

Guide to the Stella Bloch Papers, 1907-1999

(S)*MGZMD 173

Jerome Robbins Dance Division

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York**

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	Stella Bloch Papers, 1907-1999
Collection ID:	(S)*MGZMD 173
Creator:	Bloch, Stella
Extent:	15 linear feet, 34 boxes
Repository:	Jerome Robbins Dance Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Abstract: Stella Bloch was an ethnic dancer and artist. Bloch took dance lessons from the Isadorables and then learned native dances of the Near East during a year long trip in 1920. During the 1930s and 1940s she wrote film scripts. In the 1950s with a move to the East Coast, she began to concentrate more on drawing and painting her surroundings. Her work captures Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance. Included in the collection are correspondence, personal papers, writings and photographs.

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

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Custodial History

The Stella Bloch Papers were donated to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division in 2002 by David Eliscu and Michael Coleman.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2007.

Biographical Note

Stella Bloch was born in 1897 in Tarnow, Poland, but raised in New York City. At an early age she began to draw, but it was a performance of Isadora Duncan in 1914, that changed her life. Bloch became the first American student of the Isadorables, the six women who were the company of dancers for Duncan.

At the age of 17, she accompanied Ananda Coomaraswamy on a trip to India and the Far East. While there, she learned the native dances of Bali, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, and Java. She spent a year in the palace of the Prince of Solo learning the Javanese dance. Upon her return to the United States, she performed these dances to enthusiastic crowds and headlined at the Eastman Theatre in Rochester, NY.

Bloch married Coomaraswamy in 1922. It was Coomaraswamy's third marriage. The couple spent most of their married life in different cities; he in Boston as the curator of Indian and Muhammadan Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and she in New York City. The couple divorced in 1930.

While working on and off Broadway, Bloch met the lyricist Edward Eliscu. The couple married in 1931. They moved to Hollywood soon after, where they both worked in the movies. Because of the House Committee on Un-American Activities of the 1950s, Eliscu was blacklisted and the family moved back to New York City. Eliscu worked in television until he was again blacklisted. The couple moved to Newtown, Connecticut in 1966, where they remained until their deaths.

Throughout her life, Bloch continued her art work. It was during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s that Bloch sketched and painted pieces that would later be hailed as her best; subjects included Josephine Baker, Bessie Smith, Thelonious Monk as well as Harlem street scenes. One of her pieces was used as the logo art of the Broadway musical *Black and Blue* in 1989.

Her artwork has been featured in *Dance Magazine* and shown at the Library for the Performing Arts and The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, both part of The New York Public Library. Other exhibitions have been at the Montross Gallery, New Macy Galleries, and Touchstone Galleries in New York City and Braxton Gallery, Warner Galleries, and Putzel Gallery, of Hollywood, California. Beginning in 1983 she was represented by the Beaux Arts Gallery in Woodbury, Connecticut, where retrospectives were shown in 1996 and 2000.

The Eliscu's had two sons, David and Peter, and six grandchildren. Edward died in June 1998. Stella Bloch died in January 1999 just one day short of her 101st birthday.

Scope and Content Note

The Stella Bloch Papers span the years 1907-1999 and include correspondence, writings, personal papers, and photographs.

The collection is important in its documentation of Bloch's career as both a performer and an artist. Especially interesting is her professional and personal relationship with director George Cukor and photographer Mortimer Offner.

The most personal material is in the correspondence between Bloch and her immediate and extended families. Of significance is the correspondence between the Eliscu's and the Lebac's (Ned and Jane Sherman). The Lebac's were close friends and the wide-ranging correspondence between the two couples reflect concerns about schooling their children, finding work during the Red Scare of the 1950s, and later careers including reviving dances from the pioneers of the modern dance (Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis). The correspondence between Stella and Edward and their children, David and Peter, begins while the boys were in early teens and continues through their early middle age.

Missing from the collection is information about Bloch's career as a film script writer and her first marriage.

