



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

Guide to the

**Black dance collection**

1939-1990

Sc MG 224

## Summary

**Creator:** Nash, Joe, 1919-2005

**Title:** Black dance collection

**Date:** 1939-1990

**Size:** 0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of Joe Nash, 1984-2007.

**Abstract:** Joe Nash was a dancer, black dance historian, coordinator of black dance history courses at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater School in New York, and director and founder of the Multiethnic Christian Education Resources Center of the National Council of Churches. The Black dance collection consists of correspondence, contracts, scripts, and descriptions of dances based on African themes.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Black dance collection, Sc MG 224, 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:** Processed with Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project.

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Art and Artifacts Division: posters and decoupage

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: 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

Joe Nash was a dancer, black dance historian, coordinator of black dance history courses at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater School in New York, and director and founder of the Multiethnic

Christian Education Resources Center of the National Council of Churches. Born in New York City, Nash came from a musical family and trained to become a secretary. He began dancing in 1940 with the National Youth Administration, then spent four years in the Army in Europe. Following World War II, he enrolled in the dance division of the American Theatre Wing. He studied ballet and modern dance, making his first professional appearance with the Charles Weidman Dance Group.

Nash's dance career includes such Broadway shows as *Show Boat*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Bless You All*, *Flahooley*, *My Darlin' Aida*, *Livin' the Life*, and *Inside the U.S.A.*. His concert performances include New York City Center's production of *Carmen Jones* and *Love for Three Oranges*. His television credits include *Omnibus*, *The Hit Parade*, *The Paul Whiteman Show*, *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and the Canadian production of *Portfolio*.

Joe Nash's role with dance moved into the area of art administration with such organizations as the National Endowment for the Arts and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre Foundation, where he served as a dance panelist and a member of the Board of Trustees, respectively. He also worked as a lecturer, dance teacher, and exhibition coordinator. In the role of researcher of black dance history, Nash compiled an extensive collection of photographs, manuscripts, programs and flyers, news clippings, decoupage art, books, and dissertations documenting black dance and dancers from the 1920s through the 1980's.

## Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of correspondence, contracts, scripts, and descriptions of dances based on African themes. Material about the following dancers and choreographers includes: Asadata Dafora's storyline and press release for *Kykunkor*, a ballet-drama choreographed by Dafora; Al Bledger's contracts for the plays *La Belle Helene*, *Swingin' the Dream*, and *Spring in Brazil*; and Hemsley Winfield's script and description of the ballet *The Jungle Wedding*, which he choreographed. There is also information pertaining to the organization of the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Additionally, the collection contains flyers announcing Nash's speaking engagements on black dance. Correspondence mostly consists of letters of thanks to Nash for his assistance on a dance related project or a lectures.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American dance  
African American dancers -- United States  
African American historians  
African Americans in the performing arts  
Dance, Black

### Names

Bledger, Al  
Dafora, Asadata, 1890-1965  
Nash, Joe, 1919-2005  
Winfield, Hemsley, 1907-1934

## Container List

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transcripts 1994 March 15
- b. 2 f. 2 The Kennedy Center Honors programs 1993