide silver braid in heart pattern		
Artifact, 2 blue silk "soaring" fabrics, 16"x4" each		