Guide to the Mildred Davenport Dance Programs and Dance School Materials
MS.P.029

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**Contributing Institution:** Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries

**Title:** Mildred Davenport dance programs and dance school materials

**Creator:** Davenport, Mildred

**Identifier/Call Number:** MS.P.029

**Physical Description:** 0.3 Linear Feet (1 box and 1 oversize folder)

**Date (inclusive):** 1914-1942

**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 of Material:** English

**Access**

Collection is open for research.

**Publication Rights**

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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**


**Historical Background**

No Subnote Content

**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.
1932        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.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Modern dance -- United States -- History -- Sources
Dance, Black -- History -- Sources
African American dancers.
Dance schools -- Massachusetts -- Boston
Dance teachers.
Photographic prints
Dance -- Archives
Dance cards
Dancers.
Posters
Davenport, Mildred -- Archives

Biographical and academic materials

Boston Girls' High School, commencement program 1918
George Peabody College for Teachers, School of the Dance, schedule of courses offered by Ted Shawn 1938
"Boston teacher called evangelist of the dance," newspaper clipping 1939

Dance programs

The Feast of Apollo, Brattle Hall, Massachusetts 1925
Mildred Davenport and her pupils, Brattle Hall, Massachusetts 1928
Recital of dance poems and songs, Allied Art Studio, Boston 1928
Mildred Davenport and Sepia Beauties in revue, Challengers Club, Boston 1933
Bronze rhapsody
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box &amp; Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| box 1, folder 2 | **1934**
Typescript of stage directions, with holograph note "Miss Davenport (personal)" on first leaf |
| box 1, folder 3 | **1935-1941**
| box 1, folder 3 | **1942**
Hand-colored poster (partial) |
| box FB-021, folder 1 | Classic, John Hancock Hall, Boston 1938
Shadowland Ball Room performances, Boston, undated |
| box 1, folder 4 | Physical Description: 2 items.
General Physical Description note: no content |
| box 1, folder 5 | Dance school materials
Davenport School of the Dance application, undated
Silver Box Studio
Course brochures and applications, undated. |
| box 1, folder 5 | Physical Description: 3 items.
General Physical Description note: no content |
| box 1, folder 6 | Event invitation and greeting card, and undated. 1939 |
| box 1, folder 6-11 | Physical Description: 2 items.
General Physical Description note: no content |
| box 1, folder 6-7 | Photographs
Personal
Prince School class, 1914 |
| box 1, folder 6-7 | Teenage performances, undated. |
| box 1, folder 6-7 | Physical Description: 5 items.
General Physical Description note: no content |
| box 1, folder 7 | Portraits, undated |
| box 1, folder 7 | Physical Description: 3 items.
General Physical Description note: no content |
| box 1, folder 8-10 | Performances by students
Piggilly wiggily, ca. 1942
Top hat ca. 1942
Unidentified, undated. |
| box 1, folder 8-10 | Physical Description: 15 items.
General Physical Description note: no content |
| box 1, folder 11 | Other individuals
Hall, Tom, 1930
Purcell, Barbara, ca. 1942
Stokes, Bernice, ca. 1942
Roberts, Francine, ca. 1942 |