



AMERICAN RHYTHM TAP PIONEER: THE LATE-CAREER NEW YORK RENAISSANCE ARCHIVE OF CHARLES 'HONI' COLES

Collection Title: Charles 'Honi' Coles & My One and Only Era New York Renaissance Archive

Date Range: c. 1983–1997 (Bulk: 1983–1988)

Provenance: Private files of the Ben Raeburn (Horizon Press) and Pat Percy Estate

Classification: Manuscript Annotations, Autograph Correspondence, Tribute Programs, and Theatrical Ephemera

Price: \$1,850

SCOPE AND CONTENT OVERVIEW

This archive documents the late career, public recognition, and posthumous stewardship of Tony Award-winning tap pioneer Charles 'Honi' Coles (1911–1992). Preserved within the private files of Ben Raeburn, founder of Horizon Press, and his companion Pat Percy, the collection bridges Coles's public achievements—including appearances at Carnegie Hall and the Joyce Theater—with candid correspondence, annotated photographs, and contemporary manuscript material preserved outside institutional collections.

More than a gathering of theatrical ephemera, the archive is unified by contemporary annotations and personal documentation. Together they record the physical demands of touring on an aging performer, the enduring professional network of Black vernacular dancers, and the efforts of Coles's friends and colleagues to preserve his legacy following his death.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

For special collections, museums, and researchers in performance studies, African American history, and twentieth-century theater, the archive contributes primary documentation in three related areas.

The Performing Arts Network and the Tap Revival

The correspondence documents the professional relationships that sustained the late-twentieth-century revival of rhythm tap. Letters preserve contemporary observations, addresses, and personal updates involving Bunny Briggs, Harry 'Sweets' Edison, Charles 'Cholly' Atkins, and other leading performers, illustrating the continuity between the Apollo Theatre tradition, international touring, and the Broadway revival.

The Human Cost of Performance

Annotated tour photographs and related correspondence document the realities of life on the road during Coles's final performing years. Together they record the decision to continue touring rather than return to New York for surgery, providing firsthand evidence of the physical demands placed upon veteran performers and the circumstances surrounding the stroke that ended his career.

Preserving a Legacy

Materials created after Coles's death trace the efforts of friends and colleagues to document, organize, and preserve his career. Annotated reference works, correspondence, and promotional material reveal an informal but deliberate effort to identify publications, locate administrative records, and secure surviving performance films before broader institutional preservation began.

MAJOR COLLECTION COMPONENTS

A. Performance & Recognition

The 37th Annual Capezio Dance Award Official Tribute Program (April 18, 1988)

Produced for the one-night gala honoring Charles 'Honi' Coles at The Joyce Theater, this large-format four-panel folding program opens to 22.75 inches and features an illustrated career chronology, retrospective performance photographs dating from the 1940s, and printed tributes by Agnes de Mille, Alvin Ailey, and Suzanne Farrell. Produced for event attendees, the program is not represented in OCLC/WorldCat or identified in institutional holdings, making it an important record of Coles's late-career recognition.

Kool Jazz Festival Official Program & Layout Dossier (June 25, 1984)

Official program for *An Evening of the Music of Harold Arlen* at Carnegie Hall, documenting Coles's appearance alongside Bobby Short, Stan Getz, and an exceptional roster of jazz and theater performers. The program is accompanied by Edward Jablonski's original program layout material and contemporary press review clippings, preserving both the public presentation of the performance and elements of its production history.

B. Research Materials, Correspondence & Photographs

Annotated Reference Monograph (May 26, 1996)

A working copy of Marshall and Jean Stearns's *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*, retained within the archive and bearing a manuscript note in the hand of Pat Percy. Dated May 26, 1996, the note directs the copying and indexing of pages documenting Honi Coles and Charles 'Cholly' Atkins, providing evidence of the archive's active use in preserving and organizing Coles's legacy following his death.

Correspondence, Postal History & Ephemera (1983–1997)

A chronological sequence of autograph letters, signed postal cards, picture postcards, envelopes, and related ephemera documenting Coles's touring years and the preservation of his legacy. Highlights include a two-page autograph letter signed and attached to a *My One and Only* Playbill (1983); a signed postal card mailed during the Broadway tour (1984); a signed picture postcard announcing the production's move to Washington, D.C. (1985); a 1992 funeral announcement; and a 1997 Lincoln Center *Reel to Real for Kids* flyer accompanied by a manuscript note discussing efforts to locate archival film footage of Coles's performances.

