



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the DC Cowboys Dance Company Records

NMAH.AC.1312

Franklin A. Robinson, Jr.

2014



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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	DC Cowboys Dance Company Records
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1312
Date:	undated 1994-2012
Extent:	7.5 Cubic feet (22 boxes, 3 oversize folders)
Creator:	DC Cowboys Dance Company
Language:	English Collection text is in English.
Summary:	The records of the DC Cowboys Dance Company, an all-male, gay, non-profit dance company based in Washington, DC. that was active from 1994-2012. They performed nationally and internationally live and on television, "celebrating diversity through dance."

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by Kevin P. Platte, founder and Artistic and Executive Director of DC Cowboys Dance Company in 2013.

Other Finding Aids

[Inventory](#) available.

Processing Information

Processed by Franklin A. Robinson, Jr., archives specialist, September 2013; supervised by Vanessa Broussard-Simmons, archivist.

Preferred Citation

DC Cowboys Dance Company Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

This collection is open for research use. Gloves must be worn when handling unprotected photographs, negatives, and slides.

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Biographical / Historical

"History of the DC Cowboys Dance Company - Celebrating diversity through dance"

The DC Cowboys Dance Company, an all-male, gay dance company, entertained audiences around the world from 1994 to 2012. Internationally acclaimed, the DC Cowboys specialized in providing exciting, high-energy, jazz-style, dance entertainment which spanned all musical genres, from contemporary country to club dance party, pop, to classic Broadway numbers for all types of occasions. Shows were customized to the venue—both gay-specific and mainstream events—and featured anywhere from one song to multiple sets of three to four songs each. Combining a little traditional country-western with jazz, musical theater and a masculine sex appeal, the DC Cowboys' high-energy choreography made the company one of the most-sought after gay dance groups in the world.

Founder and Artistic Director Kevin Platte started the dance company in August 1994 after seeing a similar gay, country-western dance group in California. Platte recruited 11 dancers—mostly friends—from a Washington, D.C., gay, country-western bar named Remington's. He approached the best dancers based on watching them two-step and line-dance at the bar. The dancers formed the troupe for the sole purpose of performing at the Atlantic States Gay Rodeo Association's (ASGRA) annual rodeo in Washington, D.C., in September 1994.

Platte thought the performance would be a one-time event. But based on an overwhelming reception, the dancers decided to continue the group. This required weekly rehearsals, the creation of a dance "repertoire" and a larger commitment from the dancers. Of the original 12 members, only six were up to the task. These six original members then had to find more dancers and identify other performance venues. Mainstay venues soon included the Capital Pride Festival every June and the Atlantic Stampede Gay Rodeo event every September.

In September 1995, *Metro Weekly* placed them on the cover of their magazine, giving them greater exposure and more clout. The Cowboys used this coverage as a catalyst to build the brand and identity. All the while, the DC Cowboys remained volunteers and amateurs, performing solely for the love of it. Each dancer maintained a "day job," and the group only rehearsed in the evenings once or twice a week. As the warmer months seemed to be their busiest, the dancers would use the colder months to build up the repertoire and practice. Every year, rehearsals would cease for the months of November and December for the existing dancers. However new recruits that were successful in the annual auditions attended "bootcamp" rehearsals during those months to learn some of the existing repertoire. In January, the existing and new members started rehearsing together as the new season began.

During the early years, the dancers paid for all expenses out of their own pockets, and monthly dues were collected to pay for group expenses. The group would often pay for the opportunity to perform. To supplement these expenses, the group began fundraising through a monthly bar night at different gay nightclubs. Once their reputation grew, venues and events began to pay for the company's entertainment services and patron club members donated funds to support the organization and their mission. These funds allowed the organization to pay for all of their expenses including dancer costuming. In addition, the group sold merchandise which included T-shirts, performance DVDs as well as their sexy DC Cowboys calendars. Three of the more popular calendars featured the dancers without clothes in artistic poses and included the "making of the calendar" DVD.

