



Smithsonian

Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

Verna Gillis audio recordings

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Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
Title:	Verna Gillis audio recordings
Date:	Undated, 1968-1979
Identifier:	CFCH.GILLIS
Creator:	Gillis, Verna (Researcher)
Extent:	24 Sound tape reels (Tapes VG-0001 - VG-0021 have been digitally transferred at 96kHz/24-bit with the exception of tapes VG-0018 and VG-0019. Tape VG-0018 has been transferred poorly. Tapes VG-0019, VG-0022, VG-0023, VG-0024 require conservation prior to transfer.)
Language:	Recordings in English and Haitian Creole.
Summary:	The Verna Gillis audio recordings consist of 24 open-reel tapes. The field recordings document work done by folklorist Verna Gillis in Haiti, Oklahoma, Philadelphia, and Cuba.

Administrative Information

Processing Information

The tapes in the Verna Gillis audio recordings were processed by Ronnie Simpkins in 2011 as a part of a digitization workflow, with an additional preservation assessment of problematic tapes by Dave Walker in 2016.

Preferred Citation

Verna Gillis audio recordings, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Access by appointment only. Contact the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections at (202) 633-7322 or rinzlerarchives@si.edu for additional information.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright restrictions apply. Contact archives staff for information.

Biographical / Historical

Verna Gillis (b. 1942) is a New York-based music producer and holds a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology. She is known for her successful efforts to bring musicians from various immigrant communities to the forefront of the New York City music scene, helping to usher music from the Caribbean, Africa, and Latin America into the mainstream of American life during the 1970s and 80s.

She was an Assistant Professor at Brooklyn College from 1974 to 1980 and at Carnegie Mellon University from 1988 to 1990.

From 1972 to 1979, Gillis recorded traditional music in Afghanistan, Iran, Kashmir, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Peru, Surinam, and Ghana.

In 1979, she opened Soundscape, a non-profit multi-cultural performance space in New York City, on west 52nd Street which she directed for the next five years. A New York Times profile from 1990 described the energy and importance of the performance space at this time: Gillis would book "lectures by the jazz saxophonist Archie Shepp, voodoo ceremonies by the Haitian ensemble Troupe Makandal, art rock by the guitarist Arto Lindsay. David Byrne, Hal Wilner and Bill Laswell of the downtown musical crowd were regular listeners. The two giants of free jazz, Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman, collaborated for the first time ever in Soundscape, playing informally together over a two-week span of 1980." [1]

Gillis had to close Soundscape in 1987 after it went too deeply into debt, but she continued to be a force in the music community of the city. Gillis began a new career managing and producing international musicians including Youssou N'dour from Senegal, Yomo Toro from Puerto Rico, Salif Keita from Mali, and Carlinhos Brown from Brazil.

Gillis produced sixteen albums on Folkways/Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, which include music from the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Haiti, Cuba, the Gambia, and Philadelphia, PA, as well as American Indian music and spoken word.

She was nominated for two GRAMMYs for her work as a producer: in 2000 for the Archie Shepp/Roswell Rudd Quartet Live in New York, and again in 2001 for Roswell Rudd's MALIcool.

[1] <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/08/magazine/what-really-makes-new-york-work-secret-powers-verna-gillis-muse-melting-pot.html?pagewanted=all>

Scope and Contents

The Verna Gillis audio recordings consist of 24 open-reel tapes. The field recordings document work done by folklorist Verna Gillis in Haiti, Oklahoma, Philadelphia, and Cuba between 1968-1979. Most recordings are of vodou ceremonies recorded in Haiti and church services led by Bishop Audrey F. Bronson. Also notable are performances by Comanche artist Joyce Lee "Doc" Tate Nevaquaya, an American Indian flute player.

Arrangement

The Verna Gillis audio recordings are arranged according to numbers assigned to the open reel tapes by the RRFAC. Where more than one tape from the same day or event exists, those tapes are kept together in the overall arrangement.

General

Scope and Contents notes for each tape are composed of transcribed notes from the recto and verso of tape boxes. Archivist notes are in brackets.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Church music
Native American flute

Vodou -- Haiti -- Rituals.

Types of Materials:

Sermons

Names:

Bronson, Audrey F.

Guillén, Nicolás , 1902-1989

Nevaquaya, Doc Tate, 1932-1996

Container Listing

VG-0001: American Indian flute demonstration by Doc Tate , 1978 July 18

1 Sound tape reel (10 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Sioux flute, 5 holes, white cedar, 24"

Cherokee flute, 7 holes, cherry wood, 26"

Comanche flute, 6 holes, red cedar, 24"

3/4" from the mouthpiece chamber a partition divides airflow into two channels

Tracks:

1) "The Eagle," talking "I saw an eagle fly," red cedar flute, composer Doc Tate

2) "Edmund's song" – his son, Comanche flute

3) "When the moon is full, I'll be thinking of your singsong," Comanche flute

4) "Comanche riding song," Comanche flute, two takes

5) "The wind song," Comanche flute

6) "Omaha wind song," Comanche flute, 3rd take - Sioux flute

7) "Sioux song," Richard Foolsbull

8) "Riding song"

9) "If you really loved me, you'd come back"

10) Comanche hymn, "Jesus, I want to be near you all the time"

11) "Comanche moon" 2 takes

12) Social dance similar to a round dance

Comanche greeting and in English

Listening copy available.

