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DODSON, Owen Vincent

MSRC Staff

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OWEN VINCENT DODSON PAPERS  
Collection 27-1 to 27-10

Prepared & Revised by:  
Greta S. Wilson  
June 1980

MANUSCRIPT DIVISION

## Scope Note

Owen Dodson presented this collection to Howard University between the years 1963-1968. It consists of scripts of certain of his plays, two novels, reviews and programs of his publications and productions, a small amount of personal correspondence, lectures and workshop materials, sheet music, poetry, periodicals containing Dodson's contributions, clippings, prints, photographs and two scrapbooks. Among the photographs, a large array of pictures of Lillian Evanti, (Lillian Evans Tibbs) coloratura soprano from Washington, D.C., are dominant. Many of these photographs were taken in elaborate costumes from some of her performances.

The collection contains approximately 1080 items and measures 5 linear feet including two individually wrapped scrapbooks. It spans the years 1930 to 1968.

## Biographical Data

- 1914 Born in Brooklyn, New York, the son of Sarah Elizabeth Goode and Nathaniel Barnett Dodson
- 1932 Graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School, Brooklyn
- 1936 B.A. degree from Bates College, Lewiston, Maine; elected to Phi Beta Kappa
- 1938, 1939 Received fellowships from General Education Board
- 1938-1942 Directed drama at Atlanta University and Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia
- 1939 Master of Fine Arts, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut
- 1940 Won Anderson Award for Verse Drama for his Garden of Time
- 1941 Won contest sponsored by the Committee on Interracial Cooperation, Atlanta, Georgia, for his Gargoyles in Florida
- 1942 Directed drama at Hampton Institute, Hampton, VA.
- 1942-43 Served in U.S. Navy (Seaman I/C) during which time he directed a morale building program and wrote several verse dramas
- 1944 Awarded Rosenwald Foundation Fellowship
- 1946 His Powerful Long Ladder, a book of poems was published
- 1947 Appointed Associate Professor of the Department of Drama, College of Fine Arts, Howard University
- 1949 Under the auspices of the Department of State toured Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Germany with his Howard University Players
- 1951 *His Boy at the Window*, a novel, was published
- 1953 Awarded Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship "for creative activity in the field of fiction."
- 1955 Won prize in international short story contest sponsored by Paris Revue for The Summer Fire
- 1960 Promoted to full Professor, Department of Drama, College of Fine Arts, Howard University

## Biographical Data

- 1963      Toured the United States with his Howard University Players
- 1964      Named member of National Committee of the Shakespeare Anniversary Committee  
            plan the American celebration of the Shakespeare Quadricentennial
- 1967      Received Doctor of Letters degree from Bates College

Mr. Dodson's plays have been performed by theatre groups throughout this country and in England. His poems, plays and fiction have been translated into French, Polish, Italian, Japanese and Norwegian.

## Series Description

- Series A**  
Box 27-1  
**Personal Papers**  
Awards, certificates, diplomas, clippings, legal documents, programs, announcements and invitations surrounding his academic and professional career
- Series B**  
Box 27-1  
**Correspondence**  
Letters, telegrams, greeting and post cards
- Series C**  
Box 27-2  
to Box 27-3  
**Manuscripts**  
Includes scripts, cast list, notes, property lists, sheet music, two novels "A Bent House" and "Boy and the Window", poems and plays written by Dodson
- Series D**  
Box 27-4  
**Programs and Reviews of Production**  
Newspaper reviews, posters, flyers, programs relating to theatrical productions mostly directed by Dodson; some performed by the Howard Players and others. Includes reviews by Dodson.
- Series E**  
Box 27-5  
**Teaching Materials**  
Notes and outlines from a production seminar and manuscripts from a play writing class.
- Series F**  
Box 27-5  
**Programs**  
Programs of Charter Day exercises, Howard University commencement exercises, church services, recitals, operas, and plays
- Series G**  
Box 27-5  
**Publications**  
Includes periodicals containing articles contributed by Dodson; and descriptions of two anthologies; American Negro Poetry and Soon, One Morning which contains contributions by Dodson
- Series**  
Box 27-6  
**Howard Players**  
Background of the Howard Players, Howard University and the Drama Department plus review of plays performed by the Players

## Series Description continued

**Series I      Howard University**

Box 27-6      Annual report of the Summer School, 1951

**Series J      Theatre Workshops**

Box 27-6      Clippings, programs, reviews, proceedings invitations to productions of the following workshops: New York State Theatre Festival, Alabama, A & M College Writers Conference, Atlanta University Summer School of the Theatre, Hampton Institute Summer Theatre Arts Festival

**Series K      Prints and Photographs**

Box 27-7      Includes several photographs of Dodson. There are a large number of photos of Miss  
to Box 27-8      Lillian Evanti (Lillian Evans Tibbs), soprano from Washington, D.C., many of which are of her in ornate costumes from some of her performances. There are also numerous prints of scenes from famous plays and operas.

