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Guide to the

**Harlem Spiritual Ensemble collection**

1983-1999 [bulk 1987-1995]

Sc MG 658

Compiled by L.J. Sewell, 1999.

## Summary

**Creator:** Clemmons, François

**Title:** Harlem Spiritual Ensemble collection

**Date:** 1983-1999 [bulk 1987-1995]

**Size:** .42 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** Donated by Francois S. Clemmons, 1999.

**Abstract:** The Harlem Spiritual Ensemble Collection contains organizational correspondence for both the Harlem Spiritual Ensemble (HSE) and the American Negro Spiritual Research Foundation (ANDRF). The correspondence consists of introductory letters, acknowledgements, tour arrangements, grant documents and performance requests. Also included in the collection are contracts, proposals, sheet music, clippings, programs and a scrapbook of HSE and ANSRF materials. The scrapbook includes acknowledgements, ANSRF board of director meeting minutes, invitations, clippings and programs.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**Conditions Governing Access:**

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**Preferred citation:** [Item], Harlem Spiritual Ensemble collection, Sc MG 658, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Processing note:** Compiled by L.J. Sewell, 1999. Photographs transferred to Photographs and Prints Division. Audiotapes, videotapes and films transferred to Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division. Finding aid edited and adapted to digital form by Kay Menick in 2016.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Harlem Spiritual Ensemble (HSE) was founded in 1986 by Francois S. Clemmons. Clemmons, a recipient of degrees in music from Oberlin College and Carnegie Mellon University, also directed the Ensemble. The HSE was founded with the purpose of perpetuating the American Negro Spiritual through performances that reflect their traditional arrangement. Clemmons utilized traditionally arranged spirituals and gathered singers and musicians to debut the Ensemble at the Harlem School of the Arts in 1986. The HSE has toured nationally to such cities as Washington, D.C., Chicago, Pittsburgh, and New York City, where in 1991 they had their Carnegie Hall debut. The HSE has also toured internationally in Italy, Germany, Austria, France, Finland, Korea, and Japan. Since 1990, HSE has recorded on the Arcadia Label.

In 1989, Clemmons founded and became director of the American Negro Spiritual Research Foundation, Inc. (ANSRF), whose mission is to be, "the only organization solely dedicated to preserving and performing the American Negro Spiritual in its original form." ANSRF also "sustains an important aspect of American folk heritage, and expands public awareness of the spiritual's singular beauty," through groups such as HSE.

This collection contains organizational correspondence of HSE and ANSRF. The correspondence consists of introductory letters, acknowledgments, tour arrangements, grant documents, and performance offers. Also included in the collection are contracts, proposals, sheet music, clippings, programs, and a scrapbook of HSE and ANSRF materials. The scrapbook includes acknowledgements, ANSRF board of director meeting minutes, invitations, clippings and programs. The scrapbook was removed from its original binding for preservation purposes, however the integrity of the scrapbook has been maintained in archival file folders.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American entertainers -- New York (N.Y.)  
African American musicians -- New York (N.Y.)  
African American singers -- New York (N.Y.)  
African Americans -- Music  
African Americans -- New York (N.Y.) -- Music  
Ensemble singing  
Spirituals (Songs) -- New York (N.Y.)

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence  
Scrapbooks  
Sheet music

### **Names**

American Negro Spiritual Research Foundation  
Harlem Spiritual Ensemble

## Container List

### General Correspondence

- b. 1 f. 1 1983, 1987-1989
- b. 1 f. 2 1990-1991
- b. 1 f. 3 1992-1995
- b. 1 f. 4 Contracts 1983, 1987-1992
- b. 1 f. 5 Proposals 1989

### Programs

- b. 1 f. 6 Harlem Spiritual Ensemble 1989-1998
- b. 1 f. 7 American Negro Spiritual Research Foundation, Inc 1994
- b. 1 f. 8 Sheet Music
- b. 1 f. 9 Clippings 1993
- b. 1 f. 10 Promotional Material 1996, undated
- b. 1 f. 11 Scrapbook: Harlem Spiritual Ensemble & American Negro Spiritual Research Foundation, Inc 1994-1995