



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

Guide to the

Al Perryman papers

1961-1985

Sc MG 355

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

Summary

Creator: Perryman, Al

Title: Al Perryman papers

Date: 1961-1985

Size: 1.63 linear feet (3 boxes, 1 oversize folder)

Source: Gift of Dorothy Perryman, 1988.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: Al Perryman was an African American dancer, choreographer, and instructor. The Al Perryman papers document his dance career and consist of scripts, programs, broadsides, and playbills, among others.

Preferred citation: [Item], Al Perryman papers, Sc MG 355, 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 Sule Greg Wilson, August 1988, and Janice Quinter, October 2007.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

Creator History

Al Perryman was an African American dancer, choreographer, and instructor; he studied ballet, modern dance, jazz, tap, and African dance. Born in Monroe, Louisiana, in 1945, he grew up in New York City. Perryman began dancing at age three and made his television debut at nine on the *Perry Como Show*; he later appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and in television specials. A versatile dancer, he performed with Dinizulu, Olatunji, Eleo Pomare, JoJo Smith, and the Brooklyn Dance Theatre, which he founded in

1979. Perryman appeared on Broadway in *Purlie*, *Two Gentleman of Verona*; *Raisin*, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, and *The Wiz* (for which he was the dance captain), and choreographed *Raisin*, *The Vampire and the Dentist*, and the Broadway musical *Amen Corner*, in 1983. He taught jazz and modern dance at Iowa University, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, and the Philadelphia Dance Company, and he was the artistic director of the Brooklyn Dance Theatre. In addition, Perryman taught dance to youth at community organizations in urban areas. Perryman appeared frequently with his dance partner, Loretta Abbott. He was well known for his recreation of Earl "Snakehips" Tucker for the Brooklyn Academy of Music's production of *Dance--Black in America*, as well as his dance done to "Mr. Bojangles".

Scope and Content Note

The Al Perryman papers document his dance career and consist of scripts for productions, programs, broadsides and playbills from plays in which Perryman performed, sketches of designs by Perryman, choreography and lighting notes, contracts and agreements, Brooklyn Dance Theatre financial and legal records, correspondence, news clippings, and reviews. There are also notices, awards, and programs prepared in honor of Perryman, produced after his death.

Arrangement: Arranged into two series: I. Personal and II. Professional.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American Choreographers
African American dance teachers
African American dancers
African American entertainers
African Americans in musical theater
African Americans in the performing arts
Dance companies

Names

Perryman, Al
Brooklyn Dance Theatre (New York, N.Y.)

Container List

- Personal 1978-1985
 - b. 1 f. 1 Biographical
 - o. 1 Awards and honors 1978-1985
Oversized folder 1 replaces box 1, folder 2.
 - b. 1 f. 3 Life insurance policy
 - b. 1 f. 4 Obituaries 1985
 - b. 1 f. 5 Tributes 1985
- Professional 1961-1984
 - b. 1 f. 6 Correspondence 1967-1984
 - b. 1 f. 7 Addresses and contacts
 - b. 1 f. 8 Contracts
- Brooklyn Dance Theatre
 - b. 1 f. 9-10 1980-1983
 - b. 1 f. 11 Financial
 - b. 1 f. 12 Logo art
 - b. 1 f. 13 *Raisin*
Includes cast information and rehearsal schedule.
 - b. 1 f. 14 *The Wiz* 1976
Includes cast information and set layout.
- b. 1 f. 15-17 Artwork 1977
Includes artwork for ballet for Loretta Abbott (folder 16) and costume designs (folder 17).
- b. 2 f. 1-3 Choreography
Folder 2 includes choreography "written [by Perryman] in the very late stages of his illness."
Folder 3 includes staging, plans, and plays for *Mephistofele* and *Raisin*.
Costume design
 - b. 2 f. 4 *Get on Board, Brooklyn Academy of Music Production* 1980
 - b. 2 f. 5 "Mr. Bojangles" by Clyde Ruffin
 - b. 2 f. 6 *Divided We Fall (Send/Bring in the Clowns), Brooklyn Dance Theatre*
- b. 2 f. 7-8 Broadsides
 - b. 3 f. 1 *Costume idea, possibly for Mephistofele*
- b. 3 f. 2-6 Programs
- b. 3 f. 7-14 News clippings
- b. 3 f. 15 Financial records
- b. 3 f. 16 Barcliff, Richard. Artwork dedicated to Perryman 1978
- Scripts
Arranged alphabetically by title.
 - b. 3 f. 17 *Alice by Judie Berke, working script first draft* 1976 March 30
 - b. 3 f. 18 *Black Nativity by Langston Hughes* 1961
 - b. 3 f. 19 *Bright Star, Shining by Don Evans*
 - b. 3 f. 20 *Central Park Story by Kingsley Rotardier*
 - b. 3 f. 21 *Cleobis and Bito by Ronald Tavel* 1967

Professional (cont.)

Scripts (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 22 *I Am Going Crazy (a Mental Health Symposium) by Leemar Hill, first draft*
- b. 3 f. 23-24 *The Jitney Vehicle by Louise Baker, adapted by Charles Briggs 1972*
Includes alternate draft in folder 24.
- b. 3 f. 25 *The Life of Juanita Castro by Ronald Tavel 1965*
- b. 3 f. 26 *Lorenzo by Judd Woldin and Richard Enquist*
- b. 3 f. 27 *Oliver! by Lionel Bart*
- b. 3 f. 28 *Rumba: Voyage through Afro-Cuban Folklore by Leopoldo Fleming 1980*
- b. 3 f. 29 *The Sistuhs by Sandra Sharp*
- b. 3 f. 30-31 *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue by Alan Jay Lerner*
- b. 3 f. 32 *Tambourines to Glory by Langston Hughes*
- b. 3 f. 33 *Tinkerman to the Promised Land by Gordon R. Watkins 1976*
- b. 3 f. 34 *Two Gentlemen of Verona by William Shakespeare, adapted by John Gaure and Mel Shapiro*
- b. 3 f. 35 *La Valse by Clarence L. Taylor, complete treatment 1968*
- b. 3 f. 36 *The Vampire and the Dentist by Weldon Irvine*
- b. 3 f. 37 *What Use Are Flowers? by Lorraine Hansberry*
- b. 3 f. 38 Incomplete script (unidentified)
- b. 3 f. 39 Fragments
- b. 3 f. 40 Poems with choreography