

*Guides to Special Collections
in the Music Division of the Library of Congress*

**RUTH PAGE
COLLECTION**

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/eadmus.mu2005.wp.0033>

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Introduction

The materials in the Ruth Page collection were purchased by the Library of Congress from Lion Heart Autographs, Inc. of New York in December, 1995. The collection consists of more than 120 pieces of correspondence, fifteen programs, and clippings regarding her association with Remi Gassman. Other items include contracts, drafts and a photograph of Page.

Certain restrictions as to the use or photocopying of the materials in this collection may apply. Consult a Reference Librarian in the Music Division for further information.

Approximate number of items:	150
Linear feet of shelf space:	1
Number of containers:	1

Biographical Sketch

Ruth Page was born on March 22, 1905 (or, according to some sources, as early as 1899). At the age of 12, she began studying ballet with local teachers in her native Indianapolis. When the Anna Pavlova Company came to Chicago, she began taking lessons from dancers Andreas Pavley and Serge Oukrainsky. She eventually became a member of the Pavlova Company and joined it on its tour of Central and South America in 1918-1919. Upon her return to Chicago, Page began studying with Adolph Bolm who cast her in the leading role of his production of John Alden Carpenter's *Birthday of the Infanta* (1919). From this early success, Page became the principal dancer and toured with Bolm's newly founded Ballet Intime (1920) and Allied Arts Ballet (1924). In 1925, she married attorney Thomas Fisher. Over the next thirty years she went on to become the principal dancer or ballet mistress in such well-known ballet companies as the Chicago Opera Company, Teatro Colón, the Metropolitan Opera Company, the Ravinia Opera Company, Diaghilev's Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, Les Ballets Americains, and her own dance companies.

In 1921 Page began choreographing and performing her own works, including *Girl With The Flaxen Hair*, *The Poisoned Flower*, and *La Gitanette*. All were performed in New York City at the Apollo Theater. Many of her ballads were choreographed to the classics of Chopin (*Chopin Mazurka*, 1922), Mozart (*Diana*, 1928), Mussorgsky (*The Shadow of Death*, 1928), Ravel (*Pavane*, 1931), Villa-Lobos (*Possessed*, 1932), Castelnuovo-Tedesco (*Valse Mondaine*, 1935), Bach (*Gavotte*, 1938), Debussy (*Night of the Poor*, 1939), Tchaikovsky (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1949), and Ibert (*Impromptu aux bois*, 1951), to name a few. She also employed the music of such contemporaries as Handy (*St. Louis Blues*, 1930), Hindemith (*Evolution of a Goddess*, 1933), Copland (*Hear Ye! Hear Ye!*, 1934), and Gershwin (*An American In Paris*, 1936). One such contemporary, French composer and close friend Remi Gassman, was commissioned to compose music for Page's *Billy Sunday* (1946), a ballet based on the sermons of the famous revivalist who gave long satirical discourses of the sins of several prominent biblical characters. One of Page's innovations was the use of the spoken word while dancing, a technique employed in *Billy Sunday*. Page tended to create works that reflected contemporary life and social themes, however, she also found inspiration in the poetry of García Lorca, e.e. cummings, Langston Hughes, Dorothy Parker, Shakespeare (*Lady Macbeth*), and Edgar Allen Poe (*The Bells*).

As a ballet director, Page gained experience as early as 1926, when she headed the Ravinia Opera. She also directed the Metropolitan Opera Ballet (1927); the Chicago Civic Opera (1934-36); the Chicago Opera (1941-42); and the Chicago Lyric Opera (1954-69). In 1938 she formed her first dance company, the Page-Stone Ballet, with longtime partner Bentley Stone. The company consisted of some thirty dancers, including eight soloists, and had a repertory of eleven ballets. In 1940, it toured South America, opening at the Municipal Opera House in Caracas. Sixteen years later, Page founded the Chicago Opera Ballet, a touring company later known as Ruth Page's International Ballet. The company traveled extensively for 15 years and performed, along with her own works, numerous familiar operas, including *Carmen*, *Die Fledermaus*, and *Susanna and the Barber* (after the opera *The Barber of Seville*), all of which Page had adapted to one-hour ballet versions. It is worth noting that in 1962, a young Russian dancer by the name of Rudolf Nureyev made his American debut with Page's Chicago Opera Ballet.

Among her numerous awards Page received an Honorary Doctorate degree from Columbia College in 1974, the *Dance Magazine* Award in 1980 and 1990, and the Illinois Gubernatorial Award in 1985. On April 7, 1991 Ruth Page died in Chicago of respiratory failure. Her first husband died in 1969. She was survived by her second husband, André Delfau, a French stage designer, and a brother, Irvine Page.

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists primarily of the correspondence of American dancer, choreographer, and company director Ruth Page and her first husband attorney Thomas Fisher, along with programs and clippings highlighting Page's career. The collection spans the years 1944 to 1960.

The correspondence includes personal letters, contracts, telegrams, and postal cards between Page, Fisher, and French composer Remi Gassman regarding the creation and production of Page's ballet *Billy Sunday*. Other correspondence includes material from Gassman's wife, Marthe, ballet producer, S. J. Denham, composer Howard Hanson, and others. The collection documents Page's performances of her ballets *Frankie and Johnny*, *The Bells*, *Billy Sunday*, and *Scrapbook*, which were performed in the United States and France between 1946 and 1950. Clippings in the collection consist of several reviews of Page's works by well-known critics of the time.

Rodney Todd, February 1997

Container List

CORRESPONDENCE

<i>Box/Folder</i>	<i>Contents</i>
1/1	Albert Roullier Art Galleries, 1945
1/2	Denham, S. J., 1947-48
1/3	DuPont, Paul, 1947
1/4	Fisher, Thomas Hart, 1946-49
1/5	Fisher, Thomas Hart and Ruth Page, 1946-47
1/6	Gassman, Remi, 1944-48, n.d.
1/7	Hanson, Howard, 1944-54
1/8	Kirstein, Lincoln, 1947
1/9	Page, Ruth, 1945-50, n.d.
1/10	Weissberger, L. Arnold, 1948

LEGAL CORRESPONDENCE

1/11	1945-60
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PROGRAMS

1/12	1946-50, n.d.
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CLIPPINGS

1/13	1945-51, n.d.
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PHOTOGRAPHS

1/14	Page alone; 8x10 b&w Inscription on verso: Ruth Page as Frankie
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