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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Eusebia Cosme papers

1927-1973

Sc Micro R-3619

Processed by Diana L. Lachatanere.

Summary

Creator: Cosme, Eusebia

Title: Eusebia Cosme papers

Date: 1927-1973

Source: Presented by Eileen Charbo, Mexico, 1975. SCM77-7

Abstract: Correspondence, personal papers, contracts, poems including some written about Cosme, essays, programs, newspaper and magazine clippings, scripts including radio scripts, certificates, posters, and photographs, relating mainly to Cosme's career, including her readings of Afro-Antillian verse, chiefly by Hispanic poets using black themes, as well as Afro-American poets Paul Laurence Dunbar and Langston Hughes. Also, material on Cuba. Correspondents include Felix B. Cagnet.

Conditions Governing Access:

Researchers are restricted to microfilm copy.

Preferred citation: Eusebia Cosme papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: In Spanish and English

Processing note: Processed by Diana L. Lachatanere; machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services; revised by Terry Catapano.

Separated Materials:

The following items were removed from the: Eusebia Adriana Cosme Papers SCM 77-7 and have been sent to the division or section indicated, either to be retained or disposed of there. Any items that should receive special disposition are clearly marked.

Soto, Hilda Perera. *Cuentos de Apolo*(Habana: Editorial Lex, 1947)

Guillen, Nicolas. *West Indies, Ltd.; Poemas*(La Habana, 1934) *Album de Versos Negros*(Suplemento de

la Revista "*Folklore*", 1953)

Creaciones del Luis Carbonell(Suplemento de la Revista "*Cancionero de Las Americas*", 1957)

Green, Paul. "*The Man who Died at Twelve O' Clock; A Negro Comedy in One Act*" (N.Y.C.: Samuel French, 1927)

4 posters for movie "*El Derecho de Nacer*" -- Poster Collection.

(Photographs, prints, 1 archival box of photographs.

Creator History

Eusebia Adriana Cosme y Almanza was born in Santiago de Cuba in 1908, the only child of Leocadia Almanza and German Cosme. Her parents died when she was still a minor and she was befriended by a distinguished Santiago family who eventually took her to Habana. In Habana, Cosme studied music and piano theory at the Escuela Municipal de Musica and elocution and declamation at the Academia de Declamacion of the Conservatorio Municipal. It was at the Conservatorio that Cosme received her first professional encouragement from one of her teachers, Graziella Garbalosa.

Cosme's career as an interpreter of Afro-Antillian verse began in the early 1930's when she was asked to recite for Jose Gonzalez Marin, a Spanish actor and reciter. Marin then sponsored her public debut at the Teatro Payret in Habana. Prior to that she had performed only for friends and at school functions.

From the inception of her career, Cosme's recitals were interpretive performances with background scenery and costumes which she designed herself. Her concerts featured primarily the works of Hispanic poets who wrote "*poesias negras*", poetry with a black theme. However, she also performed the works of Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence Dunbar. Among her favorite poets were Nicolas Guillen, Felix B. Caignet (Cuba), Luis Pales Matos (Puerto Rico), and Andres Eloy Blanco (Venezuela). They, as well as other poets, often wrote works expressly for her. One of these was the now well-known poem, "*Pintame Angelitos Negros*" by Eloy Blanco. Additionally, Cosme did dramatic readings from the Afro-Antillian literary genre. She is especially noted for her performance of Hilda Perera Soto's *Cuentos de Apolo*.

In 1937 Cosme left Cuba to begin her career as an international concert performer. She appeared in South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States. Wherever she appeared she received critical and popular acclaim and was considered the most successful Cuban diseuse of Afro-Antillian verse.

Upon leaving Cuba, Cosme settled in New York City. During the 1940's she had her own radio program there, "*The Eusebia Cosme Show*" on Columbia Broadcasting System's Las Cadenas de las Americas, doing dramatic readings and poetry recitals. It was apparently during this period that Cosme married Rafael "Felo" Laviera.