In 1996, Platte added a charitable element to the organization. He created a mission statement which said the company would provide free entertainment to any HIV/AIDS charitable organization. Over the years, the company also directly raised funds for HIV/AIDS organizations by sharing the profits of their calendar sales. The DC Cowboys raised millions of dollars through performances for national and local non-profit organizations such as: Washington, D.C. AIDS Ride; Washington, D.C. AIDS Walk; Chase Brexton Clinic of Baltimore, Maryland; Northern Virginia AIDS Ministry; Human Rights Campaign; Whitman Walker Clinic of Washington, D.C.; Food and Friends of Washington, D.C.; Mautner Project; Gay Latino Benefits in Metro D.C.; Harford County AIDS/Cancer Benefit, Maryland; NYFD Benefit for the New York City Fire Department.

In 1996, the company received a grant from the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, honoring the company for its valued contribution to the Washington, D.C. arts community. The company always maintained a tax-deductible status as a 501c3 non-profit organization with a small board of directors.

During their 18-year tenure, the DC Cowboys provided an outlet for gay artists and performers in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. The company included 85 dancers, eight choreographers and three stage-managers. The company performed at 458 events in five countries. The DC Cowboys' crowd-pleasing, sexy dance style had been described as "Will Rogers Follies meets Bob Fosse." The group famously described themselves on *America's Got Talent* in 2008 as "Think Brokeback meets Broadway," which became a popular line echoed around the world. Their growth and popularity were attributed to their unique and high quality entertainment which was often copied in other cities but never equalled. In addition the dancers were talented, good-looking men who were friendly and approachable to their many fans. Their farewell season tour in 2012 visited all of their favorite performance venues and locations around the world and was dedicated to their fans who were instrumental to their success.

Typical performance venues included Pride Festivals in New York City, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Charlotte, North Carolina; Headliners on the Gay Rodeo circuit in Washington, D.C., Las Vegas, San Diego, Atlanta, Chicago, Calgary, and Texas; Halloween in New Orleans; Mr. Gay All-American Finals; Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, Washington, D.C., concerts and events; Whitman Walker Volunteer Appreciation at Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C.; PFLAG's Gala Dinner, Washington, D.C.; HRC (Human Rights Campaign) Leadership Dinner cruise aboard the Spirit of Washington, Washington, D.C.; Human Rights Campaign National Dinner, Washington, D.C. - special reception for major donors; Annual Chef's Best Dinner & Auction for Food and Friends, Washington, D.C..

Performance highlights included *America's Got Talent* television show, season 3, NBC, semifinalists (2008); Closing Ceremonies of the Gay Games VII at Wrigley Field in Chicago (2006); RSVP's Caribbean Fantasy gay cruise (2005); Arts grant recipient from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts (1996); The Sziget Festival in Budapest, Hungary (2009--012); *Dales' Great Getaway* television show, ITV London, England (2012); *The Podge and Rodge* television show, RTE, Dublin, Ireland (2010)."

Source

This history of the DC Cowboys Dance Company was supplied by its founder, Kevin Platte.

Scope and Contents

The DC Cowboys Dance Company Records contain the business and financial papers of the company, such as memoranda and correspondence; choreography routines; printed materials such as press releases and articles; fundraising materials; photographs; audiovisual materials; and the pre-recorded music used for their various dance routines. The records are arranged chronologically in three series.

Series 1: Company Files, 1994-2013, undated, is arranged chronologically by year and maintains the original order received from the donor. The files cover the entire life of the company and its performances within the United States as well as internationally. The files contain correspondence, contracts, dance routines, fundraising initiatives, event information and advertising materials, travel and lodging arrangements, tourist information, and photographs.

Series 2: Financial, 1996-2011, undated, is arranged chronologically. The files contain receipts, money receipt books, financial statements, balance sheets and those materials related to the financial aspect of running the company.

Series 3: Audiovisual, 1994-2012, undated, contains compact discs (189) of pre-recorded music used for the company's various dance routines. The music was prepared for each booking and most often identified with the title of the booking and the date. Much of the music on these discs is under copyright since they are recordings done by original artists or professional covers of songs that were contemporary with the company's performance during any given year. There are also DVDs (five) detailing the production of various fund raising DC Cowboys calendars and one audio cassette tape.

Arrangement

This collection is divided into three series.