Photographic Portfolio

Seventeen photographs documenting Coles on stage, backstage, and on tour. The group includes an original 8½ × 11-inch silver gelatin performance photograph by Tom Caravaglia depicting Honi Coles and Harold Nicholas, together with sixteen candid photographs, sequential snapshots, and dressing-room images. Contemporary manuscript notes attached to several photographs identify dates, locations, individuals, and events, including commentary documenting Coles's health decisions during his final years on tour.

COLLECTION SUBJECTS

African American History — Archives — Autograph Material — Broadway Theatre — Dance — Performance Studies — Tap Dance — Theater History — Vernacular Dance.

VISUAL PORTFOLIO & MANUSCRIPT TRANSCRIPTIONS

Tom Caravaglia Photograph



Photographic Portfolio, Component 1 (Tom Caravaglia Silver Gelatin Print) Holograph Transcription (Verso): Honi Coles

CREDIT - TOM CARAVAGLIA Harold Nicholas [written to the right in a separate hand]

PRIVATE - PAP

HOUSE	NAME
0193	AL
0234	BE
0253	DE
0306	LO
0339	LO
0359	VE
0441	LA
0529	ME

Best I ever had from having the photo.
 58 - 800/350-C
 339

Ms. Elizabeth A. Putnam
 65 East Second St. #219
 Rochester, NY 14607

FIRST CLASS

Patricia Percy
 740. for Child Development
 345 E. 46th St.
 New York, N.Y.
 #10011

Room # 700

Postcard stamp: **UNITED STATES POSTAGE**
 10c
 Date of issue: **USA**
 New Jersey 22

Honi signing autographs on the cocktail napkins I'd supplied, for the little party. I'm kneeling nearby, waiting to ask him something. (He's in my big chair)

Honi & I in his hotel room the day he decided to go with the tour, alas! instead of going back to NYC for the operation that might have →

Ms. Elizabeth A Puttnam
475 East Broad St #K19
Rochester, NY 14607

FIRST CLASS

Patricia Percy
7 dn. for Child Development
345 E. 46th St.
New York, N.Y.
#10017

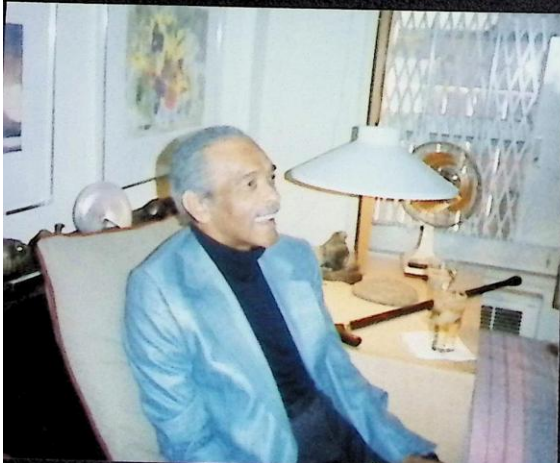
Room # 700

Dec 18, 1987 USA
New Jersey 22

Toni &
I in his
hotel room
the day he
decided to go
with the tour,
alas! instead
of going back
to NYC for the
operation that
might have →

[Hinged Upper Left Slip]: Kept him from having the stroke





VISUAL PORTFOLIO & MANUSCRIPT TRANSCRIPTIONS

A. THE ACTIVE STAGE CAREER & PEER NETWORKS (1983–1985)

The items in this section document Coles's triumphant return to Broadway in "My One and Only," his active touring schedule, and his candid reflections on the changing landscape of historic tap dancers.

Description: High-resolution diagnostic view of a full-page autograph letter signed by Charles 'Honi' Coles on personalized stationery, physically coupled with an original St. James Theatre playbill wrapper for *My One and Only*. The letter details his active stage routing, professional expectations for the upcoming Broadway season, and intimate contemporary updates regarding historic peers within the vernacular dance circuit.

