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Evelyn Burdett

A Collection of Photographs and Related Papers of Evelyn Burdett, Stage Director and Teacher at Skidmore College and the Maryland Institute School of Fine and Practical Arts (1922 – early 1940s)
(Saratoga Springs, New York; Baltimore, Maryland: 1922-47) \$4500



An archive of dance and theater photographs with accompanying hand-made and printed programs, and related working papers of theater artist and educator Evelyn Burdett. A graduate of Columbia College in 1920-21 (Teacher of Fine Arts), most of the material in the archive dates from when Burdett was working as a teacher at Skidmore College (1922-28), and Stage Director and Faculty Advisor at the Maryland Institute School of Fine and Practical Arts in Baltimore during the 1930s. She attended Barnard College in the late 1920s and early 1930s before her appointment at the Maryland Institute.

An early advocate of modernist costume and stage design, Burdett worked behind the scenes on the creation of elaborate dance pantomimes for the annual "May Day" festival at Skidmore and the annual "Fete of Lights" costume ball at the Maryland Institute. As head of the Stagecrafts Class of the Maryland Institute she directed her students in other dance and theater productions staged at the Institute and by other local companies. She later worked as an illustrator and painter at Wellfleet, Cape Cod, and is best known for her modernist portraits of women.

The collection contains over 100 black & white photographs: most are (7½" x 9½") gelatin silver prints of dancers and stage designs, including groups of female students, and one unidentified portrait of a young African-American woman. Also prominent in the collection are 18 handmade programs, several of which are hand-painted or printed by hand, often with woodcut illustrations. There are several other programs of performances that Burnett was involved in (including at the Vagabond Community Theatre and the Baltimore Museum of Art), or attended (including the Isadora Duncan Dancers of Moscow, Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo, and the Jooss European Ballet). Also included is a folder of Burdett's working papers and drawings of stage designs, and two folders of articles and clippings: about modern dance companies and individual dancers; and about contemporary theater, stage, and costume designs (including the new art deco theater at the Radio City Music Hall).

A compelling small archive of primary source materials with an avant-garde sensibility, documenting the unheralded life of an early independent Barnard woman.

A more detailed list of the archive follows:

Over 100 Photographs (1922-42)

-1 platinum print (8" x 10"): portrait of an unidentified African-American woman.

-21 gelatin silver prints: outdoor images of dance pantomimes and students at Skidmore College (1922-28). Consists of 10 (7½" x 9½") prints and 11 (5" x 7") prints. Most have a photographer's small ink stamp on the back: "H.B. Settle, Photographer, Saratoga, N.Y."

-93 gelatin silver prints: images of various dancers and set designs taken at the Maryland Institute (circa 1933-42). Consists of about 83 (7½" x 9½" or 8" x 10") prints; and 10 smaller prints. Several have a studio stamp: "Howard Kenneth Jones, Baltimore, M.D."

Working Papers and Drawings (circa 1933-42)

Manuscript notes and sketches of stage designs for the annual "Fete of Lights" costume ball and other dance pantomimes at the Maryland

Institute. Includes six letters (TLS) to Burnett.

7 Skidmore College May Day Programs (1922-28)

Custom made: consisting of a folded letterpress sheet (printed on hand-made paper) stitched or tipped-in a handmade paper wrapper, including five programs with a woodcut illustration on the front cover. Two have Burdett's ownership name written in ink on bottom margin of the front cover.

-May 17, 1922 (The Return of Proserpine).

-May 16, 1923 ("Undine," a dance pantomime).

-May 21, 1924 (The Snow Maiden).

-May 20, 1925 (Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves). 2 copies, each with a different front cover wood-cut illustration.

-May 19, 1926 (Awakening of Launcelot).

-May 16, 1928 ("Alice in Wonderland," in pantomime).

2 Barnard College Programs (1927-29)

-*Greek Games dedicated to the God Dionysus*. Presented by the Classes of 1929 and 1930 of Barnard College, April 2, 1927. String-tied printed wrapper, illustrated with tipped-in halftone photographs (detached).

-*Greek Games dedicated to the Goddesses Demeter and Persephone*. Presented by the Classes of 1931 and 1932 of Barnard College, April 13, 1929. String-tied printed wrapper, illustrated with tipped-in halftone photographs.

11 *Fete of Lights* Programs (1933-42)

The Maryland Institute's Annual Costume Ball: all are custom designed and printed in color silk screen or letterpress.

15 Miscellaneous Programs

-12 programs for dance performances and theatrical works involving Burdett and her Stagecrafts Class performed at the Maryland Institute (Christmas Mart and Christmas Pageant, Jollie Follies, Fantasy Fair), and elsewhere (The Vagabond Community Theatre and The Baltimore Museum of Art).

-Isadora Duncan Dancers of Moscow. Directed by Irma Duncan. First American Tour. Souvenir Program. Quarto. Stapled, in printed wrapper.

-Jooss European Ballet. First American Tour. Under the direction of F.C. Coppicus. Folio. Stapled, in color-illustrated wrapper.

-Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo. Colonel W. de Basil Director General. Folio. Stapled, and with String tied letter press specific program laid-in.

Articles and Clippings (circa 1930-50)

Two file folders of magazine and journal articles. Re: 1. Various dance companies and individual dancers; 2. Various theaters and stage designs.

Includes a few clipped illustrations mounted on plain paper sheets. [BTC#421178]