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

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/2014572460

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/eadmus.mu022012

Prepared by the Music Division of the Library of Congress

Finding aid encoded by Jane Cross, 2022 April
Collection Summary
Title: Hall Johnson Papers
Inclusive Dates: 1913-1980
Bulk Dates: 1913-1944
Call No.: ML31.J643
Creator: Johnson, Hall, 1888-1970
Extent: approximately 100 items
Extent: 3 containers
Extent: 1.5 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/2014572460
Summary: Hall Johnson was a choral conductor, composer, and arranger of spirituals. Through his arrangements, writings, and performances of the Hall Johnson Choir, he raised the profile of the African American spiritual as a significant art form. The collection contains holograph and manuscript scores for several of his compositions and arrangements, works by other composers, concert programs, scripts, and legal and financial papers related to his estate. Titles in this collection contain demeaning language.

Acquisition Information
Purchased from a manuscript dealer in 1999.

Custodial History
Upon his death, a small portion of Hall Johnson's papers became the property of Bessie J. Pruitt, the administrator of his estate. She transferred ownership to her accountant. Upon the accountant's death, the materials passed to his widow, and then to an unnamed party who consigned them to a manuscript dealer.

Accruals
No further accruals are expected.

Processing History
Jane Cross processed the Hall Johnson Papers and coded the finding aid in April 2022.

Transfers
Sound recordings from the Hall Johnson Papers have been transferred to the Library of Congress Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. An inventory of this material is available in the Music Division's collection file.

Other Repositories
The National Museum of African American History and Culture holds the Hall Johnson Collection formerly curated by Dr. Eugene Thamon Simpson. The University of Georgia holds the Hall Johnson Photographs collection as well as his personal
books and recordings, and the New York Public Library holds a Hall Johnson Portrait Collection as well as a collection of theater stills from Run, Little Chillun.

The Hall Johnson Collection at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture contains correspondence, clippings, music, poetry, and notes. Emory University's Hall Johnson Collection includes clippings, photographs, programs, and scripts. The Hall Johnson Negro Choir Collection at the Museum of Performance and Design in San Francisco contains programs and publicity files.

### Related Material

Seven arrangements by Hall Johnson can be found in the Jessye Norman Papers, while the Leonard B. Smith Papers contain two arrangements. The Oscar Hammerstein II Collection contains correspondence with Johnson. Production records for Johnson's folk opera Run, Little Chillun can be found in the Federal Theatre Project Collection.

Johnson's Thirty Negro Spirituals is cataloged in M1670.J63 T5, and his Green Pastures Spirituals are cataloged in M1513.J6 G72. A score for piano for his work "Honor! Honor!" is cataloged in M1671.J and his work "Swing Dat Hammer!" can be found in M2093.J. Programs for The Green Pastures are cataloged in PN2093.A44 1877.

### Copyright Status

Materials from the Hall Johnson Papers 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 Hall Johnson Papers are 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.

### Online Content


### Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Hall Johnson Papers, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

### Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1888 March 12</td>
<td>Born Francis Hall Johnson in Athens, Georgia, to The Reverend William Decker Johnson (1842-1909) and Alice Virginia Sansom Johnson (1857-?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890s</td>
<td>Studied piano with his sister Mary Elizabeth and then James Davis</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Graduated from the Knox Institute in Athens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Graduated from Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina, with a bachelors degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Began graduate studies in theory and composition at the University of Pennsylvania and private violin study at the Hahn School of Music in Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1910  Won the Simon Haessler Prize for the best composition for chorus and orchestra
Graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a masters degree

1912  Married Polly Celeste Copening

1914  Moved to New York City
      Studied composition with Percy Goetschuis, head of the theory and composition department at the
      New York Institution of Musical Arts (later known as The Juilliard School)
      Performed with James Reese Europe's Orchestra for Vernon and Irene Castle's dance salon
      Established his own violin, theory, and composition studio

1918  Performed with Marion Cook's New York Syncopated Orchestra

1920-1927  Founding violist of the Negro String Quartet, later renamed the American String Quartet, which
          appeared on a program with Marian Anderson and performed with Roland Hayes at Carnegie
          Hall

1921-1925  Performed in the pit orchestra for *Shuffle Along* by Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake

1923  Performed in the pit orchestra for *Runnin' Wild*, the show that popularized the Charleston dance

1925  Established the Hall Johnson Negro Choir, later known as the Hall Johnson Choir

1926 March 16  First public performance of the Hall Johnson Choir, which took place at the International House in
               New York

1926, 1927  Received the Holstein Prize for Composition

1930  Arranged and composed music for, and directed the Hall Johnson Choir in, the play *The Green Pastures* by Marc Connelly, gaining national recognition
      RCA Victor released the first of many recordings of the choir

