



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
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Guide to the

Don Redman papers

1906-1980

Sc MG 360

Summary

Creator: Redman, Don

Title: Don Redman papers

Date: 1906-1980

Size: 16 boxes (7.5 linear feet)

Source: Gift, Ilona Henderson, 04/--/1989

Abstract: The Don Redman Papers consist principally of holograph and printed music of this jazz composer and arranger, as well as some personal and professional papers. Redman's music contains orchestral and vocal scores and parts for various instruments. There is also music and lyrics by other composers most notably Tadd Dameron's "For Europeans Only." A ledger (1931-1932) lists members of the Don Redman Orchestra a.k.a. Don Redman and His Orchestra, for that period together with salaries, scheduled appearances and copyright information. Two scrapbooks document the activities of the Orchestra and other groups which Redman assembled for European tours during the 1940's. The collection also includes biographical information, programs, newsclippings, and an autograph book signed by celebrities. Of interest are two letters written by Louis Armstrong (1939, 1945), one mentioning two songs for which he wants Redman to make dance arrangements.

Access: Some collections held by the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. To request access to materials in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, please visit: http://archives.nypl.org/scm/request_access

Preferred citation: [Item], Don Redman papers, Sc MG 360, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Don Redman, jazz composer, arranger and bandleader, was a leading contributor to the development of big band sound of the 1920's and 1930's along with Fletcher Henderson.

Redman was born in West Virginia in 1900 and died in 1964 in New York. He came from a musical family, and was a child prodigy, playing the trumpet at age three. He joined a band at six and spent much of his childhood studying every instrument in the band as well as harmony, theory and composition. He completed his studies at the Boston and Detroit Conservatories, and was a member of Fletcher Henderson's band between 1924-1927. He also recorded and arranged for Henderson and did arrangements for Louis Armstrong.

From 1927-1931, Redman served as musical director of McKinney's Cotton Pickers, and had his own band from 1931-1940. His band was one of the top black orchestras at the time. They appeared in films, and in 1932 they were the first black orchestra to play for a sponsored radio series ("Chipso"). In 1940 he began working as a freelance arranger, although he formed a group for special occasions or to tour Europe several times in the 1940's. Those for whom he arranged included Paul Whiteman (for thirty-five years), Count Basie, Jimmy Dorsey and Harry James. In 1949 Redman had his own series on CBS television, and throughout the 1950's he was the musical director for Pearl Bailey.

Scope and Content Note

The Don Redman Papers consist principally of holograph and printed music of this jazz composer and arranger, as well as some personal and professional papers. Redman's music contains orchestral and vocal scores and parts for various instruments. There is also music and lyrics by other composers most notably Tadd Dameron's "For Europeans Only." A ledger (1931-1932) lists members of the Don Redman Orchestra a.k.a. Don Redman and His Orchestra, for that period together with salaries, scheduled appearances and copyright information. Two scrapbooks document the activities of the Orchestra and other groups which Redman assembled for European tours during the 1940's. The collection also includes biographical information, programs, newsclippings, and an autograph book signed by celebrities. Of interest are two letters written by Louis Armstrong (1939, 1945), one mentioning two songs for which he wants Redman to make dance arrangements.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American entertainers
African American musicians
Entertainers -- United States

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Scores

Names

Armstrong, Louis, 1901-1971
Dameron, Tadd, 1917-1965
Redman, Don
Don Redman and his Orchestra