Summary

Creator: Des Verney, Bertha

Title: Bertha Des Verney papers

Date: 1929-1977

Size: .46 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Donated in 1977.

Abstract: Bertha Des Verney was a pianist, composer, arranger, writer, singer, playwright, concert promoter, and music teacher. The Bertha Des Verney papers include programs and flyers for musical events that she was involved in, annotated musical texts, scripts, holograph music of her arrangements and compositions, correspondence, and news clippings. From the Washington Music School there are reports, financial records, and a history of the school (1931). Material for the National Association of Negro Musicians includes programs for conventions. The collection also includes two scrapbooks, one of which contains news clippings and programs for musical concerts, primarily featuring African-American artists (1929-1957). The second scrapbook contains news clippings about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and other noteworthy events in the Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson families, as well as obituaries of a number of black personalities, and some musical programs (1936, 1959-1974). There are also a few letters in the collection.

Access: Advance notice required.

Conditions Governing Use: Information on copyright available from repository.

Preferred citation: [Item], Bertha Des Verney papers, Sc MG 449, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Creator History
Bertha Des Verney was an African American pianist, composer/arranger, singer, playwright, concert promoter, and music teacher, who devoted much of her time to church and community activities. Des Verney joined Harlem's Mother A.M.E. Zion Church in 1919 and for more than forty years served as the director of several of its choirs and was president of the church's Dramatic Club. Among other educational responsibilities, she was director of the Washington Music School in Albany, New York in the 1930s. Des Verney was a member of the National Association of Negro Musicians, serving as president in 1964. She also organized the Ministers of Music and Drama League, which honored performing artists. She died in 1975 in New York City.

Key Terms

Subjects
African American music teachers
African American musicians
African American singers
African American women composers
African Americans -- Music
African Americans in the performing arts
Arrangers (Musicians) -- United States -- 20th century

Occupations
Composers

Geographic Names
Harlem (New York, N.Y.)

Genre/Physical Characteristic
Programs
Scores
Scrapbooks
Sheet music

Names
Ministers of Music and Drama League (New York, N.Y.)
Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (New York, N.Y.)
National Association of Negro Musicians (U.S.)
Washington Music School (Albany, N.Y.)
## Container List

1. **b. 1 f. 1**  
   Mother A.M.E. Zion Church 1929-1975

2. **b. 1 f. 2**  
   National Association of Negro Musicians 1956-1977

3. **b. 1 f. 3**  
   Programs - Other Venues 1939-1973

4. **b. 1 f. 4**  
   Birthday Tribute to W.C. Handy and Other Events 1947-1957

5. **b. 1 f. 5**  
   Scripts and Other Writings by Des Verney 1933-1963

6. **b. 2 f. 1-2**  
   Music - Original and Arrangements

7. **b. 2 f. 3**  
   Lyrics - Author Unidentified undated

8. **b. 2 f. 4**  
   Ministers of Music and Drama League Citations to Others and Program 1954-1956

9. **b. 2 f. 5**  
   Washington Music School, Albany, New York 1931, undated

10. **b. 2 f. 6**  
    Teaching Material 1942, undated

11. **b. 2 f. 7**  
    Scrapbook No. 1 1929-1957

12. **b. 2 f. 8**  
    Scrapbook No. 2 1936, 1959-1974

13. **b. 2 f. 9**  
    Miscellaneous 1934-1972