



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

Guide to the

Mary Lou Williams *Music on My Mind* documentary collection

1976-1988

SC MG 922

Processed by Tiana Taliep, March 2016.

Summary

Creator: Williams, Mary Lou, 1910-1981

Title: Mary Lou Williams *Music on My Mind* documentary collection

Date: 1976-1988

Size: 1.04 linear feet (3 boxes)

Source: Gift of Joanne Burke, ca. 2015-2016.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: The collection contains materials used to create the Mary Lou Williams documentary, *Music on My Mind*, directed by Joanne Burke. *Music on My Mind* focuses on Williams's enduring contribution to American culture as a jazz pianist, composer, and vocalist. This collection includes a short autobiography (incomplete), transcripts of interviews, information on the financial support of the documentary, film technical edits, reel catalog, and an information kit about the documentary.

Preferred citation: [Item], Mary Lou Williams *Music on My Mind* documentary collection, SC MG 922, 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 by Tiana Taliep, March 2016.

Creator History

Mary Lou Williams was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1910, and grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As a child, she taught herself to play piano and began working in vaudeville at the age of thirteen. In the 1930s, Williams began performing with Andy Kirk's the Clouds of Joy, a Kansas City band. She also composed for bandleaders such as Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington. In 1942, she settled in Harlem, New York City, where she performed at a Greenwich Village nightclub. Williams was known for incorporating bebop style in her music, and creating longer pieces, such as "Zodiac Suite". In the late 1950s, Williams converted to Catholicism which served as inspiration to compose sacred pieces and

several masses, including "Mary Lou's Mass". In the 1970s, Williams began teaching at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and then at Duke University, where she served as artist-in-residence.

Williams passed away at the age of 71 on May 28, 1981, due to bladder cancer. She left behind more than 350 compositions, and she is primarily noted as one of the first African American woman to gain prominence in jazz.

Joanne Burke is a documentary film and video producer who has directed nine documentaries, including the hour-length film on jazz musician Mary Lou Williams, *Music on My Mind* (1990). Her films and videos have been broadcast on PBS, CBS, LaSept/Arte, and other European channels. Burke also taught film editing for five years at New York University and eight years at the School for Visual Arts. For the past decade, she has been living mainly in Paris, where she often works with her writer husband, David Burke.

Scope and Content Note

The collection contains materials used to create the Mary Lou Williams documentary, *Music on My Mind*, directed by Joanne Burke. *Music on My Mind* focuses on Williams's enduring contribution to American culture as a jazz pianist, composer, and vocalist. This collection includes a short autobiography (incomplete), transcripts of interviews, information on the financial support of the documentary, film technical edits, reel catalog, and an information kit about the documentary.

Arrangement: Arranged into three series: I. Williams, Mary Lou; II. Music on My Mind; and III. Burke, Joanne.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American jazz musicians
African American musicians
African American women composers
African American women entertainers
African American women in popular culture
African American women jazz singers
African American women singers
Authors, Black
Documentary films
Documentary films -- Production and direction
Independent filmmakers -- United States
Jazz musicians
Jazz singers -- United States
Women jazz musicians
Women singers -- United States

Names

Burke, Joanne (Film producer, director and editor)
Williams, Mary Lou, 1910-1981

Container List

b. 1 f. 1 Williams, Mary Lou undated

This series contains Williams's autobiography, which is particularly notable for the insight provided to the people, places, and events that influenced Williams's personal and professional development.

Music on My Mind 1980-1988

This series most effectively demonstrates support for the documentary with various transcripts, including an interview between Williams and John S. Wilson; fundraising correspondence for the documentary; film technical edits; and reel catalog.

Arranged into four subseries: (1) Transcripts; (2) Correspondence; (3) Financial; and (4) Film information.

Transcripts

b. 1 f. 2 Merrill, Susan and Joanne McGarrity

b. 1 f. 3-4 Williams, Mary Lou and John S. Wilson

b. 1 f. 5 Miscellaneous

Correspondence

b. 1 f. 6 Black Catholic bishops

b. 1 f. 7 Burke, Joanne

Fundraising rejections

b. 1 f. 8 1980-1984

b. 1 f. 9 1986 February

b. 1 f. 10 1986 June

b. 1 f. 11-12 1986 August

b. 2 f. 1 1986 September

b. 2 f. 2 1986 October

b. 2 f. 3 1987 January-1988 May

Financial

b. 2 f. 4-6 Bills paid 1980-1982

b. 2 f. 7-10 Receipts 1983-1986

b. 3 f. 1 New York Council for the Humanities budget 1985-1986

Documentary information

b. 3 f. 2 Press kit

b. 3 f. 3 Film technical edits

b. 3 f. 4 Reel catalog

Burke, Joanne 1976-1977

This series holds two original screenplays, "Emily", and "The Messenger and the Pigeon", written by Joanne Burke. These screenplays are edited, but it is unclear whether these scripts were produced.

b. 3 f. 5 "The Messenger and the Pigeon" 1976

b. 3 f. 6 "Emily" 1977