Brown, William, 1938-2004

Papers, circa 1947, and dated 1955-2003, including concert programs, promotional materials, correspondence, photographs and media concerning his career as an operatic tenor and recitalist.

10 boxes (circa 9 linear feet)
Received from Brenda Kelly, 2007 with additional donations by Ann Sears, December 2008.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

William A. Brown was born on May 29, 1938 in Jackson, Mississippi to Albert Brown and Ida Mae Perry. Brown began singing in his local church choir at an early age and in 1949, he started more formal musical training on the trumpet and piano. His success as a trumpeter at Jim Hill High School afforded him the opportunity to attend Jackson State College on a full scholarship in 1955. However, after performing there in his first opera, Cavalleria Rusticana, Brown changed his concentration to voice, graduating in 1959 with a BME. In the fall of that same year he taught voice and served as director of the choir at Utica Junior College in Utica, Mississippi. He then enrolled at Indiana University–Bloomington in 1960 to study voice. After earning his master of music degree in 1962, Brown enlisted in the United States Navy and served as a chief petty officer and chorister for the US Navy Band, “Sea Chanters.” While Brown was in the Navy he was married to Marion Tally.

After his discharge in 1966, he began his performing career. In 1968, Brown made his debut with the New York City Opera in Hugo Weisgall’s Nine Rivers from Jordan, and went on to become an internationally acclaimed concert, opera and recording artist known for his virtuosity and beautiful tone. He was a champion of twentieth-century music, and made an important contribution to the public appreciation of black music in 1970 when he gave recitals nationwide entitled “Black Composers Concert(s)”, which highlighted music written by black composers. He also appeared with major contemporary music ensembles, and enjoyed the honor of having compositions written especially for him. His recorded work appears on CBS Records, Nonesuch, New World, CRI among others. Brown continued to perform until late 2002 in concerts with the Boston, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Royal Philharmonic, Detroit and Capetown symphonies, as well as operatic roles with the New York City, Lake George Opera Festival, Opera Ebony, and Goldovsky opera companies, and many more. Major roles included Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni, Tamino in Die Zauberflöte, and Count Almaviva in Il Barbiere di Siviglia. Ebony Magazine listed William Brown as one of the “ten new voices of the eighties.”

In 1972 he took the position of Associate Professor of Music at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida. In 1993 he received their Distinguished Professor Award; he remained on the faculty until his untimely death in 2004. Brown also held an honorary doctorate from Bridgewater College in Massachusetts. His home state of Mississippi proclaimed a William Brown Day in his honor.

SCOPE NOTE:

The William Brown papers consist of concert programs, correspondence, newspaper and magazine articles, photographs, slides, cassettes, compact discs, and videotapes. The bulk of the collection consists of more than 200 photographs of William Brown and other colleagues taken during his career. Included within this part of the collection are photographs from his childhood, naval duties, and operatic performances. The extensive collection of concert programs chart his performing career from 1968–2003. Original order has been maintained much as possible. The collection is then arranged by type of material and is alphabetically and chronologically arranged within each folder.
For further reference, see also:

Preferred citation:

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**CONTAINER LIST:**

**Box 1, Series I:**
Concert Programs 1968–1985

**Box 2, Series I:**
Concert Programs 1986–1996

**Box 3, Series I:**
Concert Programs 1997–2003

**Box 4, Series II:** General Correspondence (list of correspondents):
Adams, Leslie
Andrews, Dwight
Anderson, T.J.
Baker, David
Banfield, William C. (Bill)
Bay, Peter
Bolcom, William
Brown, William A.
Buffkins, Archie L.
Cheatham, Wallace
Connell, Doug M.
Crumb, George
Davis, Don
Fischer, William S. (Bill)
Hailstork, Adolphus
Hayes, Roland
Jackson, Isaiah
Jaffe, Stephen
Jenkins, Leroy
Jones, Harold
La Montaine, John
Logan, Wendell
Misurell-Mitchell, Janice
Morris, Robert L.
Newton, James
Patterson, J.O.
Perkinson, Coleridge-Taylor
Plush, Vincent
Box 4, Series II: General Correspondence (list of correspondents), continued:
Raphael Michael
Ran, Stewart
Reagon, Bernice Johnson
Rudel, Julius
Shirley, George
Singleton, Alvin
Smith, Horace
Smith, Wadada Leo
Spearman, Rawn W.
Still, Judith Anne
Stock, David
Tamul, Jack
Walker, George
Unidentified Correspondence