In 1955 Cosme began her acting career with a Mexican acting company. She appeared in a few plays including a Mexican production of "*El Derecho de Nacer*" (The Right to be Born), a drama written by

Caignet, the Cuban poet/author. The play was made into a movie in 1966 with Cosme in one of the major roles and was an immediate success. For her interpretation of the role of "*Mama Dolores*," Cosme was chosen Best Actress and received the "Onix" award, the Mexican version of the "Oscar," from the Instituto Cinematografico de la Universidad Ibero-Mexicana. Her movie acting career had begun with her appearance in 1964 in Sidney Lumet's "*The Pawnbroker*" as Mrs. Ortiz.

The favorable public and critical response to "*El Derecho de Nacer*," and particularly to the character of "Mama Dolores," led Caignet to write a screenplay entitled "Mama Dolores" (1970) in which Cosme repeated the role. This was followed by acting parts in four other Mexican movies. During this period Cosme resided in Mexico. She also continued to give occasional concert performances in South American and Europe.

Among Cosme's other talents were music composition and painting. She composed the music and lyrics for the theme song to "Mama Dolores," as well as songs which were sung by popular singers of the day. Her painting career received its impetus from her husband's death in the late 1950's. An abstract painter, Cosme exhibited her works in several of the annual Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibitions in New York City, as well as in Mexico.

Eusebia Cosme died in Miami in 1976.

Scope and Content Note

The Eusebia Cosme Papers, 1927-1973, deal mainly with Ms. Cosme's career as a diseuse and actress. The collection includes personal papers, correspondence, contracts, poems and essays, programs, newspaper and magazine clippings, scripts, certificates, posters, and photographs. The majority of the material is in Spanish. The papers are arranged chronologically within each type of material.

Key Terms

Subjects

Actresses, Black
African Americans -- New York (State) -- New York
Blacks -- Cuba
Blacks in the motion picture industry
Blacks in the performing arts
Entertainers -- Cuba
Entertainers -- United States
Hispanic Americans -- New York (State) -- New York
Minorities -- New York (State) -- New York
Poets, Black

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Poems
Posters
Scripts

Names

Caignet, Fe_lix B.

Cosme, Eusebia
Dunbar, Paul Laurence, 1872-1906
Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967

Container List

b. 1 f. 1 r. 1 Personal File 1927-1973

The file contains two diplomas from the Escuela Municipal de Musica where Cosme studied, a typescript of the theme song from "Mama Dolores," and manuscripts of two other songs written by her.

b. 1 f. 2 r. 1 Correspondence 1928-1972, n.d.

The file is comprised of scattered and miscellaneous incoming correspondence, primarily from friends and acquaintances. There is one letter from Cosme to a friend. Included are two letters from Felix B. Cagnet (1936, 1943) concerning his work and activities in Cuba, and expressing his friendship and admiration for Cosme, who during this period of their association frequently recited or read from his works.

b. 1 f. 3 r. 1 Contracts 1955-1973

The contracts are related to Cosme's work on stage for recitals and plays, as well as for movies and television.

Poems and Essays

The file is divided into two groups. The first group consists of laudatory poems and essays written about Cosme. Among them is an article-essay by Fernando Ortiz, the Cuban ethnologist. The second group contains holograph, typescript and printed poems which were apparently sent or given to Cosme for possible inclusion in her performances.

b. 1 f. 4 r. 1 Written about Cosme 1937-1952, n.d.

b. 1 f. 5 r. 1 Sent to Cosme 1934-1937, n.d.

Printed Material

Programs

The programs have been arranged in three groupings. The first relates to Cosme's concert appearances in Cuba during the early stages of her career and subsequent concerts from the 1930's through the 1950's in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico and the United States. The next division is of programs from non-concert events Cosme participated in, such as plays, the premier of *"The Pawnbroker"*, and a guest appearance for *"El Derecho de Nacer."* The last division is of programs for other artists and events arranged alphabetically by artist and name of play or event, and includes programs for concerts given by Dalia Iniguez, another Cuban disease whom Cosme admired.

b. 1 f. 6 r. 1 Concert 1930-1958, n.d.

b. 1 f. 7 r. 1 Non-Concert 1932-1972, n.d.

b. 1 f. 8 r. 1 Other Artists and Events 1935-1969, n.d.

