



PERFORMANCE!

NEWSLETTER OF THE SAA PERFORMING ARTS SECTION
SUMMER 2020

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Message from the Outgoing Chair



Dear Members,

Welcome to the latest issue of *Performance!* Having presided over the last makeover of our newsletter as its editor (back in 2010!), it is gratifying now, as the outgoing co-chair of the section, to be able share with you this first issue that boasts a brand new and beautiful design, while still providing the same wealth of content on performing arts archives that you have come to expect. Many thanks to Kelly and Stephanie for making this transformation possible!

To say that this has been a strange membership year is a major understatement. The global pandemic has brought all kinds of loss in its wake, as well as exposed harsh truths about systemic racism and economic inequality that no longer can be ignored by any of us. It also has had especially devastating consequences for the entertainment industry in general and live performance venues in particular. As performing arts archivists, you have had to respond to the distinct challenges and opportunities brought about by the extended lockdown. Many of you have been able to continue to work remotely full-time, but have had to do so while also trying to juggle simultaneously the multiple demands of parenting and other forms of caregiving. Too many others have found themselves suddenly to be precariously employed through furloughs and/or reductions in salaries and hours. I sincerely hope that you all have been finding ways to take good care of yourselves in the midst of these ongoing challenges.

On a slightly more positive note, the physical closure of our spaces has led many organizations to explore new ways to utilize their archives more creatively, by opening up more digitized archival content to engage the public, as well producing new educational or performance-based digital content that draws on archival resources (and, which, in turn, will need to be archived). The section began trying to document this phenomenon with the creation of a crowdsourced [spreadsheet](#) back in March. Several volunteers contributed to this effort, for which I am grateful, but the overwhelming volume of these initiatives soon made it difficult to keep pace with tracking them. I hope that the section continues to share information about such projects through articles in this newsletter or posts on some of our recently begun social media platforms (more about that below). Now that we all have gotten thoroughly accustomed to Zoom meetings, the section also could develop webinars or offer informal online discussion forums that examine this topic and the various issues raised around rights, preservation, and sustainability, in more depth. In addition, the section might want to investigate establishing its own awards to recognize these outstanding achievements by our colleagues or try to nominate them for some already existing category of SAA award.

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Message from the Outgoing Chair

(continued)



Credits

Cover photo: Bernard Jackson, Olive Hale & Toni Sorrel in *Between Two Worlds*, Cleveland Play House Collection

Table of contents: Stand-up comedian Sebastian Maniscalco exploring the George Carlin Interactive Exhibit at the National Comedy Center

Along similar lines, in late March, the section moved up the launch date of a long-discussed WordPress site and blog (<https://saaperformingarts.wordpress.com>), which co-chair Brenna Edwards designed and published in short order.

Although we were successful in generating content early on, it was mainly supplied by section leadership and we would love to see more contributions from our members. We envision the blog as being a place for time sensitive announcements about grants, new collections, job postings, or other news about projects-in-progress, while the newsletter will continue to focus on feature length articles.

With live performances put on hold indefinitely, Web Liaison Supriya Wronkiewicz also has set up an Instagram account ([saa_performing_arts](#)) as a means to spotlight the digital content created by performing arts archives, collections, or groups; especially from those arts organizations and venues that will have to remain shut down to varying degrees for the foreseeable future. She hopes to publish posts from section members that will share content from their collections on an at least weekly basis. Please contact Supriya directly if you wish to participate. Finally, in September 2019, the section did a soft launch of a Twitter account ([@par_section](#)), to post section announcements, news about performing arts archives and collections, and sporadic “on this day” in performing arts history tweets. I have found composing the latter to be occasionally therapeutic and even productive (for example, compiling some of the research has enabled me to get several entries in the IBDB updated).

In closing, I would like to thank the other outgoing section leaders: steering committee member Vin Novara and Alonso Avila (who stepped down as newsletter co-editor after the last issue) for their service to the section, as well as their engagement and generosity as colleagues. I am pleased to welcome Cecily Marcus as the new co-chair and Laura LaPlaca as incoming steering committee member. I am sure that they will work hard with continuing leaders, co-chair Brenna Edwards and steering committee member Libby Smigel, to help to keep this section vibrant and a safe space where performing arts archivists can find support and collaborate.

Helice Koffler

Digitizing the Cleveland Play House Production Photographs: Using Performance Past to Inspire Future Workflows

Stephanie Becker, Eleanor Blackman, and Anne Kumer

Working over the course of several months, a team of Kelvin Smith Library (KSL) staff made over 6,000 production photographs from the Cleveland Play House (CPH) available online through Case Western Reserve University's (CWRU) Institutional Repository, Digital Case. As an Open Access platform, Digital Case makes online access to the Play House collection available for anyone to see and use. While the goal of this project was to provide online access to the digitized production photographs, the team was also able to use this collection in order to establish procedures for future digitization, description, and ingest projects.



In 2012, KSL's Special Collections acquired over 1,000 boxes of materials belonging to CPH. The boxes housed materials such as photographs, playbills, program booklets, posters, scripts and set designs dating from 1915, when CPH was founded, to the present day. The Tony Award winning theatre is America's first professional regional theatre.

Speaking about the CPH Archive, Arnold Hirshon, CWRU's Vice Provost and University Librarian has said "When one surveys the existing and available archival record of professional theatre, it would be hard to find a comparable collection; The Cleveland Play House archives are an unparalleled resource for researchers studying the emergence and development of the American regional theatre movement, as well as a treasure trove of information about the general and cultural history of Cleveland."

Since acquiring the collection, Special Collections archivists, along with dozens of student workers, interns and volunteers, worked continuously through December 2019 to process the records of the theatre. The processing project culminated in completion of the public facing finding aid in ArchivesSpace: https://archivesspace.case.edu/repositories/2/resources/37/collection_organization.

Because the Play House had maintained good physical and intellectual control over their 100 years of production photographs, Special Collections staff made the decision, upon acquisition, to begin a digitization project that focused solely on that series. The project's access point would be through Digital Case, where earlier Special Collections projects are also available. Between 2012 and 2014, staff worked to refolder, interleave and assign unique identifiers which would become file names as digital surrogates were created for thousands of photographs. The metadata collection phase included location information, photographer's names, caption information, production name, and dates.

In 2012, after the first 100 production photographs were arranged and described, Special Collections staff worked with archivists in CWRU's Archives department on a pilot project to test the application of Archives' existing digitization procedures at that time. Although the pilot was a success, digitization continued exclusively through on-demand requests until 2014. From that point through 2015, Special Collections staff completed digitization of production photographs from 1915-1965 with the photos from 1915-1945 the first batch to be made available for online access via Digital Case.



Due to several constraints in resources starting in 2016, KSL decided to put the digitization of CPH production photographs on hold. A backlog of files from 1945-1965 waited to be ingested until the program was re-started with renewed resources, including hiring a metadata librarian, digital collections manager, and repository developer in 2017-2018. At that point, the Special Collections archivist worked together with the additional staff members to provide online access to the remaining digitized photographs.

