

Festival Caravan: Diversity in Action

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Abstract:

The Carson Brierly Giffin Dance Library (CBGDL) is an endowed collecting area of the University of Denver. Annually, through the collaboration of the Curator and Archivist, CBGDL explores and brings to life an aspect of performing arts history in Denver through the creation of an exhibit and documentary. In 2017, the project focused on the diverse and cross-cultural Bonfils Theatre program, Festival Caravan. Festival Caravan was a summer program held from 1973 through 1985 and consisted of live performances of theater, dance, and music staged in Denver's parks. The creator of Festival Caravan, Henry Lowenstein, set out to reach across the segregated parks and neighborhoods of the city using the performing arts to introduce residents to different cultures and experiences. Performances took place nightly on a specially constructed platform stage, traveling from park to park. Festival Caravan provided a stage for minority theater, with Lowenstein purposely featuring lineups of Black and Chicano artists.

In order to document this history and create the programming for the project, the dance library collaborated with other Denver area archives. The majority of the papers and materials were located at another institution, which required research and collecting off-site. The collaboration proved successful, providing the dance library with the opportunity to digitize historically significant photographs and U-matic films. The finished project consisted of an exhibition and a documentary, both produced by the dance library, that highlights Festival Caravan's accomplishments of diversity in Denver. The exhibit and documentary are currently on display at the University of Denver Anderson Academic Commons.

About the Author:

Nathalie Proulx is the Archivist for the Carson Brierly Giffin Dance Library at the University of Denver, University Libraries. She started at the University of Denver as a Library and Information Science graduate student working the Special Collections and Archives reference desk. After receiving her MLIS in 2015, she began her position as Archivist for the Carson Brierly Giffin Dance Library. Her work consists of producing the annual projects including exhibits and documentaries, processing collections, and providing reference services.