Series 1: Company Files, 1994-2013, undated

Series 2: Financial, 1996-2011, undated

Series 3: Audiovisual, 1994-2012, undated

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Cowboys
- Dance
- Dance companies
- Gay business enterprises
- Gays
- Homosexuality

Types of Materials:

- Articles -- 1990-2000
- Articles -- 21st century
- Business records -- 1990-2000
- Business records -- 21st century
- Compact discs
- Correspondence -- 1990-2000
- Correspondence -- 21st century
- DVDs
- Financial records -- 1990-2000
- Financial records -- 21st century

Photographs -- 1990-2000
Photographs -- 21st century
Press releases -- 1990-2000
Press releases -- 21st century

Container Listing

Series 1: Company Files, 1994 - 2013, undated

Box 1, Folder 1 Publicity, 1994

Box 1, Folder 2 Photographs, 1994

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Kevin Platte with his cowboy hat : digital photoprint.], circa 2012
1 Item (10.1" x 8")

[Image\(s\)](#)

DC Cowboys Dance Company, Collector

In box 21, folder 12.

Unrestricted research use on site by appointment.

Ink on paper.

Local Numbers

AC1312-0000003 (AC Scan)

Names: Platte, Kevin P.

Topic: Cowboys
Dance
Dance companies
Gay business enterprises
Gays
Hats
Homosexuality

Genre/ Inkjet prints

Form: Photographs -- 2010-2020 -- Color photoprints -- Digital

Box 1, Folder 3 Correspondence, 1994

Box 1, Folder 4 Repertoire, 1994 - 2000, undated

Box 1, Folder 5 Correspondence, 1995 - 1996

Box 1, Folder 6 Budget, 1995

Box 1, Folder 7 Contracts, 1995

Box 1, Folder 8 Notes, 1995

Box 1, Folder 9 Photographs, 1995

Box 1, Folder 10 Publicity, 1995

Box 1, Folder 11	Atlanta Gay Rodeo (Atlanta, Georgia), 1995
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Box 1, Folder 16	Private party (Washington, D.C.), 1995
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Box 1, Folder 24	Rumors Nightclub (Dover, Delaware), 1996
Box 1, Folder 25	Gay Pride (New York, New York), 1996
Box 1, Folder 26	Lassos and Lariats Benefit (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), 1996
Box 1, Folder 27	Atlantic Stampede (Washington, D.C.), 1996
Box 1, Folder 28	Rodeo (Del Mar, California), 1996
Box 1, Folder 29	International Gay and Lesbian Aquatics Championships (Washington, D.C.), 1996
Box 2, Folder 1	Notes, 1997
Box 2, Folder 2	Dance sheets, 1997
Box 2, Folder 3	Contracts, 1997
Box 2, Folder 4	Budget, 1997
Box 2, Folder 5	Sets, 1997
Box 2, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1997
Box 2, Folder 7	Photographs, 1997

Box 2, Folder 8	Mid-Atlantic Leather Competition (Washington, D.C.), 1997
Box 2, Folder 9	Gay Men's Chorus (Washington, D.C.), 1997
Box 2, Folder 10	Rodeo (Ramona, California), 1997
Box 2, Folder 11	Capital Pride (Washington, D.C.), 1997
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Box 2, Folder 17	Sundance (Fort Lauderdale, Florida), 1998
Box 2, Folder 18	Hoe Down '98 (Baltimore, Maryland), 1998
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Box 2, Folder 20	Atlantic Stampede '98 (Washington, D.C.), 1998
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Box 2, Folder 26	Repertoire, 1999
Box 2, Folder 27	AIDS Walk Washington (Washington, D.C.), 1999
Box 2, Folder 28	Second Millenium, Latino Community AIDS Service Organizations (Washington, D.C.), 1999
Box 2, Folder 29	Northern Virginia AIDS Ministry, 1999
Box 2, Folder 30	Splash Dance '99 (San Diego, California), 1999
Box 2, Folder 31	Atlantic Stampede (Montgomery County, Maryland), 1999
Box 2, Folder 32	Reel Affirmations (Washington, D.C.), 1999

Box 2, Folder 33 Big City Hoedown (Toronto, Canada), 1999

Box 2, Folder 34 Capital Pride (Washington, D.C.), 1999

Box 2, Folder 35 Spring Fever (Baltimore, Maryland), 1999

[Image\(s\)](#)

Spring Fever Good for One Dance with the D.C. Cowboy of Your Choice [coupon], 1999

1 Item (2.6" x 4.4".)

[Image\(s\): Spring Fever Good for One Dance with the D.C. Cowboy of Your Choice \[coupon\].](#)

DC Cowboys Dance Company, Collector

In box 2, folder 35. (?)

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Ink on paper.

