Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary 3
Information on Use 3
Access 3
Digital Images 3
Citation 4
Biographical Note 4
Scope Note 4
Related Resources 4
Subject Headings 5
INVENTORY 5
Series I: Papers 5
Series II: Photographs 11
Series III: Costumes 13
Subseries 1: Costume Clothing 13
Subseries 2: Accessories and Props 18
Subseries 3: Scraps 20
Series IV: Oversize 21
Series V: Restricted 21
Descriptive Summary

Identifier  ICU.SPCL.WHITNEYPRASS

Title       Prass, Marjorie Whitney. Papers

Date        1927-2008

Size        104 linear feet (49 boxes, 1 over-size folder)

Repository  Special Collections Research Center
            University of Chicago Library
            1100 East 57th Street
            Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract    This collection contains papers, photographs, costumes and ephemera belonging to Marjorie Whitney Prass, an alumna of the University of Chicago and an avid dancer. The bulk of the collection is comprised of over 200 pieces of costume clothing, accessories and props. The majority were made for Prass by her mother, Mathilde Muller Whitney, for performances at the University of Chicago. The collection also includes choreography notes and programs from dance performances in Chicago from the 1930s through the 1980s.

Information on Use

Access

Box 48 contains student material and is restricted for 80 years. The rest of the collection is open for research.

Digital Images

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Citation
When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Prass, Marjorie Whitney. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Biographical Note
Marjorie Whitney Prass was born on Sept. 11, 1918. She began dancing as a child, and by nine was performing in recitals. She also played the piano, and in the eighth grade was chosen to perform in a Chicago Symphony Orchestra educational outreach concert. Prass grew up in Riverside, IL, and in 1935 entered the University of Chicago. She was active in dance and theatrical performances at the University, most notably the Mirror Review, an annual women’s dance revue. It was begun as an answer to the all-male Blackfriars musical comedy troupe.

While at the University, Marjorie met future husband Norman W. Prass. He was an avid photographer, and many of the photographs of Marjorie in costume and dancing were taken by Norman. Most of the costumes in the collection were made by Marjorie’s mother, Mathilde Muller Whitney.

Prass graduated in 1941, with a degree in History. She and Norman eventually moved back to Riverside, where she lived for most of the rest of her life. Prass remained an active member of the Chicago Dance Council and the Dance for Victory Committee, and an active patron of Chicago dance and theatrical performances. She died on April 8, 2009.

Scope Note
This collection contains papers, photographs, costumes and ephemera belonging to Marjorie Whitney Prass. Most of the paper part of the collection consists of programs from dance performances in Chicago but there are also choreography notes for many dances, and a series of photographs of Prass. The bulk of the collection, though, is comprised of over 200 pieces of costume clothing, accessories and props. There are both theatrical and dance costumes, many of them ethnic or folk costumes. The collection also contains parts of costumes, scarves, shoes, headpieces, hair flowers, and other accessories, as well as castanets, bells, and tambourines. The majority of the costumes were made for Prass by her mother, Mathilde Muller Whitney, for performances at the University of Chicago. Most items date from the 1930s and 1940s, with most costume pieces from the 1930s.

Related Resources
The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:
http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html

Chicago Drama Performances. Index, 1839-1955

Playbill and Program. Collection, 1843-1979

**Subject Headings**

- Prass, Marjorie Whitney
- University of Chicago
- Students
- Dance Programs
- Dance (Chicago, IL)
- Costume

**INVENTORY**

**Series I: Papers**

This series includes personal papers of Marjorie Whitney Prass, including many pages of choreography notes and instructions for various dances. There are also numerous newspaper clippings (most of them pictures of dancers and movie stars), and many dance and theatre programs, almost all of them from performances in Chicago. Most items date from the 1930s and 1940s.

