

# Harriet Hoctor Collection

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



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## Collection Summary

**Title:** Harriet Hoctor Collection

**Span Dates:** 1917-1972

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1923-1937)

**Call No.:** ML31.H58

**Creator:** Hoctor, Harriet

**Extent:** 1,700 items ; 12 containers ; 10 linear feet

**Language:** Material in English

**Location:** Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Summary:** Harriet Hoctor (1905-1977) was a dancer in vaudeville, on Broadway, and in films during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. The collection contains materials that document her professional life in all of these venues. It also contains items related to her early dance training at the Louis H. Chalif Normal School of Dancing in New York and the founding of the Harriet Hoctor Ballet School in Boston in 1945. Materials include correspondence from various notables, including Mary Pickford, Ted Shawn, Walter Winchell, Billy Rose, Milton Berle, and Florenz Ziegfeld; a scrapbook; clippings; contracts; photographs; programs; posters; reviews; publicity materials from various periods of her performing career; choreographic notes; music; personal papers; and costume designs.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### People

Berle, Milton--Correspondence.

Hoctor, Harriet--Archives.

Hoctor, Harriet--Correspondence.

Hoctor, Harriet--Photographs.

Hoctor, Harriet.

Hoctor, Harriet.

Pickford, Mary, 1892-1979--Correspondence.

Rose, Billy, 1899-1966--Correspondence.

Shawn, Ted, 1891-1972--Correspondence.

Winchell, Walter, 1897-1972--Correspondence.

Ziegfeld, Flo, 1869-1932--Correspondence.

### Subjects

Choreography--United States.

Costume design--United States.

Dance in motion pictures, television, etc.--United States.

Dance music.

Dance schools--United States.

Dance--United States.

Musical theater--United States.

Vaudeville--United States.

Women dancers--United States.

### Form/Genre

Clippings (Information artifacts)

Correspondence.

Photographic prints.

Programs (Documents)

Scrapbooks.

# Administrative Information

## Provenance

The material was donated to the Library in 2000 by Hoctor's niece, Harriet Hoctor Groeschel.

## Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

## Processing History

The Harriet Hoctor collection was processed by Elizabeth Aldrich in 2007. The finding aid was coded for EAD by Janet McKinney in 2010.

## Copyright Status

Materials from the Harriet Hoctor Collection are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

## Access and Restrictions

The Harriet Hoctor Collection is open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Certain restrictions to use or copying of materials may apply.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Harriet Hoctor Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

# Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1905, Sept. 25	Born in Hoosick Falls, New York, to Timothy and Elizabeth Kearny Hoctor.
1917	Hoctor moves to New York City to live with her Aunt Annie Kearney and to study dance at the Louis H. Chalif Normal School of Dancing. Later she studies with Ballets Russes member Ivan Tarasov, as well as with notable ballet stars Anton Dolan and Nicholas Legat.
1918	Hoctor appears in minstrel shows in her hometown of Hoosick Falls.
1920	Makes her Broadway debut in the chorus of <i>Sally</i> (music by Jerome Kern; ballet music by Victor Herbert; produced by Florenz Ziegfeld; and starring Marilyn Miller).
1922	Hoctor begins to work in vaudeville on the Keith and Orpheum Circuits. She also begins to study with dancer, teacher, and choreographer Merriel Abbot, who would choreograph many of Hoctor's specialty acts.
1923	Hoctor is hired by vaudeville superstars Vivian and Rosetta Duncan (known as the Duncan Sisters) to dance in <i>Topsy and Eva</i> (music and lyrics by Vivian and Rosetta Duncan), the Sisters's musical comedy adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> . The show previews in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and Cincinnati.

