

# May O'Donnell:

## A Preliminary Inventory of Her Collection in the Performing Arts Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

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### Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator:</b>	O'Donnell, May, 1909-2004
<b>Title:</b>	May O'Donnell Collection
<b>Dates:</b>	1930s-1996
<b>Extent:</b>	2 document boxes, 2 oversize folders (0.84 linear feet)
<b>Abstract:</b>	May O'Donnell (1909-2004) was an American dancer, choreographer, and teacher. She was a soloist with Martha Graham's company from 1932 to 1938; in 1949 she founded her own dance troupe, which performed in New York and on tour until the 1980s. The May O'Donnell Collection, 1930s-1996, consists of personal and performance photographs and publicity materials.
<b>Call Number:</b>	Performing Arts Collection PA-00184
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Note:</b>	This brief collection description is a preliminary inventory. The collection is not fully processed or cataloged; no biographical sketch, descriptions of series, or indexes are available in this inventory.
<b>Access:</b>	Open for research

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### Administrative Information

<b>Acquisition:</b>	Gift, 2005 (G12430)
<b>Processed by:</b>	Helen Adair, 2005
<b>Repository:</b>	<a href="#">Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin</a>

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## Scope and Contents

May O'Donnell (1909-2004), an American dancer, choreographer, and teacher, studied with Estelle Reed in San Francisco and Martha Graham in New York. She was a soloist with Graham's company from 1932 to 1938. In 1939 she presented her first program of her own work, and from 1940 to 1942 she toured with José Limón. She returned to Graham's company in the mid-1940s, appearing as a guest artist from 1944 to 1952. In 1949 she founded the May O'Donnell Dance Company which performed in New York and on tour until the 1980s. She was married to the composer Ray Green. May O'Donnell died in 2004 at the age of ninety-seven.

The May O'Donnell Collection, 1930s-1996, is arranged into two series, I. Photographs and II. Publicity Materials. The photographs are subdivided into personal and performance photographs, with the latter arranged alphabetically by title. The majority of the photographs show May O'Donnell or her company in performance, 1930s to 1980s. Except for one color photograph for *Homage to Shiva*, all photographs are black and white. Some of the photographs are reproductions of originals not held by the Ransom Center.

The publicity materials are arranged chronologically and consist of promotional fliers, programs, reviews, and articles, supplemented by a few miscellaneous items such as a 1959 contract with the University of California and two letters, one from 1956 written by May O'Donnell to the critic Walter Terry, and a 1978 letter from Grace Cohen Jaffe (formerly Grace Marcus) to May O'Donnell (filed in the 1949 folder).

Elsewhere in the Performing Arts Collection, the Dance Collection contains reviews of performances by May O'Donnell's company. A compact disc titled "Ray Green and His Music" is located in the Ransom Center Library.

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**Series I. Photographs, circa 1930s-1980s**

Personal, 1977, 1980s

**Box 1 Folder 1**

Performances

*Appalachian Spring*, 1944 (2 photos)**Box 1 Folder  
2***Cave of the Heart*, 1946 (1 photo)**Folder 3***Celtic Ritual*, 1949 (2 photos)**Folder 4***Cornerstone*, 1937 (1 photo)**Folder 5***Dance Concerto*, 1954, 1980s (4 photos)**Folder 6***Dance Energies*, 1959, 1980s (3 photos)**Folder 7***Folksay*, 1940 (1 photo)**Folder 8***Homage to Shiva*, 1980s (2 photos)**Folder  
9***Horizon Song*, 1946 (1 photo)**Folder 10***Illuminations*, 1956 (2 photos)**Folder 11***Incredible Adventure*, 1954 (1 photo)**Folder  
12***Legendary Forest*, 1954 (1 photo)**Folder  
13***The Queen's Obsession*, 1958 (1 photo)**Folder  
14***Suspension*, 1943, 1970s (2 photos)**Folder  
15***This Story Is Legend*, 1941 (1 photo)**Folder  
16***Three Interpretations of Casey Jones*, 1939 (5 photos)**Folder 17**

With Martha Graham's company, 1930s (4 photos)

**Folder** 18

At Bennington College, 1944 (1 photo)

**Folder**  
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With Erick Hawkins, 1945 (1 photo)

**Folder**  
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**Series II. Publicity Materials, 1936-1996, undated**

1936	<b>Box 1 Folder 21</b>
1940	<b>Folder 22</b>
1941	<b>Folder 23</b>
1942	<b>Folder 24</b>
1944	<b>Folder 25</b>
1945	<b>Folder 26</b>
1946	<b>Folder 27</b>
1947	<b>Folder 28</b>
1948	<b>Folder 29</b>
1949	<b>Folder 30</b>
1951	<b>Folder 31</b>
1952	<b>Folder 32</b>
1953 [*plus oversize, Flat File 1]	<b>Box 2 Folder 1*</b>
1954	<b>Folder 2</b>
1955 [*plus oversize, Flat File 1]	<b>Folder 3*</b>
1956	<b>Folder 4</b>
1958	<b>Folder 5</b>
1959	<b>Folder 6</b>
1960	<b>Folder 7</b>
1961	<b>Folder 8</b>
1964	<b>Folder 9</b>
1969	<b>Folder 10</b>

1971 [*plus oversize, Flat File 1]	<b>Folder 11*</b>
1972	<b>Folder 12</b>
1975	<b>Folder 13</b>
1976	<b>Folder 14</b>
1977 [*plus oversize, Flat File 2]	<b>Folder 15*</b>
1978	<b>Folder 16</b>
1979	<b>Folder 17</b>
1980	<b>Folder 18</b>
1981	<b>Folder 19</b>
1982	<b>Folder 20</b>
1983	<b>Folder 21</b>
1984	<b>Folder 22</b>
1985	<b>Folder 23</b>
1987	<b>Folder 24</b>
1988	<b>Folder 25</b>
1996	<b>Folder 26</b>
Undated [*plus oversize, Flat File 2]	<b>Folder 27*</b>