Box 4, Series III:
Articles about William Brown (from newspapers and magazines):

Biographical Sketch

Photocopies (Jackson State College Yearbook 1955-1959)

Photocopies (newspaper articles about other musicians) – The New York Times and Chicago Tribune

Resume

Itineraries 1967–2001

Box 5, Series IV:

Cassette recordings:

CD recordings:
  “Other Voices.” Non-commercial recording. Undated.
Box 5, Series IV: (continued)

VHS recordings—all appear to be non-commercial, except for the first, published status unknown:

“Good Morning America.” September 11, 1990. A segment from the television show (?).


Box 6, Series IV:

Reel-to-reel tape recordings:

Box 7, Series V: Photographs (Folders 1-22):

Operas
Barber of Seville (Folder 1)
Don Giovanni and Faust (Folder 2)
La Boheme (Folder 3)
Porgy and Bess (Folder 4)
Turandot and Unidentified Operas A and B (Folder 5)

Portraits
A-D (Folder 6)
E-H (Folder 7)
J-Q (Folder 8)
S-AB (Folder 9)

Contact Sheets
Portraits A-E, G and J (Folder 9)
Barber of Seville (Folder 10)
Sergio Commissiona
Don Giovanni
Family
Leon Fleisher
Lowell Lecture
Spelman College Lecture

Negatives (Folder 11)
Barber of Seville
Family
Leon Fleischer
Portraits C, E, and G-H
The Shephards Playe (advertisement)
William Grant Still

Recitals
A-C (Folder 12)
D-E (Folder 13)
Box 7, Series V: Photographs (Folders 1-22): (continued)

Musicians
Anderson, T.J. (Folder 14)
Baker, David
Black Music Repertory Ensemble
Boatwright, Henry
Carter, Nathan
Comissiona, Sergio
Dobbs, Mattiwilda
Festival of Spirituals
Fleisher, Leon
Foster, William (Folder 15)
Freeman, Paul
Gospel Rhythms
Graffman, Gary
Hakim, Talib Rasul
Harrower, Peter
Jackson State College Choir (Folder 16)
Jordan, Barbara
Joubert, Joseph (Folder 16)
Kraus, Lili
Maazel, Loren
Spieth, Donald
Still, William Grant
Weathers, Felicia
Wilson, Olly
Unidentified Vocalist
Yessin, Gerso

Lectures
Spelman College (Folder 17)
Unidentified Lectures (Folder 18)

Miscellaneous
U.S. Navy (Folder 19)
College Kaleidoscope (Folder 20)
Paul Freeman Rehearsal
William Brown age 8 or 9
William Brown age 18
William Brown chorister
William Brown with student

Unidentified photographs (Folders 21-22)

Box 8, Series I: (Outsize)

Flyers

Box 8, Series III: (Outsize)

Articles (newspaper articles about William Brown):

Box 8, Series V: (Outsize) Photographs

Contact Sheets
F, H, and I
Wilson, Olly
Box 8, Series V: (Outsize) Photographs (continued)

Miscellaneous
William Brown in Russia

Musicians
Sears, Ann

Portraits H and I

Additional Materials donated by Ann Sears, December 2008:

Box 1A, Series IV:

16 CDs of recording session for a commercial CD of the songs of Will Marion Cook
(included in box count for series IV)

Box 2A, Series VI:

Papers, chiefly concerning the above recording, including:

Correspondence, 2002-2004, 2006 and undated
Production notes
Liner notes
Snapshots