- Box 1
  - Folder 1
    - Letter from American Legion, 1934
  - Box 1
    - Folder 2
      - Ticket Stubs, Movie Flyer, 1935, 1937
  - Box 1
    - Folder 3
      - College Coursework and Notes, 1936, 1938, 1939, undated
  - Box 1
    - Folder 4
      - University of Chicago Campus Map, undated
  - Box 1
    - Folder 5
  - Box 1
    - Folder 6
      - Dance Instructions and Choreography, Notes, 1940, undated
  - Box 1
    - Folder 7
      - Dance Instructions - Conga, circa 1940
Dance Instructions – "Short Course on Spanish Dancing," undated
Box 1
Folder 9
Dance Articles – Literary Digest, 1932, 1933
Box 1
Folder 10
Chicago Dancer Newsletter, 1940-1942
Box 1
Folder 11
Dance Index: The Soviet Ballet, Flyer, 1943
Box 1
Folder 12
Newspaper Clippings, Marjorie Whitney, undated
Box 1
Folder 13
Newspaper Clippings, Dancers, 1936, undated
Box 1
Folder 14
Newspaper Clippings, Dance Articles and Reviews, undated
Box 1
Folder 15
Newspaper Clippings, Movie Stars, 1929-1931
Box 1
Folder 16
Newspaper Clippings, Nina Rosa Stars, 1930
Box 1
Folder 17
Newspaper Clippings, Non-Dance Related, 1937, undated
Box 1
Folder 18
Newspaper Clippings, Prass’s 90th Birthday (photocopy), 2008
Box 1
Folder 19
Programs – Marjorie Whitney, 1927-1940
Box 1
Folder 20
Programs – Mirror Revue, 1937, 1939
Box 1
Folder 21
Programs – University of Chicago Events, 1946, 1947, undated
Box 1
Folder 22
Dance Programs – Alvarez and Soriano, 1939-1941
Box 1
Folder 23
Dance Programs – Carmen Amaya and Gypsy Dancers, 1942, undated
Box 1
Folder 24
  Dance Programs – American Ballet Caravan, 1939
Box 1
Folder 25
  Dance Programs – American Ballet Theatre, 1968, 1969
Box 1
Folder 26
  Dance Programs – Antonio and Ballets de Madrid, 1968
Box 1
Folder 27
  Dance Programs – La Argentina, 1934-1935
Box 1
Folder 28
  Dance Programs – Argentinita, undated
Box 1
Folder 29
  Dance Programs – Ballet Repertory Company, 1944, undated
Box 1
Folder 30
  Dance Programs – Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, 1934-1954, undated
Box 1
Folder 31
  Dance Programs – Ballet Theatre, 1943-1954
Box 2
Folder 1
  Dance Programs – Ballet Theatre National Tour, 1942-1946
Box 2
Folder 2
  Dance Programs – Bayanihan Philippine Dance, 1964
Box 2
Folder 3
  Dance Programs – Vytautas Finadar Beliajus, 1935
Box 2
Folder 4
  Dance Programs – Gabriel Cansino, 1941
Box 2
Folder 5
  Dance Programs – Chicago Folk Festival, undated
Box 2
Folder 6
  Dance Programs – Agnes de Mille and Company, 1940
Box 2
Folder 7
  Dance Programs – Devi-Dja and her Bali-Java Dancers, 1939, 1944, circa 1950
Folder 8
  Dance Programs – Katherine Dunham, 1938-1945
Box 2
Folder 9
  Dance Programs, Flyers, Article – Gladys Hight School of Dancing, 1949, undated
Box 2
Folder 10
  Dance Programs – Martha Graham, 1936
Box 2
Folder 11
  Dance Programs – Jose Greco, 1952
Box 2
Folder 12
  Dance Programs – Hanya Holm and Company, 1940
Box 2
Folder 13
  Dance Programs – Harkness Ballet, 1969
Box 2
Folder 14
  Dance Flyer – Hatfield, Parkin, Kravitsky, undated
Box 2
Folder 15
  Dance Programs – Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, 1937
Box 2
Folder 16
  Dance Programs – Roberto Iglesias Ballet Espanol, 1960
Box 2
Folder 17
  Dance Programs – Joffrey Ballet, 1970
Box 2
Folder 18
  Dance Programs – Joors European Ballet, 1936
Box 2
Folder 19
  Dance Programs – Harald Kreutzberg, 1936, 1937
Box 2
Folder 20
  Dance Programs – Markova and Dolin, 1945
Box 2
Folder 21
  Dance Programs, Flyer – Clarita Martin, 1939
Box 2
Folder 22
  Dance Programs – "Musical Americana" Revue, 1954
Box 2
Folder 23
Dance Programs – Mata and Hari, 1953

