

Concordia University Library, Special Collections

Finding Aid - Vernon Isaac fonds (P228)

Generated by Access to Memory (AtoM) 2.4.0 Printed: November 07, 2018

Language of description: English

Concordia University Library, Special Collections

Vanier Library, VL 121

Concordia University

7141 Sherbrooke Street West

Montreal

Quebec

Canada

H4B 1R6

Telephone: 514-848-2424 x 7762

[Email: spec-coll@concordia.ca](mailto:spec-coll@concordia.ca)

<https://library.concordia.ca/find/special-collections/>

<http://concordia.accesstomemory.org/index.php/vernon-isaac-fonds>

Vernon Isaac fonds

Table of contents

Summary information	3
Administrative history / Biographical sketch	3
Scope and content	4
Notes	4
Access points	5
Series descriptions	5
P228/ A, Textual records, 1939-2000	5
P228/ B, Scrapbooks, photo albums and other graphic material, [193-?]-2000	6
P228/ C, Audio-visual material, 1962-1998	6
P228/ D, Objects, [197-?]-1993	7

Summary information

Repository: Concordia University Library, Special Collections

Title: Vernon Isaac fonds

ID: P228

Date: [193-?]-2000 (date of creation)

Physical description: ca. 1600 photographs : b&w or col. prints and negatives
ca. 40 cm of textual records
20 moving images
19 sound recordings
7 objects

Language: English

**Dates of creation,
revision and deletion:**

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

Vernon Clarence Isaac, a jazz musician and bandleader, was born in Pittsburg, Texas on October 21, 1913 as the first child of the storekeeper Arthur Lee Isaac and Helen D. Isaac Williamson. In 1922, his family moved to Oklahoma City.

Vernon and his nine brothers and sisters grew up in a musical environment with their father and mother both playing mostly religious music on piano and organ. At age 14, Vernon Isaac was playing piano, violin and clarinet and started saxophone. With 16, he dropped out of high school, to travel around the United States for about ten years, playing alto and tenor saxophone with jazz musicians like Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Count Basie.

Vernon Isaac married Ester Geraldine Wonowity (Gerry Isaac) in 1942. They had three children : Richard, Jean and Francine. In 1942, Isaac was also drafted to the U.S. Army's 92nd Colored Division. There he led the 37th Special Services Band. In 1946, after being discharged from the army, Isaac returned to Philadelphia where he formed the jazz group "Three Jacks and a Jill." Vernon Isaac came to Canada for the first time in 1948 while he was on tour with "Three Jacks and a Jill." Few years later, in 1951, Isaac moved to Canada, settling in Montreal where he remained for 25 years. Until "Three Jacks and a Jill" disbanded, he toured in Ontario and the Maritimes. Later, he played mostly in Montreal at the Montmartre and with Allan Wellman at Rockhead's Paradise. Also at Rockhead's Paradise, he helped organize the show 'Ebony in Rhythm' in 1964. At the same time, he led some smaller bands, like the L.V.J. Trio, named after Lem Neal, Vernon Isaac and Jimmy Valdez, and went on tour again.

In 1973, Vernon Isaac moved to Ottawa, where he became a founding member of the oldest non-profit organization in Canada to promote jazz, Ottawa jazz, in 1975. Ottawa Jazz helped to promote, preserve and present jazz in the Ottawa area until its dissolution in 1996. It had a major impact on the Ottawa

Jazz scene, by organizing jazz sessions and supporting clubs like La Paloma, Beacon Arms Hotel, The Penguin, Mr. Keith's MacDonald Club, as well as the Ottawa Jazz Festival.

In the 1980s, Vernon Isaac established the Vernon Isaac Big Band, and in 1985, he participated in the St. Michel All-Stars at Le Grand Café in Montreal.

Vernon Isaac died in Gatineau, Québec on December 16, 1999.

Custodial history

The fonds was transferred from Concordia University's Records Management and Archives Department to Concordia University Libraries' Special Collections March 16, 2016, April 12-13, 2016, April 19-20, 2016, April 26, 2016, May 5, 2016, and May 10, 2016.

Scope and content

The materials in the fonds document Vernon Isaac's life as a jazz musician and the Canadian jazz scene of the 1970s to 1990s. The fonds also contains information about Vernon Isaac's family.

The fonds includes personal documents, photographs of Vernon Isaac's family, friends and other performers, press clippings, programs, posters, commemorative plaques, and sound and audiovisual recordings of Vernon Isaac.

The fonds is organized into the following series:

P228/A. Textual records

P228/B. Scrapbooks, photo albums and other graphic material

P228/C Audio-visual material

P228/D Objects

Notes

Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Title based on the content of the fonds.

Immediate source of acquisition

The documents were kept by Susan Galvin, a friend of Vernon Isaac. She donated them to Concordia University's Records Management and Archives Department in November 2008 and May 2013.

Conditions governing use

In most cases, reproduction for research or private study is permitted. Use of material in publications cannot be done without permission of the copyright holder.

Finding aids

Box listings available.

Accruals

No further accruals expected.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
- **Level of detail:** Minimal
- **Status description:** Revised

Access points

- Multiple media (documentary form)
- Jazz (subject)

Series descriptions

Series P228/ A: Textual records

Date: 1939-2000 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

The series provides information on Vernon Isaac and other jazz musicians. It presents Isaac's life as a musician as well as his family. It also contains material on Jazz Ottawa.

The series contains, among other materials, personal papers, newspaper clippings, correspondence, flyers, programs, biographies, invitations, newsletters, meeting minutes, financial documents and certificates.

Physical description: 26 cm of textual records

Access points:

- Textual record (documentary form)

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Series P228/ B: Scrapbooks, photo albums and other graphic material

Date: [193-?]-2000 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

The series illustrates Vernon Isaac's personal life as well as his career as a musician, and includes documents concerning his work with Three Jacks and a Jill, the Vernon Isaac trio, Jazz Ottawa, Ebony in Rhythm, and others. The photographs mostly relate to Vernon Isaac's work as a musician, but also includes images of him as a soldier, and of his family and friends. Some images depict his travels to Greenland and Alert, Nunavut. The series also includes publicity photographs showcasing other artists (some publicity photographs are inscribed by the artists).

The series contains 11 photo albums of various sizes, 10 scrapbooks (composed of press clippings, photographs, advertisements, correspondence, programs, postcards), loose photographs, posters, and a drawing.

Physical description: Over 1600 photographs : prints and negatives

ca. 16 cm of textual records

2 posters

1 drawing

Access points:

- Graphic material (documentary form)
- Textual record (documentary form)

Publication status:

Published

Conservation:

Most scrapbooks and photo albums have been removed from original binders and placed in acid free folders.

File / item list

Series P228/ C: Audio-visual material

Date: 1962-1998 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

The series contains documentation pertaining to the history of jazz in Canada in the second half of the 20th century. It documents Vernon Isaac's career as a jazz musician through recordings of the LVJ Trio, Vernon Isaac's Big Band, Jazz Ottawa and an interview with Vernon Isaac. It also includes recordings of Allan Wellman and Oliver Jones.

The series contains sound recordings and moving images.

Physical description: 20 moving images

19 sound recordings

Access points:

- Moving images (documentary form)
- Sound recording (documentary form)

Publication status:

Published

File / item list**Series P228/ D: Objects**Date: [197-?]-1993 (date of creation)Scope and content:

The series contains materials that document the Ottawa International Jazz Festival and Jazz Ottawa. It contains four Jazz Ottawa badges and three plaques from the Ottawa International Jazz Festival.

Physical description: 7 objectsAccess points:

- Object (documentary form)

Publication status:

Published

File / item list