Local Numbers

AC1312-0000001 (AC Scan)

Topic: Cowboys
Dance
Dance companies
Gay business enterprises
Gays
Homosexuality

Genre/
Form: Coupons

Box 3, Folder 1 DC Cowboys calendar, 1999 - 2000

Box 21, Folder 1 DC Cowboys calendar (display copy), 1999-2000

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Box 3, Folder 7 Capital Pride (Washington, D.C.), 2000

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Box 4, Folder 3	Schedule and publicity, 2002
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Box 5, Folder 1	Music, 2003 - 2004
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Map-folder 1 Canadian Rockies International Rodeo (Calgary, Alberta, Canada), posters, 2005

Box 6, Folder 5 Calgary adventure (Calgary, Alberta, Canada), 2005

Box 6, Folder 6 Gay Men's Chorus, holiday concert (Washington, D.C.), 2005

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Box 7, Folder 2 Las Vegas, Nevada, 2006

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Box 7, Folder 4 Colorado Pride Guide, 2006

Box 7, Folder 5 Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, 2006

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Box 13, Folder 1	Website redesign, 2011
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Box 13, Folder 3	Proposed project, 2011
Box 14, Folder 8	Fan mail, Banner, George E. III, 2011 - 2013, undated
Box 13, Folder 4-5	Photographs, 2012

- Box 21, Folder 12 Oversize photographs, contact sheets, 1999-2012, undated
- Box 13, Folder 6 Promotional photograph, 2012
[Image\(s\)](#)
 2012 DC Cowboys Dance Company - The Farewell Season [digital flyer],
 2012
 6 Items (8 1/2" x 11".)
[Image\(s\)](#)
[Image\(s\): 2012 DC Cowboys Dance Company - The Farewell Season \[digital flyer\].](#)
 Vankim, Julian, Photographer
 DC Cowboys Dance Company, Advertiser
 Autographed group images of DC group Dance Company
 In box 13, folder 6.
 Unrestricted research use on site by appointment.
 ink on paper.
 Local Numbers
 AC1312-0000002-01 (AC Scan)
 AC1312-0000002-02 (AC Scan)
 Topic: Cowboys
 Dance
 Dance companies
 Gay business enterprises
 Gays
 Homosexuality
 Genre/
 Form: Photographs -- 2010-2020 -- Color photoprints -- Digital
- Box 13, Folder 7 *MetroWeekly*, 2012
- Box 13, Folder 8 Chattanooga Pride (Chattanooga, Tennessee), 2012
- Box 22 Tennessee Valley Pride, buttons, 2012
- Box 22 "Southern Country Chattanooga" (Chattanooga, Tennessee), can sleeve, undated
- Box 13, Folder 9 Sziget Festival (Budapest, Hungary), 2012
- Box 22 Sziget Festival, performer's pass and lanyard, 2012-08
- Box 13, Folder 10 Canadian Rockies International Rodeo and Music Festival (Alberta, Canada), 2012
- Box 13, Folder 11 Capital Pride (Washington, D.C.), 2012

Box 13, Folder 12	International AIDS Conference (Washington, D.C.), 2012
Box 13, Folder 13	DC AIDS Walk fundraiser (Washington, D.C.), 2012
Box 13, Folder 14	Purim Party (Washington, D.C.), 2012
Box 13, Folder 15	“Dale Winton's Great Getaway” (London, England), 2012
Map-folder 1	“Dale's Great Getaway” , theatre plat, 2012
Box 14, Folder 7	<i>MetroWeekly</i> , 2013
Box 14, Folder 9	Bumper sticker, undated
Box 21, Folder 13	DC Cowboys, banner fragment, undated
Box 22	DC CWBYS, Virginia state vanity license plate, 2011

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Series 2: Financial, 1996 - 2011, undated

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Box 14, Folder 13	Money receipts, 1998 - 2000
Box 14, Folder 14	Financial, 1999
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Box 15, Folder 1	Financial, 2000
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Box 16, Folder 5	Financial, 2010
Box 16, Folder 6	Paid receipts, 2010
Box 16, Folder 7	General expenses and deposits (rehearsal), 2010
Box 16, Folder 8	Deposit and expenses, Harrisburg Pride, 2010
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Box 16, Folder 10	Expenses, Budapest, 2010
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Box 16, Folder 14	Money receipt books, 2001-2004
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