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DESCRIPTION OF COLLECTION

Shelf location: A3A 2,3
Physical extent: 2 linear feet

Biographical Sketch

R. (Robert) Nathaniel Dett was born in Drummondsville (now Niagara Falls), Ontario, Canada, on October 11, 1882. He studied piano as a child, and began more serious musical studies at the Oliver Willis Halstead Conservatory in Lockport, New York. He graduated from the Oberlin Conservatory in 1908, the first African American to receive a BMus. degree there. He pursued additional studies at Columbia, Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, the American Conservatory, and with Nadia Boulanger in France (1929). He graduated with a MMus degree from the Eastman School of Music in 1932. Throughout his career he was active as teacher, composer, and pianist. He published his first work in 1900; as a composer he often found his inspiration in African-American folk music. From 1913 until 1931 he served as the Director of Music at the Hampton Institute, where he developed the choir which received critical acclaim in the USA and Europe. In 1919 he helped found the National Association of Negro Musicians. He last served as Music Director for the United Service Organizations in Battle Creek, Michigan, where he died on October 2, 1943.

Provenance

Unknown.
**Scope and content**

The collection holds printed music composed or arranged by Nathaniel Dett, manuscript scores by Dett, and printed scores and manuscripts of works by other composers. The collection also contains ephemera including publicity flyers, printed programs, imprints from Dett’s personal library, and a published history of Niagara Falls.

**Restrictions**

There are no restrictions on research use of this collection. Copyright restrictions apply in the event of requests for reproductions.

**Associations**

The R. Nathaniel Dett Collection constitutes one of a growing number of collections of working papers of Eastman School alumni. Significantly, this collection holds more original works of Dett than are represented in the Sibley Music Library’s general collection. Elsewhere in the Eastman School’s collections, the Ensemble Library of the Eastman School holds the manuscript performing materials of the Afro-American Symphony. The Sibley Music Library also holds the manuscript score of Dett’s *Ordering of Moses*, which he completed as his graduate thesis composition at ESM in 1932.
DESCRIPTION OF SERIES

Series 1: Original works

Sub-series 1: Published works

Imprints of original works by R. Nathaniel Dett.

Sub-series 2: Manuscripts

Manuscripts of original works by R. Nathaniel Dett.

Series 2: Other composers’ music

Imprints of original works by composers other than Dett.

Series 3: Music - Unidentified

Works for which either composer or title are unknown.

Series 4: Ephemera

Miscellaneous additional items, including books, programs, and memorabilia.
R. Nathaniel Dett. Magnolia Suite Part II, Mammy. For strings, piano, and winds. Instrumental parts (holograph, ink).
From R. Nathaniel Dett Collection, Box 4, Folder 7.
INVENTORY

Series 1: Original works

Sub-series A: Published works

Box 1


folder 3  There’s A Meeting Here To-night: Negro Spiritual for three-part chorus of women’s voices with accompaniment. Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1921.

folder 4  I’m So Glad Trouble Don’t Last Alway: Negro spiritual for three part chorus of women’s voices with accompaniment. Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1919.

folder 5  O Hear the Lambs a-Crying: for soprano solo and six-part chorus of mixed voices. Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1926.

folder 6  Son of Mary: for four-part mixed voices: based on a traditional Negro melody. Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1924.

folder 7  I’ll Never Turn Back No More: for SATB. New York: J. Fischer & Bro., 1917. Accompanied by a second copy (1938 ed.).

folder 8  The Chariot Jubilee: for tenor solo and chorus of mixed voices. Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1919. Organ (piano) or orchestra accompaniment. 2 copies.


folder 13  Heavenly Union: a spiritual for baritone or tenor solo and mixed voices. New York: Mills Music, 1941.
folder 14  Sit Down, Servant, Sit Down: for 4-part chorus of mixed voices with tenor solo and piano accompaniment. New York: G. Schirmer, 1932. Two copies.


folder 16  Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?. Transcribed by R. Nathaniel Dett.

folder 17  Rise Up, Shepherd, an’ Foller. Transcribed by R. Nathaniel Dett.

Box 3


folder 6  Enchantment [Incantation]: from “A Romantic Suite for the Piano on an Original Program.” Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1922. Two copies.


folder 13  Juba (Dance): from the Suite “In the Bottoms”. Chicago. Clayton F. Summy Co., 1913/1926. Versions for solo piano (four copies); four hands (one copy); and two pianos (three copies).


folder 34  In The Bottoms [Barcarolle]: characteristic suite for the piano. Chicago: Clayton F. Summy Co., 1913.


Sub-series B: Manuscripts

Box 4

folder 1  The Ordering of Moses: Oratorio. — 1937

folder 2  Confessional: for violin and piano. Score only.

folder 3  Oh Whisp’ring Tree: for voice and piano.

folder 4  From the Sea [and other sketches]: for voice and piano.

folder 5  America the Beautiful. Chordal arrangement.

folder 6  Sit Down, Servant, Sit Down: for voice and piano.

folder 7  Magnolia Suite Part II, Mammy: for strings, piano, and winds. Score and parts.
Series 2: Other composers’ music

Box 1


folder 23  Come Back Sweetheart. 1927. Thomas, Dr. Joe T. Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Joe T. Thomas. Waltz Song. For piano and instruments.


Box 4


folder 45  Come Back Sweetheart. 1927. Thomas, Dr. Joe T. Cleveland. Dr. Joe T. Thomas. For voice and piano.

Series 3: Music - Unidentified

Box 4

folder 8    I’m Troubled in Mind. Slave song.

folder 9    Oh! Stand the storm; Lord, Have mercy. Two manuscripts.

folder 10   I’m So Glad Trouble Don’t Last Always. Solo melody only.

folder 11   Ole-Time Religion. For mixed voices.

folder 12   The Crimson and Gold. For voice and piano.

folder 13   The New Irish Ballad.

folder 14   [Unidentified manuscript]. Manuscript is incomplete.

folder 15   [Sketches]. Folder of various sketches.

Series 4: Ephemera

Box 2

folder 1    The Song of Seven. Nathaniel Dett’s typescript for The Song of Seven.


folder 3    Publicity brochures on Nathaniel Dett, “Announcing R. Nathaniel Dett, Composer-Pianist”.

folder 4    Various programs.

folder 5    Memorabilia.

folder 6    Memorabilia.

folder 7    The Crisis, February 1920.

folder 8    The Southern Workman, June 1917.

folder 10  The Locke Primary Plan. The Music School.