Smith, Irene Britton

Papers, dated circa 1930 to 1990 and undated, predominantly manuscripts of her musical compositions and composition exercises, plus a scrapbook reflecting her musical and professional careers, and correspondence.

22 boxes

Donated by Eva S. Butler on behalf of Irene Britton Smith, August 1998.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Irene Britton Smith (1907–1999) was born and educated in Chicago, where she attended Wendell Phillips High School and the Chicago Normal School. Music and music composition were her avocation. Professionally, she taught reading in the Chicago Public schools for forty years. During her summer vacations she studied music in Chicago, receiving a BM from the American Conservatory in 1946, and a MM from DePaul University in 1956. She also studied composition at Juilliard, at Tanglewood, and with Nadia Boulanger at the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, France. Smith herself played violin, piano, and organ, and served as a church musician. After her retirement from teaching, she was active as a docent for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s youth concerts.

SCOPE NOTE:

Most of the collection consists of Smith’s compositions, dated late 1940s to 1950s, with most undated. She wrote music for orchestra, solo violin, and piano, as well as choral works, spiritual arrangements, and art songs. Some of her works appear to be intended for children and were perhaps written for her students. Her papers contain a folder of poems and texts she apparently considered for musical settings, as well as correspondence from Countee Cullen concerning her request to set his poem “Leaves.”

Her correspondents include Chicago composer Florence B. Price and Stella Roberts, her composition teacher at the American Conservatory of Music. Most of the correspondence she kept is in her scrapbook, along with programs from concerts in which her works were performed and other items about her activities as a teacher and musician.

In addition to her scrapbook she kept a file of clippings and programs on composer and conductor Margaret Harris (1943–2000), also a Chicago native. The file on Harris and other loose items laid into the back of the scrapbook, plus items received separately are filed in separate files.

An interesting component of the collection are the various composition exercises and reworkings of compositions by other composers that Smith retained after her studies. These, along with her class notes, which she also kept, would be useful for a study of her development as a composer, as would a typed draft of an undated letter to her teacher at the American Conservatory, Stella Roberts, in which Smith states her ideas about music.

The collection also contains her textbooks and books on theory and composition, which have been inventoried, and her collection of music by other composers, some of which date from the 1920s and 1930s. Music by black composers and association copies are listed in the full finding aid. Appended to the collection are nine boxes of published music which have been filed alphabetically by composer but are not inventoried.

Collection processed by Kristin McGee June 2000
Series:
I. Scores by Smith
   1. Poetry by Smith and others
II. Scrapbooks, ephemera, photographs
   1. Material on Margaret Harris
III. Composition exercises, notebooks
IV. Correspondence and papers
V. Scores by other composers
   1. Choral music by black composers
   2. Association copies of music by black composers
VI. Sound recordings
VII. Collection of books and music manuals
VIII. Published music by other composers (not inventoried)

Inventory:
Series I, Scores by Smith: Boxes #1–#3 (arranged alphabetically by title) plus Outsize Box #4:

Autumnal Reverie. Score: manuscript. Scored for piccolo, flute, oboe 1 & 2, clarinet 1 & 2, bassoon 1 & 2, horn 1 & 2, trumpet 1 & 2, trombone, bass trombone, harp, violin 1 & 2, viola, cello and bass.

“Born Anew.” Score: manuscript. Scored for mixed voices, solo baritone and organ.


“Dream Cycle: I. Over the Hill, II. By the Pool, III. Sunset and IV. Why Fades a Dream.” Irene Britton Smith, Poetry by Paul Lawrence Dunbar. Score: manuscript. Scored for voice and piano.

“Fairest Lord Jesus.” 1946. Published by G. Schirmer, Inc. Scored for soprano and alto voices and organ accompaniment.


“God is Our Refuge/Psalms 46.” Score: manuscript and photocopy. Scored for baritone voice, chorus and piano.

“Good Morning.” Piano/vocal score: manuscript and photocopies. For unison voices.


“Not A Word.” Score: manuscript. Scored for solo voice and four male voices.

“Panis Angelicus.” Score: manuscript. Scored for three female voices.

Passacaglia and Fugue in C# Minor. Piano score: manuscript.

Prelude. Solo piano piece. Photocopy of manuscript.


“Psalm 25.” Score: manuscript. Scored for three female voices.

“Psalm 121.” Score: manuscript, incomplete. Scored for voice and piano.