Box 2
Folder 24
Dance Programs – The Polish Ballet, undated

Box 2
Folder 25
Dance Programs – Ruth Page and Bentley Stone, 1939, 1941, undated

Box 2
Folder 26
Dance Programs – Rosario and Antonio and Company, 1945

Box 2
Folder 27
Dance Programs – Radio City Music Hall (Astaire/Cherise), 1953

Box 2
Folder 28
Dance Programs – Royal Danish Ballet, 1980

Box 2
Folder 29
Dance Programs – Sadler’s Wells Ballet, 1949-1950

Box 2
Folder 30
Dance Programs – Saidenberg Symphonietta, 1940

Box 2
Folder 31
Dance Programs – Trudi Schoop and Comic Ballet, 1936

Box 2
Folder 32
Dance Programs – Uday Shan-Kar and Hindu Dancers, 1933-1952

Box 2
Folder 33
Dance Programs and Flyer – Mia Slavenska, 1944

Box 2
Folder 34
Dance Programs – Student Recitals, 1950, 1954, undated

Box 2
Folder 35
Dance Programs – Olga Valentine, Woman’s Symphony Orchestra, 1936

Box 2
Folder 36
Dance Programs – Miscellaneous Ballet, 1937, 1938, 1951, undated

Box 2
Folder 37
Theatre Program – The Playgoer Magazine, 1928, 1930

Box 2
Folder 38
Theatre Program – Nina Rosa, 1930
Box 2
Folder 39
Theatre Program – Three Wise Fools, 1936
Box 2
Folder 40
Theatre Program – O Say Can You Sing? 1936
Box 2
Folder 41
Theatre Program – Frankie and Johnny et al., 1938
Box 2
Folder 42
Theatre Program – Mamba's Daughters, 1939
Box 2
Folder 43
Theatre Program – Guest in the House, 1943
Box 2
Folder 44
Theatre Program – Kiss and Tell, 1943
Box 2
Folder 45
Theatre Program – Carmen Jones, 1945
Box 2
Folder 46
Theatre Program – Up in Central Park, 1946
Box 3
Folder 1
Theatre Program, Clipping – Grand Kabuki, 1969
Box 3
Folder 2
Theatre Program – Idiot's Delight, undated
Box 3
Folder 3
Theatre Program – I’d Rather Be Right, undated
Box 3
Folder 4
Theatre Program – Lookin' at Life, undated
Box 3
Folder 5
Theatre Program – Countess Maritza, Swedish Film Flyer, undated
Box 3
Folder 6
Theatre Program – The Great Waltz, undated
Box 3
Folder 7
Music Program – Manuel and Williamson Harpsichord Ensemble, 1941
Folder 8  
Music Program – Faust, 1942

Box 3
Folder 9  
Music Program – Don Cossack Chorus, 1945, undated

Box 3
Folder 10  
Music Program – Tannhaeuser, 1946

Box 3
Folder 11  
Music Program – Andres Segovia, 1964, 1970

Box 3
Folder 12  
Music Program – Semiramide, 1971

Box 3
Folder 13  
Music Program – Marian Anderson, undated

Box 3
Folder 14  
Miscellaneous Programs, undated

Series II: Photographs

This series contains photographs of Marjorie Whitney Prass in costume, and a few of her in performance. There are several portrait and graduation photographs as well, and a set of pictures of her husband, Norman Prass. An avid photographer, Norman took most of the pictures of Marjorie.

