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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**American Negro Ballet Company scrapbook**

1937-1983 [bulk 1937-1938]

Sc MG 519

## Summary

**Creator:** American Negro Ballet Company

**Title:** American Negro Ballet Company scrapbook

**Date:** 1937-1983 [bulk 1937-1938]

**Size:** 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

**Source:** Gift of Beryl Clarke James, April 1985.

**Revision History:** Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

**Abstract:** The American Negro Ballet Company scrapbook consists of news clippings and programs about the company founded by Eugene van Grona. Included are reviews of its performances in New York City and Brighton, England, in 1937 and 1938; and programs for the ANB and Lew Leslie's "Blackbirds" of 1939, which featured dances choreographed by van Grona. A program and a news clipping refer to performances honoring the company, 1981 and 1983.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], American Negro Ballet Company scrapbook, Sc MG 519, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

**Related Materials:**

Other collections in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture:

Dean Dixon papers, Sc MG 324

## Creator History

The American Negro Ballet (ANB) Company was formed by Eugene van Grona in 1934. Van Grona, a modern dancer trained by German choreographer Mary Wigman, immigrated to the United States in 1925. He formed the ANB, composed of thirty African American dancers, among them Lavinia Williams and Al Bledger, to showcase their talents as serious dance artists capable of more than jazz dancing.

The American Negro Ballet Company debuted at Harlem's Lafayette Theater on November 21, 1937. The company's original program, conducted by Dean Dixon, included Stravinsky's *Firebird* as well as pieces choreographed by van Grona to the music of Duke Ellington and W. C. Handy. The premier was a critical and popular success, however, the American Negro Ballet Company survived for barely a year before its demise in 1938. Van Grona re-formed the company as "Von Grona's American Swing Ballet" in 1939, when they appeared in producer Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds* as well as other venues.

## Scope and Content Note

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## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American ballerinas  
African American dance  
African American dancers  
African American women dancers  
African Americans in the performing arts  
Ballet companies  
Ballet dancers  
Choreographers -- United States  
Dance companies

### Names

Grona, Eugene van  
American Negro Ballet Company