

Guide to the Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson Papers, 1975-1978

JPB 07-3

Music Division

**The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York**

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Descriptive Summary

Title:	Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson Papers
Collection ID:	JPB 07-3
Creator:	Perkinson, Coleridge-Taylor
Extent:	4.02 linear feet (6 boxes)
Repository:	Music Division. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Abstract: The Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson Papers document Perkinson's career as an arranger for Motown Records artists, particularly Marvin Gaye, in the mid 1970s, and as a composer for television.

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson Papers, JPB 07-3, Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Custodial History

The Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson Papers were donated to the Music Division in 2006 by Richard Gordon.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2007.

Biographical Note

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson was born June 14, 1932 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Prophetically, he was named after Samuel Coleridge Taylor, an Afro-British composer and conductor from the late 19th century. He moved to New York around the age of 11 to live with his mother, a piano teacher and church organist. He attended the High School of Music and Art where he began composing and conducting, graduating with a share of the LaGuardia Prize in music in 1949. After two years at New York University's School of Education, he transferred to the Manhattan School of Music to study composition with Vittorio Giannini, Charles Mills and Earl Kim, and earned a Master's Degree in 1953. His classmates there included later prominent jazz musicians such as Max Roach, Herbie Mann and Randy Weston.

Perkinson's professional accomplishments span a remarkably wide range of fields, including classical music, jazz, popular music, dance, film soundtracks, scores for television, and education. In 1965 he co-founded the Symphony of the New World in New York; many of his classical compositions (influenced primarily by Hindemith, Barber and Bartok) were collected on a 2005 CD, *Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson: A Celebration*. His jazz credits include a short stint playing piano in Max Roach's Quartet, and work with Rahsaan Roland Kirk, David Sanborn, and Donald Byrd and the Blackbyrds. He straddled the jazz and dance worlds when he wrote a ballet for Alvin Ailey inspired by Charlie Parker, *For Bird, With Love*; he was also Music Director for the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, Jerome Robbins's American Theater Lab and the Dance Theater of Harlem. His film credits include the Martin Luther King documentary, *From Montgomery to Memphis*, Sidney Poitier's *A Warm December*, *Cornbread*, *Earl and Me*, and *The Education of Sonny Carson*. His television work included scores for *Harris and Company* and *The Plant Family*, and musical director for *The Barbara McNair Show*. His career in education began at Brooklyn College in 1959 and ended at Columbia College Chicago, where he directed the Center for Black Music Research and the New Black Music Repertory Ensemble until his death from cancer on March 9, 2004.

Perkinson's career as an arranger in popular music was brief, but significant. His eclectic background equipped him well to contribute to the development of rhythm and blues from the slick pop singles of early Motown and the rawer soul of Stax/Volt Records to the more lush, fully orchestrated sounds of disco in the late 1970s. His work on Marvin Gaye's *I Want You* and its companion, Leon Ware's *Musical Massage* (called "the pre-eminent early disco concept albums" by the All Music Guide), puts him in the company of other arrangers of the period such as David Van de Pitte (on Gaye's previous records *What's Going On* and *Let's Get It On* and the Temptations' *Ball of Confusion*), Johnny Allen and Dale Warren (on Isaac Hayes's *Shaft*), Riley Hampton and Johnny Pate (on Curtis Mayfield's *Superfly*), Thom Bell (with the O'Jays and other Philadelphia International Records artists) and Gene Page (with Motown and Barry White) who greatly expanded the level of orchestral sophistication of this music, allowing for records with dramatic, palpable atmosphere and sonic depth.

Sources:

Jurek, Thom. Review of *I Want You* [Expanded Edition], by Marvin Gaye, All Music Guide. Available online at <http://www.allmusic.com> (accessed September 15, 2007).

Lewis, Uncle Dave. Review of *Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson - A Celebration*. All Music Guide. Available online at <http://www.allmusic.com> (accessed September 15, 2007).

Martin, Douglas. "Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, Versatile Musician, Dies at 71," *New York Times*, March 13, 2004.