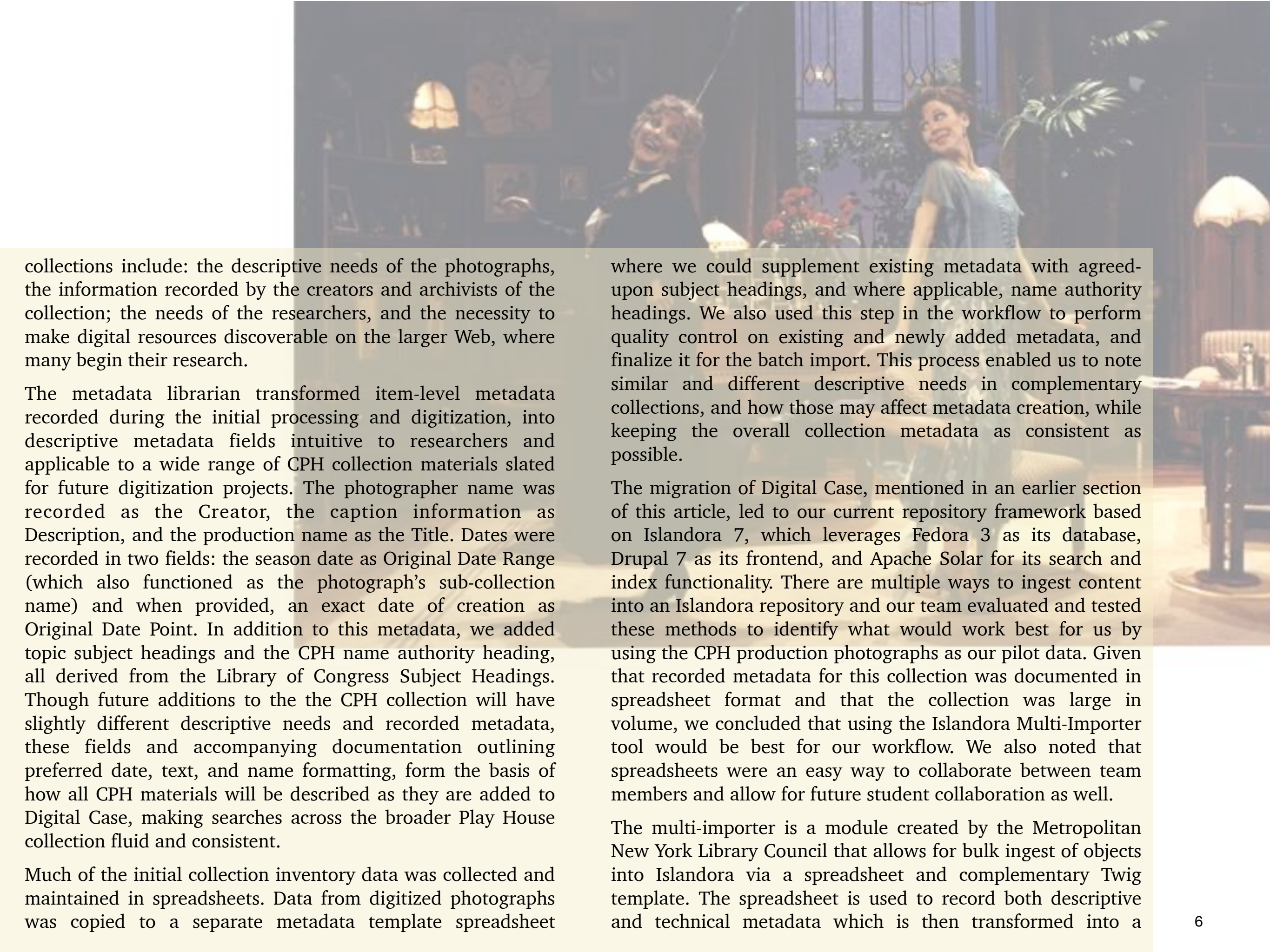
Given the inherent scholarly value and local interest of this collection, the team wanted to ensure long-term preservation and access to the digitized materials and their metadata records. Since the original ingest of production photographs in 2015, a major migration of Digital Case was undertaken by the digital collections manager and repository developer. With a new repository system in place, the team then needed to develop a new programmatic process, described further in this article, for online access, intellectual control, and long-term preservation of collections in Digital Case.

Our first step as a team was to decide how to organize the collection on Digital Case in a way that made sense for both the searching and browsing of objects. Due to user interface variables, the way patrons navigate collections on the web can sometimes differ from the collection organization documented in a finding aid. In the case of these Play House photographs, we decided that organizing the collection by season

date range would make the most sense for patron use online. The final structure resulted in Cleveland Play House as the top-level collection, Production Photographs as the sub-level, and then sub-sub-level collections for each season which contain the individual photographs.

We created a consistent and simple metadata schema that would support the collection organization, enable unmitigated search by remote and online researchers, increase visibility to the virtual and physical collections, provide accurate citations, and facilitate open access and scholarly collaboration. Too much or too little information about a photograph is unhelpful to the researcher, as is metadata that varies greatly in scope, purpose, and content. Factors that helped us decide what metadata to include for this and complementary





collections include: the descriptive needs of the photographs, the information recorded by the creators and archivists of the collection; the needs of the researchers, and the necessity to make digital resources discoverable on the larger Web, where many begin their research.

The metadata librarian transformed item-level metadata recorded during the initial processing and digitization, into descriptive metadata fields intuitive to researchers and applicable to a wide range of CPH collection materials slated for future digitization projects. The photographer name was recorded as the Creator, the caption information as Description, and the production name as the Title. Dates were recorded in two fields: the season date as Original Date Range (which also functioned as the photograph's sub-collection name) and when provided, an exact date of creation as Original Date Point. In addition to this metadata, we added topic subject headings and the CPH name authority heading, all derived from the Library of Congress Subject Headings. Though future additions to the the CPH collection will have slightly different descriptive needs and recorded metadata, these fields and accompanying documentation outlining preferred date, text, and name formatting, form the basis of how all CPH materials will be described as they are added to Digital Case, making searches across the broader Play House collection fluid and consistent.

Much of the initial collection inventory data was collected and maintained in spreadsheets. Data from digitized photographs was copied to a separate metadata template spreadsheet

where we could supplement existing metadata with agreed-upon subject headings, and where applicable, name authority headings. We also used this step in the workflow to perform quality control on existing and newly added metadata, and finalize it for the batch import. This process enabled us to note similar and different descriptive needs in complementary collections, and how those may affect metadata creation, while keeping the overall collection metadata as consistent as possible.

The migration of Digital Case, mentioned in an earlier section of this article, led to our current repository framework based on Islandora 7, which leverages Fedora 3 as its database, Drupal 7 as its frontend, and Apache Solar for its search and index functionality. There are multiple ways to ingest content into an Islandora repository and our team evaluated and tested these methods to identify what would work best for us by using the CPH production photographs as our pilot data. Given that recorded metadata for this collection was documented in spreadsheet format and that the collection was large in volume, we concluded that using the Islandora Multi-Importer tool would be best for our workflow. We also noted that spreadsheets were an easy way to collaborate between team members and allow for future student collaboration as well.