- 1924 While in Chicago, Hocter choreographs her first show, a Chicago Junior League production of *Wizard of Oz*. She also performs three solos as part of the Chicago Theatre's "Mighty Twin Organ" concerts.
- 1924 *Topsy and Eva* opens in New York City on 23 December at the Sam H. Harris Theatre and plays for twenty weeks.
- 1925 *Topsy and Eva* tours in Boston and Chicago.
- 1926 Hocter returns to San Francisco to perform vaudeville on the Orpheum Circuit and begins a life-long dance partnership with William Holbrook, whom she meets at Ivan Tarasov's ballet studio.
- 1927 After tryouts in Boston, the Broadway revue *A La Carte* opens in New York City's Martin Beck Theatre (music and lyrics by Herman Hupfeld, Louis Alter, Norma Gregg, and others; dances and ensembles staged by Sam Rose; special ballet direction by Theodore Bekeli; produced by Rosalie Stewart). Critics say that "Harriet Hocter is the only member of the cast who is certain to be pleasantly remembered." After *A La Carte* closes, Hocter returns to vaudeville.
- 1928 Hocter stars in Florenz Ziegfeld's Broadway musical, *The Three Musketeers* (music by Rudolf Friml; lyrics by P.G. Wodehouse and Clifford Grey; choreography by Albertina Rasch), which previews in Washington D.C. and Boston, opening in New York City at the Lyric Theatre.
- 1928 In the spring of 1928, Hocter presents a series of Sunday evening recitals and includes her interpretation of Debussy's "Claire de Lune" and "The Raven," based on Edgar Allen Poe's poem. She also receives permission from Ziegfeld to dance in a series of Sunday night entertainments at the Selwyn Theatre.
- 1928 Hocter is selected as leading prima ballerina on the American stage.
- 1929 Hocter opens in *Show Girl*, produced by Florenz Ziegfeld (music by George Gershwin; lyrics by Ira Gershwin and Gus Kahn; dances staged by Beth Connell and ballets created by Albertina Rasch). Harriet Hocter becomes the first dancer to dance to Gershwin's "American in Paris."
- 1930 Hocter opens in the Broadway musical, *Simple Simon* (music by Richard Rodgers; lyrics by Lorenz Hart; book by Ed Wynn and Guy Bolton; sets by Joseph Urban; produced by Florenz Ziegfeld).
- 1932 Hocter arrives in England to star in the musical revue, *Bow Bells*. One critic noted "the audience gave her an ovation such as London's representatives only give to artistes of the very front rank."
- 1932 Hocter opens in *Earl Carroll's Vanities* (music by Harold Arlen; lyrics by Ted Koehler; costumes created by Vincent Minnelli; ballets created by Gluck Sandor, other dances by Ned McGurn; production conceived and produced by Earl Carroll).
- 1933 Hocter opens in New York City's RKO Music Hall Stage with her work, "The Nightingale and the Rose," based on a work by Oscar Wilde. New York critics hail the work as "an awe-inspiring performance which one cannot forget."

- 1933 Hcctor appears in previews for *Hold Your Horses* (music and lyrics by [Robert] Russell Bennett and others; scene and costume design by Russell Patterson; ballets created and staged by Harriet Hcctor; produced under the supervision of John Shubert). After previews in Boston and Pittsburgh, the show opens at the Winter Garden on 25 September 1933. Even though the show survives a mere eleven weeks, Hcctor receives the best reviews: "Except for Miss Hcctor's really lovely dancing, there isn't much about *Hold Your Horses* to recommend it to your attention."
- 1934 A revamped and pared down *Hold Your Horses* tours Chicago and Washington, D.C.
- 1934 The *Harriet Hcctor Ballet Revue* opens in New York City's Belasco Theatre. Hcctor presents six new ballets of her own creation.
- 1935 Columnist Louella O. Parsons announces in the *New York American* that the noted dance team of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers are to split and Hcctor is to star in Astaire's next film, *Shall We Dance* (1937). Regrettably for Hcctor, Rogers decides to appear in the film. Hcctor is given a ballet at the end of the film.
- 1936 Hcctor opens in Florenz Ziegfeld's *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1936* (music by Vernon Duke; lyrics by Ira Gershwin; scenery and costumes by Vincent Minnelli; dances by Robert Alton and George Balanchine). Reviews consistently praise the show's three stars: Josephine Baker, Fannie Brice, and Harriet Hcctor.
- 1936 Hcctor appears as herself in the Hollywood film, *The Great Ziegfeld* (directed by Robert Z. Leonard; music by Walter Donaldson, starring Myrna Loy and William Powell).
- 1936 Hcctor signs as premier ballerina for the tenth edition of *Earl Carroll's Vanities* and spends the summer in St. Louis dancing in productions of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee* and Noel Coward's *Bitter Sweet*.
- 1937 Hcctor stars in Billy Rose's musical revue, *Casa Manaña*, in Fort Worth, Texas. More than 10,000 attend the show's four performances. One critic declares "The ballerina does her exquisite toe work so lightly it actually looks as though the breeze were blowing a slim boneless body from side to side."
- 1937 Hcctor appears in the musical revue *Chez Paree Revue* with orchestra leader Vincent Lopez.
- 1937 The *New York Times* announces that Hcctor is to be Fred Astaire's leading lady in RKO's film *Damsel in Distress* (1937). The part eventually goes to Joan Fontaine.
- 1937-1941 Hcctor appears in stage shows that preview movies, often with her own company.
- 1941 Hcctor is billed as "Favorite Ziegfeld Ballerina" at the Latin Quarter in Boston and appears in a solo recital at the Malden (MA) Auditorium.
- 1942 Hcctor appears in Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe revue, *Mrs. Astor's Pet Horse*, New York City.
- 1943 Hcctor performs in Beverly Hills in *All American Revue*.
- 1945 Hcctor choreographs the dances and performs in Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe revue, *Toast of the Town*.