Organization

The collection is organized into 5 series. They are:

Series I: Correspondence, 1907-1997

Series II: Writings, 1950-1994

Series III: Personal Papers, 1907-1999

Series IV: Photographs, 1919-1990

Series V: Oversized Material, 1915-1994

Series Descriptions

Series I: Correspondence, 1907-1997

15 Boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains correspondence, primarily from family members, including husband Edward, sons David and Peter and their children, Jed, Jenny and Michael. There is also extensive correspondence with extended family members including cousins Mortimer Offner, Olga Offner, Edna Leopold and Olga Auerbach. Also included are letters from friends Ned and Jane (Sherman) Lebac.

Series II: Writings, 1950-1994

9 Boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series includes notebooks, note cards and notes created and used by Stella Bloch. There are also unpublished scripts, skits and stories, including preliminary drafts of a book about the life of Isadora Duncan. Where possible the notebooks are titled with what was written on the cover in the author's handwriting, few are dated. The remainder of the notebooks have been numbered by the archivist.

Series III: Personal Papers, 1907-1999

8 Boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series includes personal papers of Stella Bloch. The largest sections of this series are the calendars-yearbook diaries describing daily events. There are also clippings from magazines and newspapers, divorce papers from her first marriage, material about associations and membership, information about her art exhibits through the years and programs from several Isadora Duncan performances ca. 1919.

Series IV: Photographs, 1919-1990

1 Box

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains photographs, snapshots, slides, and negatives. The photographs are mostly publicity stills and portraits taken by Mortimer Offner. The snapshots are mostly of a personal nature, including times with family and friends.

Series V: Oversized Materials, 1915-1997

1 Box

Arrangement: Alphabetical

This series contains oversized material, including artwork, clippings and posters from art exhibitions. Of special interest is a handwritten family tree of the Offner clan from Poland in the 1800s to present day United States. It was dictated by Stella Bloch.

Series I: Correspondence, 1907-1997**Box 1**

F 1	A, 1921-1997
F 2	Alan, Charles, 1929-1931, 1972
F 3	Asher, Claire, 1934
F 4	Auerbach, Arnold and Justine, 1928-1990 (2 nd cousin)
F 5	Auerbach, Nina, 1987-1990, (3 rd cousin) Auerbach, Olga, (cousin)
F 6	1920-1921, 1928
F 7	1930-1939
F 8	1940-1949, undated
F 9	B, 1907-1989
F 10	Benoit, Gertrude, 1991-1992 Bloch, Charlotte, (mother)
F 11	1918-1920
F 12	1921-1926
F 13	1927

Box 2

F 1	1928
F 2	1929
F 3	1930
F 4	1931
F 5-7	1932

Box 3

F 1-4	1933
F 5	undated
F 6	C, 1927-1996
F 7	Censer, Milton, 1921-1927
F 8	Coomaraswamy, Ananda, 1917-1932, (ex-husband)
F 9	Coomaraswamy, Dona Luisa, 1956-1959
F 10	Cukor, George, 1923-1947

Box 4

F 1	D, 1932-1991
F 2	Delza, Sophia, 1969-1985
F 3	E, 1925-1986 Eliscu, David, (son)
F 4	1943-1952
F 5	1956-1958
F 6	1970-1979

Box/Folder	Description	Stella Bloch Papers
F 7	1980-1990	
F 8	undated	
	Eliscu, Edward, (husband)	
F 9	1919-1929	
	1930	
F 10	Feb.	
Box 5		
F 1	Mar.	
F 2-3	Apr. telegrams	
F 4	May	
F 5	June-Aug.	
Box 6		
F 1	1931-1932 Sept.	
	1932	
F 2	Oct.	
F 3	Nov.	
F 4	Dec.	
	1933	
F 5	Jan.-Oct.	
F 6	Nov.	
F 7	Dec.	
	1934	
Box 7		
F 1	Jan.	
F 2	Feb. – Dec.	
F 3	1935	
F 4-5	1936	
F 6	1940-1942	
	1943	
F 7	Jan. – Oct	
F 8	Nov. – Dec.	
F 9	1945 Jun-Aug.	
Box 8		
F 1	1946	
F 2	1947	
F 3	1948	
F 4	1960-1979	
F 5	1980-1991	
F 6-7	undated	
Box 9		

