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**Dunham's Data: Katherine Dunham
and Digital Methods for Dance
Historical Inquiry, Personnel
Check-In, 1947-1960**

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User Guide

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This User Guide is intended to accompany the Personnel Check-In Dataset, 1947-60 from Dunham's Data: Katherine Dunham and Digital Methods for Dance Historical Inquiry, released September 2022.

Dunham's Data is funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC AH/R012989/1, 2018-2022), under the direction of Kate Elswit (PI, University of London, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama) and Harmony Bench (CI, The Ohio State University). Through this project, we explore the kinds of questions and problems that make the analysis and visualization of data meaningful for dance history. We do so through the case study of choreographer Katherine Dunham, manually cataloging a daily itinerary of Dunham's touring and travel from the 1930s-60s, the dancers, drummers, and singers in her employ during that time, and the repertory they performed. These curated datasets provide new means to understand the relationships between thousands of locations, and hundreds of performers and pieces across the decades of Dunham's career, and ultimately elaborate how movement moves.

This user guide explains the choices we made in collecting and structuring the data, column by column. The Personnel Check-In dataset, the second dataset in the [Dunham's Data series](#), accounts for the comings and goings of Katherine Dunham's dancers, drummers, and singers over time. The dataset in this release focuses on archival evidence of each performer's presence at a given moment, aggregated for the nearly 200 performers who were in the studio and theatre together over the fourteen years from 1947 through 1960. As with the Everyday Itinerary, data on check-ins come from scattered sources, including correspondence, payroll, programs, run notes, and travel visa applications. Because of the variability of archival materials, check-ins are categorized as "comprehensive," indicating that all performers are present and accounted for, or "non-comprehensive," when only select performers are mentioned (see ["Checking In: The Flows of Dunham's Performers" \(2019\)](#)). Across this 14-year period, we average three check-ins per month, although coverage is greater in some periods than others. Due to varying levels of information available, we have prioritized chronology when estimating check-in dates, and levels of specificity are indicated for every check-in as a confidence value. By showing who shared time and space together, the Personnel Check-In dataset can be used to trace potential lines of transmission of embodied knowledge within and beyond the Dunham Company. Because this dataset concerns all performers traveling with Dunham at a given moment, her presence is implied in all check-ins.

The Personnel Check-In dataset was curated by Harmony Bench and Kate Elswit in conjunction with a related dataset on Personnel Attributes, which we are not releasing due to the personal nature of the data. Instead, we are releasing two derivative supplementary datasets created by Antonio Jiménez-Mavillard on the basis of this data: one on select performer AKAs (married names, stage names, nicknames), and one that aggregates the passports that "checked-in" performers carried each year so as to obscure personal details. We are also releasing a supplementary dataset of First and Last Check-Ins. See SUPPLEMENTARY DATASETS for more details.

Creation and auditing for this dataset was done in the following phases: first the preliminary draft of the 1947-60 dataset was curated from archival sources, in tandem with the Everyday Itinerary and Repertory datasets. Then, a second pass was done to revisit each piece of evidence identified as a source, and assign confidence levels to each check-in. During this second phase, some check-ins were re-dated to better represent their position chronologically in relation to other evidence. In the third phase, names from the expanded 1937-62 Repertory dataset were added to the Personnel Attributes dataset, and reconciled as AKAs where appropriate. In the fourth phase, an expanded Personnel Check-In dataset was drafted from select programs to encompass 1937-1962, which supported the discovery and disambiguation of further AKAs (not part of this release). In the final phase, performer check-ins were audited in two ways: 1) by comparing performers with similar first and last names across 1937-62; and 2) by spot-checking any performer with a gap in check-ins of more than two years.

For more on this particular dataset and the scholarly interpretations that it makes possible, see [“Visceral Data for Dance Histories: Katherine Dunham’s People, Places, and Pieces” \(2022\)](#).

Interactive visualizations of this data include [“Interactive Flow of Katherine Dunham’s Dancers, Drummers, and Singers: ‘Check-Ins’ 1947-60”](#) and [“Interactive Chord Diagram of Katherine Dunham’s Dancers, Drummers, and Singers, 1947-60”](#). Static visualizations include [“Performer Cohorts, 1947-60”](#), [“Company Makeup by Performer Passport Nationality over Time, 1947-60”](#), and [“Select Performer First Check-Ins, by Country and Passport Nationality, 1947-60”](#).

For more on the full series of datasets, see [“Dance History and Digital Humanities Meet at the Archives: An Interim Project Report on Dunham’s Data” \(2020\)](#), which is part of the deposit under “DS0 Study-Level Files.”

DATE

The sheet is organized chronologically from January 1st, 1947 to December 31st, 1960. The check-ins average three per month, with some time periods more represented than others. In order to avoid accentuating over-representation, similar documents that would produce more than one check (for example, a series of sign-in sheets for rehearsals on subsequent days) are consolidated to roughly a single row entry per week, unless there are discrepancies. Documents that span longer periods of time may be referenced in more than one row.

SOURCE

This column indicates the sources for materials from which information contained in that row was drawn. Most are from the special collections at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIU) and Missouri Historical Society (MHS). We have indicated to the box and folder-level where we have found supporting evidence, both to document our own process and to aid future researchers.

