



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

Guide to the

**Mary Cardwell Dawson papers**

1937-1984

Sc MG 104

## Summary

**Creator:** Dawson, Mary Cardwell, 1894-1962

**Title:** Mary Cardwell Dawson papers

**Date:** 1937-1984

**Size:** 11 items (1 folder)

**Source:** Purchase, 05/10/77

**Abstract:** Opera director, concert singer, teacher, conductor and impresario, Dawson was the founder, president and general manager of the National Negro Opera Company. Formed in 1941 due to Dawson's concern regarding the lack of opportunity for Afro-Americans in opera because of racial discrimination, for over 20 years the Company presented such productions as Verdi's *Aida* and *La Traviata*, and C.C. White's *Ouanga*. Among the featured opera singers were Minto Cato, Lillian Evanti, Muriel Rahn, Edward Boatner and Robert Mc Ferrin. Ms. Dawson also founded the Cardwell School of Music and the prize winning Cardwell-Dawson Chorus. At the time of Dawson's death in 1962, her proteges were appearing in the great opera houses of the world. Collection of documents relating to Dawson and the National Negro Opera Company. Collection includes a booklet describing the history and activities of the Company, biographical data on Dawson, and several certificates commending Dawson for her achievements and contributions to various organizations.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**Preferred citation:** Mary Cardwell Dawson papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

## Creator History

Opera director, concert singer, teacher, conductor and impresario, Dawson was the founder, president and general manager of the National Negro Opera Company. Formed in 1941 due to Dawson's concern regarding the lack of opportunity for Afro-Americans in opera because of racial discrimination, for over 20 years the Company presented such productions as Verdi's *Aida* and *La Traviata*, and C.C. White's *Ouanga*. Among the featured opera singers were Minto Cato, Lillian Evanti, Muriel Rahn, Edward Boatner and Robert Mc Ferrin. Ms. Dawson also founded the Cardwell School of Music and the prize

winning Cardwell-Dawson Chorus. At the time of Dawson's death in 1962, her proteges were appearing in the great opera houses of the world.

### **Scope and Content Note**

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### **Key Terms**

#### **Subjects**

African American singers  
Opera -- Biography  
Opera companies -- United States  
Opera producers and directors -- United States  
Women singers -- United States

#### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Certificates  
Programs

#### **Titles**

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

#### **Names**

Dawson, Mary Cardwell, 1894-1962  
National Negro Opera Company