



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**American Negro Theatre Alumni collection**

1987

Sc MG 515

## Summary

**Title:** American Negro Theatre Alumni collection

**Date:** 1987

**Size:** 0.67 linear feet (2 boxes)

**Abstract:** This collection includes material gathered for an exhibition that would tell the story of the ANT and the achievements of its various performers. This material, sent by various alumni, includes such as updated resumes, programs, photographs, and press clippings.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], American Negro Theatre Alumni collection, Sc MG 515, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Accessioned by Diana Lachatanere in 1993-1994.

### Related Materials:

American Negro Theatre records, Sc MG 70, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

American Negro Theatre scrapbook, Sc MG 363, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

## Creator History

The American Negro Theatre (ANT) co-founded by Frederick O'Neal and Abram Hill, was established to provide Black actors, playwrights, directors, and other theater-related professionals with opportunities to work in productions that illustrated the diversity of Black life. ANT's program was essentially divided into three categories: stage productions, a training program, and radio programs.

From 1940-1949, nineteen plays, twelve of them original, were produced by ANT. *On Striver's Row*,

*Walk Hard--Talk Loud*, (both written by Hill), and *Rain* were well-received plays. However, commercial success struck with Philip Yordan's *Anna Lucasta*. ANT also exhibited the talents of several now well-known actors and actresses, some for the first time, including Ruby Dee, Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Alvin and Alice Childress, Hilda Simms, Earl Hyman, Isabel Sanford, Vinie Burroughs, Helen Martin, Roger Furman, Maxwell Glanville, Clarice Taylor, Gordon Heath, and Hilda Hayes.

For the first five years (1940-1945), ANT was housed in the basement of the 135th Street Branch Library of the New York Public Library, known as the "Harlem Library Little Theatre". In 1945, ANT moved to the Elks Lodge at 15 West 126th Street, which was renamed the American Negro Theatre Playhouse. In 1950, ANT made its final move to a loft on West 125th Street, and according to O'Neal, officially went out of business a year later.

This collection was created by the American Negro Theatre Alumni Committee as part of the 1986 fundraising campaign for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The campaign led to the opening of the expanded Schomburg Center complex that houses the renovated basement theater (the former 135th Street Branch Library, now known as the Landmark Building), which housed the ANT for several years.

## **Scope and Content Note**

This collection includes material gathered for an exhibition that would tell the story of the ANT and the achievements of its various performers. This material, sent by various alumni, includes such as updated resumes, programs, photographs, and press clippings.

**Arrangement:** Arranged first generally, then alphabetically by performer's last name.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Acting -- Study and teaching  
African American actors  
African American theater  
African Americans in the performing arts

### **Geographic Names**

Harlem (New York, N.Y.)

### **Names**

Childress, Alice  
Dee, Ruby  
Jeannette, Gertrude, 1914-  
O'Neal, Frederick, 1905-1992  
American Negro Theatre

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Correspondence
- b. 1 f. 2 Acquisitions Committee
- b. 1 f. 3 List
- b. 1 f. 4 Burrows, Vinie
- b. 1 f. 5 Carter, Dorothy
- b. 1 f. 6 Childress, Alice
- b. 1 f. 7 Dee, Ruby
- b. 1 f. 8 Evans, Chickie
- b. 1 f. 9 Glanville, Maxwell
- b. 1 f. 10 Greaves, William
- b. 1 f. 11 Briggs-Hall, Austin
- b. 1 f. 12 Haynes, Hilda
- b. 1 f. 13 Henderson, Vicki
- b. 1 f. 14 Jeannette, Gertrude
- b. 1 f. 15 Leyba, Claire
  - b. 2 Includes scrapbook, "Leyba in the Theatre".
- b. 1 f. 16 O'Neal, Frderick
- b. 1 f. 17 Pichard, Juanita B
- b. 1 f. 18 Richardson, Virgil
- b. 1 f. 19 Rowan, Pearl
- b. 1 f. 20 Thomas, Franklin
- b. 1 f. 21 Trotman, James and Olive (Tucker)
- b. 1 f. 22 Truesdale, Ted
- b. 1 f. 23 Wallace, Emmett "Babe"
- b. 1 f. 24 Wilbur, James