

Philip A. Stewart Charles L. Johnson Collection (SC227)

Introduction

This collection contains various sheet music composed by Charles L. Johnson and additional composers dating from 1895 to 1947. The sheet music consists of ragtime, cakewalks, waltzes, novelty, and two-step. The items in this collection were gathered by a local collector, Philip Stewart.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Philip A. Stewart
Title: Philip A. Stewart Charles L. Johnson Collection
Dates: 1895-1947, 2009
Size: 0.834 linear feet, 2 boxes
Collection Number: SC227

Donor Information

Gift, 2018, Kathy and David Altaras.

Citation Note

Philip A. Stewart Charles L. Johnson Collection (SC227), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Administrative Information

Additional form available: Digitized images of some sheet music are available on a hard drive donated with the collection.

Related Collections: Additional material relating to this collection can be found in the Charles L. Johnson Papers (SC4). More information on local composers, may be found by searching the main library catalog and the local history collections database.

Biographical Sketch

Charles Leslie Johnson was a music composer and arranger. Johnson was born in Kansas City, Kansas, in 1875 and died in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1950. Most of his life was spent in Kansas City, MO where he composed over 300 songs between the 1890s and the time of his death. He studied African American ragtime music which lead him to compose 40 pieces in that style including, "Dill Pickles," which is noted as one of his best ragtime songs. He composed cakewalk, tangos, waltzes, ballads, and novelty songs, and arranged piano scores for orchestras and many other song writers. More materials on Charles Johnson's music can be found in, *A Songbook of Charles Johnson* [M 781.645 J66S]; located on the third floor of the Central Library.

Johnson is also credited, although he is not the writer, for the popular orchestra arrangement of the “Missouri Waltz,” which eventually became the official song of the state of Missouri. President Harry Truman was known to publicly play the song on the piano many times. Many of Johnson’s popular hits sold millions of copies.

A resident of Paola, Kansas, Philip A. Stewart, started his Charles L. Johnson collection in 1979. He first discovered the music of Johnson while visiting a flea market in Kansas City, MO, and continued collecting because he wanted others to learn about Johnson and his music. Stewart believed Johnson would have been a more recognized name had he left Kansas City and pursued his music in New York. Through his collecting of Johnson’s music, Stewart was able to release three books: *The Music of Charles Leslie Johnson: A Collector’s Journey* [MVSC Q 781.64 J66ZS]; *The Music of Charles Leslie Johnson* [MVSC Q 781.64 J667S 2009]; and *Rags and Other Riches: Instrumental Selections of Charles Leslie Johnson*, which includes comprising of Johnson’s music and details of his life. A longtime educator and teacher by profession, Philip A. Stewart died in 2017.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains sheet music composed by Charles Johnson and additional composers dating from 1895 to 1947. The sheet music ranges from ragtime, cakewalks, waltzes, novelty, to two-step. Most of the sheet music has been arranged alphabetically by song title. Johnson’s picture show music and the Piano Selections from Foster Edition are housed at the end of the collection. Some songs have multiple copies, though some pieces may be different versions. In addition to music there is an article about Philip Stewart, the creator of this collection.

For many years, it was believed that the names Ethel Earnist and Fannie B. Woods were pseudonyms for Charles L. Johnson. However, recent scholarship strongly suggests that both women were real and wrote their own music. As such, the composer of the song, “Peanuts (A Nutty Rag)” was likely created by Earnist, and “Sweetness” should be credited to Woods.

Please note that a portion of Charles L. Johnson’s songs include racist stereotypes and imagery.

Collection Inventory

- f. 1 *Miami County Republic* news article
- f. 2 12th Street Rag - By the Winding Tennessee
- f. 3 Can You Bring Back the Heart - Deep in My Heart Beloved
- f. 4 Dementia America - Drifting in a Lover’s Dream
- f. 5 Everybody Calls Her Sunshine - Golden Moon
- f. 6 Golden Spider - I Want to See My Pickaninny
- f. 7 I’ll Be Waiting for You - Jubilee in the Sky
- f. 8 Kaiser’s Military Bal l- Lucy Lee
- f. 9 Ma Pickaninny Babe - My Little Woman
- f. 10 My Love for Old Kentucky -Ozark Moon
- f. 11 Pansy Blossoms - Rose of Tennessee
- f. 12 Scandalous Thompson - Somewhere Along the Missouri Tonight
- f. 13 Song of the American Eagle- Sweetness
- f. 14 Take Mamma Dear Along - Twinkles

- f. 15 U.S.S. Texas March - What's the Use of Crying
- f. 16 When Clouds Have Vanished - When You're Full of Love
- f. 17 Where the Lanterns Glow -You're the Girl That I've Been
- f. 18 Charles L. Johnson's Picture Show Music
- f. 19 Piano Selections from Foster Edition

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