



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

Guide to the

***Porgy and Bess* collection**

1932 - 1964 [bulk 1952 - 1956]

Sc MG 454

Summary

Creator: Riemer, Walter

Title: *Porgy and Bess* collection

Date: 1932 - 1964 [bulk 1952 - 1956]

Size: .17 linear feet (1/2 archival box)

Source: Gift, Lynn Archer for Walter Riemer Estate, June 1996

Abstract: The *Porgy and Bess* collection documents the 1954-1956 touring company of the opera *Porgy and Bess* by George Gershwin, produced by Robert Breen and Blevins Davis, and directed by Breen.

Preferred citation: [Item], *Porgy and Bess* collection, Sc MG 454, 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 on July 31, 1996.

Separated Materials:

Two posters moved to the Broadside collection. Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: 1 box and 1 oversize envelope of photographs of various US and European productions.

Related Materials:

Scrapbook in General Research and Reference Division.

Creator History

The *Porgy and Bess* collection documents the 1954-1956 touring company of the opera *Porgy and Bess* by George Gershwin, produced by Robert Breen and Blevins Davis, and directed by Breen. The

stage manager was Walter Riemer. Cast members included Joseph Attles, Catherine Ayers, Georgia Burke, George A. Hill, Helen Thigpen, and Catherine Van Buren.

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of several letters (1953-1955) between one of the producers and the musical director relating to production problems and issues affecting the show; a company roster providing vital statistics for cast, crew, and musicians, 1954; and the itinerary for the international tour, 1952-1956. Additionally, there are US programs (including for a 1964 production in which Riemer played a role) and European productions, reviews, and other articles.

Of particular interest are photocopies of letters (1932-1935) between composer George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, author of the original book on which the musical was based, regarding the development and production of the original production of *Porgy and Bess* and casting. There is also one letter from Ira Gershwin to Heyward after the death of his brother George in 1937.

Key Terms

Subjects

African Americans -- Music
African Americans in the performing arts
Celebrities -- United States -- Correspondence
Musical theater -- Production and direction
Opera -- Production and direction -- United States -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
Opera producers and directors -- Correspondence
Race in opera
Theater management -- United States -- Records and correspondence

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Theater programs

Names

Gershwin, George, 1898-1937
Gershwin, Ira, 1896-1983
Heyward, DuBose, 1885-1940
Riemer, Walter

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward correspondence 1932 - 1937
Photocopies.
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence 1952 - 1973
- b. 1 f. 3 Touring company roster 1954 - 1955
- b. 1 f. 4 US tour programs 1952 - 1964
- b. 1 f. 5 Itinerary for the international tour 1952 - 1956
- b. 1 f. 6-7 European tour programs 1952 - 1956
- b. 1 f. 8 Reviews and articles