Box/Folder	Description	Stella Bloch Papers
F 1	Eliscu, Frank and Mildred, 1947-1991	
F 2	Eliscu, Jed, 1980-1989, (grandson)	
F 3	Eliscu, Jenny, ca. 1981, (granddaughter)	
F 4	Eliscu, Mike, 1990-1994 (grandson)	
	Eliscu, Peter (son)	
F 5	1948-1958	
F 6	1961-1963, 1975	
F 7	undated	
F 8	Erwin, Hobe, undated	
F 9	F, 1963-1980	
F 10	Folmer, Walter, 1924-1927	
F 11	G, 1932-1983	
F 12	Gerber, Louise, 1980-1992	
F 13	Gotoff, Bess, 1927-1943	
F 14	H, 1924-1991	
F 15	Hoiyer, Dorothy, 1952-1987	
F 16	I-K, 1924-1982	
F 17	L, 1930-1992	
	Lehac, Ned and Jane Sherman	
Box 10		
F 1	1948	
F 2	1950-1959	
F 3	1960-1965	
F 4	1966-1969	
F 5	1970-1977	
F 6	1978-1979	
F 7	1980-1981	
F 8	1982	
Box 11		
F 1	1983-1984	
F 2	1985-1986	
F 3	1987-1989	
F 4	1990-1995	
F 5	1996-1998	
F 6-7	undated	
Box 12		
F 1	Leopold, Edna and Joe, 1956-1980 (cousin)	
F 2	M, 1927-1990	
F 3	McKean, Arthur, 1929-1930	
F 4	N-O, 1925-1986	

Box/Folder	Description	Stella Bloch Papers
F 5	Neidecker, Helen, 1978-1981	
F 6	Offner, Buffy and Deborah, 1979-1987 (2 nd cousins)	
F 7	Offner, Edna, 1919-1938 (cousin see also Leopold)	
F 8	Offner, Joseph, 1920-1929 (uncle)	
	Offner, Mortimer (cousin)	
F 9	1918	
F 10	1920	
F 11	1921	
F 12	1922	
F 13	1923	
Box 13		
F 1	1924	
F 2	1925	
F 3	1926	
F 4	1927	
F 5	1928	
F 6	1929	
F 7	1930-1932	
F 8	1933-1935	
F 9	1936	
F 10	1937	
F 11	1938	
F 12	1940-1942	
F 13	1943	
F 14	1944	
Box 14		
F 1	1945	
F 2	1946-1956	
F 3	undated	
	Offner, Olga (cousin)	
F 4	1914, 1918-1919	
F 5	1920-1929	
F 6	1930-1933	
F 7	1934-1939	
F 8	1940-1949	
F 9	1950-1958	
F 10	1962-1969	
F 11	1970-1975	
F 12	undated	
Box 15		

Box/Folder	Description	Stella Bloch Papers
F 1	Offner, Richard and Phillipa, 1919-1968 (cousin)	
F 2	Offner, Ruth, 1966-1971 (married to Mortimer)	
F 3	Offner, Sol, 1931-1933 (Uncle)	
F 4	Offner, various others, 1924-1971	
F 5	P-R, 1923-1986	
F 6	S-T, 1919-1986	
F 7	Seeds, Corinne, 1944-1957	
F 8	Singam, S. Durai Raja, 1974-1982	
F 9	Spiegel, Sara, 1991-1993	
F 10	Taylor, Laurette, ca. 1933	
F 11	U-Z, 1920-1990	
F 12	Unidentified, undated Notebooks (letters written in response to incoming correspondence, before being typed)	

Box 16

F 1	1983
F 2	1986
F 3	1987
F 4	1988
F 5	1989
F 6	1990

Series II, Writings and Notes, 1950-1994

Notebooks

Box 17

F 1	4, undated
F 2	1984
F 3	1986-1987
F 4	1987 Sept. 18
F 5	1992 Record
F 6	Autobiography, ca. 1994

Box 18

F 1-3	Isadora, undated
F 4	Lincoln Center notes, 1981-1982
F 5	Notes 4, undated
F 6	Notes 7, undated
F 7	Plea for grant, undated