Half track stereo, 7.5 ips

VG-0002: Oklahoma Pow wow , undated

1 Sound tape reel (10 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: [Performance featuring group chanting and percussion by Ponca tribe and others.]

Inner tribes - Southern Plains

Tracks:

1) Round Dance (Universal), no language, chants, 6 men 8 women

2) War Dance, chant, 8 songs, last 3 in Ponca language from central Oklahoma (3x)

3) Four veterans songs, Kiowa - U.S. wars

4) Gourd dance – Kiowa (3x)

5) Eight "49" songs

Order of songs

Invocation, flag song, round dance, social (gourd), 49, veteran's closing - dedicated to WWII veterans

Listening copy available.

Half track stereo, 7.5 ips

VG-0003: Church service led by Reverend Audrey Bronson, reel 1 of 2,
undated
1 Sound tape reel (10 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)
Notes: Listening copy available.
Half track stereo, 7.5 ips

VG-0004: Church service led by Reverend Audrey Bronson, reel 2 of 2,
undated
1 Sound tape reel (10 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)
Notes: Listening copy available.
Half track stereo, 7.5 ips

VG-0005: Audrey and Becky I, 1978 September 17
1 Sound tape reel (10 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)
Notes: Ch 1 - Lavallier - Reverend's Ch 2 - Organist, choir
999 - Becky playing
people entering
Rev. [McDougald?]
440 - Choir enters
200 - Change speakers
083 - Rev. Augustin Hill
back to 999 - Chorus singing
670 - Young woman singer to podium
574 - Change singers
480 - back to same singer as 670
402 (changed to mike #2 - 1 making a sound)
Half track stereo, 7.5 ips
Listening copy available.

VG-0006: Audrey and Becky II, 1978
1 Sound tape reel (7 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)
Notes: Listening copy available.
Half track stereo, 7.5 ips

VG-0007: Church service led by Reverend Audrey Bronson , 1978 September
17
1 Sound tape reel (10 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)
Notes: Listening copy available.
Half track stereo, 7.5 ips

VG-0008: Voodoo ceremony, tape 1 of 3, 1975 March 22
1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)
Notes: Listening copy available.

VG-0009: Voodoo ceremony, tape 2 of 3, 1975 March 22

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Listening copy available.

VG-0010: Voodoo ceremony, tape 3 of 3, 1975 March 22

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Listening copy available.

VG-0011: Voodoo ceremony, recorded in Haiti, tape 1 of 5, 1975 March 29

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: 7.5 ips
Rada Drums – 3 hand and stick
Petro - 1
Tambourines (?) - 2
Bell
Love - Erzuli
Sea -
Guinea - Bizangos - active, brutal
Listening copy available.

VG-0012: Voodoo ceremony, recorded in Haiti, tape 2 of 5, 1975 March 29

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: 7.5 ips
chain + whip
whistle
[bring on crib-like structure] + leaves
Listening copy available.

VG-0013: Voodoo ceremony, recorded in Haiti, tape 3 of 5, 1975 March 29

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: 7.5 ips
prepare fire
Listening copy available.

VG-0014: Voodoo ceremony, recorded in Haiti, tape 4 of 5, 1975 March 29

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Listening copy available.

7.5 ips

VG-0015: Voodoo ceremony, recorded in Haiti, tape 5 of 5, 1975 March 29

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Listening copy available.

7.5 ips

VG-0016: Performance in Bizoton, Haiti, undated

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: 01 - good [vaccines?], nice steady rhythm

280 – song - relatively clear

great

Listening copy available.

VG-0017: Sermon delivered by Audrey Bronson , 1978 September 17

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Listening copy available.

Half track stereo, 7.5 ips

VG-0018: Sermon delivered by Audrey Bronson , 1978 September 17

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Sermon delivered by Audrey Bronson September 17th, 1978.
Labeled Roll #4 and "Box 4 of 5."

Back of box reads "9/17/78 Audrey Bronson's Sermon Roll #4
STEREO 7.5 ips 2TRACK ORIGINAL" and written on spine
reads "Bronson Box 4 of 5" and label on reel reads "22 Bronson
box 4 of 5 tail out box 4 of 5." Very poor transfer.

Listening copy available.

Half track stereo, 7.5 ips

VG0019: Audrey and Becky, 1978 September 17

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Half track stereo, 7.5 ips

VG-0020: Voodoo ceremony recorded in Haiti, tape 1 of 2, 1975 March 22

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: 3.75 ips

Listening copy available.

VG-0021: Voodoo ceremony recorded in Haiti, tape 2 of 2, 1975 March 22

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: 3.75 ips

Listening copy available.

VG-0022: 3-A / [Nicolás Guillén?] , 1979 January

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Guillen #4 Cuba

VG-0023: 3-B / [Nicolás Guillén?] , 1979 January

1 Sound tape reel (5 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)

Notes: Guillen # 5

Cuba

VG-0024: Bizotan Haiti / Lorin-Frank GMC / 4866 , 1968 April 17

1 Sound tape reel (10 inch reel, 1/4 inch tape)