**Series L      Scrapbooks**

Item 27-9      The first Scrapbook contains clippings of the cartoon series "Dark Laughter" and  
to Item 27-10      "Lighter Side" by Ol Harrington: the second one contains clippings surrounding his professional career as director and author.

## Container List

- Series A      Personal Papers  
                         Academic
- Box            Folder  
27-1          1 Bates College  
                 2 High School Diploma and Completion of study, 1929, 1932  
                 3 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation
- Awards  
4 Awards
- Clippings  
5 Biographical materials - clipping  
6 Clippings - miscellaneous  
7 Jefferson City Post Tribune
- Documents  
8 Agreement: Farrar, Straus and  
                 Co. and Owen Dodson  
9 Appointment as Apprentice  
                 Petty Officer, U.S. Navy  
10 Certification of Registration of  
                 a Claim to Copyright in a Drama-  
                 tic or a Dramatic Musical  
                 Composition
- Organizational Affiliations  
11 Harold Jackson Memorial  
                 Committee - clippings and  
                 snapshots  
12 Phi Beta Kappa, Gamma Chapter  
13 Shakespeare Anniversary  
                 Committee - clippings  
14 Shakespeare Anniversary  
                 Committee - correspondence
- 15 Thomas Jefferson High School  
                 Alumni Association -  
                 Alumni Reunion Programs
- Printed Materials  
16 Announcements



- 17 Contest Programs
- 18 Invitations
- 19 Ship passenger lists
- 20 Published materials

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## B Correspondence

### Letters

- Box 27-1 Folder 21 Correspondence - A-B  
22 Correspondence - C-F  
23 Correspondence - G-H  
24 Correspondence - J-N  
25 Correspondence - P-S  
26 Correspondence - V-N  
27 Correspondence - no name  
and/or date  
28 Other Correspondents

### Cards

- 29 Greeting cards  
30 Post cards

### Telegrams

- 31 Telegrams

## C Manuscripts

Box 27-2

### Music

- 32 "Naturama" by Evanti, Lillian  
33 "Til Victory is Won" - Cast  
List, property list, etc.  
34 "Til Victory is Won" -  
miscellaneous, notes,  
memos, etc.  
35 "Til Victory is Won" - script

### Music Scores

- 36 "Everybody Join Hands"  
37 "He's Hitched Our Wagon to a  
Star"  
38 "My Lord's Treasury"  
39 "Sleep, Darling Sleep"  
40 "We Will follow all the Way"  
41 "When we were Lost"  
42 Untitled scores

### Novels

- 43 A Bent House

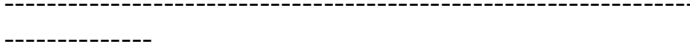
44 Boy at the Window

Poems

45 "Asking"

46 "Autumn"

47 "Black Mother Praying"



C Manuscripts (cont'd)

	Poems
Box 27-2	Folder 48 Black mother -Praying in the summer, 1943
	49 "Centaur's are half Animal, half men"
	50 "The Confession Stone"
	51 "The Decision"
	52 "Finally, Lady, You Were Gone From Us"
	53 "Guita"
	54 "Ira Aldridge, 1807-1867" draft
	55 "Jonathan's Song"
	56 "Metaphor for a Negro Woman"
	57 "Poems for Kenneth"
	58 "The Precedent"
	59 "Righteousness"
	60 "Sickle Pears"
	61 "Someday We're Gonna Tear The Pillars Down"
	62 "Summing Up by the Defendant"
	63 "Tell Rachael, He Whispered"
	64 "This is a Prayer"
	65 "Those Seven Sisters"
	66 "Trilogy Earle Hyman"
	67 "The Widows Walk"
	68 "For J.M."
	69 "Doomsday Chorus"
	70 "I Will Tremble Once and Be Forgotten Forever"
	71 "Winter Death"
	72 "All for fun of the World Well Gained"
	73 "Venus and Mars"
	74 "Troy is a lost City"
	75 "The Dawn Risers"
	76 "Slave Who Died Coming Here"
	77 "On Her Birthday"
	78 "Epithalamion"
	79 "France 1942"
	80 "Dante, 1942"
	81 "The Failure"
	82 "Seventy-five Years Is A Long Stretch of Land"

83 "Generation of Vipers"

84 "Returning Veteran"