The multi-importer is a module created by the Metropolitan New York Library Council that allows for bulk ingest of objects into Islandora via a spreadsheet and complementary Twig template. The spreadsheet is used to record both descriptive and technical metadata which is then transformed into a

MODS record through the Twig template. Twig is a flexible, fast, and secure template engine that leverages PHP principles with added functionality useful for templating environments. The repository developer designed a custom Twig template that maps each spreadsheet column to a MODS element. One of the columns points to a local server where we temporarily host our digital files that are ready for ingest. Islandora pulls from this server and pairs each file with its corresponding row of metadata. The CPH production photographs were used to create and test this functionality, but the multi-importer process will be useful for ingesting all our digital collections moving forward.

Once this process was established and tested, our team proceeded with ingesting the CPH production photographs one season at a time in order to help minimize mistakes during the ingest and quality control processes. Each individual object in the repository was issued a persistent identifier to ensure long-term access to the materials. As we wrap up our efforts in making these production photographs available online, our attention is shifting to other Play House materials, such as playbills and program booklets.

You can see the full Cleveland Play House production photographs collection along with other materials from KSL's Special Collections here: <http://hdl.handle.net/2186/ksl:2006052983>.

Stephanie Becker is the Digital Collections Manager, Freedman Center for Digital Scholarship Team at the Kelvin Smith Library; Eleanor Blackman is the Special Collections Archivist, Kelvin Smith Library Scholarly Resources and Special Collections Team; Anne Kumer is the Electronic Resources Metadata Librarian at the Kelvin Smith Library, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH

Image credits:

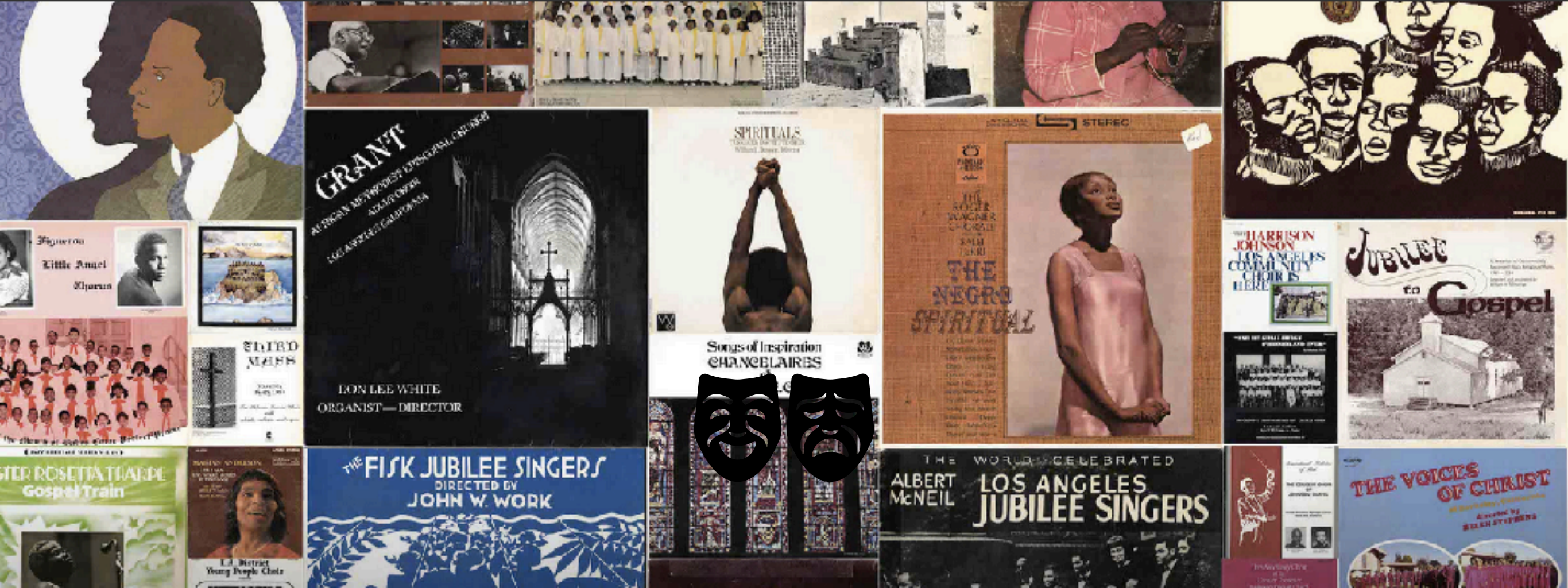
Page 3: Fuschia Walker, Frank A. Farrow III, Barbara D. Mills, Jim Weaver, and Theara J. Ward in *Ain't Misbehavin'* at the Cleveland Play House, which ran from March 28 - May 7, 1995. Photograph by Richard Termine. <http://hdl.handle.net/2186/ksl:2006057873>

Page 4: Nolan Bell, Ella Apple, and Buddy Davis in *The Day of the Lion* at the Cleveland Play House, which ran from October 11 - November 2, 1968. <http://hdl.handle.net/2186/ksl:2006056174>

Page 5: Evie McElroy (standing), Carol Schultz, Jo Farwell, and Catherine Albers in *A Lovely Sunday for Creve-Cour* at the Cleveland Play House, which ran from December 12, 1979 - January 20, 1980. <http://hdl.handle.net/2186/ksl:2006056673>

Page 6 (background): Johanna Morrison and Crista Moore in *The Guardsmen* at the Cleveland Play House, which ran from October 3 - November 26, 2000. Photograph by Roger Mastroianni. <http://hdl.handle.net/2186/ksl:2006061106>





Is It Real or Is It Megabytes: Transcribing a Music Exhibition for an Online Platform

Beth McDonald

On February 20, 2020, I stood in the gallery of the Library Cultural Arts Center at California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) and looked around with a deep sense of pride and accomplishment. Two and a half years earlier I had been hired as the Music Archivist to work on the African Diaspora Sacred Music and Musicians Archive (ADSMM), a series of collections documenting the lives, careers, and accomplishments of African American musicians, composers, and conductors in Los Angeles and the surrounding areas. For the last six months, I had developed the themes of the exhibition, designed posters and signage, and pulled photos, documents, LPs, and ephemera to fill cases. I had curated playlists for listening stations, hunted for mannequins to display choir robes, and encapsulated a truly astonishing number of posters.

February 20th was the culmination of all that work: the opening of [*Will the Circle Be Unbroken? The Sacred Music of the African American Diaspora*](#). Attendees included our sponsor, Dr. Sallyanne Payton; our largest contributor, Professor Emeritus of Music and accomplished



pianist Dr. Hansonia Caldwell; community members from across the city; CSUDH faculty and staff; and guest of honor Dr. Albert J. McNeil, whose collection was a central part of the exhibition and who had celebrated his 100th birthday less than a week before. There were performances from Dr. McNeil's Jubilee Singers and a soloist accompanied by Dr. Caldwell. The event went off swimmingly. Our guests were happy, our donors were happy, the dean was happy, my boss was happy. I was over the moon and looking forward to next steps.

Three weeks later, the state of California issued stay at home orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The gallery space was shuttered.

Like most people, I spent the first few weeks of the lockdown in a blur of Zoom meetings and emails as our archive figured out how to negotiate our work remotely. Scheduled tours and usage of the space were cancelled, including a meeting of the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM). My plans for class visits from the Africana Studies and Music departments fell by the wayside. Before the full scope of the pandemic and the resulting closures became apparent, I hoped to reschedule many of these plans for the summer or fall. As time went on it became clear that none of that was going to happen and I resigned myself to the heartbreaking idea that the next time I saw the exhibition, it would probably be to empty the cases.

