



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

Guide to the

**Raoul Abdul papers**

1949-2009

Sc MG 833

## Summary

**Creator:** Abdul, Raoul

**Title:** Raoul Abdul papers

**Date:** 1949-2009

**Size:** 1.04 linear feet (3 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of the Estate of Raoul Abdul, April-May 2010.

**Abstract:** This collection mostly contains material related to Raoul Abdul's career as a singer and author. There is a limited amount of personal information, including some clippings from his early life. A large part of the collection consists of concert programs and tour information. Additionally, there is material on lectures and seminars, and reviews and correspondence regarding his writing, including 3000 Years of Black Poetry, The Magic of Black Poetry, and Famous Black Entertainers of Today.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Raoul Abdul papers, Sc MG 833, 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, June 2010.

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the General Research and Reference Division: books

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: audio and moving image materials. For more information, please contact the division at [schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org](mailto:schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org) or 212-491-2270.

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

## Creator History

Raoul Abdul was a classical singer, author, and former assistant to the poet and writer Langston

Hughes. Abdul was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on November 7, 1929. His father was from Calcutta, India, and his mother was a native of Cleveland. Abdul attended John Hay High School, and later earned a diploma from the Vienna Academy of Music, where he studied with Alexander Kipins. He also studied at Harvard University, the New School for Social Research, the Cleveland Institute of Music, New York College of Music, and the Mannes College of Music.

Abdul was involved in theater from an early age, participating in children's theater productions by age six. Following graduation from high school, he began working as a journalist for the *Cleveland Call and Post*, and in 1951, at the age of twenty-two, he relocated to New York City where he sang with such notables as William Warfield and Marian Anderson. During this time, Abdul was a founding director of the Coffeehouse Concerts in Harlem, and was a singer in a number of performances, including shows at Carnegie Hall. In 1961, Abdul became the literary assistant and close friend to writer Langston Hughes, and he remained so until Hughes's death in 1967.

In 1970, Abdul published and edited his first book, *3000 Years of Black Poetry*, with author Alan Lomax. Over the next few years, he published several more volumes, including *The Magic of Black Poetry*, *Famous Black Entertainers of Today*, and *Blacks in Classical Music*. Abdul also gave private voice lessons in his home in New York, based on the Austrian singing technique that he learned while studying in Vienna. At the time of his death on January 15, 2010 at the age of 80, he was the music critic for the *New York Amsterdam News*.

## Scope and Content Note

This collection mostly contains material related to Raoul Abdul's career as a singer and author. There is a limited amount of personal information, including some clippings from his early life. A large part of the collection consists of concert programs and tour information. Additionally, there is material on lectures and seminars, and reviews and correspondence regarding his writing, including *3000 Years of Black Poetry*, *The Magic of Black Poetry*, and *Famous Black Entertainers of Today*.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American musicians  
African American singers  
African Americans -- Poetry  
Authors, Black

### Names

Abdul, Raoul  
Harding, Buster, 1917-1965  
Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967  
Smith, Hale, 1925-2009

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical information
- b. 1 f. 2 Music 1949-1952
  - Press clippings
- b. 1 f. 3 Cleveland 1949-1952
- b. 1 f. 4 New York (student days) 1953-1955
- b. 1 f. 5 General 1954-1978
- b. 1 f. 6-7 "Negro As Playwright" program 1954-1959
- b. 1 f. 8 Karamu Theatre recital 1955
- b. 1 f. 9 Letters 1955-2009
- b. 1 f. 10 "About Langston" (Hughes) 1956-2002
- b. 1 f. 11 *Così fan tutte*, Karamu Theatre 1956-1957
- b. 1 f. 12 *Il Cambattimeno*, Henry Street Playhouse, New York 1956 March 4
- b. 1 f. 13 *The Misfortunes of Orpheus*, Piermont, New York 1958 May 18
- b. 1 f. 14 Antioch Baptist Church 1957 October 24
  - Concerts
- b. 1 f. 15 New York 1958-1960
- b. 1 f. 16-17 Coffeehouse Concerts 1958-1960
  - b. 1 f. 18 Europe 1959-1962
  - b. 1 f. 19 1959
    - b. 2 f. 1 Vienna 1960-1988
    - b. 2 f. 2 *Negermelodie scrapbook* 1961-1962
    - b. 2 f. 3 Coffeehouse Concerts 1963
    - b. 2 f. 4 Graham, Gladys P. clippings 1963
      - Includes articles written by Graham, some about Abdul; also includes some correspondence.
      - "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Langston Hughes
    - b. 2 f. 5 "The Negro Speaks of Rivers: Folk Songs and Poetry of a Long Journey, a Teleplay" undated
      - By Herbert D. Greggs, Ronald C. Olson, and Raoul Abdul.
  - b. 2 f. 6-9 Tour 1964-1967
    - 1965 folder includes listing for the television performance, "The Negro Sings of Rivers".
- b. 2 f. 10-11 Carnegie Recital Hall 1965-1967
  - b. 2 f. 12 Harvard seminar 1966
  - b. 2 f. 13 National Theatre of the Deaf 1968
  - Writing
  - b. 2 f. 14 *3000 Years of Black Poetry reviews* 1970
  - b. 2 f. 15 *The Magic of Black Poetry letters and reviews* 1972
  - b. 2 f. 16 *Famous Black Entertainers of Today reviews* 1974
  - b. 2 f. 17 Abdul's column 1976-2009
  - b. 2 f. 18 *Blacks in Classical Music* 1978
  - b. 2 f. 19 The National Association of Negro Musicians Annual Concert program material 1977-1999

- b. 3 f. 1 Liedklasse lecture and demonstration 1989-2009
- b. 3 f. 2 **Harding, Buster** 1992-2009  
Abdul represented the Estate of Buster Harding in disputes with Earl Warren over royalties.  
Mostly includes legal correspondence.
- b. 3 f. 3 **Awards** 1996-2006
- b. 3 f. 4 **North Buxton** 2005-2006  
Includes printed matter (brochures, program, and clippings) for performances in this town,  
including one in which Abdul participated.
- b. 3 f. 5 **Master classes on tour** 2006
- b. 3 f. 6 **Smith, Hale** obituary 2009
- b. 3 f. 7 **Address cards**