Holograph Transcription:

July 26, 1983

Dear Betty—

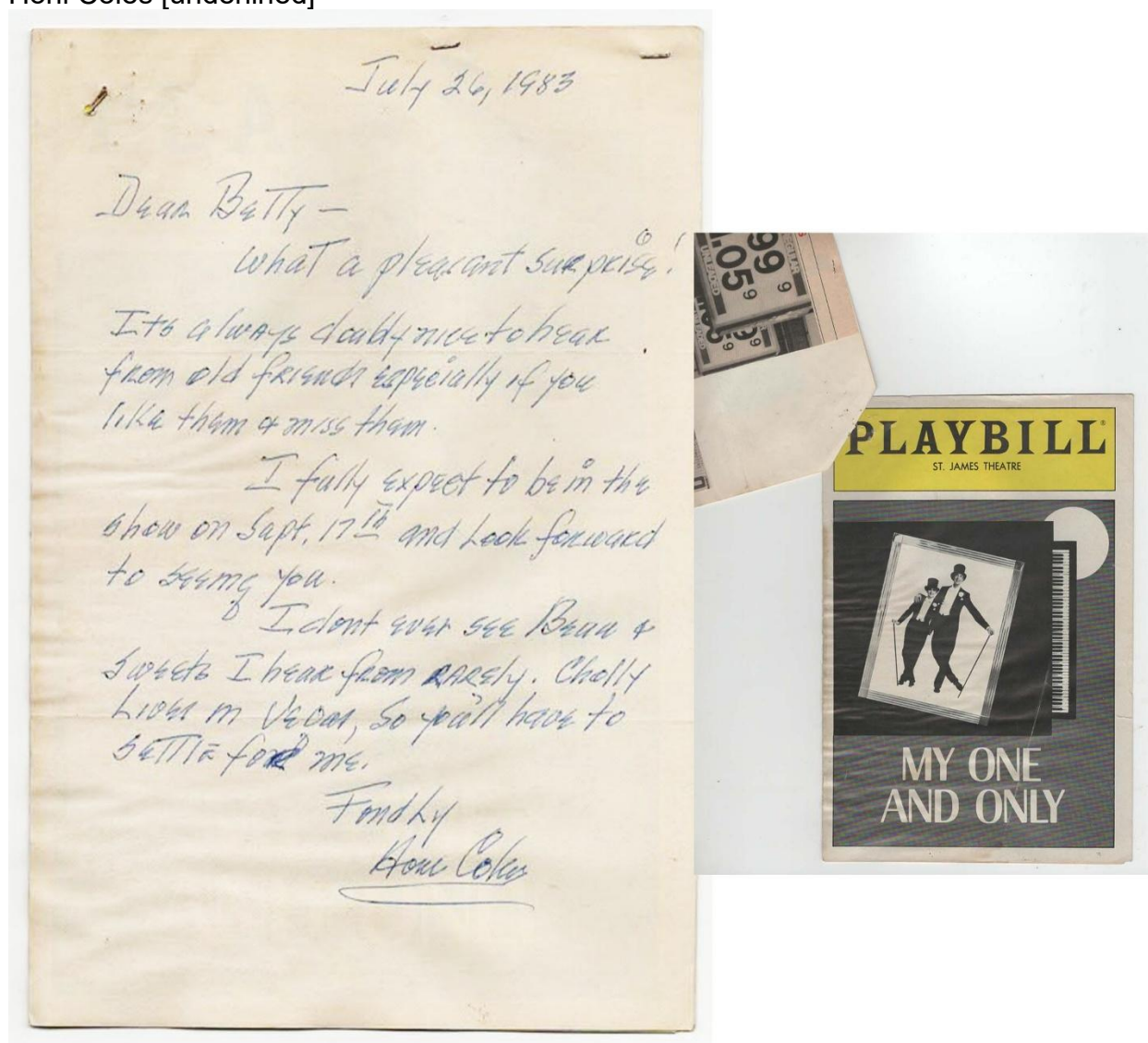
What a pleasant surprise! It's always doubly nice to hear from old friends especially if you like them & miss them.

I fully expect to be in the show on Sept. 17th and Look forward to seeing you.

I don't ever see Bunn & Sweets I hear from RARELY. Cholly Lives in Vegas, so you'll have to Settle for me.

