Inventory of the
William Lawrence Papers, 1919 - 1988

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Charleston, SC 29401 USA

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Descriptive Summary

Title: William Lawrence Papers,

Dates: 1919 - 1988

Creator: Hunt, Albert Jr.

Abstract: William Lawrence (1895-1981) was born in Charleston, South Carolina to Merton and Sylvia Lawrence. He studied piano, organ, and voice at the Avery Institute (early 1900s), at the New England Conservatory of Music (1913-1916) and in Paris, France (1926-1931). He accompanied such well-known singers as Marian Anderson and Roland Hayes. He also taught piano and voice, composed music, and gave instrumental and vocal recitals in Europe and America. He died in 1981, and his remains rest at Trinity Church Crematory in New York.

The papers relate to the professional career and personal life of William Lawrence, his wife, Lillian Thompson Lawrence, and her family, the Thompsons. Items of particular note are a series of concert programs dated 1919-1978, which include programs for performances by Lawrence, Marian Anderson, Roland Hayes, Lawrence Brown, and other notable black musicians, including his student, the blind vocalist Sadie Knight; a variety of sheet music arranged and composed by Lawrence and several notable black musicians, including a handwritten Cantata by Jean Stor; and several autographed photographs of notable black musicians, including W. C. Handy and William Grant Still. Correspondents include Alain Locke, Countee Cullen, Marian Anderson, W. H. Brennan, Roland Hayes, and Todd Duncan. Miscellaneous items in the collection include radio and play scripts of productions, some directed by Lawrence.

Extent: .75 linear feet (2 archival boxes)

Repository: Avery Research Center at the College of Charleston

Call Number: AMN 1008

Language of Material: Material in English

Biographical Note

William Lawrence (1895-1981) was born in Charleston, South Carolina to Merton and Sylvia Lawrence. He studied piano, organ, and voice at the Avery Institute (early 1900s), at the New England Conservatory of Music (1913-1916) and in Paris, France (1926-1931). He worked briefly at South Carolina State Agricultural and Mechanical College (later South Carolina State University) in Orangeburg, and accompanied such well-known singers as Marian Anderson and Roland Hayes. He also taught piano and voice, composed music, and gave instrumental and vocal recitals in Europe and America. He died in 1981, and his remains rest at Trinity Church Crematory in New York.

Collection Overview
The papers relate to the professional career and personal life of William Lawrence, his wife, Lillian Thompson Lawrence, and her family, the Thompsons. Items of particular note are a series of concert programs dated 1919-1978, which include programs for performances by Lawrence, Marian Anderson, Roland Hayes, Lawrence Brown, and other notable black musicians, including his student, the blind vocalist Sadie Knight; a variety of sheet music arranged and composed by Lawrence and several notable black musicians, including a handwritten Cantata by Jean Stor; and several autographed photographs of notable black musicians, including W. C. Handy and William Grant Still. Correspondents include Alain Locke, Countee Cullen, Marian Anderson, W. H. Brennan, Roland Hayes, and Todd Duncan. Miscellaneous items in the collection include radio and play scripts of productions, some directed by Lawrence.

Collection Arrangement

1. Biographical Material
2. Music Materials
3. Correspondence
4. Scripts
5. Associates and Pupils
6. Miscellaneous Materials
7. Photographs

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

No restrictions.

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Subject Headings

African American composers.
African Americans -- Music.
African American musicians.
African American singers.
African American teachers.
African Americans with disabilities.

Blind women.

Brown, Lawrence, 1893-1972.

Cullen, Countee, 1903-1946.

Duncan, Todd.

Handy, W. C. (William Christopher), 1873-1958.

Hayes, Roland, 1887-1977.

Knight, Sadie.

Lawrence, Lillian Thompson.

Lawrence, William 1895-1981.

Locke, Alain LeRoy, 1886-1954.

Still, William Grant, 1895-1978.

Stor, Jean.

Thompson family.

**Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], William Lawrence Papers, Avery Research Center, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, USA.

**Acquisitions Information**

Donated by Albert Hunt, Jr., November, 1994

**Processing Information**

Processed by Felice Knight, 2006

Encoded by Melissa Bronheim, July 2010

Edited by Melissa Bronheim, July 2010

Funding from the **Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation** supported the processing of this collection.

Funding from the **Council on Library and Information Resources** supported the collection processing and encoding of this finding aid.
Detailed Description of the Collection

1. Biographical Material, 1923-1927 and undated

Box 1 Folder 1  
Typed biographical information compiled during Lawrence's career and posthumously

Includes printed funeral program; newspaper obituary; letter identifying Lawrence's mother as member of Harleston family of Charleston, South Carolina.