1945	Hoctor opens a ballet school in Boston and devotes herself full-time to teaching.
1974	Hoctor retires and moves to Lorton, Virginia.
1977, June 9	Harriet Hoctor dies in Arlington, Virginia.

## Scope and Content Note

The Harriet Hoctor Collection is comprised of materials that document her professional life as a vaudeville, Broadway, and film dancer. The collection contains materials that span her early dance training at the Louis H. Chalif Normal School of Dancing in New York in 1917 to the founding of the Harriet Hoctor Ballet School in Boston in 1945.

Some of the highlights of the collection are correspondence (letters, cards, and telegrams) and contracts. Represented in the correspondence sent to Harriet Hoctor are Mary Pickford, Ted Shawn, Walter Winchell, Billy Rose, Milton Berle, and Florenz Ziegfeld.

The collection also contains one scrapbook, which includes articles, clippings, photographs, and posters, detailing the early career of Hoctor (1923-1925) as well as programs, posters, and publicity materials. A few of Hoctor's choreographic notes are in the collection, including sketches for the "Hurdle Ballet," which was originally staged by Seymour Felix for Hoctor in Ziegfeld's *Simple Simon*.

## Organization of the Harriet Hoctor Collection

The Harriet Hoctor Collection is organized into ten series:

- Photographs
- Scrapbook (1923-1925)
- Clippings
- Posters, Programs, and Publicity Materials
- Choreographic Notes
- Monographs and Poems
- Correspondence
- Music
- Magazine Articles about Harriet Hoctor
- Personal Papers, Magazines, Costume Designs

## Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-2, 7	<u>Photographs</u>
BOX 6	<u>Scrapbook</u>
BOX 10-12	<u>Clippings</u>
BOX 4	<u>Posters, Programs, and Publicity Materials</u>
BOX 4	<u>Choreographic Notes</u>
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BOX 8	<u>Personal Papers, Magazines, Costume Designs</u>

# Container List

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BOX-FOLDER 1/3, 7/3	<i>A La Carte</i>
BOX-FOLDER 1/4, 7/4	<i>Three Musketeers</i>
BOX-FOLDER 1/5, 7/5	<i>Simple Simon</i>
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	Eloise Hoctor (sister)
	Frank Hoctor (brother)
	Frank Hoctor's children (Elizabeth, Frances, and Harriet)
	Fred Hoctor (nephew)
	John Hoctor (brother)
	Tim and Elizabeth (Libby) Hoctor (parents)
	Pat Kearney (uncle)

## Photographs

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	Marguerite Sage Oetjen (niece)
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## Posters, Programs, and Publicity Materials