“Psalm 130.” Score: manuscript. Scored for SATB chorus and organ accompaniment.
Series I, Scores by Smith: Boxes #1–#3 (arranged alphabetically by title) plus Outsize Box #4, continued:

Reminiscence for Violin and Piano. Score: manuscript and transparency. Scored for violin and piano.

Sinfonietta. 1956. Score: manuscript, photoreproduction and photocopy. Scored for flute 1 & 2, oboe 1 & 2, clarinet 1 & 2, bassoon 1 & 2, horn 1-4, trumpet 1 & 2, trombone, bass trombone, timpani, drums, triangle, violin 1 & 2, viola, cello and bass. [Outsize, Box #4]

Sinfonietta. 1956. Parts: flute 1 & 2, oboe 1 & 2, clarinet 1 & 2, bassoon 1 & 2, horn 1-4, trumpet 1 & 2, trombone, bass trombone, timpani, drums, triangle, violin 1 (8 copies) & 2 (6 copies), viola (4 copies), cello (4 copies) and bass (3 copies). Manuscript and transparencies.

Sinfonietta. Sketches and practice sheets: manuscript.


Sonata for Violin and Piano. 1947. Score and parts: manuscript, complete.

Sonata for Violin and Piano. Score and parts: manuscript, complete.

Sonata for Violin and Piano. Score and parts: transparencies, complete.


Sonata for Violin and Piano. Scores and parts: manuscript and photocopies, incomplete.

2nd Movement: score and parts, manuscript. Notebook sketches of all three movements: manuscript.


“The Story of Crosspatch.” Score: manuscript. Scored for mixed voices.


Variations on A Theme by MacDowell, Op 49, no 1. Piano score: manuscript.

Untitled. Variations on a theme. Score: manuscript. Scored for piccolo, flute, oboe 1 & 2, clarinet 1 & 2, bassoon 1 & 2, horn 1-4, trumpet 1 & 2, trombone 1 & 2, tuba, celeste, violin 1 & 2, viola 1 & 2, cello and bass.

Series I, sub-series 1: Poetry (2 folders), Box #6


Brooks, Gwendolyn. “Martin Luther King.”


“Leaves” by Countee Cullen.

De Vere, Mary Ainge. “God Keep You.”
Series I, sub-series 1: Poetry (2 folders), Box #6, continued

Dickey, James. "On the Hill Below the White House."

Dunbar, Paul Lawrence. "Good-Night," "Why Fades a Dream."

Holland, Josiah Gilbert. "Lullaby."

Hughes, Langston. "Dream Variation," "I Dream A World."

Inman, Arthur Crew. "River Song."

Isaiah 44: 23

Isaiah 52.

Johnson, Douglas. "Your World."


Psalm 05 (?)

Psalm 1.

Psalm 100.

Psalm 104.

Smith, Irene Britton. God planned the beauty of the day..."Making Bubbles."

______, 1949. "Hills of beauty..." "My people sing..."

______. "In the mountains I found Beauty..." "How Lovely to know...."

______. "My Song is His." "My people laugh..."

_______. "Silent are the Trees of the Night." "Softly now the light of day...."

_______. "Solitude."

_______. "Sunrise." "Petition." "On the shore of the lake..."

_______." "Together." "A Song in the Night."

______. "When You're Away."

______. "The world is grey..."

Teasdale, Sara. "What Do I Care."

Whiting, Lilian. "The Mystery."

Unattributed poems:

"The Dreamer" "Dream Song." "Resignation." "The Sum."
Series I, sub-series 1: Poetry (2 folders), Box #6, unattributed poems continued

“Dreams.”

“The Foolish Heart.”

“Life's Tragedy.”

“Lullaby, Baby Jesus.”

“Sunset.” “Longing.” “By The Stream.” “Beyond the Years.”

“This day is ours to have and to hold....”

“To My Father in Heaven.”

“Tulips bloomed one by one...”

“Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes...”

“We Wear the Mask.” “Dreams.”

“Will you remember Me....”

“The world is grey...” “Stillness is a feeling...”

Series II: Scrapbook, photographs and ephemera
Irene Britton Smith's Scrap Book, Box #5:

Page 1: June 15, 1943. Opening page with date in gold letters: "June 15, 1943."

Page 2. Photograph of Cosmopolitan Rhythm Band in black and white. Newspaper clipping advertising concert: “The Rhythm Band of Cosmopolitan Community Church will be heard in their annual concert Sunday, June 19 at 6 P.M. in the community house, 5259 South Wabash Avenue.”

Page 3: June 30th, 1950. Program for the Cosmopolitan Children's Rhythm Band under the direction of Irene B. Smith.