1931  Received the Harmon Award for his arrangements in *The Green Pastures*

1933 March 1  Premiere of his successful folk opera *Run, Little Chillun* at the New York City Lyric Theater

1934  Received an honorary doctorate in music from the Philadelphia Academy of Music

1935 December  Death of Polly Celeste Copening Johnson

1935-1937  *Run, Little Chillun* produced by the Federal Theater Project in Los Angeles

1936  *The Green Pastures* was made into a film
      Travelled to Hollywood with fifty singers to appear in the production

1936-1943  Arranged and directed background music for film shorts, cartoons, and more than thirty
          Hollywood films, including *Lost Horizon, Banjo on My Knee, Hearts Divided, Way Down South, Swanee*, and *Cabin in the Sky*

1937  The Hall Johnson Choir performed on the soundtrack of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*

1937-1939  Composed the operetta *Fi-yer!,* which was not produced during Johnson's lifetime

1938  *Run, Little Chillun* produced by the Works Progress Administration at the Golden Gate
      International Exposition in San Francisco

1941  Organized and conducted the Negro Festival Chorus of Los Angeles
      The Hall Johnson Choir performed on the soundtrack of the Disney film *Dumbo*

1946  The Hall Johnson Choir sang in the Disney film *Song of the South*
      Returned to New York City
      Founded the Interracial Festival Chorus of New York City

1946 March 26  Cantata *Son of Man* performed at Carnegie Hall

1947  Introduced the New Artists annual concert series

1951  Sponsored by the U.S. State Department to conduct the Hall Johnson Choir in Berlin at the
      International Festival of Fine Arts
      Extended the tour to Hamburg, Nuremberg, and Vienna to acclaim

1951-1970  Reestablished his theory and composition studio, coached vocalists, and continued composing and
          arranging for performers such as Jessye Norman, Marian Anderson, and Robert McFerrin

1955  Hired by Disney to organize a group of singers for the *Mickey Mouse Club* television series

1965  Published his essay "Notes on the Negro Spiritual"

1970 April 19  Music publisher Carl Fischer, Inc. sponsored a Musical Tribute to Hall Johnson
      New York City Mayor John Lindsay presented Johnson with the Handel Award
1970 April 30  Died in New York City
1975  Elected to the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame
2020  Inducted into the Athens Music Walk of Fame

Scope and Content Note

The Hall Johnson Papers span from about 1913 to 1980, with the bulk of the materials dating from 1913 to 1944. Holograph and manuscript scores for voice and piano composed or arranged by Johnson primarily comprise the Music series. There are also vocal scores, scores for piano, lead sheets, and sketches. Composers such as Henry Cowell, Stephen Foster, Lou Harrison, and Robert MacGimsey are included, and there are traditional songs present as well. Most works in this series are undated. The Miscellany series contains legal and financial documents regarding the estate of Hall Johnson as administered by Bessie J. Pruitt, a flier and programs for the Hall Johnson Choir, two scripts, and notes.

Notes in this collection contain demeaning language.

Bibliography


Organization of the Hall Johnson Papers

The collection is arranged in two series:

- Music, circa 1913-1960 and undated
- Miscellany, 1936-1980

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
Cowell, Henry, 1897-1965.
Foster, Stephen Collins, 1826-1864.
MacGimsey, Robert, 1898-1979.

Subjects
Choruses (Mixed chorus), Unaccompanied.
Musical sketches.
Piano music, Arranged.
Songs with piano.
Spirituals (Songs)