Fondly

Honi Coles [underlined]



Description: Complete Carnegie Hall program booklet for the 1983–1984 season, overlaid with contemporary press clippings and cultural history layout drafts by Edward Jablonski. The program captures Coles performing alongside jazz and tap royalty during *An Evening of the Music of Harold Arlen* for the Kool Jazz Festival, demonstrating his prominent placement in major institutional concert programming during his final active decade.

Printed Typographic Text (Program Cover Face):

CARNEGIE HALL

1983 - 1984 SEASON

George Wein and Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation present the

KOOL JAZZ FESTIVAL

Monday Evening, June 25, 1984, at 8:00

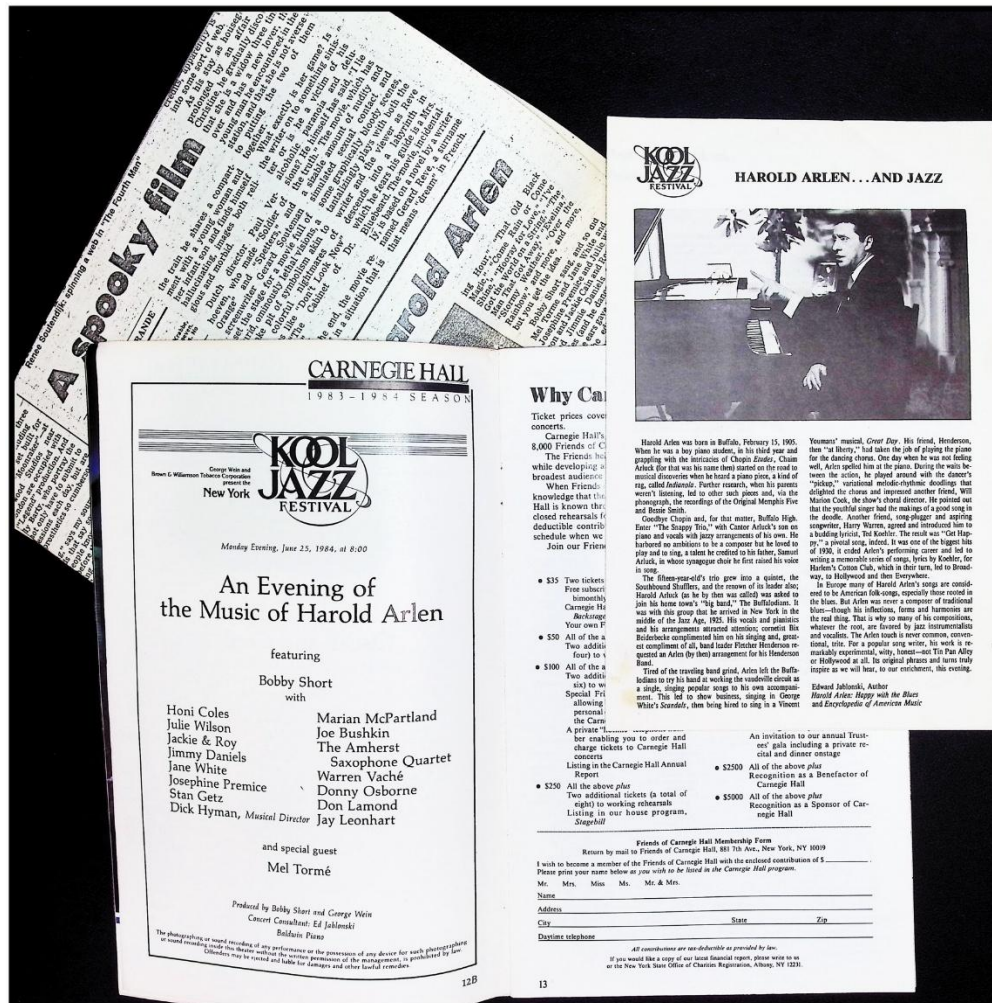
An Evening of the Music of Harold Arlen

featuring

Bobby Short

with

Honi Coles, Marian McPartland, Julie Wilson, Joe Bushkin, Jackie & Roy, The Amherst Saxophone Quartet, Jimmy Daniels, Jane White, Warren Vaché, Josephine Premice, Donny Osborne, Stan Getz, Don Lamond, Dick Hyman, Musical Director, Jay Leonhart and special guest
Mel Tormé



Postal History Data: USPS 20¢ Roberto Clemente commemorative stamp, New York postmark dated September 24, 1984.