SOURCE TYPE

This column categorizes the type of archival evidence that underpins the row. The four categories are a) “travel”: passenger manifests, visa paperwork, hotel room assignments, or other travel-related documents; b) “stage”: documents related to onstage decisions, such as programs, show patters, cast lists, or other repertory-related materials; c) “administration”: documents related to offstage company administration, such as company registers, contracts, cash advances, call sheets, salary adjustments, or payroll logs; and d) “correspondence”: letters, telegrams, and the manuscript “Love Letters to I Tatti”. The document types and their content do not always align. For example, an onstage casting choice might be represented in the archives by an administrative note regarding a temporary bump in salary; administrative company information is often documented as part of personal and professional correspondence; and salary levels were often supplied when applying for temporary travel authorizations.

NOTES

This column describes the source document more specifically and/or key information drawn from it, and also maintains commentary around conflicting pieces of evidence. For example, we may have evidence both that a performer signed a contract to perform, and that they never actually joined the company because they do not appear in subsequent payroll. Likewise, drafts of programs were submitted in advance of the company’s performance engagements, so a printed program may misleadingly include performers who would have already left the company and omit those who had arrived to take their places. The notes also account for when the date of a document is substantially different from the date of the information this represents, which has implications for CONFIDENCE levels, as well as for aspects of a given piece of evidence that may impact COMPREHENSIVENESS — for example when a program only lists featured performers, or when it lists all performers but is missing one or more pages. Common notes include: “DD dated (by)...”, meaning that we are working with an undated program that we have provisionally dated by cross-referencing the Personnel Check-In, Everyday Itinerary, and Repertory datasets; “program for day” or “dated list” meaning that the document itself references the specific date; and then ranges such as “payroll for week,” meaning that the information covers the week ending at that date.

CONFIDENCE

The Personnel Check-In dataset privileges correct chronological sequencing in cases when exact dates are unknown. This column is a key part of our manual data curation process and describes our confidence in each check-in date according to four levels of accuracy: “1” means we are confident the check-in occurred on that specific date; “2” means we are confident that it occurred sometime within the surrounding two weeks of the entry (one week on either side); “3” means we are confident within the surrounding month (two weeks on either side); “4” is rarely used but means our confidence level exceeds a month. In the case of end ranges in particular, the rationale is documented in NOTES when this is not self-explanatory.

COMPREHENSIVENESS

Each check-in is categorized as comprehensive or non-comprehensive. A comprehensive check-in is based on a piece of archival evidence that includes all dancers, drummers, and singers present at the time (e.g.: a payroll book, or a program that includes full casting, not just

featured performers); in our data handling for Dunham's Data, everyone who has previously been marked present but is not included in a comprehensive check-in gets checked out. A non-comprehensive check-in offers evidence about the presence or absence of only some performers; for example a note saying an individual missed their entrance in the evening performance is evidence they were there, but offers no insight into those not named.

COLUMNS BY INDIVIDUAL PERFORMER NAMES

Performers are sorted alphabetically by last name; for alternate names, please refer to the supplementary dataset of public AKAs. Only performers who appeared onstage with Dunham (dancers, drummers, and singers) are named in this dataset. It does not include musical directors, personal assistants, and so on, unless those individuals also appear at least occasionally as performers in programs. This is a necessary decision due to the availability of evidence, but it means that key individuals who often traveled with and contributed to the company are not present in this dataset, including Leslie Harnley, Vadico Gogliano, Margery Scott, and John Pratt. The most common two entries in the individual performer columns are “y” and “n.” “Y” indicates archival evidence a performer was there, as described in COMPREHENSIVENESS. “N” indicates evidence that a performer was specifically not there, for example a name crossed out of a program, or a letter directing publicists to no longer use photographs featuring that performer. When evidence exists for the specific date of a state-change, its opposite is indicated in the preceding row. In general, however, this dataset is a tool to understand rough date ranges for individuals. Although we draw inferences for our own research based on non-comprehensive check-ins, it is beyond the scope of evidence to discern conclusively whether a performer was present between comprehensive check-ins. Two further designations are also used in conjunction with notes: “?” when evidence suggests an artist is present but they may likely not be; and “y*” when evidence does not suggest an artist is still present, but they likely are. For example, y* is relevant when an injured performer continues to travel with the company while not appearing in active casting).

SUPPLEMENTARY DATASETS

First and Last Check-Ins. This dataset compiles every performer's first and last check-in date, to show the general timespan during which performers appeared with the company, although they may come and go in the interim. Because performers may have long or short gaps between these dates, we also include a list of all calendar years in which we have evidence for a particular performer's presence. Names are consistent with those used in the columns by PERFORMER NAMES. Dates are formatted by “day, month, year.”

Performer Passport Nationality by Year. This dataset counts the number of “checked in” performers that travelled with Dunham's company during each year, broken down into the passport under which performers traveled. We have chosen this format to represent some of the experience that we have documented in the Personnel Attributes dataset as passing through Dunham's company over time, but in an aggregated manner that obscures personal details. As we elaborate in *Visceral Data for Dance Histories* (2022), passports are an imperfect proxy for

culturally-specific knowledge, and we include all known countries represented by performers with that passport (eg: “French, including Senegal, Martinique, and French Guiana). “Unknown” indicates performers for whom no passport information has been found in Dunham’s archives.

Public AKAs. In order to avoid duplicating or forking performer information, we keep track of all alternate namings for PERFORMER NAMES we encounter in the archives in the Personnel Attribute dataset, including nicknames, maiden names, stage names, legal names, and alternate/mis-spellings. The Public AKAs dataset makes available a selection of these alternative names. To increase findability, it includes select names that came into use after 1960 (eg: Othella Strozier’s later career was built as Othella Dallas). In general, the public AKAs contain all key namings, with the exception of one racialized nickname.