Page 6: 1943. Program for the American Conservatory of Music fifty-seventh commencement exercise. Irene B. Smith receives a Bachelor of Music in Composition.

Page 7. Newspaper clipping: "Women Plan Conference on Education". Workshop leaders include Irene B. Smith, demonstrating the phonovisual method of teaching reading.

Page 8: June 1956. Program for the De Paul University fifty-eight annual convocation. Irene B. Smith receives her Master's of Music in Theory and Composition.


Series II: Scrapbook, photographs and ephemera
Irene Britton Smith's Scrap Book, Box #5, continued:

Page 12: November 27, 1977. Program given by soprano soloist Jo Ann Pickens, Jennifer J. Whittenburg and Marshall Titus. Program includes *Sunset* and *Why Fades a Dream* from the *Dream Cycle* by Irene B. Smith.


Page 15: October 21, 1977. Correspondence from Cyrus Colter, Chairman of the African American studies department at Northwestern University congratulating Smith on recent radio broadcast of composition.

Page 16: October 20, 1977. Program dated from the Cultural Center's Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts featuring Jo Ann Pickens and Janet Herbert. Includes *Sunset* and *Why Fades a Dream* by Irene B. Smith.

Page 17: January 8, 1947. Correspondence from Stella Roberts (former teacher) with warm wishes for profitable study.

Page 18: March 17, 1948. Correspondence from Vittorio Giannini declaring intent to submit letter of reference for Irene B. Smith.

Page 19: January 27, 1936. Correspondence from Florence B. Price thanking Smith for her letter and encouraging Smith to bring in some of her work.


Page 23: October 18, 1957. Correspondence from Dr. Leon Stein to the Fontainebleau Association. Letter of recommendation for Irene B. Smith to study at the Ecole D'Art.

Page 24: June 1960. Program for the Twenty-Third Annual Conference on Reading featuring workshop by Irene B. Smith of the Pershing Elementary School, Chicago.


Page 27: Journal clipping: "Willis Is Lecturer in Docent Program." Thomas Willis, concert manager of the School of Music at Northwestern University lectures to docents of the Women's Association of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.


Page 30: 1940. Correspondence from Stella Roberts to Mrs. Smith requesting score to *Fairest Lord Jesus*.
Series II: Scrapbook, photographs and ephemera
Irene Britton Smith's Scrap Book, Box #5, continued:

Page 31: Glossy clipping (from program or newsletter?). "The Women's Association of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra salutes its Docsents 1981-82 and 1982-83." Irene B. Smith's name listed.


Page 34: January 9, 1983. Invitation for "A Recital in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. featuring soprano Jo Ann Pickens, bass-baritone Jonathan Sprague and pianist Clifford Jackson." Recital features works by Irene B. Smith.

Page 35: "The Women's Association of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra salutes its Docsents 1987-88." Irene B. Smith's name listed.


Page 37: May 10, 1983. Correspondence from Mrs. Thornton B. Wierum to Irene B. Smith in regard to the duties of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's docent program.

Page 38: October 6, 1980. Clipping advertising the Chicago Symphony Orchestra concerts directed by Sir Georg Solti. Jo Ann Pickens in one of the featured soloists performing the Mater Gloriosa.


Page 41: March 26, 1989. Program for Second Presbyterian Church service with anthem Fairest Lord Jesus by Irene B. Smith.

Page 42: April 10, 1989. Correspondence from Ellen Harris, professor of music at MIT to Irene B. Smith praising score for the Dream Cycle.

Page 43: January 24, 1990. Correspondence from Susan B. Obel, manager of public relations at the Harlem School of the Arts, Inc. Letter thanks Mrs. Smith for donation to HAS.

Page 44: Black and white studio photo of the young Irene B. Smith. Undated. Removed and filed with other photographs.

Series II: Scrapbook, photographs and other ephemera
Photographs, Box #6:

Irene Britton Smith. Undated.

Irene Britton Smith as a young woman. Undated studio photograph.

Herbert E. Smith. Undated.

Margaret Harris (1949)

Series II: Other Programs and Clippings, Box #6:


January 9, 1981. Flyer: "Chamber Consortium Hosts Aaron Copland." Jo Ann Pickens is one of the featured soloists.
Series II: Scrapbook, photographs and other ephemera
Other Programs and Clippings, Box #6, continued:
April 14, 1981(?). Flyer sponsored by Warner Communications International Competition Winners Series promoting Jo Ann Picken's recital at Merkin Concert Hall, NY.
Biographical information on Jo Ann Pickens. Undated.
October 17, 1989. Program for the Tenth Anniversary of the Talman Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert featuring soprano soloist Jo Ann Pickens and pianist Elizabeth Buccheri.