Titles
Hall Johnson collection, 1925-1970

Form/Genre
Arrangements (Music)
Art music.
Autographs (Manuscripts)
Concert programs.
Financial records.
Lead sheets.
Legal instruments.
Musical sketches.
Notes (Documents)
Scores.
Screenplays.
Songs.
Spirituals (Songs)
Vocal scores.
# Description of Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1-2</td>
<td><strong>Music, circa 1913-1960 and undated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This series primarily contains holograph and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>manuscript scores for voice and piano for</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>works composed or arranged by Hall Johnson.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are also vocal scores, scores for piano,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>lead sheets, and sketches. Works present</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>include traditional songs and several</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unidentified works, as well as songs by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Robert MacGimsey. Titles in this series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contain demeaning language. Arranged</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>alphabetically by composer and title therein.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 3</td>
<td><strong>Miscellany, 1936-1980</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>concert programs for the Hall Johnson Choir,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two scripts, notes, and legal and financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>documents regarding the estate of Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Johnson as administered by Bessie J. Pruitt.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arranged alphabetically by type of material.</td>
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# Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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</table>
| BOX 1-2   | Music, circa 1913-1960 and undated  
This series primarily contains holograph and manuscript scores for voice and piano for works composed or arranged by Hall Johnson. There are also vocal scores, scores for piano, lead sheets, and sketches. Works present include traditional songs and several unidentified works, as well as songs by Henry Cowell, Stephen Foster, Lou Harrison, and Robert MacGimsey. Titles in this series contain demeaning language. Arranged alphabetically by composer and title therein. |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/1 | Allen, Gilbert  
Jesus Keeps His Little Children, undated  
Manuscript score for voice and piano  
*Note:* Dedicated to Adrienne Moore |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/1 | Cowell, Henry  
The Coming of Light, 1938  
Ozalid of manuscript vocal score for SSAA chorus  
*Note:* Inscribed by the composer |
| BOX-FOLDER 2/2 | Foster, Stephen  
Into These Hollows, 1938  
Ozalid of manuscript score for three voices  
*Note:* Inscribed by the composer |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/2 | Hall, M.  
My Old Kentucky Home, undated  
Arranged by Hall Johnson  
Holograph score for piano  
*Note:* Sketch for "Dat Suits Me" on reverse |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/3 | Hall Johnson  
Ma Chile, undated  
Manuscript score for voice and piano  
*Note:* "To Maudina" |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/4 | Harrison, Lou  
Sanctus, undated  
Ozalid of manuscript score for voice and piano  
*Note:* Inscribed by the composer |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/5 | Johnson, Hall  
Carolina Cabin, undated  
Two holograph scores for voice and piano |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/7 | Cecelia, undated  
Sketch  
*Note:* Title difficult to read, could also be "Cecilia" or "Creslia" |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/8 | Crossing the Bar, 1914 January  
Poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson  
Holograph score for voice and piano |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/31 | Fiy-er: Vision Scene and July Sun Chorus (Picnic Scene), undated  
Sketches; lyrics |
Music, circa 1913-1960 and undated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>
| BOX-FOLDER 1/9 | In the Evening by the Moonlight, undated  
Two holograph scores for voice and piano without lyrics; holograph score for piano;  
holograph lead sheet; chorus parts |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/10 | Land O' Dreams, 1913?  
Three holograph scores for voice and piano; tenor obbligato part  
Includes: Sketch for "Bold Brigand" |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/11 | Little Voice (Children's Song), 1960  
Five photocopies of score for voice and piano |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/12 | A Soldier Speaks, 1944 September 21  
Holograph score for piano; holograph lead sheet |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/13 | Spirit Lullaby (Crooning Song), undated  
Holograph vocal score for SATB chorus; manuscript vocal parts |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/14 | Spirit Lullaby (Crooning Song), undated  
Manuscript vocal score for SATB chorus |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/7 | Way Up in Heaven, 1925 November 25  
Sketch  
Note: For Roland Hayes' concert at Carnegie Hall |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/15 | Unidentified, 1916  
Lyric by G. Harry Boldece  
Holograph score for voice and piano (incomplete) |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/16 | Unidentified sketches, undated |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/17 | I'm Goin' Down to the River, undated  
Manuscript score for voice and piano |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/18 | Old Nigger, undated  
Manuscript score for voice and piano |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/19 | Working Working, undated  
Manuscript score for voice and piano |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/6 | Carry Me Home, undated  
Text by Clement Wood; arranged by Hall Johnson  
Holograph vocal score for male chorus; manuscript parts |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/20 | City Called Heaven, undated  
Arranged by Hall Johnson  
Photocopy of manuscript vocal score for SATTBB chorus; holograph score for piano  
Includes: Sketch for "End of the Road"  
Laid in: Notes |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/25 | Day Dawns with Freight to Haul, undated  
Manuscript vocal score |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/21 | Hold On (Keep Yo' Hand on the Plow), undated  
Arranged by Hall Johnson  
Manuscript score for piano |
| BOX-FOLDER 1/22 | K. C. Jones, undated  
Alternate title: Casey Jones  
Arranged by Hall Johnson |
Oh Heaven Is One Beautiful Place, undated
   Arranged by Hall Johnson
   Manuscript lead sheet

Oh Lord, Have Mercy (?), undated
   Manuscript score for piano

Song of Love, undated
   Manuscript vocal score

Water Boy, undated
   Arranged by Hall Johnson
   Holograph score for voice and piano without lyrics; holograph orchestra parts; sketch for
   male voices and orchestra

Woke Up This Morning, undated
   Sketch

Chili's Lament, undated
   Manuscript lead sheet
   *Laid in:* Lyric sheet

Foggy Bottom, undated
   Manuscript score for piano

Froggy, undated
   Sketch; lyrics

Great Day, undated
   Sketch; lyrics

John Henry, undated
   Manuscript score for voice and piano

My Sweet Little Gal, undated
   Manuscript score for piano

Rocky Road, or Brody Brody, undated
   Sketch

Pansy-Eyes, undated
   Manuscript score for piano

Song of War, undated
   Manuscript lead sheet

Flier for the Hall Johnson Negro Choir, undated

   Petition and account of Bessie J. Pruitt, administrator of the Hall Johnson Estate; royalty
   statements; death certificate; museum proposal; grave certificate

Notes, undated

Programs, 1930, 1938, undated

Script, "Command Performance U.S.A.", 1942 October 27

Script, *Son of Man*, undated