



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations

NMAH.AC.0471

Annie Kuebler

1997

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations |
| Date: | circa 1929-1954 |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.0471 |
| Creator: | Lunceford, Jimmie (bandleader) (Composer) Driggs, Frank, 1930- (Collector) Oliver, Sy (Arranger) |
| Extent: | 8 Cubic feet (28 boxes) |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | Collection consists of approximately 320 titles from the Jimmie Lunceford Band Orchestrations. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was acquired from Frank Driggs, jazz historian, photographer, and producer from Brooklyn, New York. It was purchased with funds from the Division of Musical History, now known as the Division of Cultural and Community Life, August 31, 1992.

Separated Materials

Brass mutes, bandstands, and percussion instruments that are located in the Division of Cultural and Community Life.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Annie Kuebler, 1997

Preferred Citation

Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

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Biographical / Historical

Jimmie Lunceford (1902-1947) was born in Fulton, Missouri. He studied music under Wilberforce J. Whiteman, father of Paul Whiteman (leader of a popular swing band in the 1930's), when Lunceford's family moved to Denver, Colorado. Lunceford graduated with a bachelor's degree in music from Fisk University. In 1926, Lunceford was a performer in Mary Lou William's (nee Scruggs) band in Memphis, Tennessee where he taught music at Manassa High School. Lunceford returned to Fisk as an assistant professor and with his former students, Edwin Wilcox (piano) and Willie Smith (alto sax), formed the Chicksaw Syncopaters in 1927. Although Lunceford was a composer and skilled on reeds, guitar and trombone, he preferred to conduct, leading the band with a white baton. In 1929, the band became professional, and due to its popularity from radio broadcasts began touring nationally in 1933. Lunceford was a disciplinarian and from the beginning the band symbolized correctness and professionalism in music and demeanor with a great sense of showmanship. Its unique arrangements distinguished the band displaying a saxophone ensemble sound and a two-beat swing that came to be known as the "Lunceford style." This sound was the creation of its earliest arrangers, Wilcox and Smith, Sy Oliver who joined the band in 1935, and Eddie Durham (guitar) in 1939. The arrangements also provided showcases for the band's unique soloists Snooky Young (trumpet), Joe Thomas (tenor sax) and Trummy Young (trombone) among others. At its peak in the mid and late 1930's, the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra offered consistently brilliant swinging performances-popular with dancers. Nevertheless, by the early 1940's, the band reputation waned and many major soloists and arrangers left. Later arrangers, including Billy Moore, Jr. (who replaced Oliver when he joined Tommy Dorsey's band in 1939), Gerald Wilson and George Duvivier continued to contribute unique arrangements to the band's repertoire but the band's performances and popularity deteriorated until Lunceford's death in 1947. Edwin Wilcox and Joe Thomas co-led the Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra until 1949 when the band continued sporadically under Wilcox's leadership until the early 1950's.

Scope and Contents

The Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations consists of ca. 310 music titles dating from approximately 1935 to 1954. The titles are arranged alphabetically. Many arrangements are by Edwin Wilcox but the orchestrations also include arrangements by Sy Oliver and Willie Smith who with Wilcox were the "architects" of the Lunceford style. There are a few arrangements by Lunceford and others including Fernando Arbello, Al Cobbs, Tadd Dameron, Bill Doggett, Eddie Durham, George Duvivier, Bud Estes, Horace Henderson, Dave McRae, Billy Moore, Jr., Don Redman, Roger Segure, Willie Smith, Lonnie Wilfong, and Chappie Willett. The arrangements are found in a variety of configurations. Some have a score only, some have parts only, some have both scores and parts, and a few have incomplete sets of parts. Several pieces contain piano or drum parts only. Many parts bear the musician's name rather than the instrument he played. It can be assumed by the condition of the material that the band continued to use the arrangements of Sy Oliver and Willie Smith after their departure in 1939. It appears they replaced those parts for their arrangements when they deteriorated from use. Although most of the material is in good condition, some older frequently used arrangements are in poor condition. Oversized scores were removed to one larger box; this box is at the end of the Collection and the reference see oversize.

This document uses three reference abbreviations to indicate the location of the music. See indicates the material is under another title or in the oversize box (for example; Cherry Blossom Lane see It Looks Like Love In Cherry Blossom Lane); the reference sa means see also and shows additional music under this title is found elsewhere (for example: For The Rest Of My Life see oversize). The reference verso indicates a part on the reverse of another piece of music (for example, Honeysuckle verso Cone With The Wind). Approximately 320 titles of Jimmie Lunceford Band Orchestrations.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged into one series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

- Music
- Orchestrations

Container Listing

Series 1: Music Arrangements

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