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- BOX-FOLDER 4/8** The Boston Ballet Company, *The Nutcracker* [choreography and costumes for "Candy Canes" by Harriet Hocter]
- BOX-FOLDER 4/9** *Simple Simon*, Majestic Theatre, New York City, 1931
- BOX-FOLDER 4/10** Harriet Hocter and her Ballet Revue, Belasco Theatre, Los Angeles, undated
- BOX-FOLDER 4/11** Souvenir program: *The Great Ziegfeld* (MGM, 1936)
- BOX-FOLDER 4/12** Second Twilight Concert Benefit Building Fund, The University of the American Theatre, East Hampton, L.I., New York, undated
- BOX-FOLDER 4/13** Unique Sunday Night Divertissements, Selwyn Theatre, 1928
- BOX-FOLDER 4/14** Flyer: *Ziegfeld Follies* [1936]
- BOX-FOLDER 4/15** *Topsy and Eva*, Sam H. Harris Theatre, New York City, 1925
- BOX-FOLDER 4/16** *The Three Musketeers*, Lyric Theatre, New York City, 1928
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- BOX-FOLDER 4/17** Postcards: The Manchester Hippodrome, 1932
- BOX-FOLDER 4/18** Mail order application: Belasco Theatre, undated
- BOX-FOLDER 4/19** Flyer: *The Three Musketeers*, 1928
- BOX-FOLDER 4/20** Farewell supper in honor of the Duncan Sisters, 1923
- BOX-FOLDER 4/21** Flyer: *The Three Musketeers*, 1928
- BOX-FOLDER 4/22** Sample stationery: Harriet Hocter's Boston Ballet School, undated
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- BOX-FOLDER 4/27** Poem: "Dancer" by Jack Walsh
- BOX-FOLDER 4/28** Poem: "A Ballade to Harriet Hocter"
- BOX-FOLDER 4/29** "Ballet is Magic: Harriet Hocter," by Walter Ware
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- BOX-FOLDER 3/2** Eloise [Hocter] (sister)
- BOX-FOLDER 3/3** Elizabeth Kearney Hocter (mother)
- BOX-FOLDER 3/4** Frances H. Hocter (niece)
- BOX-FOLDER 3/5** John Hocter (brother)
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- BOX-FOLDER 3/7** Laurel [?] (niece)
- BOX-FOLDER 3/8** Jane Moon Love (niece)
- BOX-FOLDER 3/9** Nancie [?] (niece)
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## Correspondence to and from Harriet Hoctor

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#### Others

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<b>BOX-FOLDER 3/41</b>	Business correspondence to Hoctor (1931-1934)
<b>BOX-FOLDER 3/42</b>	Unidentified and Fragments
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#### BOX 5

#### Music

## Music

### Container

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Piano conductor's score with some choreographic notes
- BOX-FOLDER 5/2** "I wish I had never seen sun shine" [Jimmy Davis]  
Piano vocal score
- BOX-FOLDER 5/3** "Hora Staccato," Dinicu-Heifetz  
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- BOX-FOLDER 5/4** "Tarentelle" op. 85, no. 2, Stephen Heller  
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- BOX-FOLDER 5/7** "Valse Bleue," A. Margis  
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- BOX-FOLDER 5/10** "Pas de Quatre," Pagni (Markova Dolin Ballet)  
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- BOX-FOLDER 5/11** "A Game of Tag," Geo. J. Trinkaus  
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- BOX-FOLDER 5/12** "The Cockatoos" [unidentified]  
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### BOX 9

#### Magazine Articles about Harriet Hoctor

- BOX-FOLDER 9/1** *Theatre Magazine*, "The Homes of American Celebrities," December 1928, no. 7, p. 57.
- BOX-FOLDER 9/2** *The Dance Magazine*, "The All-American Choice of Dancers for 1928," January 1919, pp. 34-35.
- BOX-FOLDER 9/3** *Vanity Fair*, "The Theatre," December 1933, pp. 40-41.
- BOX-FOLDER 9/4** *Picture Play*, February 1936, p. 20.
- BOX-FOLDER 9/5** *Motion Picture*, June 1937, p. 55.
- BOX-FOLDER 9/6** *Dance*, June 1937, cover and p. 13.
- BOX-FOLDER 9/7** *Dance Magazine*, December 1965, pp. 112-117.
- BOX-FOLDER 9/8** Magazine clippings, 1920s
- BOX-FOLDER 9/9** Magazine clippings, 1930s
- BOX-FOLDER 9/10** Magazine clippings, undated

### BOX 8

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- BOX-FOLDER 8/1** Newspapers, publications, and magazines relating to Hoctor's hometown of Hoosick Falls, New York
- BOX-FOLDER 8/2** Elementary school papers
- BOX-FOLDER 8/3** Magazine covers
- BOX-FOLDER 8/4** Costume sketches
- BOX-FOLDER 8/5** Prints and postcards
- BOX-FOLDER 8/6** Magazines, programs, and non-dance newspaper clippings