Description: Broadway National Tour correspondence envelope and letter face, written while Coles was on the road, highlighting the physical demands and personal joy of maintaining a rigorous performing schedule.

Mailing Address (Recto/Right Panel):

Ms Betty Puttnam
475 E. Broad St
Rochester, N.Y.
14607

Holograph Transcription (Verso/Left Panel & Overlap):

Dear Betty—

It's been a while. Too Long! So I look forward to seeing you on the 7th of Oct.

You'll see Some New characters in the shoe but it's still a happy, happy show & being the performer that You are, I Know you'll still Like it —

Soon —

Love

Honi

Dear Betty—
It's been a while.
Too Long! So I look
forward to seeing you on
the 7th of Oct.
You'll see some new
characters in the shoe but
it's still a happy, happy show
& being the performer that
you are, I know you'll still
like it —
Soon
Love
Honi

ms Betty Puttnam
475 E. Broad St
Rochester, N.Y.
14607

characters in the shoe but
it's still a happy, happy show
& being the performer that
you are, I know you'll still
like it —
Soon
Love
Honi

PM
SEP
1984

Roberto
Clemente

Postal History Data: USPS 13¢ Crazy Horse definitive stamp, New York postmark.

Description: Illustrated vernacular tour postcard sent to Betty Puttnam, tracking the geographical movement of the production from New York to Washington, D.C.

Mailing Address (Recto):

to..

B. A. Puttnam

K-19

475 E. Broad St

Rochester, n. y.

14607

Holograph Transcription (Verso):

2/26/85

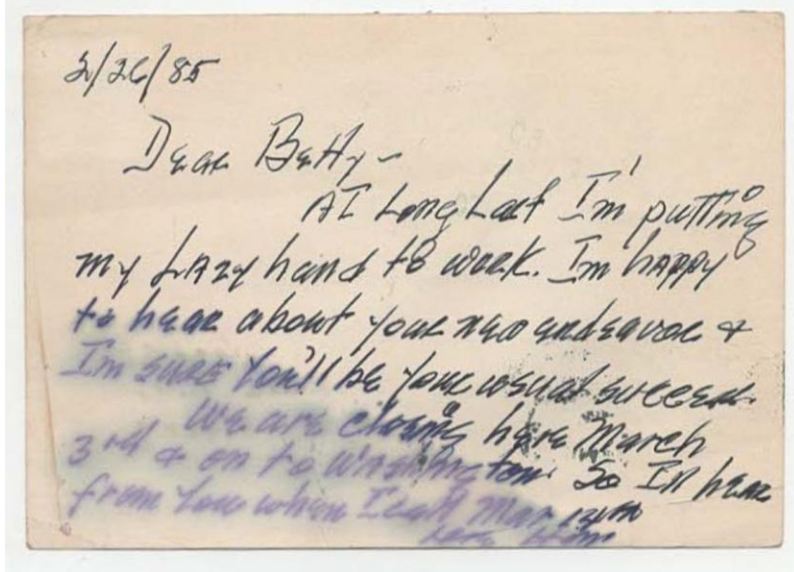
Dear Betty—

At Long Last I'm putting my Lazy hands to work. I'm happy to hear about your new endeavor & I'm sure You'll be your usual success.

We are closing here March 3rd & on to Washington. So Ill hear from You when I call Mar 14th

