Guide to the Mildred Davenport Dance Programs and Dance School Materials

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Note
Arts and Humanities--Dance--Dance Performance
Arts and Humanities--Dance--Dance History and Criticism
Area, Interdisciplinary, and Ethnic Studies--African American Studies
Guide to the Mildred Davenport Dance Programs and Dance School Materials

Collection number: MS-P029

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Mildred Davenport dance programs and dance school materials,
Date (inclusive): 1914-1942
Collection number: MS-P029
Creator: Davenport, Mildred, 1900-1990
Extent: 0.3 linear feet (1 box and 1 oversize folder)
Repository: University of California, Irvine. Library. Special Collections and Archives.
Irvine, California 92623-9557

Abstract: This collection comprises dance programs, dance school materials, photographs, and ephemera documenting the early career of the Boston-based African-American dancer, dance instructor, and civic official Mildred Davenport. The bulk of this collection consists of dance programs and dance school materials. The collection also contains 29 photographs of Davenport, her students in various performances, and friends or individual students. Dance programs from 1925 to 1942 feature her solo performances and group performances with her students. The collection includes a complete run of programs for Bronze Rhapsody, an annual performance series choreographed, staged, and directed by Davenport. Her personal copy of a typescript of stage directions for a 1934 performance is included with these programs. Her dance schools, Davenport School of the Dance and Silver Box Studio, are documented in course brochures and applications. Biographical and academic materials include a 1939 newspaper article on Davenport.

Language: English.

Access
Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation

For the benefit of current and future researchers, please cite any additional information about sources consulted in this collection, including permanent URLs, item or folder descriptions, and box/folder locations.

Acquisition Information

Processing History

Biography
Mildred Ellen Davenport was a noted civic official and military officer with an extensive career as a dancer and dance instructor in Boston in the 1930s and 1940s. She was born in Boston on November 12, 1900. She began her dance studies at C.C. Perkins Grade School and Prince School as a teenager, and graduated from Boston Girls' High School in 1918. In the 1920s she studied at the Sargent School for Physical Culture and at Harvard, and opened her first dance school, the Davenport School of Dance. Over the next ten years she studied under Ted Shawn and taught dance in Boston. She was also progressively more involved in road show performances such as Hot Chocolates. From 1930 to 1935 she performed in a number of African-American musical productions on Broadway, including Fast and Furious, Flying Colors, and Black Birds.

In 1932 she established her second dance school, the Silver Box Studio, in the South End of Boston. She became the first African American woman to perform with the Arthur Fiedler Pops unit of the Boston Symphony Orchestra at this time.

During World War II, Davenport enlisted in the Army as a captain. She produced musical shows for military bases and later served as a special service officer, library officer, and advisor in the Office of Racial Affairs. In 1950, she served as an executive board member for the N.A.A.C.P. office in Boston. From 1947 to 1968 she worked for the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, founded in 1944 to enforce fair employment practices. Davenport died in Boston in 1990.

1900 Born in Boston.
Ca. 1914 Student at C.C. Perkins Grade School and Prince School.
1918 Graduates from Boston Girls' High School.
Ca. 1920s Establishes Davenport School of Dance in Boston.
1921 Student at Sargent School for Physical Culture.
1921-1922 Physical training instructor at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama.
1923 Student at Harvard Summer School.
1925-ca. Staff member with the Department of Public Welfare, Boston.
1930 Performs on Broadway.
Ca. 1930-1935 Establishes Silver Box Studio in Boston.
1946-1947 U.S. Army, civilian defense instructor.
1947 U.S. Army Office of Racial Affairs, assistant special service officer, library officer, and advisor.
1950 Executive board member of N.A.A.C.P., Boston. Member of Women's Service Club and League of Women for Community Service, Boston.
1947-1968 Staff member with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.
1973 Receives Sojourner Truth Award of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Boston and Vicinity Club.
1990 Dies in Boston.

