



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

Guide to the

Willis Jackson Papers

1955-1984

Sc MG 332

Summary

Creator: Jackson, Willis

Title: Willis Jackson Papers

Date: 1955-1984

Size: 2.2 linear feet

Source: Gift, Watson, James L, 1989

Abstract: Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson, composer, arranger and saxophonist, was born in 1932 in Miami, Florida. He began studying the piano at age ten, then added the clarinet, and made his professional debut at age fourteen on the tenor saxophone with local bands. Jackson studied theory and harmony at Florida A & M University, and later worked and toured with Cootie Williams, Dinah Washington and Jackie Wilson, among others. He formed various groups including the Willis Jackson Organ Quartet and the Willis Jackson Orchestra and utilized a rhythm and blues sound as well as jazz. His invention, the Jackson's Gator Horn, is a saxophone used for ballads whose sound is a cross "between soprano and alto [saxophone] and French horn and clarinet." He died in 1987. The Willis Jackson Papers consist principally of holograph musical compositions, mainly instrumental parts, composed and arranged by Jackson and others. The compositions are arrangements of standard jazz classics, popular tunes and bossa nova pieces. Also included are performance contracts, songwriters' agreements, a small amount of personal and professional correspondence, and lists of compositions, recordings and group members.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Willis Jackson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson, composer, arranger and saxophonist, was born in 1932 in Miami, Florida. He began studying the piano at age ten, then added the clarinet, and made his professional debut at age fourteen on the tenor saxophone with local bands. Jackson studied theory and harmony at Florida A & M University, and later worked and toured with Cootie Williams, Dinah Washington and Jackie

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Scope and Content Note

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Key Terms

Subjects

African American musicians

Jazz

Jazz musicians -- United States

Popular music -- United States

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Musical scores

Titles

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

Names

Jackson, Willis