



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

Guide to the

Blanche K. Thomas papers

1905-1979 [bulk 1934-1979]

Sc MG 179

Summary

Creator: Thomas, Blanche K., 1885-1977

Title: Blanche K. Thomas papers

Date: 1905-1979 [bulk 1934-1979]

Size: 1.25 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Gift of Joseph A. Thomas, 1977.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: African American music teacher and composer Blanche K. Thomas was the founder of the Thomas Music Study Club. The Blanche K. Thomas papers reflect the musical career of this teacher and composer.

Preferred citation: [Item], Blanche K. Thomas papers, Sc MG 179, 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 2009.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the General Research and Reference Division: book.

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

Creator History

African American music teacher and composer Blanche K. Thomas was the founder of the Thomas Music Study Club. Thomas graduated from the Juilliard School of Music (1928) and studied choral conducting at the Westminster Choir School. In 1932, she organized a mixed ensemble of youth to study and perform the music of African American composers. Annual recitals were presented at a

variety of New York venues including Carnegie Hall and the New York World's Fair. Thomas arranged a number of the songs performed by the group. Originally called the Thomas Negro Composers Study Group, the organization became affiliated with the National Association of Negro Musicians in 1940, and continued under the name of the Thomas Music Study Group. During this period and through the 1960s, Thomas conducted lessons in piano, singing, and related subjects at her studio, the Thomas Music Studio, at her home at 409 Edgecombe Avenue in Harlem. Thomas also served as the director of church school music at New York's St. Philip's Church and was supervisor of church school music at St. James Presbyterian Church.

In 1909, she married Joseph A. Thomas, who later became the business manager of the Study Group. Blanche Thomas died in 1977 at age ninety-two.

Scope and Content Note

The Blanche K. Thomas Papers reflect some aspects of the musical career of this teacher and composer. The Personal series (1905-1978) includes a love letter written by her future husband, Joseph, during their engagement (1905), certificates, and citations.

The series Music career (1934-1967) includes correspondence, programs, newsletters, and materials related to the Thomas Music Studio, Thomas Music Study Club, and the National Association of Negro Musicians. There is music composed and arranged by Thomas, both holograph and printed. An "Index of Songs" contains an alphabetical listing of songs, Thomas's file numbers, sheet music and some holograph music, lists, and letters. It appears that the index served as Thomas's organizational guide for recitals. The collection also includes other sheet music and songbooks, many written by African American composers.

Arrangement: Papers organized into two series: I. Personal and II. Music career.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American music teachers
African American women composers
African American women musicians
African Americans -- Music
Authors, Black
Music -- Instruction and study

Names

Thomas, Blanche K., 1885-1977
Thomas Music Study Group

Container List

Personal 1905-1979

- b. 1 f. 1 Obituaries 1977-1978
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence 1905-1978
- b. 1 f. 3 Postcards 1949-1977
- b. 1 f. 4 Certificates
- b. 2 f. 1 Box 2, folder 1, replaces box 1, folder 5.
- b. 2 f. 2 Thomas, Joseph A 1973-1979
Box 2, folder 2 replaces box 1, folder 6.

Music career 1934-1977

- b. 1 f. 7 Thomas Music Studio
Thomas Negro Composers Study Group
- b. 1 f. 8 1934-1943
- b. 1 f. 9 1944-1951
- b. 1 f. 10 Correspondence 1934-1955
- b. 1 f. 11 Thomas Music Study Club 1953-1967
Includes constitution, newsletters, and programs.
- b. 1 f. 12 National Association of Negro Musicians 1936-1977
- b. 2 f. 3 Music by Thomas
Box 2, folder 3, replaces box 1, folder 13.

Musical arrangements

- b. 1 f. 14 "And Jesus Took a Child"
- b. 1 f. 15 "Go Down Moses"
- b. 1 f. 16 "Hallelujah Lullaby"
- b. 1 f. 17 "Holy Lord"
- b. 1 f. 18 "Lift Up Your Heads"
- b. 1 f. 19 Work, John W. "Maudy Lou"
- b. 1 f. 20 "My Day"; "My Lady's Lips Are Like De Honey" by Will Marion Cook; and
"Now the Day Is Over" by Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould
- b. 2 f. 4 Bastion, Al. "A Prayer" and "An Affirmation"
Box 2, folder 4, replaces box 1, folder 21.
- b. 2 f. 5 Boatner, Edward H. "Trampin"
Box 2, folder 5, replaces box 1, folder 22.
- b. 2 f. 6 Untitled chorale by Bach
Box 2, folder 6, replaces box 1, folder 23.
- b. 1 f. 24 "Index of Songs" 1940s-1950s
- b. 1 f. 25 Copyright information 1936-1964
- b. 1 f. 26 Music and memorial programs of others

Sheet music

- b. 1 f. 27 A-G
- b. 1 f. 28 Coleridge-Taylor, S. "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast"
- b. 1 f. 29 H-O
- b. 1 f. 30 P-S

Music career (cont.)
Sheet music (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 31 U-W
- b. 2 f. 7 Other
Box 2, folder 7, replaces box 1, folder 32.
- b. 1 f. 33-35 Song books