Collection Scope and Content Summary
This collection comprises dance programs, dance school materials, photographs, and ephemera documenting the early career of the Boston-based African-American dancer, dance instructor, and civic official Mildred Davenport. The bulk of this collection consists of dance programs and dance school materials. The collection also contains 29 photographs of Davenport, her students in various performances, and friends or individual students. Dance programs from 1925 to 1942 feature her solo performances and group performances with her students. The collection includes a complete run of programs for Bronze Rhapsody, an annual performance series choreographed, staged, and directed by Davenport. Her personal copy of a typescript of stage directions for a 1934 performance is included with these programs. Her dance schools, Davenport School of the Dance and Silver Box Studio, are documented in course brochures and applications. Biographical and academic materials include a 1939 newspaper article on Davenport.
The collection is arranged topically. Materials are arranged chronologically within each topical grouping whenever possible.

**Indexing Terms**
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Subjects**
Davenport, Mildred, 1900-1990--Archives.
Dance schools--Massachusetts--Boston--Archival resources.
Dance--Archival resources.
Modern dance--United States--Archival resources.
Dance, Black--Archival resources.
African American dancers--Archival resources.

**Genres and Forms of Materials**
Dance programs.
Photographic prints.
Posters.

**Occupations**
Dancers.
Dance teachers.

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| Box 1 : 1 | Biographical and academic materials |
| Box FB-21 : 1 | Boston Girls' High School, commencement program, 1918 |
| Box 1 : 1 | George Peabody College for Teachers, School of the Dance, schedule of courses offered by Ted Shawn, 1938 |
| Box 1 : 1 | "Boston teacher called evangelist of the dance," newspaper clipping, 1939 |
| Box 1 : 2-4 | Dance programs |
| Box 1 : 4 | The Feast of Apollo, Brattle Hall, Massachusetts, 1925 |
| Box 1 : 4 | Mildred Davenport and her pupils, Brattle Hall, Massachusetts, 1928 |
| Box 1 : 4 | Recital of dance poems and songs, Allied Art Studio, Boston, 1928 |
| Box 1 : 4 | Mildred Davenport and Sepia Beauties in revue, Challengers Club, Boston, 1933 |
| Box 1 : 2-3 | Bronze rhapsody |
| Box 1 : 2 | 1934 |
| Box 1 : 2 | Typescript of stage directions, with holograph note "Miss Davenport (personal)" on first leaf, 1934 |
| Box 1 : 3 | 1935-1941 |
| Box 1 : 3 | 1942 |
| Box FB-21 : 1 | Hand-colored poster (partial), 1942 |
| Box 1 : 4 | Classic, John Hancock Hall, Boston, 1938 |
| Box 1 : 4 | Shadowland Ball Room performances, Boston, undated. |

**Physical Description:** 2 items.

| Box 1 : 5 | Dance school materials |
| Box 1 : 5 | Davenport School of the Dance application, undated |
| Box 1 : 5 | Silver Box Studio |
| Box 1 : 5 | Course brochures and applications, undated. |

**Physical Description:** 3 items.

| Box 1 : 5 | Event invitation and greeting card, 1939 and undated. |

**Physical Description:** 2 items.

| Box 1 : 6-11 | Photographs |
| Box 1 : 6-7 | Personal |
| Box FB-21 : 1 | Prince School class, 1914 |
| Box 1 : 6 | **Teenage performances, undated.**  
Physical Description: 5 items. |
| Box 1 : 7 | **Portraits, undated.**  
Physical Description: 3 items. |
| Box 1 : 8-10 | **Performances by students**  
Box 1 : 8 | **Piggilly wiggily, ca. 1942**  
**Top hat, ca. 1942**  
Box 1 : 8-10 | **Unidentified, undated.**  
Physical Description: 15 items. |
| Box 1 : 11 | **Other individuals**  
**Hall, Tom, 1930**  
**Purcell, Barbara, ca. 1942**  
**Stokes, Bernice, ca. 1942**  
**Roberts, Francine, ca. 1942** |