Box 1 Folder 2  
Clippings regarding Lawrence's career as vocalist and pianist.

Box 1 Folder 3  
Miscellaneous paper documents, 1923-1927

Includes invitation to Lawrence's wedding, passenger list of steamer featuring Lawrence and his wife's names, Lawrence's passport, and his certificate of membership in Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

Box 1 Folder 4  
Lillian Thompson Lawrence

Includes information regarding Lillian Thompson Lawrence's family; correspondence regarding Lillian's career as a florist and coordinator of the Citizens Care Committee of Harlem, New York, also includes letter of condolence regarding Lawrence's death.


Box 1 Folder 5  
Sheet music for songs (sacred and secular) arranged/composed by Lawrence, H. T. Burleigh, Lawrence Brown, and Jean Stor

Includes a handwritten cantata by Stor, a blues song by Lucille Goodloe with words by Langston Hughes, and two songs with music by Lawrence and words by Countee Cullen.

Box 1 Folder 6  
Complete copy of Saint Helena Island Spirituals, 1925

A book of sheet music for spirituals sung by different groups of singers at Penn School on St. Helena Island, recorded and transcribed by Nicholas George Julius Ballanta-Taylor.

Box 1 Folder 7  
Pianoforte syllabus for Music Education League; information regarding the League's auditions for singers, including audition application form for Sadie Knight, pupil of Lawrence; bulletin for 21st Biennial Auditions for the National Federation of Music Clubs; correspondence regarding various auditions, 1943-1955.

Box 1 Folder 8  
Various printed programs and flyers for vocal and instrumental performances, 1919-1926

Includes some by William Lawrence, Lawrence Brown, Marian Anderson, and Roland Hayes. Of note is joint recital by William Lawrence and Lawrence Brown at State Agricultural and Mechanical College (later South Carolina State University).

Box 1 Folder 9  
Programs and flyers for vocal and instrumental performances, 1933-1939

Includes Lawrence's first American tour as a vocalist (accompanying by Lawrence Brown) and several performances by The William Lawrence Sinfonietta.

Box 1 Folder 10  
Programs and flyers for vocal and instrumental performances, 1940-1949
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1 Folder 11</th>
<th>Programs and flyers for vocal and instrumental performances, 1950-1959</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes performances by Roland Hayes and recitals by Sadie Knight and other students of Lawrence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1 Folder 12</th>
<th>Programs and flyers for vocal and instrumental performances, 1960-1978</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes performances by Roland Hayes and Marian Anderson, notably a performance by Marian Anderson accompanied by Lawrence at New York City's memorial service for President John F. Kennedy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1 Folder 13</th>
<th>Programs and flyers for vocal and instrumental performances, undated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes a vocal performance by Lawrence at Boston's Repertory Theatre.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Correspondence, 1923-1978

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1 Folder 14</th>
<th>Correspondence, 1923-1978 and undated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between Lawrence, friends, associates, and relatives regarding the death of his mother, music, and travels. Includes letters from Marian Anderson, Countee Cullen, Todd Duncan, Alain Locke, Roland Hayes, and a letter from Lawrence Brown to W. H. Brennan. Also, a letter from Mary Marshall mentioning Paul Robeson.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1 Folder 15</th>
<th>Correspondence, 1923-1959</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between Lawrence, business partners and clients, including correspondence with W. H. Brennan of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and with Cook Laboratories regarding pressing of albums. Also among Cook correspondence, handwritten lyrics to street crier songs (possibly written by Lawrence) featuring street criers from New York, Charleston and Beaufort.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Scripts, 1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2 Folder 1</th>
<th>Several scripts for radio and stage plays, 1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes fragment of a WPA Federal Theatre Radio Division radio show program directed by Lawrence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. Associates and Pupils, 1972

| Box 2 Folder 2 | Eulogy to Lawrence Brown, handwritten by William Lawrence, and printed memorial concert program for Brown; clippings regarding Roland Hayes, Sadie Knight, and Marian Anderson. |

### 6. Miscellaneous Materials, undated

| Box 2 Folder 3 | Newspaper clippings and scholarly articles regarding musicians, operas, and urban development in Charleston, South Carolina. |

### 7. Photographs, undated

<p>| Box 2 Folder 4 | Photographs of Lawrence, his friends, pupils, and acquaintances |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2 Folder 5</th>
<th>Photographs of Lillian Thompson Lawrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Also includes her relatives, and members of the Citizens Care Committee of Harlem, New York, of which she was coordinator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Includes photographs of Sadie Knight and autographed photos of W.C. Handy and William Grant Still, with inscription to W.C. Handy on photo of William Grant Still.