Box 3
Folder 15  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Peter Pan Costume

Box 3
Folder 16  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Flamenco Costume, 1933

Box 3
Folder 17  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Sun Costume, 1936

Box 3
Folder 18  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Folk Costume, 1936

Box 3
Folder 19  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Flamenco Costume, 1936

Box 3
Folder 20  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Oriental Costume, 1940

Box 3
Folder 21  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Peacock Flamenco Dress, 1940

Box 3

Folder 22  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Spanish Veil, 1940

Box 3

Folder 23  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Indian Costumes, 1940, 1943

Box 3

Folder 24  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Theatre Costumes, 1940, undated

Box 3

Folder 25  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Short Black Costume, undated

Box 3

Folder 26  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in White Beaded Costume, undated

Box 3

Folder 27  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Theatre Costume, undated

Box 3

Folder 28  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney in Pointe Shoes, undated

Box 3

Folder 29  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney Dancing, undated

Box 3

Folder 30  
Photographs – Dance Performances, undated

Box 3

Folder 31  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney (Portraits), 1938, 1940

Box 3

Folder 32  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney Graduation and Miscellaneous, 1936, 1941, undated

Box 3

Folder 33
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney and Norman Prass, Picnic, 1944

Box 3

Folder 34  
Photographs – Norman Prass, circa 1938-1944

Box 3

Folder 35  
Photograph – Eleanor Muller, undated

Box 3

Folder 36
Photographs – Dancers, Autographed, 1934, undated

Series III: Costumes

This series contains dance and theatre costumes, costume components and accessories, most worn or used by Marjorie Whitney Prass. Subseries 1 contains actual articles of clothing, with dresses and complete costumes coming first in the arrangement. Most of the ensembles described as costumes are folk or ethnic costumes. There are also several children’s costumes. These are followed by individual pieces (blouses, skirts, scarves, etc.), bodysuits and bloomers. Subseries 2 contains accessories and props, including headpieces, fabric flowers, shoes, fans, castanets, tambourines, and bells. Subseries three contains fabric scraps, sewing notions and unfinished projects.

Subseries 1: Costume Clothing

Box 4
   Yellow dress with ruffles, flower print, undated
   View image of costume. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/whitneyprass-0004-001

Box 5
   Red satin dress: shirtwaist, skirt, undated

Box 6
   Purple gown, detached lace collar, undated

Box 7
   Coral satin gown, undated

Box 8
   Pink gown with black lace, undated

Box 8
   Blue linen dress, undated

Box 9
   Mauve satin slip dress, undated

Box 9
   Pink/Lavender lyrical dance or slip dress, undated

Box 10
   Black satin long gown, black sequined fingerless gloves, sequined hair bow, undated

**Box 11**
White ruffled dress: top with peplum, long skirt, undated

**Box 12**
White satin costume: beaded bodice, beaded long skirt, sequined headpieces, undated

**Box 13**
Gold lamé and sequin dress, gold sequin headpiece, undated

**Box 14**
Short black velvet dress, undated

**Box 15**
Pierrot costume: jacket, pants, hat, undated

**Box 16**
Sun and moon costume: gold bodysuit, gold dress, sun and moon sequin headpieces, circa 1936

**Box 17**
Peter Pan costume: vest, shorts, sash, feathered hat, undated

**Box 18**
Belly dance costume: harem pants, vest, kerchief, headpiece, ankle or wrist bells, undated

**Box 19**
Green Indian costume: green skirt and sari, gold choti top, undated

**Box 20**
Blue Indian costume: blue satin skirt, gold lamé choti, blue hat, chiffon veil with gold trim, detached pendants from veil, circa 1940

**Box 21**
Chinese costume: blue silk robe and pants, orange hat, undated

**Box 22**
Hula costume: grass skirt, grass wristlets, paper leis, undated

**Box 23**
Peacock dress: black velvet flamenco dress with underskirt, bolero, hat, circa 1940

**Box 24**
Flamenco costume: bodice with attached scarf, ruffled skirt, black Spanish veil with flower, circa 1936

**Box 25**
Flamenco costume: red and white satin dress, satin hat, circa 1933

**Box 26**
Hungarian costume: blouse, skirt, kerchief, apron, undated

**Box 26**
Paisley "Gypsy" costume: shirtwaist, skirt, Japanese bloomers, kerchief, undated

**Box 26**
European folk costume: peasant blouse, red velvet Renaissance bodice, small embroidered lace bib apron, headpiece with fruit, circa 1936

