



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

Guide to the

**Edward Boatner papers**

1941-1980

Sc MG 82

Processed by Giselle Glover.

## Summary

**Creator:** Boatner, Edward

**Title:** Edward Boatner papers

**Date:** 1941-1980

**Source:** Gift of Sarah Boatner, 1981

**Abstract:** The Edward Boatner papers reflect his activities as composer, choral conductor, music professor and author of music textbooks. The music in the collection consists of scores for "Freedom Suite," his musical comedy "Julius Sees Her in Rome, Georgia," and his opera "Troubled in Mind." There are also scores for four gospel songs written by Boatner, and voice parts for selections from his musical play, "He Will Answer."

**Preferred citation:** Edward Boatner papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Giselle Glover; machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services; revised by Terry Catapano.

### Separated Materials:

The following items were removed from: Edward Hammond Boatner Papers SCM81-11, MG82

Donor: item>Sarah Boatner/item>

Gift item>x/item>

Date received: item>1981/item>

Date transferred: item>1995/item>

The item(s) listed below have been sent to the division indicated, either to be retained or disposed of there. Any items that should receive special disposition are clearly marked.

2 photographs, 1 photograph negative, 1 case of 10 color slides

## Creator History

Edward Hammond Boatner was born November 13, 1898 in New Orleans, Louisiana. He was active as a composer, choral conductor and singer. He was also the author of plays, stories and music instruction materials, as well as essays concerning African-American history.

Boatner's father, Dr. Daniel Webster Boatner, was an itinerant minister who took his family with him on his travels from church to church. Impressed by the singing he heard in those churches, Boatner began to collect spirituals at an early age. He was educated in the public schools of St. Louis, Missouri, where his family lived during his childhood. He also attended the public schools of Kansas City, Kansas, where his family later moved. Upon graduation in 1916, Boatner took lessons in voice and piano at Western University in Quindaro, Kansas, for a short time. Later that year Boatner sang for the famous tenor Roland Hayes, who encouraged the young baritone to continue his vocal studies in Boston. Boatner followed Hayes' advice, and moved to Boston in 1917.

During his first year in Boston, Boatner studied with instructors at the New England Conservatory of Music. In 1918, at the age of 20, he published his first arrangement of a spiritual, entitled *Give Me Jesus*. The Boston Conservatory of Music awarded Boatner with a one-year scholarship in 1921. Continuing his studies at the Longy School of Music the following year, Boatner met composer and pianist Robert Nathaniel Dett, who became a mentor and coach. The two musicians performed a successful series of concerts together throughout the New England states.

In 1925, Boatner moved to Chicago, in order to complete his formal education. He earned his Bachelor's degree in music from the Chicago College of Music in 1932. During his student years in Chicago, Boatner directed the choirs at Olivet Baptist Church, and concertized widely as a singer. His reputation grew during the years 1925-1933, when he was director of music for the National Baptist Convention.

In 1933, Boatner was appointed director of music at Samuel Huston College in Austin, Texas. He later taught at the Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, where he was appointed Dean of Music. During the late 1930s, he settled permanently in New York City, where he opened the Edward Boatner Studio. Through the studio, he organized and trained choral groups, and gave private instruction in piano and voice to young musicians and actors. His students included Metropolitan opera tenor George Shirley, as well as performers Josephine Baker, Clifton Webb, and Libby Holman. Boatner was also director of music at the Concord Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York.

Boatner arranged nearly three hundred spirituals, including *Oh, What A Beautiful City*, *On My Journey*, *Plenty Good Room*, *Soon-a Will Be Done*, and *Tramping*. His arrangements have been performed and recorded by such artists as Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, Leontyne Price and Nelson Eddy. His collections of arrangements include *Thirty Afro-American Choral Spirituals*, and *Spirituals Triumphant, Old And New*. One of his original compositions, *Freedom Suite*, was published in 1964, and performed at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., in 1967. His musical plays include *The Man From Nazareth* and *The Origin Of the Spirituals*.

Boatner wrote thirty textbooks in the areas of music theory, composition, pedagogy and piano technique. Other writings include *Great Achievements in Black And White*, *The Damaging Results Of Racism*, *Black Humor*, and a novel entitled *One Drop Of Blood*.

Throughout his career, Boatner won awards from the National Federation of Music Clubs, the National Association of Negro Musicians, the Brooklyn Lyceum, the Detroit Association of Musicians, and the

New York Uptown Musicians, among others. In 1979 he was honored by the Chicago branch of the National Association of Negro Musicians.

Boatner's daughter Adelaide, and a son, Clifford became concert artists. Best known was his son, jazz saxophonist Edward "Sonny" Stitt. Boatner died on June 16, 1981, in New York, New York. A memorial service honoring his life and achievements was held at Olivet Baptist Church, in Chicago, on Sunday, February 19, 1984.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Edward Boatner papers, 1941-1980, reflect his activities as composer/arranger, choral conductor, music professor, scholar, playwright, and novelist. The collection consists of six boxes, which are divided into three series: Music, Typescripts, and Articles, Programs, etc. It includes original music manuscripts, as well as published music scores. There are also original typescripts and photocopies of music theory books, musical plays, short stories and treatises.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American authors  
African American composers  
African Americans -- Music  
Composers  
Music -- Instruction and study  
Music teachers

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Scripts

### **Names**

Boatner, Edward  
Hayes, Roland, 1887-1977  
Schram, Rudolph

## Container List

### Music

The series consists of a published score and solo/chorus score for Boatner's *Freedom Suite*, which is a classical work for narrator, solo voices, chorus and orchestra. There are also scores for four gospel songs written by Boatner. Another folder contains voice parts for selections to be performed by the fictional Heaven's Gate Choir, in the musical play, *He Will Answer*. A piano/vocal score for Boatner's musical comedy, *Julius Sees Her In Rome, Georgia*, and for his opera, *Troubled In Mind (Forbidden Love)*, are also included. String quartet accompaniments for selections from *Troubled In Mind* can be found here as well.

