

Joseph Jones:

A Preliminary Inventory of His Caribbean Plays Collection in the Performing Arts Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Jones, Joseph, 1908-1999
Title:	Caribbean Plays Collection
Dates:	Circa 1950s-1960s
Extent:	1 document box (0.42 linear feet)
Abstract:	Joseph Jay Jones, English professor at the University of Texas at Austin, fought to bring Commonwealth literature to the fore by writing articles and books, editing volumes, and teaching courses on the subject. The Caribbean Plays Collection, seventeen mimeographed one-act typescripts by eleven playwrights, is his own personal contribution to this project.
RLIN Record #:	TXRC03-A7
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Gift, 1974
Processed by:	Stephanie Hays, 2002; Richard Workman, 2003
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Born in Peru, Nebraska, on 29 June 1908, Joseph Jay Jones was the son of Clifford Weldon and Maude (Tubbs) Jones. Jones earned a bachelor of science degree at the University of Nebraska in 1930. He then attended Stanford University, where he earned his M.A. in 1931 and Ph.D. in 1934. In 1935 he married Johanna Zabel, with whom he had three children, David Clifford Jones, Judith Ann Holden, and Susan Sarrett. Jones briefly taught at Colorado State College before joining the English faculty at the University of Texas at Austin.

Jones served at the University for forty years. During his tenure, he was actively involved in national, regional, and University organizations. He edited numerous journals and publications and wrote scores of articles and more than fifteen books of criticism and poetry, including his best-known title, *Life on Waller Creek*. Jones was awarded the Warshaw Award of the Western Humanities Research Association in 1952. He was further honored with a Fulbright Scholarship to New Zealand in 1953, which kindled his interest in world and non-canon literature. Jones fought to bring Commonwealth literature to the fore by writing articles and books, editing volumes, and teaching courses on the subject. He campaigned for the purchase of books representing Commonwealth literature. The Caribbean Plays Collection is his own personal contribution to this project.

Professor Jones retired in 1975, but continued to publish well into the 1980s. He died 12 February 1999, at the age of ninety.

Sources:

For Biographical Sketch:

- "In Memoriam Joseph Jay Jones." Faculty Council of the University of Texas at Austin, ed. 1999-2000.
<http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/1999-2000/memorials/JonesJ/jones.html>

For Scope and Content note:

- *The Cambridge Guide to African and Caribbean Theatre*. Martin Banham et al., eds. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- *Caribbean Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical-Critical Encyclopedia*. Donald E. Herdeck, ed. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1979.
- "Errol Gaston Hill," *Contemporary Authors Online*. The Gale Group, 2000.

Scope and Contents

The Joseph Jones Caribbean Plays Collection consists of seventeen mimeographed one-act typescripts by eleven playwrights. The plays are arranged alphabetically by author in a single series, Plays, circa 1950s-1960s. Names of authors are listed as they are given on the title pages in the collection.

All the plays appeared in *Caribbean Plays*, a publication of the University College of the West Indies' Department of Extra-Mural Studies in Kingston, Jamaica. The Extra-Mural Studies Department was dedicated to adult education. None of the plays is dated, but from publication dates given in secondary sources, it is assumed that these playwrights attended writing workshops during the 1950s and 1960s.

Though the manuscripts here represent non-canon authors, some were well known as poets, playwrights, and educators in the West Indies, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Authors include A. N. Forde, Errol Hill, Slade Hopkinson (who later used the name Abdur-Rahman Slade Hopkinson), Cicely Howland (who is better known by the name Cicely Waite-Smith), Errol John, and Roderick Walcott, Derek Walcott's twin. Less is known about Osborne Ashby, J. S. Barker, Veronica Fonrose, Lloyd Hart, and Wilfred Redhead, all of whom are represented in this collection.

Errol Hill earned his M.F.A. and D.F.A. at the Yale School of Drama before returning to his native Trinidad where he was involved in drama circles throughout the West Indies and headed the Department of Extra-Mural Studies of the University College of the West Indies. Hill's *Strictly Matrimony*, one of the highlights of this collection, satirizes British feminism's attempt to legitimize common-law marriages in the West Indies. Hill's *Broken Melody* deviates from the typical Caribbean setting and centers on a pair of sisters in post-World War II America or England.

Most of the plays share a Caribbean setting, the use of dialect in dialogue, and a comic tone. They typically center on the black communities in the Caribbean, though British or French imperial presence is a demonstrable concern. The French influence is felt linguistically when "oui" intersperses with local dialect. A native man adopts an American accent, name, and past to woo a local girl in Osborne Ashby's *Sailors Ashore*. His deceit is revealed and, at play's end, the reader expects her to return to her authentic ex-boyfriend. A. N. Forde, whose poetry and stories were published in *Island Voices: Stories from the West Indies* and *Caribbean Voices*, departs from the collection's generally comic tone to explore racial resentment in the civil service in *The Passing Cloud*.

Many authors poke fun at the superstition of the islanders. In Veronica Fonrose's *The Evil Spirit*, the women of the household are presented as silly, superstitious creatures who need the sensible father-figure to ground them. Yet it is the husband who is nearly defrauded by a charlatan who can commune with spirits in Wilfred Redhead's *Three Comic Sketches*. Despite this general mistrust of native spiritual customs, biblical images and themes are appropriated and used in plays like *A Flight of Sparrows* and *The Tout*. Slade Hopkinson's *The Onliest Fisherman* incorporates elements of Greek drama.

Related Material

Elsewhere in the Ransom Center is an uncataloged collection of Jones' papers, including manuscripts, research materials, correspondence, and other printed materials.

Index Terms

People

Ashby, Osborne.
Barker, J. S.
Fonrose, Veronica.
Forde, A. N. (Alfred Nathaniel), 1923- .
Hart, Lloyd.
Hill, Errol.
Hopkinson, Abdur-Rahman Slade, 1934- .
John, Errol, 1924-1988.
Redhead, Wilfred.
Waite-Smith, Cicely.
Walcott, Roderick.

Organizations

University College of the West Indies (Mona, Jamaica). Extra Mural Dept.

Subjects

Authors, Caribbean.
Caribbean drama (English)--20th century.

Document Types

Scripts.

Series I. Plays, circa 1950s-1960s

Ashby, Osborne. <i>Sailors Ashore</i>	Box 1 Folder 1
Barker, J. S. <i>Bond of Matrimony</i>	Folder 2
Fonrose, Veronica. <i>The Evil Spirit</i>	Folder 3
Forde, A. N. <i>The Passing Cloud</i>	Folder 4
Hart, Lloyd. <i>Dorothy's Triumph</i>	Folder 5
Hill, Errol	
<i>Broken Melody</i>	Box 1 Folder 6
<i>Oily Portraits</i>	Folder 7
<i>Strictly Matrimony</i>	Folder 8
Hopkinson, Slade. <i>The Onliest Fisherman</i>	Folder 9
Howland, Cicely	
<i>Africa Sling-Shot</i>	Box 1 Folder 10
<i>The Impossible Situation</i>	Folder 11
<i>Return to Paradise</i>	Folder 12
John, Errol. <i>The Tout</i>	Folder 13
Redhead, Wilfred	
<i>Goose and Gander</i>	Box 1 Folder 14
<i>Three Comic Sketches</i>	Folder 15
Walcott, Roderick	
<i>A Flight of Sparrows</i>	Box 1 Folder 16
<i>Shrove Tuesday March</i>	Folder 17