Series II: Sub-series 1, Margaret Harris File, Box #6:
August 24, 1947. The Chicago Sun. "Prodigy at 3-Girl Pianist to Play her First Recital" Article about Margaret Harris.
February, 1948. Newspaper clipping (full page) of Margaret Harris. "Only 4 but She Plays Recitals."
February 27, 1954 (?). Program for Margaret Harris at Lincoln Auditorium.
1954 (?). Newspaper clipping, "Margaret Harris Set for 2 Performances."
July 25, 1971. Chicago Tribune. "Margaret Harris' Possible Dream-from Garfield to Grant Part."

Series III: Composition exercises and notebooks
Composition Exercises, Box #6:
from work with M. Boulanger:
Counterpoint exercises with M. Boulanger (1958).
Composition notes from M. Boulanger folder.
Harmony notes from M. Boulanger folder.

Canon Exercises.
Counterpoint folder.
Counterpoint I. American Conservatory of Music.
Composition exercises.
Living Conductor Bios.
Modulation Possibilities.
Orchestration Notebooks (2).
Relation of Piano Practice to Organ Technique.
Resource list for African American and Calypso Music.
Series III: Composition exercises and notebooks, continued

Composition Exercises, Box #7:
Arensky. *Elegai*. Orchestral Transcription
Composition I exercises.
Composition 1A. Sonata. Two Part Invention, Suite, Three Part Invention.
*Follow the Leader*. Canon exercises.
Franck, Cesar. Symphony in D Minor, condensed for piano.
Orchestration I Notebook.
Orchestration, Strings.
Reflections. Modal Melody exercises.
Theme and Variations exercises.

Composition Exercises, Box #8:
Composition Notebook.
Composition Notebook.
“Race Attitudes in Children” and other term papers.

Composition Exercises, Box #9:
Miscellaneous Notebooks. (2 folders)
Miscellaneous notes and fragments. (4 folders)

Series IV: Correspondence and personal papers, Box #6
July 19, 1945. Letter to Irene Britton Smith from Countee Cullen denying her request for permission to use his poem “Leaves.” With Smith’s annotated typescript copy of “Leaves.”

Letter from Florence Price Robinson requesting Smith to send published scores and manuscripts to Chicago Public Library and to Mr. White, director of the Detroit Community Symphony. Undated.

Letter to Miss [Stella] Roberts from Irene Smith. Undated typed draft. [ca. 1980?]

August 8, 1931. Marriage certificate of Irene Britton to Herbert Smith.


Obituary of Herbert E. Smith from *The Chicago Defender*. Undated photocopy.


Series V: Scores by other composers

Sub-series 1: Choral Works by Black Composers, Box #10:
Series V: Scores by other composers, continued
Sub-series 1: Choral Works by Black Composers, Box #10:

Dawson, William L. “Jesus Walked This Lonesome Road.” Chicago, IL: Gamble Hinged Music Co., 1927.

Series V: Scores and materials on other composers, continued
Sub-series 2: Compositions by Black Composers and Association Copies, Box #11:

Series V: Scores and materials on other composers, continued
Sub-series 2: Compositions by Black Composers and Association Copies, Box #11:


Price, Florence. *In A Quiet Mood* for Organ. Published by Galaxy Music Corporation, 1951.

Price, Florence. “Songs to the Dark Virgin” for Voice and Piano. Published by G. Schirmer, Inc., 1941


Webster, Carter. *Bare Foot Blues*, 1949. *Impressions*, No. 1, 1940.

White, Clarence Cameron. *Lament (I'm In A Troubled Mind)*. Published by Carl Fischer, 1918.

Series VI: Sound recordings, Box #12


Taped interview with Irene Britton Smith by Helen Walker-Hill, July 7, 1989. (3 cassettes)

“Sunset” and “Why Fades a Dream” performed by Jo ann Pickell. Cassette.

Sonata for violin and piano. 2 cassette tapes.


Series VII: Collection of Books and Music Manuals, Box #13:


Series VII: Collection of Books and Music Manuals, Box #13, continued:


Series VIII: Published Music by Other Composers, Boxes #14–22 (not inventoried):


Box 22. Choral works, pieces for voice and piano, condensed symphonic scores. Compositions arranged alphabetically by composer.