Until I came across a video I made shortly before the opening. My family doesn't live in California, and it was unlikely they would see the exhibition in person, so I created a "video tour" as a way to show them what I had been doing for six months. Watching the video again, I realized there was no reason I couldn't post the video on the archives' website and perhaps our social media accounts. That thought led to the realization that many of the materials were still available to me at home. In addition to the video walkthrough, I had taken photographs of the exhibition space and cases. Digitization of the collections had begun a few months earlier and many of the items in the cases had digital surrogates on our servers, as did the posters and signage I had created for the exhibition. If the collections could be digital, why couldn't the exhibition be digital too?

Sharing the stories in the ADSMM Archive were a priority, something I had made sure to weave into every element of the physical exhibition. Among other things, I had worked very hard to treat the materials with the care and sensitivity they deserved. African American music has its foundations in the oppression of their people, and slave spirituals are a cultural touchstone for many African Americans. It would have been disingenuous, to say the least, to ignore that. In addition to featuring specific collections, I used the contents of those collections to highlight different aspects of African American musical culture in Los Angeles: the role of the church in their community and its effect on the stylistic evolution of the music; the role of African American women in music both within and outside the church; the role sacred music has played and continues to play in protest and social justice movements. My greatest hope for the exhibition was that the African American communities that were represented in those cases would see themselves reflected in a way they approved of. With the much broader audience potential of an online exhibition, it seemed exponentially more important to reach that goal.

It was a very exciting prospect, but I had no idea how to go about it. An internet search yielded a variety of options, many of which were beyond my technical acumen, required funding I didn't have, or simply didn't fit the growing vision in my mind for what I wanted an online exhibition to look like. Some, like Google's Cultural Institute, looked good on the surface but didn't feel particularly user friendly. I considered using either LibGuides, on which the archives' website is based, or ContentDM, which we use for our digital collections. I quickly concluded that both platforms were too static. Rows of thumbnails in little boxes meant the options for true storytelling were limited. I wanted the online

WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN? THE SACRED MUSIC OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN DIASPORA [10/16]

The Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers

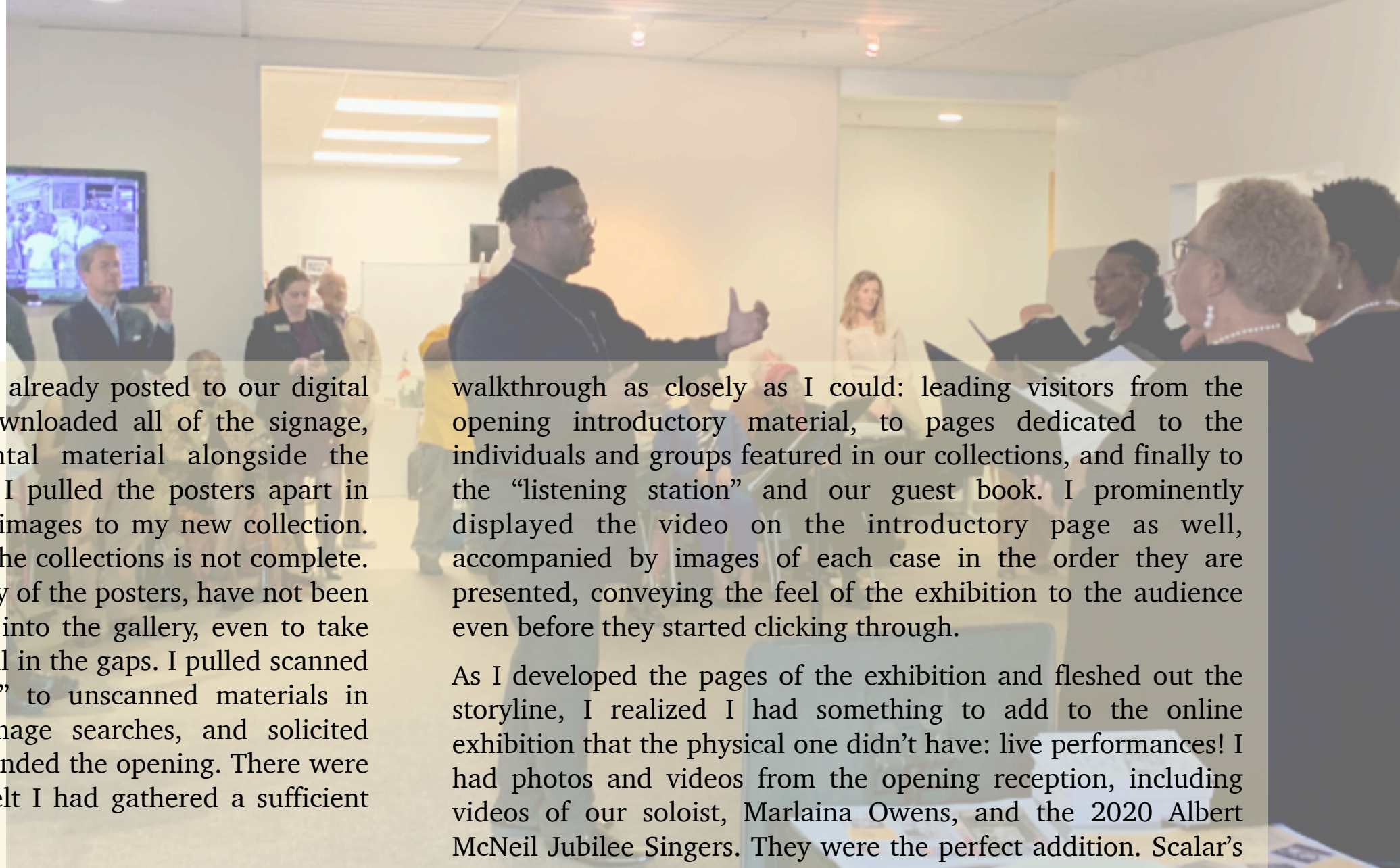
Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers, Sierra Leone 1974 (5/13)



exhibition to *flow*, like the music it represented. I wanted to duplicate as closely as possible the feeling of wandering through a gallery and convey the color and life in the collections.

Then my boss suggested I look at [Scalar](#), which had been used to create an online exhibition for another collection. Created by the University of Southern California (USC) and the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture (ANVC), Scalar is a free, open source platform designed to allow scholars and creators to self-publish interactive projects. It's user-friendly, allows for different layouts on different pages, supports many kinds of media, and has the functionality to crosslink pages and media to any and all other pages and media. It was exactly what I was looking for: a creative, dynamic way to display the materials from the collections and still tell the story.

Once I had a foundation to work with, the next step was getting the elements I needed to start building. I looked through the pictures I had taken of the space, zooming in on cases and making lists of their contents. Some of the images



were on our servers; others were already posted to our digital collections on Content DM. I downloaded all of the signage, captions, and other supplemental material alongside the digitized photos and documents. I pulled the posters apart in Photoshop to add their text and images to my new collection. Unfortunately, the digitization of the collections is not complete. A number of items, including many of the posters, have not been digitized and I couldn't get back into the gallery, even to take pictures. I had to get creative to fill in the gaps. I pulled scanned photos that were "close enough" to unscanned materials in cases, found book covers in image searches, and solicited pictures from people who had attended the opening. There were still some missing pieces, but I felt I had gathered a sufficient breadth of material to work with.

