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Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

## **Fortune Gallo Ballet Russe business letters**

1940-1942 (bulk 1941)

(S) \*MGZMD 282

Compiled by Philip Heslip, October 2011

### **Summary**

**Creator:** Gallo, Fortune T., 1878-1970.

**Title:** Fortune Gallo Ballet Russe business letters, 1940-1942 (bulk 1941)

**Size:** .63 linear foot (2 boxes)

**Source:** Purchased from Golden and Legend, Inc. in March 2002.

**Abstract:** Opera and ballet impresario Fortune Gallo (1878-1970) was the manager of the San Carlo Opera Company and was the tour director of Colonel Wassily de Basil's Original Ballet Russe between 1940 and 1942. This collection documents Gallo's management of the Original Ballet Russe, and includes letters, legal documents, publicity materials, and newspaper clippings related to the company.

**Access:** To request materials, please contact the Jerome Robbins Dance Division ([dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org)) in advance.

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**Preferred citation:** Fortune Gallo Ballet Russe business letters, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

### **Custodial history**

This collection came from Dr. George Verdak of Indianapolis, Indiana, and was sold to the New York Public Library by the dealer Golden Legend, Inc.

### **Related collections**

Ellis Parker Butler papers, 1897-1936. New York Public Library Archives

Ruth Page collection, 1918-1970. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library

The Gallo, Fortune, 1878-1970 Papers. Italian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota

### **Creator history**

Opera and ballet impresario Fortune Gallo (1878-1970) was born in Torremaggiore, Italy, to Tommas

Gallo and Zelinda Accetturo. He immigrated to the United States in 1895, and three years later became the advance man for the Banda Rossa, a famous Italian concert band. Gallo pursued a career in performance management, and by 1912 had established the touring San Carlo Opera Company, which he operated out of New York City. Gallo managed all publicity, advance work, and business dealings for the company for over 40 years. From 1940 to 1942, Gallo served as managing director of the Chicago Opera, and as the manager and tour director of the Original Ballet Russe under Colonel Wassily de Basil (1880-1951). The Original Ballet Russe, an offshoot of Diaghilev's famed Ballet Russe and formerly called the Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo, had recently suffered the loss of their manager Sol Hurok. Gallo took over the position and set up tours for the troop in Canada and the United States. His poor relationship with the Ballet's owner led to his resignation at the end of 1941. Gallo continued operation of the San Carlo Opera Company until he disbanded the company in 1955. He died in New York City in 1970.

### Scope and content note

This collection documents Fortune Gallo's tenure as manager and tour director of the Original Ballet Russe. The papers document a critical period in the Original Ballet Russe's history, and reveal how performance tours were organized and paid for at the time. The collection is comprised of approximately 1000 items, including 553 letters and 129 telegrams, and various legal contracts, publicity materials, and newspaper clippings related to the company.

Among the papers are Gallo's business dealings with the Original Ballet Russe's owner Colonel Wassily de Basil, as well as communications with Ballet Russe's lawyer, and negotiations and scheduling discussions with venue managers. Other topics addressed include performance publicity, the company's travel and hotel accommodations, and contract issues with performers and their representatives. Of note are the arrangements Gallo made to transport the ballet company from Cuba, where their previous manager Sol Hurok had left them in early 1941, to New York City, and items documenting Gallo's decision to cancel the company's Christmas tour of the West Coast in 1941. A small amount of materials concern Gallo's management of the San Carlo Opera Company.

Undated items include lists of Original Ballet Russe performers with details on each member's stage name, passport name, and nationality; essays on Hurok's departure from the Original Ballet Russe and articles on Gallo's role in the company; repertoire announcements; and dance performance programs.

### Arrangement

This collection is organized chronologically.

### Key terms

#### Subjects

Ballet companies.

#### Occupations

Dancers.

Lawyers.

#### Names

Ballets russes du Col. W. de Basil.

Basil, W. de.

Gallo, Fortune T., 1878-1970.

San Carlo Opera Company.

#### Special formats

Clippings (information artifacts)

Contracts.

Legal documents.  
Letters(correspondence)

## **Container list**

b.1 f.1-11 1940-1941 October

b.2 f.1-5 1941 November-1942, undated