Newspaper and Magazine Clippings

Consists primarily of reviews, interviews and articles about Cosme arranged chronologically. Clippings with no dates are filed last. A few of the clippings contain biographical information about Cosme. There are also clippings collected by Cosme which are filed under NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE CLIPPINGS (MISCELLANEOUS). These are on a variety of subjects and include articles about the poetry of Luis Pales Matos entitled *"Poesia Negra"* and *"Poesia Negra en Nueva York"*.

b. 1 f. 9 r. 1 1932-1938

b. 1 f. 10 r. 1 1943-1948

b. 1 f. 11 r. 1 1950-1959

b. 1 f. 12 r. 1 1961-1969

b. 1 f. 13 r. 1 1970-1972

b. 1 f. 14 r. 1 n.d

b. 1 f. 15 r. 1 Miscellaneous 1945-1966, n.d.

b. 1 f. 16 r. 1 Serialized Novel - *"El Derecho de Nacer"*

Scripts

Scripts for movies, television, plays and radio are arranged alphabetically by the name of the author, playwright, screenwriter or adapter and include an incomplete television script for *"El Derecho de Nacer"* which was made into a series for Spanish-language television; the movie scripts for *"Mama Dolores"* and *"Rosas Blancas Para Mi Hermana Negra,"* and ten scripts for the *"Eusebia Cosme Show"* on CBS radio.

- b. 2 f. 1 r. 1 *Alejandro, Julio - "Que es un Corazon?"*
- b. 2 f. 2 r. 1 *Alejandro, Julio - "Rosas Blancas Para Mi Hermana Negra"*
- b. 2 f. 3 r. 1 *Caignet, Felix B. - "El Derecho de Nacer"*
- b. 2 f. 4 r. 1 *Caignet, Felix B. - "El Derecho de Nacer" (cont.)*
- b. 2 f. 5 r. 1 *Caignet, Felix B. - "Mama Dolores"*
- b. 2 f. 6 r. 2 *Cardona, Rene, Sr. - "Pelota de Futbol"*
- b. 2 f. 7 r. 2 *Carrasco, Ramon Lopez - "Los Ninos Especiales"*
- b. 2 f. 8 r. 2 *Carrasco, Ramon Lopez - "Mistica"*
- b. 2 f. 9 r. 2 *Perea, Kenia - "El Cristo Negro"*
- b. 3 f. 1 r. 2 *Perea, Kenia - "Tres Vidas Distintas"*
- b. 3 f. 2 r. 2 r. 2 *Suarez, Roberto Rodriguez - "El Casorio"*
- b. 3 f. 3 r. 2 *Suarez, Roberto Rodriguez - "Ventanas"*
- b. 3 f. 4 r. 2 *Urueta, Margarita - "Pasion Secreta y Confesiones de Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz"*
- b. 3 f. 5 r. 2 *Zuani, Sergio (adaptation) - "La Gallina de los Huevos de Oro"*
- b. 3 f. 6 r. 2 *Zuani, Sergio - "La Noche del Grito"*
- b. 3 f. 7 r. 2 *Zuani, Sergio (adaptation) - "La Encantadora Familia Bliss"*
- b. 3 f. 8 r. 2 *Columbia Broadcasting System - "Eusebia Cosme Radio Show"*
- b. 3 f. 9 r. 2 *Miscellaneous*
 - o. 1 *Certificates 1936-1970*

CERTIFICATES, 1936-1970, primarily consists of certificates and diplomas awarded to Cosme during her 1952-1953 trip to Cuba, the first since she left in 1937. Included also are two handpainted, holograph certificates given to her by the Town Council of Santiago de Cuba and the Governor of Oriente Province.