Referencing the photos and video I had taken, I made pages for each case and distinct section of the exhibition and filled those pages with the text and media I had compiled. Scalar offers a variety of layouts for its pages, from basic text and image layouts to slideshows and timelines to complex visualizations. I looked specifically for layouts that would convey the physical cases on the screen in an engaging way while still providing context and the themes of the overall story.

In organizing the pages into a cohesive whole, I knew it was unlikely I would achieve a fully organic flow; you can't wander an online exhibition the way you would in a gallery. But I was going to give it my best shot. I went back to the "video tour" that had been my inspiration. I mirrored the path of the

walkthrough as closely as I could: leading visitors from the opening introductory material, to pages dedicated to the individuals and groups featured in our collections, and finally to the "listening station" and our guest book. I prominently displayed the video on the introductory page as well, accompanied by images of each case in the order they are presented, conveying the feel of the exhibition to the audience even before they started clicking through.

As I developed the pages of the exhibition and fleshed out the storyline, I realized I had something to add to the online exhibition that the physical one didn't have: live performances! I had photos and videos from the opening reception, including videos of our soloist, Marlaina Owens, and the 2020 Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers. They were the perfect addition. Scalar's functionality allowed me to link the videos to multiple pages, highlighting more than just a single moment in time, but a legacy of something greater.

Then came the biggest hurdle: what about the music? I had an entire exhibition about music; it was vital to keep the audio portion. Based on the Association of Art Museum Directors fair use analysis, creating listening stations with a wide variety of musical styles and artists to enhance the exhibition experience qualifies as fair use because, among other things, the music is being used for scholarship and has no adverse effect on the market value of the works. But when you attempt to transfer that same experience to an online platform, things get a little... squidgy.

Some of the music we had in our collection was still in publication, such as Marian Anderson's timeless album *Spirituals*. Making this music available online without permission would absolutely qualify as infringement, and getting permission was logistically and financially nonviable. But the rest of the music was curated from recordings now out of print or personal recordings of performances. Using the same assessment of fair use and mindful of the potential for takedown requests, I regretfully cut all the music still in publication. I kept the playlist limited to music that we already had permission to use, or music by people and groups highlighted in our collections.

It took time and many, many, many revisions. I felt like Goldilocks, fiddling with placement and formatting until it was just right. After I had gone over the pages a couple (dozen) times, I finally felt ready to hit the "publish" button. I felt just as proud as I had the day the physical exhibition opened. I had found a way to keep the exhibition open after all. I had discovered a new way to celebrate and draw attention to the achievements of artists in this unique and compelling genre. And I had developed a new skillset in the process.

The exhibition is still evolving. Every week I make changes: a tweak here, a new image there, a text edit over there. Even writing this article sparked new ideas and revisions. Once I am able to return to the archives there may be new galleries to add, new materials to add to new pages, new ways to expand and link the materials. I signed up to attend a webinar on Scalar to learn more about the different interactive elements and may experiment with different layouts that allow more interactivity for users. The possibilities are intriguing and motivating.

The CSUDH campus will be closed to 95% of in-person instruction through the end of 2020. *Will the Circle Be Unbroken? The Sacred Music of the African American Diaspora* is closed for the duration and it seems unlikely that anyone outside the archives will see the exhibition in person again. But now as an online exhibition it has a new life, a wider audience, and an unlimited timeline. My hope is that it will continue to attract visitors to both the online exhibition and our collections for a long time to come.

Beth McDonald is the Music Archivist at California State University-Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA

Image credits:

Page 8: The LP album art display reimagined as the exhibition's landing page

Page 9 (top): The section of the exhibition featuring the Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers

Page 9 (bottom): Shot of the *Will the Circle Be Unbroken?* exhibition. The case in the foreground focuses on the evolution of the spiritual into a popular art form, both within and outside the church and the African American community

Page 10: A slide from the Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers page on Scalar

Page 11 (background): David Saul Lee conducts the Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers at the opening reception, February 20, 2020



Peabody Institute Launches Streaming Collection

Matt Testa

The Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University has launched a streaming site to provide access to audio and video recordings of Peabody performances, campus events, and other unique collections.

Since going online in fall 2019, Peabody's streaming collections have grown to more than 500 online resources, the vast majority of which are of recent concerts and degree recitals at the Peabody Conservatory. Recordings are prepared by audio engineers and video editors and then submitted to the Arthur Friedheim Library Archives for preservation in Preservica and streaming access hosted by AVP's Aviary.

The growth of video production services at Peabody is a natural extension of its audio recording program, which has captured all major campus events since the 1960s. In recent years, video cameras have been installed in all five concert halls and a small video production team has been established to capture and edit recordings. Thanks to some partially automated captures, recordings are typically made available for streaming to the campus community within about three weeks of the event.

The streaming service has been well received by the campus community, especially after the campus closed in spring 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. Students were able to access video recordings of their recitals from home, and the Institute drew on some archived concert videos to hold online watch parties for the public. In less than one year, there have been more than 15,000 plays of online media files. When the pandemic pushed most performing arts activities online, Peabody began the ArtReach initiative to collect and share self-produced videos of music and dance performances by students, faculty, and alumni in response to the crisis.



Many of the videos of living-room performances that the Peabody community shared on social media have been submitted to the ArtReach archival collection for preservation and ongoing access. Several of these have already been added to the ArtReach streaming collection.

For archives staff – one full-time archivist plus some part-time student help – there have certainly been some challenges in directing a large part of daily operations toward digital archiving. In addition to the item-level processing involved in managing the new content, there have been new systems and workflows to learn or establish. But the growth in digital preservation services has boosted the library's capacity to manage digital content and prepare for other reformatting projects, such as an audiocassette collection of oral histories with local African-American musicians that is being digitized.

Peabody's streaming collections are online at <https://streaming.peabody.jhu.edu/>. Some recordings of public-domain works are available to all users; other resources are restricted to the Peabody community. Contact archivist Matt Testa at peabodyarchives@lists.jhu.edu for more information.

Matt Testa is the Archivist at the Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD



George Carlin's "Stuff:" The National Comedy Center Archives Presents & Preserves the Vital Story of Comedy

Dr. Laura LaPlaca

George Carlin was a comedic renegade whose art ranged from philosophical reflection to political outrage. As the indignant voice of the counterculture, he reinvented stand-up comedy as a form of social criticism, using his platform to counteract the platitudes spewed by politicians, advertisers, religious leaders, and others who conventionalized American thought. His landmark work led to robust cultural debates – including a Supreme Court ruling – that centered issues of censorship, obscenity, and freedom of speech during the tumultuous 1970s in America. Carlin's body of work continues to rank among the most popular and durable cultural products of the twentieth century. As he once put it, "stand-up is the centerpiece of my life, my business, my art, my survival, and my way of being."