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C Manuscripts (cont'd)

- Box 27-3
- Poems
- Folder 85 "Cradle Song"
- 86 "To the Intolerant"
- 87 Christmas Poems
- 88 Untitled Poems
- Short Stories
- 89 "Come Home Early, Chile"
- 90 "The Sea Shell"
- Miscellaneous
- 91 "Bury Me Over My Father"
- 92 Notes for a Ballard
- Plays
- 93 "Amistad"
- 94 "Bayou Legend" - Script
- 95 "Bayou Legend - Script -  
Copyrighted, 1946
- 96 "Bayou Legend - Script -  
presented by the Theatre  
Workshops of Hunter College  
May 13-21, 1950
- 97 "Where You From?" A  
manuscript of the play

D Programs and Reviews of  
Production

- Box 27-4
- 98 "Antigone"
- 99 "Aria da Cappo"
- 100 "The Bad Seed"

- 101 "The Amen Corner", James  
Baldwin
- 102 "Bayou Legend"
- 103 "Beyond the Blues"
- 104 "Boy at the Window"
- 105 "The Cave Dwellers"
- 106 "The Cherry Orchard"
  
- 107 "A Christmas Miracle" -  
clippings
- 108 "A Christmas Miracle -  
programs
- 109 "The Confession Stone"
- 110 "Constellation of Women"
- 111 "Death of a Salesman"
- 112 "Defiant Island"
- 113 "Divine Comedy"
- 114 "A Dream Come True in White  
and Blue"

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D Programs and Reviews of  
Production

Box 27-4	Folder	115 "Eaters of Dust"
		116 "Emperor Jones"
		117 "Freedom the Banner"
		118 "Garden of Time"
		119 "Guest in the House"
		120 "Hamlet"
		121 "Look Back in Anger"
		122 "Macbeth"
		123 "Mambas Daughter"
		124 "Media"
		125 "A Moon for the Misbegotten"
		126 "Morning, Noon, and Night"
		127 "My Hearts in the Highlands"
		128 "New World a Coming"
		129 "Noah"
		130 "Nude With Violin"
		131 "Oedipus Rex"
		132 "Pelleas and Melisande"
		133 "Powerful Long Ladder"
		134 "Purlie Victorious"
		135 "Pygmalion"
		136 "Rashomon"
		137 "The Reluctant Debutante"
		138 "The Return"
		139 "Simply Heavenly"
		140 "The Summer Fire"
		141 "Suppressed Desires"
		142 "Tea and Sympathy"
		143 "Thunder Rock"
		144 "Til Victory is Won" - News Release
		145 "Twilight Crane" and "Home"
		146 Reviews by Owen Dodson



E Teaching Materials

Box 27-5

- 147 Production Seminar
- 148 Playwriting Class Manuscripts

F Programs

- 149 Programs - miscellaneous

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G Publications Periodicals  
Containing Dodson's  
Contributions

- Box 27-5 Folder 150 The Arts Quarterly, June,  
1939  
151 Bravo/Carnegie Hall, 1968  
152 Cavalcade, November, 1941  
153 The Christian Century,  
Jan. 7, 1942  
154 Common Ground  
155 The Garnet, 1934-1936  
156 New Currents, Aug., 1974  
157 Opportunity, Journal of Negro  
Life, 1935-37  
158 Right Angle, 1948  
159 Tomorrow, 1945  
160 Trend, March 1942  
161 Voices, Winter, 1950  
162 The Yale Literary Magazine,  
1937-1938

Anthologies

- 163 Anthologies- Contributions

Miscellaneous

- 164 Miscellaneous publications

H Howard Players

- Box 27-6 165 The Howard Players and the  
Drama Department  
166 Howard University Players  
Reviews

I Howard University

- 167 Howard University Annual  
Report of the Summer  
School, 1951

J Theatre Workshops

- 168 Alabama A & M College  
Writer's Conference  
169 Atlanta University Summer  
School of the Theatre  
170 Hampton Institute Summer  
Theatre Arts Festival  
171 New York State Theatre  
Festival
- 
-

K Prints and Photographs

Box 27-7      Owen Dodson  
Folder 172-176

Owen Dodson and Others  
172-179

Lillian Evanti  
180-211

Box 27-8      Lillian Evanti and Others  
212-226

Photographs Individual -  
Identified  
227-241

Photographs Individual - Unidentified  
242-243

Photographs - Group-- Identified  
244-246

Photographs of Things  
247-252

Prints  
253-268

L Scrapbooks

Item 27-9      Scrapbook No. 1

Item 27-10

Scrapbook No. 2 (FRAGILE)

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