



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

Guide to the

Muriel Rahn papers

1949-1956

Sc MG 848

Summary

Creator: Rahn, Muriel

Title: Muriel Rahn papers

Date: 1949-1956

Size: 0.71 linear feet (3 boxes)

Source: Gift of Dick Campbell, 2010.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: Best known for her performance in the title role of the original 1943-1944 Broadway production of *Carmen Jones*, Muriel Rahn (1911-1961) developed a reputation as a performer who was equally talented as a singer and an actress. The Muriel Rahn papers contain materials related to her performing career.

Preferred citation: [Item], Muriel Rahn papers, Sc MG 848, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

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Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Creator History

Best known for her performance in the title role of the original 1943-1944 Broadway production of *Carmen Jones*, Muriel Rahn (1911-1961) developed a reputation as a performer who was equally talented as a singer and an actress. This African American soprano was highly acclaimed for her concerts and performances in many Broadway and off-Broadway shows. In the 1940s, she launched her career in opera, appearing in several productions in New York and in Europe during the 1950s.

Rahn's last Broadway appearance was as Cora Lewis in *The Barrier* (1950), an American opera based on Langston Hughes's play, *The Mulatto*, which focused on race relations in the "New South." In 1932, she married Dick Campbell, who later became her manager and started Dick Campbell Concerts, Inc., a concert management company serving primarily Black artists.

Scope and Content Note

The Muriel Rahn papers contain a scrapbook (1949-1950) covering Rahn's leading role in the opera *The Barrier*; it consists of news clippings, reviews, letters, and telegrams (some from Langston Hughes), programs, and photographs of a touring production. There are also contracts and letters for the 1953 national touring production of *Carmen Jones*.

A concert singer, Rahn frequently performed recitals of African American, classical, and popular music. The collection contains many pieces of manuscript music, copyist sheets, and music sheets. These include poems authored by Langston Hughes, set to music or arranged by a number of composers, including Hall Johnson, F. Norman, and William Grant Still, many with handwritten dedications to Rahn from Hughes. There are also music scores and sheet music by other authors, some annotated.

Dick Campbell Concerts, Inc., a management company owned by Rahn's husband, is represented by a brochure and promotional flyers portraying images of the artists and press information about them; and sheet music performed by the One World Ensemble, a quartet of vocalists Campbell organized representing four racial and ethnic backgrounds designed to show democratic principles at work. There are also letters regarding the dissolution of the company in 1956.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American actresses
African American singers
African American theater
African American women entertainers
African American women singers
African Americans -- Music
African Americans in the performing arts
Authors, Black
Women singers -- United States

Names

Campbell, Dick, 1903-1994
Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967
Rahn, Muriel
Dick Campbell Concerts, Inc.

Container List

- b. 1 *The Barrier scrapbook* 1949-1950
- b. 2 f. 1 *Carmen Jones* 1953
 - Music
 - Hughes, Langston
 - b. 2 f. 2 A-H
 - b. 2 f. 3 L-Z
 - Other authors
 - b. 2 f. 4 "Ave Verum"
 - b. 2 f. 5 "Beat Out That Rhythm on a Drum"
 - b. 2 f. 6 "Carmen"
 - b. 2 f. 7 C-F
 - b. 2 f. 8 "De Coppah Moon"
 - b. 2 f. 9 "Great Day"
 - b. 2 f. 10 "Indian Love Call"
 - b. 2 f. 11 "Love for Sale"
 - b. 2 f. 12 I-T
 - b. 2 f. 13 Y
 - Dick Campbell Concerts, Inc
- b. 3 f. 1 Promotional flyers 1940s
- b. 3 f. 2-3 Sheet music of One World Ensemble performances 1940s
- b. 3 f. 4 Clippings and programs 1947-1951
- b. 3 f. 5 Forms for dissolution of company 1955-1956