Love

Honi

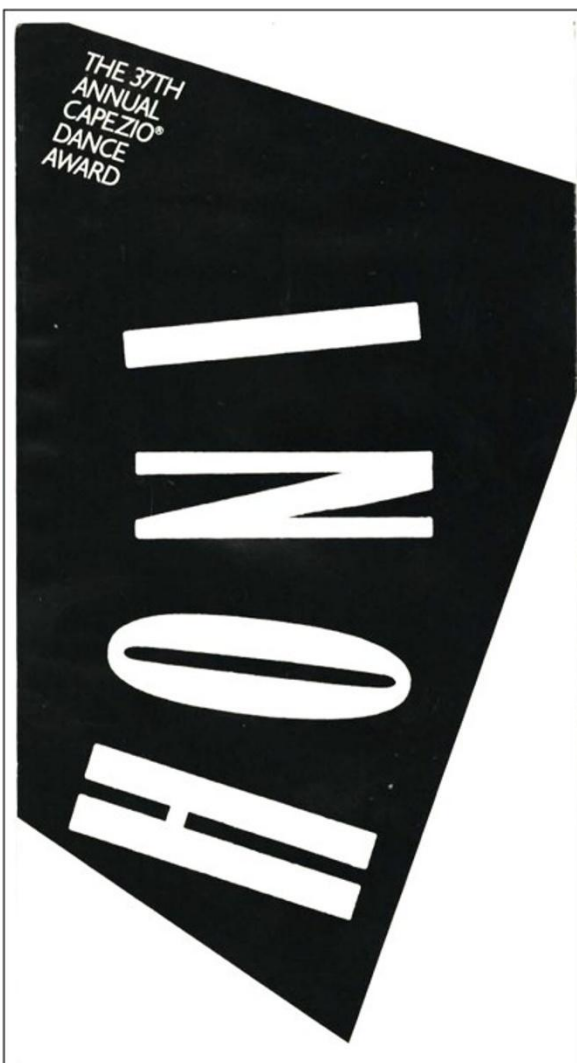


B. MONUMENTS OF THE LEGACY (1988)

This section transitions into formal peer and industry recognition of Coles's monumental impact on American dance history.

Description: Complete multi-view architectural presentation of the rare, unrecorded, large-format 37th Annual Capezio Dance Award official tribute program celebrating Charles 'Honi' Coles at The Joyce Theater (April 18, 1988).

The item is displayed unfolded to illustrate its complex structural mechanics: the stark black-and-white minimalist typographic exterior panel, the three-panel unfolding vertical biographical timeline, and the fully opened horizontal landscape expanse showcasing performance photography, chronological award lists, and printed tribute statements from foundational American choreographers.



C. THE FINAL YEARS & PASSING (1992)

The intimate core of the archive, capturing the physical realities of the stage and his formal memorial documentation.

Item Reference: EPH 1_2.jpg

Description: A scarce, original silhouette linocut proof print on lightweight cream paper stock, depicting a dynamic mid-routine stance of a vernacular jazz tap dancer. This iconic graphic representation serves as a striking visual distillation of Coles's lifelong mastery of line and rhythm.



Material Detail: Bi-fold heavy cardstock funeral announcement with printed header and extensive manuscript details completed in an elegant contemporary hand.

Description: The official, localized death announcement detailing the final resting arrangements for Coles at St. Peter's Church in Manhattan.

Printed Typographic Text (Upper Panel):

TRUMBO'S FUNERAL CHAPEL, INC.

100 St. Nicholas Avenue

New York, New York

(212) 662-3771

(212) 662-0800

Holograph Transcription (Lower Panel):

In profound sorrow we announce the death of

Charles Honi Coles [underlined]

which occurred on Nov. 12, 1992 [underlined]

