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Guide to the

**Joseph K. Westmoreland papers**

1972-1983

Sc MG 507

## Summary

**Creator:** Westmoreland, Joseph K.

**Title:** Joseph K. Westmoreland papers

**Date:** 1972-1983

**Size:** 0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of Joseph K. Westmoreland, 1993.

**Abstract:** This collection includes telegrams, letters, programs, news clippings, and one contract documenting performances of composer Joe Westmoreland's work, primarily by symphony orchestras throughout the U.S.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. To request access to materials in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, please visit: [http://archives.nypl.org/divisions/scm/request\\_access](http://archives.nypl.org/divisions/scm/request_access)

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**Language of the Material:** English

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## Creator History

Joseph K. Westmoreland, a gospel music composer, was known for "symphonic gospel" compositions in which choir and symphony orchestra are combined. His work has been played in more than 50 concerts throughout the U.S. and Israel by the Los Angeles and New York Philharmonic orchestras, among others. Westmoreland, who served as Minister of Music of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Los Angeles, founded the Interdenominational Choir, which represented most of the Black

church denominations. In addition to his career as a composer, Westmoreland also served as an art administrator (and consultant) for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association's Orchestral Training Program for Minority Students.

Westmoreland began playing the piano at a very early age in New Morning Star Baptist Church. After graduating from Booker T. Washington High School, he moved to Los Angeles to continue his education. He attended Los Angeles City College and the University of California at Los Angeles where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1981. In 2000, Westmoreland received a doctoral degree from the Pentecostal Bible College, West Coast Campus. He taught choral music at Duarte High School, Occidental College, and UCLA. For over a quarter of a century, he served the First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Los Angeles, many of these years as Minister of Music. Since 1976, his gospel music compositions have been presented in over 100 concerts by major orchestras and two films, *Music in Time* and *Zubin Rocks Gospel*, and are in public libraries around the country. One aired on three segments of CBS' *60 Minutes*. The North Carolina Symphony and Interdenominational Choir performed seven of his compositions at the Shaw University Heritage Festival, from 1977 through 1980. He conceived and helped produce the noted "Hallelujah Concert: A Tribute to Gospel Music", held at the Great Western Forum in Inglewood, California. Westmoreland was the first composer of gospel music to have his works performed by Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra as well as the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1982, Westmoreland was commissioned by the Albany Symphony to write a gospel mass. This music was also performed by the Utah Symphony Orchestra in 1983. And in 1987, together with Charles May, he wrote the gospel opera, *Job*, which starred Reverend Daryl Coley and the First AME Freedom Choir. It was performed again in 1988 for the Los Angeles Festival and for the AME General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. He wrote the gospel opera, *Jezebel*, which was performed in the Vision Theater in Los Angeles for a full month.

## Scope and Content Note

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## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American clergy  
African American composers  
Arts administrators  
Gospel music

### Names

Westmoreland, Joseph K.

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical
- b. 1 f. 2 Dallas Symphony Orchestra 1977-1980
- b. 1 f. 3 Israel Philharmonic Orchestra 1981  
Los Angeles Philharmonic
- b. 1 f. 4 1972-1976
- b. 1 f. 5 1978-1980
- b. 1 f. 6 Easter Suite concert 1995 March
- b. 1 f. 7 1993-1995  
Easter Suite
- b. 1 f. 8 First edition
- b. 1 f. 9 Orchestration
- b. 1 f. 10 Hartford Symphony Orchestra
- b. 1 f. 11 New York Philharmonic 1980
- b. 1 f. 12 Programs 1974-1983
- b. 1 f. 13 Printed matter 1975-1980
  - b. 2 Oversized poster in box 2.
- b. 1 f. 14 Albany Symphony Orchestra 1982
  - b. 2 Music manuscripts