Box 19

F 1	Scribble book, undated
F 2	Trip to Europe, ca. 1994
F 3-7	Untitled, undated

Box/Folder	Description	Stella Bloch Papers
Box 20		
F 1-10	Untitled, undated Note cards	
Box 21		
F 1-4	Quotes, undated	
F 5-6	Untitled, undated	
Box 22		
F 1-3	Untitled, undated Notes	
F 4	1963-1965	
F 5-7	Isadora Duncan, undated	
F 8	McGilligan, Pat, undated	
F 9	Untitled, undated Scripts	
	<i>Anything But Love</i> , 1950	
F 10	Musical play	
F 11	Synopsis	
Box 23		
F 1	<i>Fiddler of the Reels</i> , undated	
F 2-3	<i>Let's Celebrate!</i> A Romantic Comedy in Three Acts, undated	
F 4	<i>No More Tears</i> , undated (aka <i>Let's Celebrate</i>)	
F 5-6	<i>Shotgun Wedding</i> , undated	
F 7-8	<i>Slings and Arrows</i> , undated	
F 9	<i>When Summer Comes</i> , undated	
F 10	<i>A Year and a Day</i> , undated	
F 11-12	Untitled, undated Skits	
Box 24		
F 1	<i>Atomic Scientist</i> , undated	
F 2	<i>Freedom of Travel</i> , undated	
F 3	Untitled, undated Writings	
F 4	Ashton, Sir Frederick, undated	
F 5	<i>Barnstormer Farewell</i> , undated	
F 6	Delsarte, undated	
F 7-12	Duncan, Isadora, undated	
	<i>The Heritage of Isadora Duncan for Today's Child</i> , by Dorothy H. Cohen, Ph.D., 1978 Apr. 2	
F 13	<i>Isadora American Legend</i> by Jerry James, Ann Beigel, and Catherine Harris, 1977	
F 14		
F 15	<i>Loves of Isadora</i> , undated	

Box/Folder	Description	Stella Bloch Papers
F 16-18	Untitled, undated	
	<u>Series III: Personal Papers, 1907-1999</u>	
	Box 25	
F 1-2	Address cards, undated	
	Art Exhibitions	
F 3	Stella Bloch, 1929-1984	
F 4	Others, 1956-1990	
F 5	Art for the Airwaves, 1990 (organization)	
F 6	<i>Art vs. Culture</i> , undated	
F 7	Art work, undated	
F 8	Artists Equity Association, ca. 1989	
F 9	<i>Black and Blue</i> , 1989-1990	
	Bloch, Stella	
F 10	Biography, undated	
F 11	Publicity, undated	
F 12	Books, undated	
F 13	Buffy Offner Memorial, 1985	
	Calendars	
F 14	1924 yearbook	
	Box 26	
F 1	1925 diary	
F 2	1927 yearbook	
F 3	1929 yearbook	
F 4	1931 yearbook	
F 5	1940 yearbook	
F 6	1954 loose pages	
F 7	1956 wall calendar	
F 8	1957 wall calendar	
	Box 27	
F 1	1960 loose pages	
F 2	ca. 1968	
F 3	1972 yearbook	
F 4	1973 yearbook	
F 5	1976 yearbook	
F 6	1978 monthly date keeper	
F 7	1979 yearbook loose pages	
	Box 28	
F 1	1980 yearbook	
F 2	1981 yearbook	
F 3	1982 yearbook	

Box/Folder	Description	Stella Bloch Papers
F 4	1983 yearbook	
F 5	1984 yearbook	
F 6	1985 yearbook	
Box 29		
F 1	1986 yearbook	
F 2	1987 yearbook	
F 3	1988 yearbook	
F 4	1989 yearbook	
	Clippings	
	Magazine, 1926-1987	
	<i>The Appreciation of Art</i> , by Stella Bloch and Ananda Coomaraswamy, undated	
F 5		
F 6	<i>The Art Bulletin</i> , 1926 Sept.	
	<i>The Arts</i>	
F 7	1928 Jan., page 54	
F 8	1928 June, page 370	
F 9	<i>Ballet Review</i> , 1969, Vol. 3 No. 1	
Box 30		
F 1	<i>Beauty That Is Grace</i> by Alice Booth, undated	
F 2	Bloch, Stella, exhibitions and artist, 1934-1987	
F 3	<i>Crock-A-Doodle-Do</i> , 1928, Apr-May	
	<i>Dance Magazine</i>	
	1954	
F 4	Mar., page. 18-19	
F 5	Apr., page 12	
F 6	July, page 36	
F 7	1960, July, page 22-23	
	1977	
F 8	July	
F 9	Aug., page 27	
F 10	Sept., page 60	
F 11	Dec., page 71	
F 12	<i>Isadora Duncan In Her Dances</i> by Abraham Walkowitz, 1945	
F 13	<i>Medieval and Modern Hinduism</i> , by Stella Bloch and Ananada Coomaraswamy, 1923 Mar.	
F 14	<i>Metropolitan</i> , 1922, June, page 40	
F 15	<i>The New Orient, a Journal of International Fellowship</i> , 1925, July-Sept., page 48	
F 16	<i>Notes on Cambodia</i> , by Stella Bloch, undated	
F 17	<i>Parnassus</i> , 1930 Mar., page 29	
F 18	<i>A Picture of the Art of Face Painting and Make-up in the Classical Chinese Theatre</i> by Sophia Delza, 1971	