Services will be held on

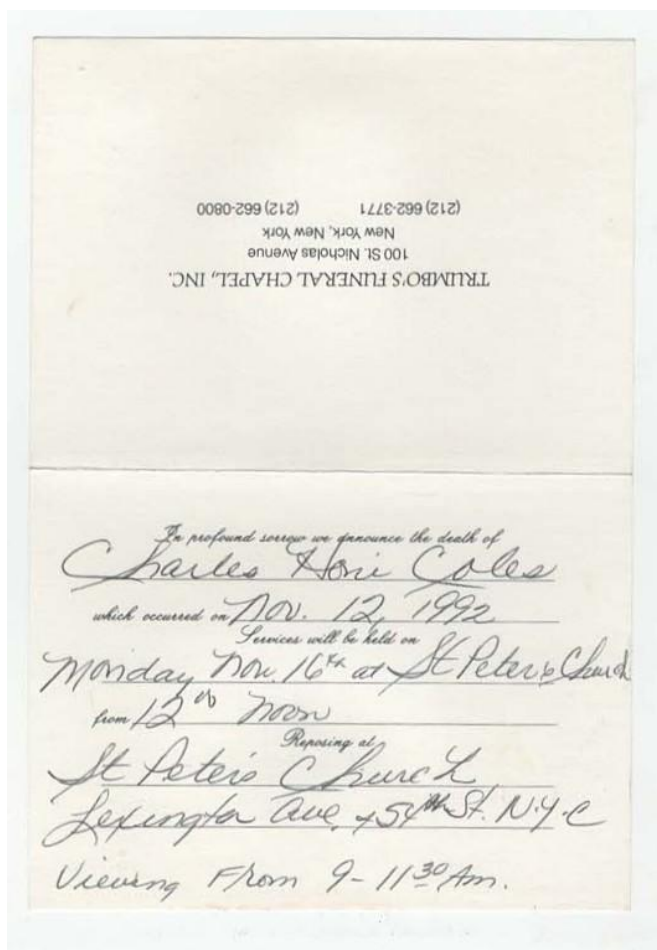
Monday Nov. 16th at St Peter's Church

from 12:00 Noon

Reposing at St Peter's Church

Lexington Ave. & 54th St. N.Y.C

Viewing From 9-11:30 Am.



D. POSTHUMOUS TRIBUTE & HISTORICAL RESEARCH VALUE (1996–1997)

The concluding section demonstrates how the archive continues to serve as an active site of memory and scholarly research.

Description: Trade paperback volume of Marshall and Jean Stearns's foundational reference work, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*, serving as an active working reference text within the archive. The primary research value centers upon a heavy square paper slip securely affixed with vintage tape to the front cover wrapper face, dated four years after Coles's passing, demonstrating how the archive's creator actively cross-referenced these materials for historic research purposes.

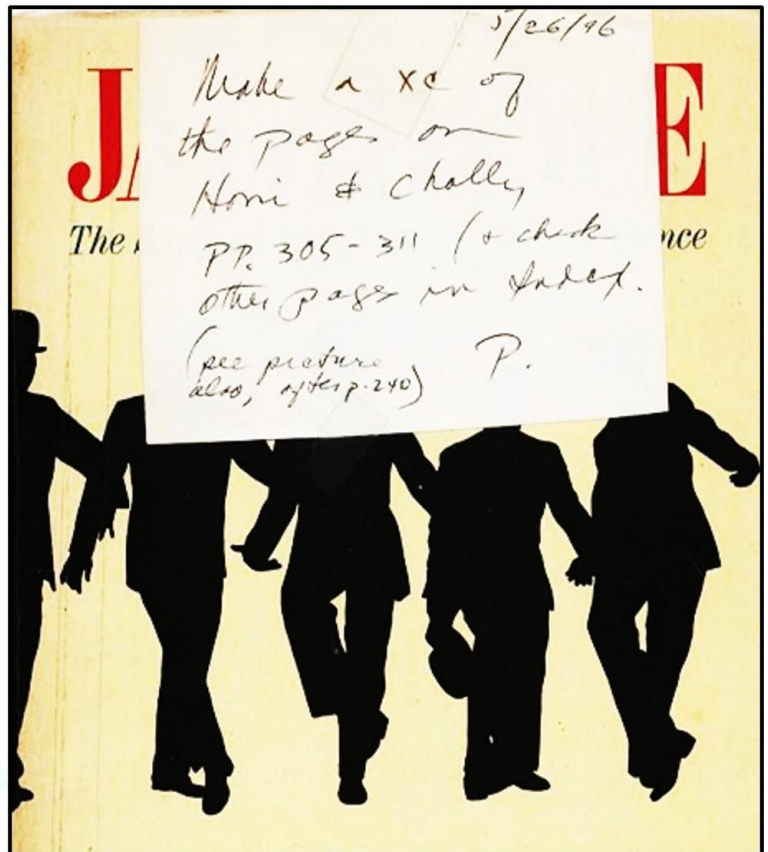
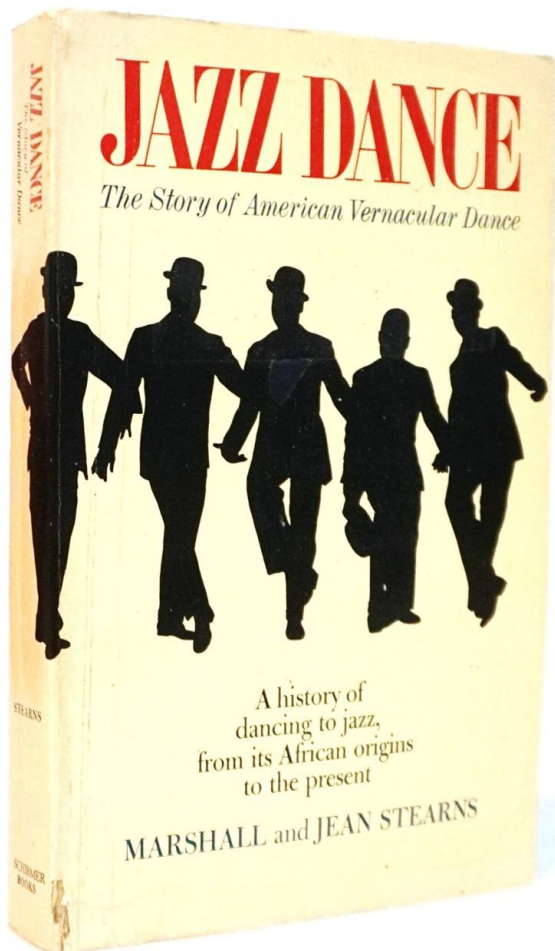
Holograph Transcription (Attached Wrapper Note):