Carlin's comedic roots were in 1950s coffee houses and nightclubs, performing clean-cut humor with his partner, Jack Burns. Into the 1960s, propelled by the encouragement of peers like Lenny Bruce and Johnny Carson, Carlin evolved a new style that spoke to a



more youthful audience, garnering acclaim (and coveted national TV airtime) with routines like his “Hippy Dippy Weatherman.” Into the 1970s, he shifted the tone and content of his work drastically, using his platform to speak intelligently, forcefully, and courageously about issues that were dividing America: the Vietnam War, race relations, drugs, religion, and freedom of expression. With his long hair, powerful liberal voice, and youthful perspective, George Carlin ascended as a countercultural comedian, encompassing the ethic and the outrage of a generation. During the 1990s, Carlin again evolved to become a sort of “elder statesmen” – adopting an almost philosophical outlook that used comedy as a vehicle for expressing his deep-seated concerns about the very fabric of American social life, politics, and civil liberties.

Following George Carlin’s death in 2008, his daughter Kelly became the custodian of three storage units full of artifacts that offered a glimpse into the creative process of one of the most influential artists in American history. The collection was accumulated and meticulously organized by George Carlin himself, who – across the span of his 50+ year career, approached his own story with something very much akin to an archivists’ eye. The collection includes extensive creative files, annotated setlists, handwritten journals, scrapbooks, awards, correspondence, wardrobe, arrest records, legal proceedings, and rare audiovisual recordings.

Carlin devised and maintained a meticulous filing system to manage his creative output. In his distinctive all-caps handwriting, often with a stark black or red felt pen, he would hastily record words, phrases, or ideas on tiny paper scraps – torn spontaneously from sheets of hotel stationery or pocket-sized multi-colored tablets. “Every day I take a lot of notes,” Carlin explained. “They can be a sentence, a word, an idea, two things that connect or contrast, an afterthought, a neat phrase. It’s an incessant process.” Those scraps would be aggregated into categories and corralled into Ziploc bags, which were then housed in hundreds of colorful alphabetized file folders: “Americans,” “Death,” “Euphemisms,” “Fullshit,” “Lingo,” “Oddball Facts,” “Race,” “War & Peace.” In his later years, Carlin used a computer to handle this voluminous workflow, but for most of his career, the process was analog – and remains, in and of itself, something like a work of art.

One theme that runs throughout Carlin’s work – and is represented thoroughly in the archive – is the power of language. From an early age, George Carlin

was attentive to the rhythms and meanings of words. This lifelong fascination became a cornerstone of his work, which assumed a cadenced, melodious form that was not unlike spoken word poetry. To achieve this effect, Carlin relied on his notes; gathering interesting words, bits of slang, euphemisms, rhymes, oxymorons, and grammatical oddities on those tiny slips of paper, and rearranging them until they constituted a polished routine. Carlin's treatment of language ranged from silliness to high intellectualism, and introduced a new type of rigor and precision into the realm of stand-up comedy performance.

Language was also the anchor of Carlin's landmark 1972 album *Class Clown*, which contained a controversial routine about censorship called "Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television." While performing the routine live before an audience of 35,000 on July 21, 1972, at Summerfest in Milwaukee, Carlin was surrounded by police and arrested in violation of obscenity laws. The next morning's newspapers were plastered with photos of Carlin's arrest, reigniting contentious debates about freedom of speech and comedy that had been brewing since the 1960s. Carlin did not attend his December 1972 court trial, but sent a copy of *Class Clown* in his stead. The judge, who was himself observed chuckling in the courtroom as the album played, dismissed the case, citing Carlin's First Amendment protections. The high-profile case set a precedent for generations of comedians who would follow.

These files are the bedrock of the National Comedy Center's interactive, immersive George Carlin exhibit, which offers a unique and extraordinarily intimate window into the mind of one of comedy's most prolific and influential figures.



The Interactive George Carlin Archive Exhibit

The George Carlin exhibit at the National Comedy Center presents thousands of digitized archival documents for museum visitors to explore at touch screen kiosks. The kiosks are located inside a larger Carlin exhibit pavilion that features a wrap-around object theater comprised of dimensional artifacts and a multi-screen documentary presentation on the artist's life and work. The archival interactive replicates the arrangement of Carlin's archive and maintains the texture and traces of the physical documents – items are labeled in Carlin's hand and presented in virtual containers that match the real Ziplocs, folders, and boxes. None of the scans have been censored or altered in any way. The kiosks themselves are fashioned from vintage steamer trunks that approximate the appearance of the actual trunks (displayed above the visitors' heads in a transparent overhead loft space) that Carlin used to

store his files. The interactive allows users to approach the archive in an exploratory mode that replicates the experience of an archivist or researcher discovering a collection. The users' path through the content is not mandated, but follows the flow of Carlin's original arrangements. Users can navigate the collection in three different ways: 1) They can select folders from Carlin's own "Career History" records, which are presented with his original labeling scheme intact and include contracts, setlists, show souvenirs, candid photography, personal correspondence, clippings, and other materials; 2) They can page through Carlin's copious day planners, which have been scanned in and networked to other archival materials (documents, photographs, audiovisual clips) that align with each calendar day of his life and career; or 3) They can explore his alphabetized Ziploc bags of joke notes, presented as digital arrays of handwritten scraps that spill out across the screen when the Ziplocs are "tapped" open. A box of folders from the physical Carlin collection is displayed behind glass in proximity to the touch screen interactive, reminding users that they are engaging with digital surrogates that map onto an analog record-keeping system created, for artistic purposes, by a comedic mind.

The Carlin archive interactive is robust enough that it is a fruitful first stop for scholars, documentarians, and students inquiring about access to the archive, but research appointments at the National Comedy Center archives are available by appointment for approved projects.

The George Carlin exhibit is one among dozens of interactive exhibits at the National Comedy Center, many of which marshal cutting-edge technology to activate archival materials. In partnership with Cortina Productions, Jack Rouse Associates, and Herzog & Co. (whose collective portfolios include attractions like the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum, the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture, and the Basketball Hall of Fame), the Comedy Center developed exhibits that allow visitors to engage with the history of comedy in immersive, personalized ways. For example, the Comedy Continuum is a 60-foot-wide touch wall that allows users to unlock comedy collaborations and influences, activating clips and historical data as they discover connections between artists on the networked wall.



The Virtual Writers' Desk is a motion activated projection-based facsimile of a comedy writers' workspace, that allows users to page through annotated script drafts, tracking changes as classic comedy scenes move from concept to execution. Prop Stars is an interactive table that recognizes the user's interaction with physical comedy "props" – a rubber chicken, chattering wind-up teeth, a seltzer bottle – and displays historical information about their use in comedy across generations. These interactive exhibits are annotated with a rotating archival exhibition program that encompasses several dozen artifact groups displayed in glass vitrines throughout the attraction.

To learn more about the National Comedy Center, and to get a taste of our exhibit media and archival holdings, visit our new and growing digital streaming platform, National Comedy Center Anywhere at anywhere.comedycenter.org. This platform brings our work direct to comedy fans, students, and families around the world, and includes selections from our exhibit galleries, original streaming interviews with comedy creators, and will soon include a comedy history curriculum for students of all ages. For questions or outreach, please feel free to contact llaplaca@comedycenter.org.



