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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: 1 folder

Source: Gift, Beryl Clarke James, April 1985

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

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: American Negro Ballet Company scrapbook, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

The American Negro Ballet Company was formed by Eugene von Grona in 1934. Von 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 von 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. Von 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

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

Key Terms

Subjects

African American dance
African Americans in the performing arts
Ballet companies -- United States
Ballet dancers -- United States
Dance companies -- United States
Dance, Black
Dancers -- United States

Names

American Negro Ballet Company
Grona, Eugene van