5/26/96

Make a xc of the pages on Honi & Cholly, pp. 305-311 (+ check other pages in Index.

(see picture also, after p. 240)

P.



Description: Large yellow promotional gatefold flyer for Lincoln Center's 1997 *Reel to Real for Kids* matinee programming, physically coupled with a contemporary slip of personal correspondence from associate Paul Condylis. The pairing highlights how Coles's artistic legacy was actively taught to the next generation of dancers, while documenting his inner circle's continued emotional remembrance.

Printed Typographic Text (Main Face):

Lincoln Center, Inc., in collaboration with The Film Society of Lincoln Center, announces
a movie matinee series combining film and live programming in unusual ways...8 weekends of classic
films and fabulous performers!

REEL to REAL for kids

A WOODPECKER'S BALL - A LIVELY TRIBUTE TO THE GREAT "HONI" COLES

The Tap Dance Kid, starring the legendary Charles "Honi" Coles, with a dazzling live performance by
Brenda Bufalino and Tony Waag from The American Tap Dance Orchestra

Sunday, April 27, 1997

11 am & 1:30 pm

Walter Reade Theater, 165 W. 65th Street

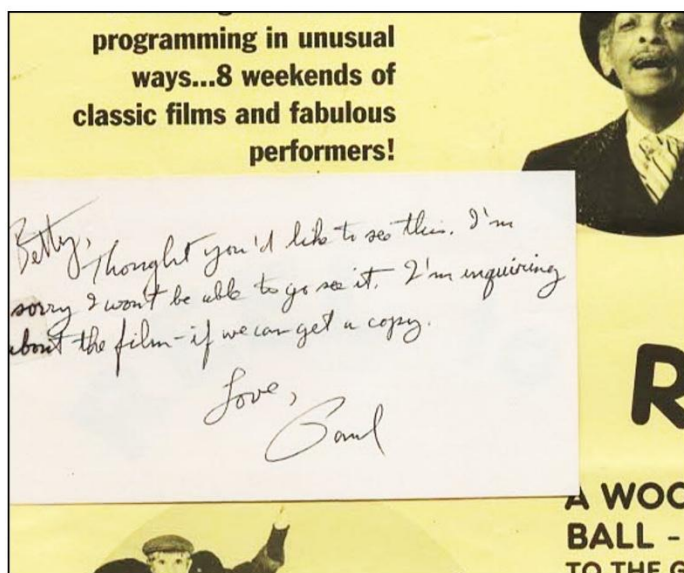
\$4.00 Kids under 16 \$8.00 Adults

Holograph Transcription (Attached Slip Layer):

Betty, I thought you'd like to see this. I'm sorry I won't be able to go see it. I'm inquiring about the film -
if we can get a copy.

Love,

Paul



Plus an additional 20+ newspaper clippings.

Institutional Terms: Deferred billing (Net 30 or Net 60 days) is available to libraries, museums, and universities. Materials will be shipped immediately upon receipt of an institutional purchase order. We are pleased to accommodate custom invoicing, split billing, or specific fiscal-year procurement requirements to facilitate acquisition.

\$1850



The
Ephemera
of Society
America



IOBA
Independent Online
Booksellers Association

Blind Horse Books
DeLand, Florida

Building Great Collections - One Fine Book at a Time