Dr. Laura LaPlaca is Director of Archives & Research at the National Comedy Center, Jamestown, NY

Image credits (all images courtesy of the National Comedy Center)

Page 14: George Carlin's Joke Notes during initial archival processing

Page 15: One of George Carlin's file boxes before processing

Page 16: George Carlin Interactive Exhibit, "Career History" interface

Page 17: Kelly Carlin with National Comedy Center Executive Director Journey Gunderson cutting the ribbon on the George Carlin Exhibit, August 2018

Page 18(above): The Comedy Continuum and Prop Stars exhibits

The **National Comedy Center** is based on the vision of Jamestown, NY native Lucille Ball for her hometown to become a destination for the celebration of comedy – in all its forms. The Comedy Center opened its doors in August 2018 and presents an unprecedented look at the time-honed creative processes that have elevated comedy to an art form. It showcases comedy's great minds and unique voices in a 21st century museum environment that engages, inspires, educates, and entertains. Over 50 immersive exhibits within the 37,000-square-foot attraction enable visitors to take an interactive journey through comedy history – from early vaudeville to the latest viral memes. Throughout their personalized experience, which uses RFID-technology to customize exhibits for each guest's unique sense of humor profile, visitors gain a profound appreciation for comedy icons and innovators, as well as for the powerful role that humor has played in shaping our shared cultural heritage. The Center also operates the nearby Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum, and its own expansive archive. The Center is devoted to honoring the comedy industry's vital sociopolitical contributions, safeguarding the archival record of this craft, and serving as a national-scale gathering place for students of comedy history.

The National Comedy Center has collaborated with dozens of artists, artist estates, and peer institutions to preserve objects that represent comedy's great artistic, social, and political contributions to American culture: from Charlie Chaplin's cane to Lenny Bruce's court transcripts, from Lucille Ball's polka dot dress to Jerry Seinfeld's "Puffy Shirt," from the set of *The Larry Sanders Show* to the Smothers Brothers' guitar and bass. We also collect, preserve, and digitize large-scale paper collections, like Carl Reiner's complete annotated script drafts for *The Dick Van Dyke Show* or paper records from the *Saturday Night Live* season one writers' room.



Dom Orejudos: Queer history in Performing Arts Archives

Nada Abdelrahim

Dom Orejudos, also known as Etienne and Stephen, was a ballet dancer, choreographer and artist in Chicago and beyond, finding himself choreographing and dancing domestically and abroad until his death from AIDS in the early 1990s. His dance papers can be found at the Newberry Library in Chicago. It isn't strange to see a dancer in the archives of the Newberry, given that one of their strongest collections in the performing arts core is their Midwest Dance Collection. The collection contains the papers of many of Chicago's most famous performing artists, including the personal papers and research of Ann Barzel as well as Hubbard Street Dance Company. The Midwest Dance Collection holds over 3,200 books and periodicals on dance history, as well as more than 80 manuscript collections associated with dancers, dance companies, dance schools and studios, and other dance related material. What is unusual about having Orejudos' papers at the Newberry, however, is the fact that he was a well-known gay erotica artist as well as an established dancer and choreographer.

Orejudos was born in Chicago in the early 1930s and was an accomplished student and artist from the start. His talents included orchestra, gymnastics, dance, and drawing, as well as a high GPA during his time in high school. In a series of interviews conducted with Orejudos, now held at the Leather Archives & Museum, he recalls having a strong sense of self at an early age, identifying as gay and feeling content with this discovery in his early teens. In fact, his gay erotica drawings





were already very much developed when Orejudos was a teen, and he was sought out by Leather Archives & Museum founder Chuck Renslow to draw gay erotica commercially at that time. Renslow also happened to be very taken by Orejudos the moment he saw him, and their relationship developed into a romantic one soon after meeting. Orejudos's art was released under the pseudonyms of Etienne and Stephen. Simultaneously, Orejudos was studying ballet at the Ellis DuBoulay School of Ballet, and so these two parts of him really developed side by side.

When first processing this collection, it was apparent that all the materials donated to the Newberry were strictly dance-related. At first glance, the story these items told was that Orejudos was a dancer who cared deeply about his work, and a person who had connections all over the country because of his ballet and choreography. These items include letters of business arranging Orejudos's services as a choreographer, thank you notes from dancers who worked with him, photographs of performances, as well as papers detailing his efforts in creating his choreography. There are also thirty VHS tapes and recordings of performances and rehearsals, audiocassettes, and an assortment of reel-to-reel tapes. All these things very much describe who Orejudos was. However, if one looks solely at this collection to learn about him, they will not really know who he was fully. As part of my research to learn more about Orejudos, visiting the Leather Archives & Museum on the north side of Chicago was essential. In the museum, Orejudos's erotica work hangs on the walls of the theatre and fills the space of the museum, representing something that really brought fulfillment to him.

The archives at the Leather Archives & Museum also hold interviews of Orejudos discussing his life as well as hundreds of pages of drawings by him, creating a fuller picture of who he was and what he cared about. Instead of leaving these parts of him to

stay as separate entities, presenting him and his legacy as it is not only contributes to a truer version of Orejudos, but a truer version of the history of dance and of Chicago. “The very decision to create a record, or to preserve it, or to place it in an archival repository becomes an act of memory construction. We consciously decide to shape the archival record, even when we do not realize we are doing so” (Jules, 2016, Medium). So, the archivist wields a great power: to provide access to those on the margins is to create access to a history that others may try to cover up. When it comes to archives, it is essential to see the person in the papers and objects, to understand them, learn about them and present them as they are—nuanced and complicated human beings.

The processing of the papers of Dom Orejudos brings a richer perspective to dance history and archives because of his gay identity. Throughout the history of archives, the papers of marginalized groups have been hidden, not made publicly available through catalogs or institutional websites. Traditionally, “archives [gave] greater voice to dominating members of a society than to groups who may have been historically marginalized” (Sinn, 2010, p. 119). In the past, the archivist may overlook the identity of Orejudos or others like him, worried about the status quo or because they do not realize the importance of providing this information. Bergis Jules makes a very good point in criticizing the way institutions equate the erasure of marginalized people as professionalism, as if acknowledging and celebrating diversity is somehow offensive or radical. Instead of trying to fit within the systems built around this erasure, Jules maintains, archivists should instead see the person in the collection, and then center them within their work in the archives. “If archives preserve only the mainstream narratives of history, they are preserving only the tip of the iceberg and overlooking the majority of the historical reserves.” (Sinn, 2010, p. 120)

THE STONE MEDUSA
choreography - dom orejudos

1) Boy with back to audience, standing in 2nd position, arms straight down at sides, palms flat against sides of thighs, looking at block of stone upstage. Group of anonymities stand with centre one facing audience, two flanking ones facing outwards one to each wing. They stand in first position with arms in front of them a deux bras, but with elbows dropped to almost 90° and wrists dropped backwards, palms outwards. B right arm raises slowly up to second.

M. A₃ A₂
A₁
↓
B

2) B step across with R leg sweeping arm forward still facing upstage, with half turn to the right take a step with L leg, R leg, now facing front bring L leg in to a crouching position holding R wrist with L hand.