- b. 1 f. 1 *Freedom Suite - Full score* 1966
- b. 1 f. 2 *Freedom Suite - Solo/chorus score*
- b. 1 f. 3 Gospel songs 1941:
  - Happy In Jesus
  - I Am Satisfied
  - I Will Answer When He Calls Me
  - My Lord Offers Peace
- b. 1 f. 4 *He Will Answer: music for the production* 1960:
  - Comes A Day
  - I've Waited So Long
  - Mercy, Lord
  - The Poison Letter
  - [Untitled Selection]
  - Who Does She Think She Is?
- b. 1 f. 5 *Julius Sees Her In Rome, Georgia - Piano/vocal score*
- b. 1 f. 6 *Troubled In Mind (Forbidden Love) - Piano/vocal score, Parts I II*
- b. 1 f. 7 *Troubled In Mind (Forbidden Love) - String quartet/orchestral accompaniments*

### Typescripts

Nearly one-third of the series are for unpublished instructional materials by Boatner, which cover the areas of music harmony, rhythm and piano technique. Other items include libretti for productions of *Julius Sees Her In Rome, Georgia*, *He Will Answer*, *The Man From Nazareth*, *One Drop Of Blood*, *The Origin Of the Spirituals*, and *Troubled In Mind*. In addition, there are drafts for nearly twenty short stories. The original typescript of Boatner's textbook, *Great Afro-Americans*, and a social commentary entitled *The Damaging Results Of Racism* are also located here.

- b. 2 f. 1 *Canebrake - A Play In Three Acts*
- b. 2 f. 2 *Chord Construction*
- b. 2 f. 3 *Chord Progression*
- b. 2 f. 4 *Chord Progression - Commentary For Teachers*
- b. 2 f. 5 *Chord Progression - Teacher's Extended Commentary*
- b. 2 f. 6 *Commercial Chord Construction*
- b. 2 f. 7 *The Damaging Results Of Racism*
- b. 2 f. 8 *Elementary Theory Book* 1975
- b. 3 f. 1 *Great Afro-Americans*
- b. 3 f. 2 *Great Afro-Americans (Incomplete)*

Typescripts (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 3 Harmonization Of Melody
- b. 3 f. 4 *He Will Answer - A Musical Play*
- b. 4 f. 1 How To Count Rhythm
- b. 4 f. 2 How To Read And Play Chord Symbols
- b. 4 f. 3 Humorous Short Stories
- b. 4 f. 4 Humorous Short Story Illustrations (by Leah Holland)
- b. 4 f. 5 The Introduction to Chord Progression
- b. 4 f. 6 Julius Sees Her In Rome, Georgia 1967
- b. 4 f. 7 Julius Sees Her In Rome, Georgia 1967
- b. 4 f. 8 The Man From Nazareth: A Religious Musical
- b. 4 f. 9 The Man From Nazareth
- b. 4 f. 10 *The Man From Nazareth (different version)*
- b. 4 f. 11 Modulation
- b. 4 f. 12 Music Embellishments
- b. 5 f. 1 One Drop of Blood - A Drama For T.V. or Movies 1974
- b. 5 f. 2 One Drop of Blood 1979
- b. 5 f. 3 The Origin Of the Spirituals 1979
- b. 5 f. 4 Origin Of The Afro-American Spirituals, or Origin of the Spirituals 1980
- b. 5 f. 5 Part-Leading
- b. 5 f. 6 Self-Study Piano
- b. 5 f. 7 Self-Study Piano Course And Comprehensive Chart 1970
- b. 5 f. 8 Three Short Stories
- b. 6 f. 1 Troubled In Mind (Forbidden Love) - An Afro-American Slave Opera In Three Acts 1968
- b. 6 f. 2 Troubled In Mind
- b. 6 f. 3 Troubled In Mind 1974
- b. 6 f. 4 The Wiggers - A Role-Reversal Historical Inter-Racial Play 1974

Articles, Programs, etc.

The series consists of several reviews of the premiere of Boatner's *Freedom Suite*, and of his production of *The Man From Nazareth*, also known as *The Life Of Christ*. Announcements and programs appear here for two productions of this musical play. A *Washington Post* interview with Boatner's mentor, tenor Roland Hayes, is included here. Finally, there is an article from the *New York Times*, which focuses on Boatner's career, and his role in the regained popularity of the spiritual.

- b. 6 f. 5 *Freedom Suite - Reviews* 1967
- b. 6 f. 6 *Great Achievements, White And Black - Advertisement*
- b. 6 f. 7 *Julius Sees Her In Rome, Georgia - Scene Illustrations*
- b. 6 f. 8 Letter from Speed Copy Center; postcards to Chorale members
- b. 6 f. 9 *The Man From Nazareth - Announcements, Programs, Reviews* 1971, 1979
- b. 6 f. 10 New York Times Article 1971
- b. 6 f. 11 Recital program (Evelyn M. Sharpe and Oscar Brown, vocalists) 1981