**Box 27**
Child’s purple butterfly costume: suit and cap, purple net wings, mauve patterned wings, undated

Box 28
Child’s gold-trimmed dress, undated

Box 28
Child’s clown costume: orange and black clown suit, cone hat, undated

Box 29
Child’s paper costume: yellow crepe paper dress and hat, undated

Box 30
Oriental costume pieces: gold lamé head pieces, vest, shoulder piece, waistbands, undated

Box 30
Felt folk costume pieces: two felt vests, two hats, belt, small pouch/purses -- one blue set, one green, undated

Box 30
Two black velvet vests, one detached coin in envelope, undated

Box 30
Orange cotton bodice, undated

Box 31
Blouses and tops: belly dancer top, lavender sheer blouse, white bodice, two sheer European peasant blouses, Mexican peasant blouse, undated
Box 31
White organza apron, undated

Box 31
Black collar, undated

Box 32
Short cape, ivory silk with crystals, undated

Box 33
Two green skirts, matching Japanese bloomers, undated

Box 33
Black ruffled skirt, undated
View image of costume. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/whitneyprass-0033-003

Box 34
Bolero jackets: purple brocade with sash, brown taffeta with belt, circa 1940

Box 34
Wraps: eight scarves, one shawl, one handkerchief, undated

**Box 35**
Petticoats, one yellow, one pink, undated

**Box 36**
Undergarments: three bodysuits, one pair pantaloons, 11 pairs Japanese bloomers, one pair child’s bloomers, undated

**Subseries 2: Accessories and Props**

**Box 37**
Pastel accessories: two satin muffls, lavender headpiece, pink bonnet, undated
Box 37
Two floppy summer hats, undated

Box 38
Crepe paper watering can and headband, undated

Box 39
Assorted accessories: stockings, hairnets/snoods, glass tussy-mussy, eye masks, black and purple belt, hatpin, black silk cap with sequins, pearl appliqué ornament (unfinished), 2 cakes of black make-up, loose coins from trim, earring dangles, all undated

Box 40
Large Oriental-style hair comb, undated
Box 40
Gold headband, undated
Box 40
Fabric corsages and hair flowers, undated
Box 41
Premade fabric flowers, wire poinsettias, fabric leaves, ribbon corsages, undated
View image of costume, part 3. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/whitneyprass-0041-003

Box 42
Percussion: One set ankle or wrist bells, two sets of Indian Nautch Girl bells, one pair small maracas, one large single maraca, one pair castanets, two pairs finger cymbals, undated

Box 43
Tambourines: two smaller, one large, one with ribbons, undated

Box 43
Fans: one large painted Japanese fan, one small Japanese fan, one paper fan/ad for Old Spice, undated

Box 44
Shoes: red Indian sandals, two pairs of black pointe shoes, pink pointe shoes with shoe covers, undated

Subseries 3: Scraps

Box 45
Unfinished Projects: blue bodice, gold veil, wings, black trimmings, white bloomers, undated
Box 46  
Scraps: ribbon, bows, pom-poms, monogram letters, appliqué, scraps of fabric, large unused fabric pieces, undated  

**Series IV: Oversize**

This series contains oversize paper items, including posters, newspaper clippings, costume patterns, and a large class reunion photograph.

**Oversize**  
**Folder 1**  
University of Chicago Class of 1939, Panoramic Photograph, 1989

**Box 47**  
**Folder 1**  
Velos and Yolanda – Clippings and Flyer, 1933-1935

**Box 47**  
**Folder 2**  
Photographs – Marjorie Whitney dancing, 1938, undated

**Box 47**  
**Folder 3**  
Clippings, circa 1939, undated

**Box 47**  
**Folder 4**  
Costume Patterns, 1942, undated

**Series V: Restricted**

This series contains restricted student material. It is restricted for 80 years.

**Box 48**  
**Folder 1**  
Student Material, 1944