M. A₃ A₂
A₁
B

3) slowly straighten up to standing position in 2nd lifting arms, still holding wrist, to a stretched overhead position, rising onto half pointe. Take L leg back to a lunge croise, bringing arms down low in front.

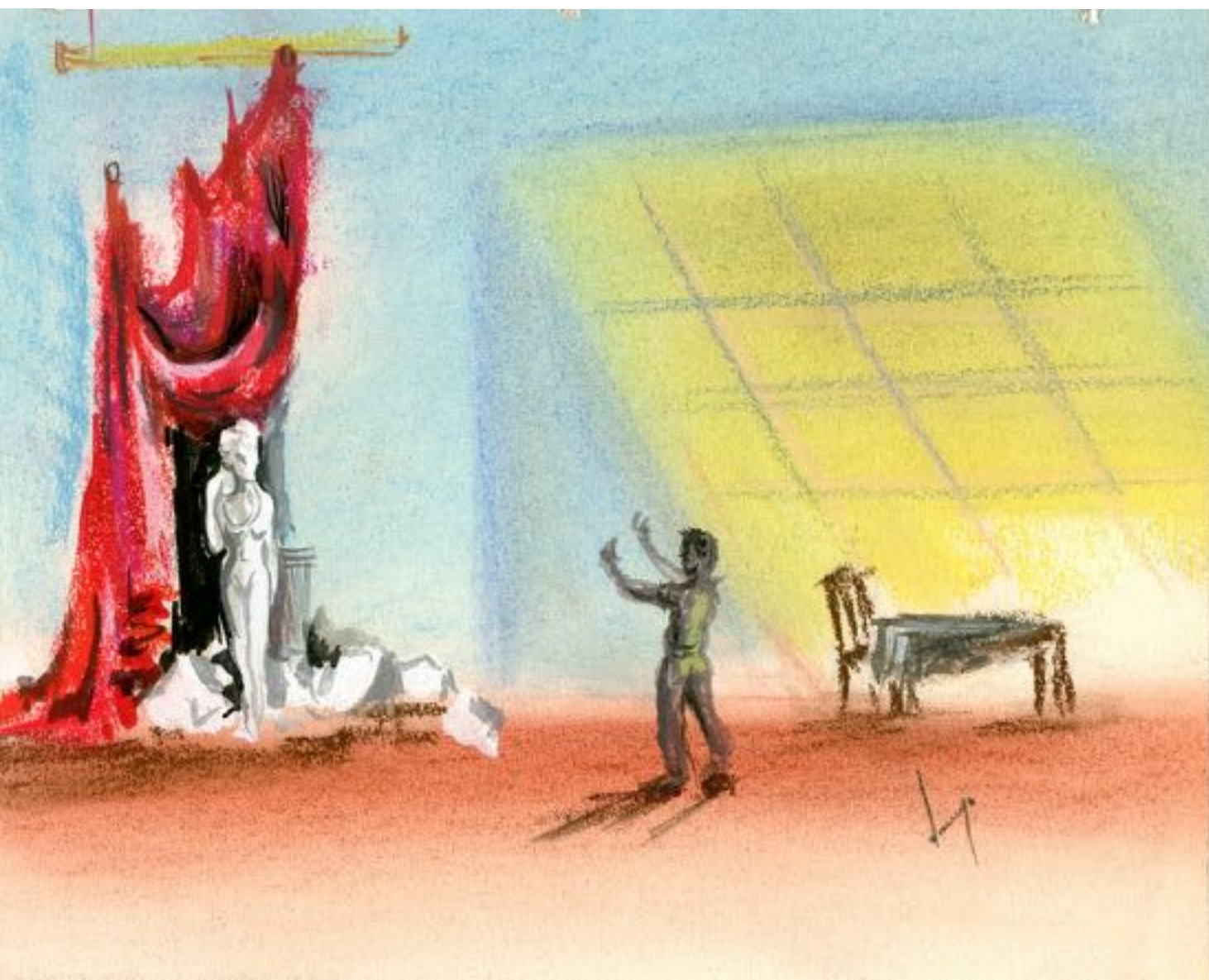
M. A₃ A₂
A₁
B

4) step, step, step together into 1st turned in on half pointe with arms in 5th en haut with marked epaulment, sink into plie still on half pointe bringing arms down to seconde with palms upwards

M. A₃ A₂
A₁
B

Therefore, the understanding of marginalized communities and diverse identities is critical in this work, because these pieces or collections, when incomplete, cannot truly provide a proper representation of history or the people that lived in that history. “Queering,” a term rooted in queer theory, is a verb meaning to search for materials (and lack thereof) related to queer history. By “queering” the archives, materials disguised under the Eurocentric heteronormative viewpoint can be re-viewed in a broader scope to consider how queer folks have always been present between the lines of the dominant narrative (Arondekar, 2015). By processing archives “through the queer of color lens” (Zepeda, 2018, p. 94) even the negative documentation becomes proof of the violence and oppressive experiences of queer folks and allows the archivist and others to point to that existence.

Disregarding the parts of Orejudos that connected him to the queer and leather community would not only erase the lives of queer folks in our histories, but it would not be truly presenting the whole picture on how his dancing and choreography work manifested. It was important, when processing and describing his life and work, that Orejudos be presented as his whole self. Working with this collection was like a puzzle that had clear missing pieces.



The identity of Orejudos was so clearly split between ballet and erotica, though no trace of his erotica work exists in his ballet papers in the Newberry's possession. It would have been very easy to keep the collection at the Newberry strictly dance. Since there were no papers there related to his leather and erotica work, the argument could be made that leaving it out from the record entirely would not be against archival methodology and practices. Sinn correctly points out that when archivists see themselves as these “impartial and “objective” stewards facilitating the use of a record, they assume their bias and work does not shape the record at all (2010). But it is important to realize that because the system in which archives exist was never meant for those that were living in the margins, archivists must actively work to give them a place to be remembered by society in the context of the archives.

Regardless of the materials in possession at the institution, it was vital and important to make researchers and others aware of Orejudos's identity in full, because it is this identity which informed his work and love of dance.

He was not a dancer sometimes, a choreographer sometimes, and a gay artist sometimes. He was all three, and more always, regardless of what he was working on or doing. Within the systems that archivists do their work—that which includes the responsibility of delegating societal memory—it is important to uplift and recognize the collections that are not of the mainstream narrative (Sinn, 2010). Dance, erotica, and his gay identity were not separate things to Dom Orejudos. They were one and the same, and through these parts of himself, he celebrated the body and the beauty he saw within it.

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Image credits:

Page 20: Dom Orejudos, courtesy of the Leather Archives & Museum, Chicago, IL

Pages 21-23: Images featuring *The Stone Medusa*, choreographed by Orejudos. P. 21: Orejudos with a dancer (name unknown) portraying the Stone Medusa; P. 22: dance notations from Orejudos' dance notebook for *The Stone Medusa*; P. 23: drawing of a draft of the stage. All images courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago

A synopsis for *The Stone Medusa*, from the production notebook: "The artist, unable to conform with the anonymities, finds himself rejected by them. He creates a statue of the Medusa which comes to life; he becomes obsessed with the beauty of his own creation and is, eventually, destroyed by it." Synopsis from the Dom Orejudos Papers, Midwest Manuscript Collection, The Newberry Library, Chicago

