Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons

Music Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2021

Contact information: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/perform.contact

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/2016570611

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/eadmus.mu021003

Prepared by the Music Division of the Library of Congress
Finding aid encoded by Rachel McNellis, 2021
Collection Summary

Title: Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons
Inclusive Dates: 1907-1980
Bulk Dates: 1919-1927
Call No.: ML31.S54
Creator: Edwards, Bertha W.
Extent: 27 items
Extent: 1 container
Extent: 1 linear foot
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/2016570611

Summary: Hiram Simmons (1874–1938) was a Black composer and musician in Portsmouth, Virginia, known primarily for his gospel music. He also worked as an educator, music publisher, and organist. The Simmons material collected by Portsmouth librarian Bertha W. Edwards includes published music, one photograph, and a biographical sketch.

Acquisition Information


Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Processing History

Music Division staff processed the Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons. Rachel McNellis coded the finding aid in 2021, assisted by Anthony Edwards.

Copyright Status

Materials from the Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

Access and Restrictions

The Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons is open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time. Certain restrictions on using or copying materials may apply.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container or reel or digital ID number], Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Born in Prince Anne County, Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Moved with his parents to Berkley, a town in Norfolk County, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Wrote &quot;Heavenly Father, Hear Our Prayer&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circa 1900</td>
<td>Began his music publishing company, Church Music Publishing House, out of his home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sold his music in person within the local community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Moved to 708 High Street, Portsmouth, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Employed by Ebenezer Baptist Church on Effingham Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Wrote &quot;The Story of Our Lord's Supper: An Oratorio in Vocal Score&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Two hymns published in the Baptist Standard Hymn Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925 June 17</td>
<td>Married Susie E. Judkins, a Portsmouth school teacher (died 1942 March 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938 March 12</td>
<td>Died at King's Daughter's Hospital in Portsmouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938 March 15</td>
<td>Funeral service at Emanuel A.M.E. Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buried at Mount Calvary Cemetery in Portsmouth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of materials created by and regarding Hiram Simmons, a Black organist, pianist, and composer who was active in Portsmouth, Virginia, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The items span the years 1907 to 1980, with the majority dating from 1920 to 1927. The collection is organized into two series. The Music series consists of published scores for Simmons’s gospel hymns, anthems, and one piano solo. The Papers series contains one photograph of Simmons and a biographical sketch that outlines his work as an educator, music publisher, and composer.

Organization of the Bertha W. Edwards Collection on Hiram Simmons

The collection is arranged in two series:
- Music, 1907-1937
- Papers 1919, 1980

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People
- Edwards, Bertha W.
- Simmons, Hiram, 1874-1938, composer.
- Simmons, Hiram, 1874-1938.

Subjects
- Choruses, Sacred (Mixed voices) with piano.
- Choruses, Sacred (Mixed voices), Unaccompanied.
- Composers--United States--Biography.
- Gospel music.
- Oratorios--Vocal scores.
- Piano music.

Form/Genre
Biographies.
Gospel music.
Oratorios.
Photographs.
Sacred music.
Scores.
Vocal scores.
Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1/3-27	**Music, 1907-1937**

This series consists of published music for twenty-five compositions by Simmons. These are primarily piano-vocal or chorus scores for his gospel music. Two works, *My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me* (1922) and *O Clap Your Hands, All Ye People* (1925), are choral anthems with organ accompaniment that have lyrics based on Biblical texts. This series also includes a spiral bound collection of his choral works, *Soul Appealing Anthems and Sacred Selections*, which was published in 1913. The only instrumental work in this collection is his piano solo *The Afro-American Musicians: March and Two-Step* (1907), which is the earliest dated composition in the collection.

Arranged alphabetically by title.

BOX 1/1-2	**Papers, 1919, 1980**

The Papers consist of a black and white photograph of Simmons and a biographical sketch written by Alexander Davis. This document outlines Simmons’s activities as a teacher, music publisher, organist, and composer during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Arranged by material type.
## Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 1/3-27</td>
<td><strong>Music, 1907-1937</strong>&lt;br&gt;This series consists of published music for twenty-five compositions by Simmons. These are primarily piano-vocal or chorus scores for his gospel music. Two works, <em>My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me</em> (1922) and <em>O Clap Your Hands, All Ye People</em> (1925), are choral anthems with organ accompaniment that have lyrics based on Biblical texts. This series also includes a spiral bound collection of his choral works, <em>Soul Appealing Anthems and Sacred Selections</em>, which was published in 1913. The only instrumental work in this collection is his piano solo <em>The Afro-American Musicians: March and Two-Step</em> (1907), which is the earliest dated composition in the collection. Arranged alphabetically by title.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | The Afro American Musicians: March and Two Step, 1907  
Score for solo piano |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/4 | Dear Old School Days, 1920  
Chorus score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/5 | Eternal Lord, Creator, King, 1927  
Piano-vocal score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/6 | Heavenly Father, Bless Us To-day, 1909  
Chorus score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/7 | Heavenly Father, Bless Us To-day, undated  
Chorus score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/8 | I Love to Hear That Voice, 1914  
Piano-vocal score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/9 | I'll Serve Thee Lord Jesus, 1936  
Piano-vocal score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/10 | Is There Joy and Peace?, undated  
Chorus score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/11 | The Lord Will Provide, 1935  
Chorus score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/12 | *My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?*, 1922  
Score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/13 | *O Clap Your Hands, All Ye People*, 1925  
Score for mixed voices |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/14 | Oh, I Want to Feel My Savior, 1934  
Piano-vocal score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/15 | Our March Song, 1920  
Chorus score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/16 | Our School Song, 1920  
Chorus score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/17 | Sing Aloud, La, La, 1920  
Chorus score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/18 | Song of the Lilies, 1920  
Chorus score |
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<tr>
<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/19</td>
<td>The Song that Leads to Heaven, 1920 Piano-vocal score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/20</td>
<td>The Story of Our Lord's Supper, 1919 Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/21</td>
<td>The Story of the Cross, 1937 Piano-vocal score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/22</td>
<td><em>Soul-Appealing Anthems and Sacred Selections</em>, 1913 Spiral-bound collection of choral music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/23</td>
<td>Sunshine, 1920 Chorus score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/24</td>
<td>Te Deum, undated Chorus score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/25</td>
<td>There Is a Hill, Far, Far Away, 1915 Piano-vocal score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/26</td>
<td>Thinking of Jesus, Always, 1935 Chorus score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX-FOLDER 1/27</td>
<td>While Thee Are Young Thee Should Enter his Fold, undated Chorus score</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| BOX 1/1-2 | **Papers, 1919, 1980**  
   The Papers consist of a black and white photograph of Simmons and a biographical sketch written by Alexander Davis. This document outlines Simmons’s activities as a teacher, music publisher, organist, and composer during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.  
   Arranged by material type. |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Biographical sketch, circa 1980  
   Typescript |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/2 | Photograph of Hiram Simmons, 1919  
   25 x 20 cm, signed "Mosby, 1919" |