



Guide to

MS 632

Cristina Casas Palmer  
UTEP Ballet research files

1949 – 2016 Span Dates

2 feet, 6 inches (linear)

Inventory by Andres Lucero  
November 2, 2016

Donated by Cristina Casas Palmer.

Citation: Cristina Casas Palmer UTEP Ballet research files, MS632, C.L. Sonnichsen  
Special Collections Department. The University of Texas at El Paso Library.  
C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department  
University of Texas at El Paso

## Historical Sketch

Debuting on January 17, 1960 at Magoffin Auditorium, the Texas Western Civic Ballet was a “joint college-community venture” between Texas Western College and the city of El Paso. The Civic Ballet was directed by Ingeborg Heuser, who also danced in productions, produced choreography for ballets, and created costumes. Musical directors included famed local conductor Abraham Chavez, Jr. and Texas Western Department of Music chair Dr. E.A. Thormodsgaard. Heuser, a graduate of the Opera Ballet School in Berlin, came to El Paso in 1953 after attending the University of Arizona. In El Paso Heuser opened her own ballet school and founded the Ballet Center Guild of El Paso. The Civic Ballet began when Heuser was chosen to create a ballet program for Texas Western College. She not only taught ballet at Texas Western College, but also served as the Civic Ballet’s artistic director for 47 years until her retirement in 2006.

Over the years the Texas Western Civic Ballet, later renamed the University Civic Ballet, Ballet El Paso, and, more recently, the UTEP Ballet, has performed at Liberty Hall, Magoffin Auditorium, and the Plaza Theatre. Comprised of professional dancers, guest artists, university students, and local high school students, the Civic Ballet staged numerous ballets including “*Gaite Parisienne*,” “Red Shoes,” “*Les Sylphides*,” “Merry Widow,” “Graduation Ball,” “*Grazioso*,” “*Coppelia*,” and “The Nutcracker,” which became a staple of the El Paso holiday season for fifty years. The Civic Ballet was often accompanied by the Texas Western College Symphony Orchestra, the El Paso Symphony, and the College Community Opera.

The Civic Ballet was important to the university and the community for many reasons. These included providing advanced training for students through the ballet program at Texas Western and for serving as a vehicle for El Paso’s ballet dancers to perform professionally on a local stage. Additionally, according to its 1963 – 1964 promotional literature, “the Texas Western Civic Ballet has become part-parcel of the community expansion and become an important stimulus toward attracting new industries who are linking industrial growth with cultural growth.” The Civic Ballet not only helped make higher professional standards of ballet performance in El Paso a reality, but also as a significant and well-known regional ballet company, played “a major role in the cultural life of the Southwest.” Under Heuser’s direction, the Civic Ballet received “nation-wide editorial recognition” and attracted notable soloists and guest artists.

Currently, the UTEP Ballet performs at Magoffin Auditorium and is part of the UTEP Department of Theatre and Dance.

Cristina Casas Palmer was born and raised in El Paso. She graduated from Loretto Academy, the University of Texas at El Paso, and the University of Texas at Austin. At

UTEP she earned a BA in Elementary Education and a MA in Educational Psychology. After working in El Paso as a teacher and an educational diagnostician, she received her PhD in School Psychology from UT Austin. Palmer then maintained a private psychology practice as well as provided psychological services for major school districts. During her time in Austin, Palmer also established the Austin Internship Consortium in Professional Psychology for doctoral students and was granted an honorary faculty position as an adjunct professor by UT Austin. Palmer returned to El Paso in 2002 and retired as a school psychologist in 2006.

In addition to her career in education and psychology, Palmer was deeply interested in ballet. She performed with the University Civic Ballet in El Paso and studied ballet in Austin and Fort Worth. She and her husband are active volunteers with the UTEP Ballet, the El Paso Conservatory of Dance, and the El Paso Youth Ballet. Her 2014 book, *For the Love of Dance: The Early Years of the UTEP Ballet*, recounts an important part of El Paso's cultural history.

[Sources: Civic Ballet booklets and programs, Box 1, Folder 14, Music Department records, MS 001 UTEP Collection; UTEP web site; *Horizons Online News*, October 2006; "Ballet Minero" in *UTEP Magazine*, Summer 2009; *For the Love of Dance: The Early Years of the UTEP Ballet* by Cristina Casas Palmer]

## **Series Description or Arrangement**

This collection was left in original order.

## **Scope and Content Notes**

This collection contains research files about the UTEP Ballet collected by Cristina Casas Palmer for her book, *For the Love of Dance: The Early Years of the UTEP Ballet*. The records date 1949 – 2016. Types of materials include clippings, photocopies of newspaper and magazine articles, magazines, and other printed materials.

## **Provenance Statement**

Donated by Cristina Casas Palmer on May 10, 2016.

## **Restrictions**

No rights to the articles or publications within the files.

## **Literary Rights Statement**

Permission to publish material from the Cristina Casas Palmer UTEP Ballet research files, MS632, must be obtained from the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library. Citation should read, Cristina Casas Palmer UTEP Ballet research files, MS632, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library.

## **Notes to the Researcher**

See also:

UTEP collection, MS001 [Music Department]

*The Flowsheet*

*For the Love of Dance: the Early Years of the UTEP Ballet (2014)*

## Container List

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
1	1	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1949
1	2	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1953
1	3	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1954
1	4	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1955
1	5	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1956
1	6	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1957
1	7	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1958
1	8	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1959-1960
1	9	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1960-1961
1	10	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1961-1962
1	11	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1962-1963
1	12	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1963-1964
1	13	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1964-1965
1	14	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1965-1966
1	15	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1966-1967
1	16	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1967-1968
1	17	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1968-1969
1	18	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1969-1970
1	19	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1970-1971
1	20	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1971-1972
1	21	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1972-1973
1	22	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1973-1974
1	23	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1975-1976
1	24	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1974-1975
1	25	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1976-1977
1	26	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1977-1978
1	27	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1978-1979
1	28	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1979-1980
1	29	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1980-1981
1	30	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1981-1982
1	31	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1982-1983
1	32	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1983-1984
2	1	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1984-1985
2	2	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1985-1986
2	3	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1986-1987

MS632 Cristina Casas Palmer UTEP Ballet research files

2	4	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1987-1988
2	5	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1988-1989
2	6	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1989-1990
2	7	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1990-1991
2	8	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1991-1992
2	9	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1992-1993
2	10	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1993-1994
2	11	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1994-1995
2	12	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1995-1996
2	13	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1996-1997
2	14	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1997-1998
2	15	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1998-1999
2	16	UTEP Ballet Research Files	1999-2000
2	17	UTEP Ballet Research Files	2000-2001
2	18	UTEP Ballet Research Files	2001-2002
2	19	UTEP Ballet Research Files	2002-2003
2	20	UTEP Ballet Research Files	2003-2004
2	21	UTEP Ballet Research Files	2004-2005
2	22	UTEP Ballet Research Files	2005-2006
2	23	UTEP Ballet Research Files	2006-2007
2	24	UTEP Ballet Research Files	2007-2008
2	25	UTEP Ballet Research Files	undated
2	26	UTEP Ballet Research Files	undated
2	27	UTEP Ballet Research Files	undated
2	28	UTEP Ballet Research Files	undated
2	29	UTEP Ballet Research Files	2016