



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

Guide to the

Ralph Brown papers

ca. 1930-1990 [bulk 1980s]

Sc MG 727

Summary

Creator: Brown, Ralph, 1914-1990

Title: Ralph Brown papers

Date: ca. 1930-1990 [bulk 1980s]

Size: 0.63 linear feet (2 boxes, 1 oversize folder)

Source: Gift of Vernece Crawford, October 2003.

Abstract: The Ralph Brown papers focus on the career of this tap dancer, with an emphasis on his performances in the 1980s. Among the documents are his public relations material and programs for the show 1000 Years of Jazz, when it toured nationally and internationally, and the special gala at Washington, D.C.'s Ford Theatre. Brown's performances in the Broadway and Paris productions of Black and Blue are represented by programs, reviews, contact lists, and associated material. A file discusses other tours in which he performed in France, 1983-1989. Programs (1930s-1988) for a variety of venues in which he appeared primarily in New York and France, contracts, and news clippings can also be found in this collection.

Preferred citation: [Item], Ralph Brown papers, Sc MG 727, 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 Janice Quinter, March 2010.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Creator History

An African American tap dancer, Ralph Brown danced with the Mills Brothers Show, and he was a regular at the Hoofer's Club in Harlem and the Cotton Club with Cab Calloway's Orchestra in the 1930s. He also performed with other well-known orchestras such as Duke Ellington's and Jimmie Lunceford's,

and toured with Count Basie and the USA tour of Eubie Blake's *Shuffle Along*. In the 1940s, he danced at New York's Paramount Theater, sharing the bill with the Ink Spots, Ella Fitzgerald, Buck and Bubbles, and the Cootie Williams Orchestra, and he was a regular at Harlem's Apollo Theater.

Brown began teaching tap dancing during the 1950s and 1960s, when there were fewer live performances of this art form. In 1979, with the resurgence of interest in tap dancing, he joined the music and dance revue *1000 Years of Jazz* with the Original Hoofers. The show opened in Montreal and toured South America, and in 1980-1984, it continued in Europe and the United States. In 1982, the show played the "Festival at Ford's", held at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., where the entertainers performed for President Reagan and guests. Brown returned to Paris in 1985 with the musical *Black and Blue*, and danced in the Broadway production of this revue from 1989 until his death in New York 1990.

Scope and Content Note

The Ralph Brown papers focus on the career of this tap dancer, with an emphasis on his performances in the 1980s. Among the documents are his public relations material and programs for the show *1000 Years of Jazz*, when it toured nationally and internationally, and the special gala at Washington, D.C.'s Ford Theatre. Brown's performances in the Broadway and Paris productions of *Black and Blue* are represented by programs, reviews, contact lists, and associated material. A file discusses other tours in which he performed in France, 1983-1989. Programs (1930s-1988) for a variety of venues in which he appeared primarily in New York and France, contracts, and news clippings can also be found in this collection.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American dancers
African American entertainers
African Americans in popular culture
African Americans in the performing arts
Dancers -- United States
Tap dancers -- United States
Tap dancing

Names

Brown, Ralph, 1914-1990

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Personal papers
- b. 1 f. 2 Public relations 1980s
- b. 1 f. 3 Letters to Brown 1943-1988
- Performances
 - 1000 Years of Jazz*
 - b. 1 f. 4 1979-1980
 - b. 1 f. 5 1981-1982
 - b. 1 f. 6-7 1982-1985
 - Includes Festival at Ford's.
 - Black and Blue*
 - b. 1 f. 8 Paris 1985-1986
 - b. 1 f. 9 Broadway 1988-1990
 - b. 1 f. 10 Tours in France 1983-1989
- Programs
 - b. 2 f. 1-2 Salute to 25 Years Savoy Ballroom 1951
 - b. 2 f. 3 1930s-1980s
 - o. 1 1958-1988
 - Oversized folder 1 replaces box 2, folder 4.
 - b. 2 f. 5 1980s
- Contracts
 - b. 2 f. 6 1947-1957
 - b. 2 f. 7 Overseas performances 1985
- b. 2 f. 8-9 News clippings