Box/Folder	Description	Stella Bloch Papers
	<i>The Touchstone</i> , 1920	
F 19	Apr., page 37	
F 20	July, page 307	
	Newspapers Clippings, 1928-1999	
F 21	1928-1975	
Box 31		
F 1	1985	
F 2	Bloch, Stella, 1924-1999	
F 3	Dance, 1928-1990	
F 4	Obits, 1998-1999	
F 5	Sculptors, 1976-1988	
F 6	Coleman, Michael, 1996	
	Contracts	
F 7	1924	
F 8	1943	
F 9	Divorce from Coomaraswamy, 1930	
F 10	Drawings and sketches, undated	
F 11	<i>The Early Years</i> , SUNY-Purchase, 1981	
F 12	Elizabeth Irwin High School speech, 1955 Feb. 10	
F 13	Gallery exhibit brochures and posters, 1982-1986	
F 14	Grooms, Red, 1975-1981	
F 15	Ledger, 1907	
F 16	Lehac, Ned, undated	
F 17	Medical and health, 1934 and 1991	
F 18	<i>The Modern School</i> , 1919 Aug., page 210	
F 19	Mortimer Offner photograph donations, 1967	
F 20	Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 1996	
F 21	National Endowment of the Arts/Humanities, 1981	
F 22	New York Artists Equity Assoc. Inc., 1991	
F 23	Other research material, undated	
F 24	<i>Poems</i> by Jane Sherman, 1960-1980	
F 25	Postcards, undated	
	Programs	
Box 32		
F 1	<i>Black and Blue</i> , ca. 1989	
F 2	Dance, ca. 1932-1984	
F 3	Isadora Duncan and her dancers, ca. 1918	
F 4	<i>The 1st International Jazz Festival</i> , 1962	
F 5	Theater, ca. 1977	
F 6	Receipts, 1932-1990	

Box/Folder	Description	Stella Bloch Papers
F 7	Rinhart, Frank, ca. 1998	
F 8	Sketchbook, undated	
F 9	<i>The Sweet Flypaper of Life</i> by Roy deCarava and Langston Hughes, undated	
F 10	<i>The Techniques of Isadora Duncan</i> by Irma Duncan, undated	
F 11	Theatre Concert Tours Inc., undated	
F 12	Wortis, Joseph, 1945-1949	
F 13	UCLA Graduate School of Education, 1982-1983	
F 14	University Elementary School, 1946-1987	
F 15	Volunteer Attorneys for the Arts, 1989	
F 16	Wesleyan University Press, 1977-1987 (Joan Bothel)	
F 17	Women in the Arts, ca. 1992	
F 18	Yale University, 1982	

Series IV: Photographs, 1919-1990

Box 33

F 1	Cut contact sheets, undated
F 2	Negatives, ca. 1940-1941, undated
	Photographs
F 3	Artwork by Stella Bloch, undated
F 4	<i>Baby de Leon</i> by Mortimer Offner, ca. 1926
	Bloch, Stella
F 5	in Duncan poses, ca. 1919-1920
F 6	by Mortimer Offner, 1919-1925
F 7	Undated
F 8	Slides, 1963-1990
F 9-11	Snapshots, undated

Series V: Oversized Material, 1915-1997

Box 34

F 1	Artwork, undated
F 2	Clippings, 1915, 1928, 1930, 1997
F 3	Posters, 1984 and undated
F 4	Stella Bloch family tree, undated