New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Video Gallery Cataloging Data for *Oral history interview with Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, 5 August, 1993* (video recording). Available online at <http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/scl/MULTIMED/JAZZHIST/cpcat.htm> (Accessed September 17, 2007).

Torres, Richard. "Romantic Obsession." Liner notes to Marvin Gaye, *I Want You* [Expanded Edition], Motown Records, B0000467-02.

Weinger, Harry. "Arranged by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson." Sidebar to liner notes for Marvin Gaye, *I Want You* [Expanded Edition], Motown Records, B0000467-02.

Scope and Content Note

The Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson Papers document only a small part of Perkinson's long and varied career, but they include the period with the highest public profile, his work as an arranger for Motown and Marvin Gaye. The collection consists almost entirely of finished full scores, and instrumental parts along with some sketches (mainly in the television music). There is no directly personal or biographical material to be found in the papers.

Organization

The collection is organized into 2 series. They are:

- Series I: Arrangements, c. 1975-1976
Series II: Television Music, c. 1978

Series Descriptions

Series I: Arrangements, c.1975-1976

2.68 linear feet (5 boxes)
Arrangement: Alphabetical by artist

The scores and parts in this series cover work for the Blackbyrds (these arrangements are actually credited to Wade Marcus), Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, and Leon Ware. The bulk of the material pertains to two closely interrelated projects, Gaye's 1976 LP *I Want You*, produced and principally written by Ware, and Ware's own *Musical Massage* LP, released later the same year. Most of the songs under Ware's name ended up on Gaye's album; several songs under both artists' names were ultimately released with different titles. Some were not released on the original LPs and only became available on the expanded CD reissues. Also included in this series is a folder of general personal papers containing a small number of items such as song lyrics, sheet music and correspondence.

Series II: Television Music, c. 1978

1.34 linear feet (1 box)
Arrangement: Alphabetical by show title

This series includes material Perkinson composed for two short-lived television shows, *Harris and Company* and *The Plant Family*, as well as some finished cues and sketches with no identification that could belong to either or neither of the two.

Series I: Arrangements , c. 1975 -76 & undated**Box 1**

- F. 1 General Personal Papers (sheet music, song lyrics, correspondence, etc.)
Blackbyrds, c. 1975
- F. 2 *All I Ask* (full score and string parts)
- F. 3 *Flying High* (full score and string parts)
- F. 4 *Love So Fine* (full score and string parts)
Marvin Gaye, c. 1975-1976
After the Dance, c. 1976
- F. 5 Full score
- F. 6 Parts
Is Anybody Thinking About Their Living? c. 1976
- F. 7 Full score
- F. 8 Parts
Long Time, No See (working title for *Since I Had You*), c. 1976
- F. 9 Full score and lead sheet
- F. 10 Parts
Nobody's Wrong, c. 1975

Box 2

- F. 1 Full score and lead sheet
- F. 2 Parts
One and Only You, c. 1975
- F. 3 Full score and lead sheet
- F. 4 Parts
- F. 5 *Save the Children*, undated (sketch)
You Are the Way You Are (working title for *All the Way Around*), c. 1976
- F. 6 Full score
- F. 7 Parts
Diana Ross, undated

Box 3

- F. 1 *Long Time, No See* (rhythm parts)
- F. 2 *Nobody's Wrong* (rhythm parts)
- F. 3 *One and Only You* (rhythm parts)
Unidentified artist(s), undated, (rhythm parts and sketches)
- F. 4 *Not Till I Miss You* (rhythm parts and sketches)
- F. 5 *Venus Fly Trap* (rhythm parts and sketches)
Leon Ware, c. 1975-1976
All the Way Around, c. 1976
- F. 6 Full score
- F. 7 Parts

By Lovin' You (working title for *Soon I'll Be Loving You Again*), c.1975

- F.8 Full score
- F.9 Parts

I Wanna Be Where You Are, c.1975

Box 4

- F. 1 Full score, lead sheet and rhythm parts
- F. 2 Brass, woodwind and string parts

I Want You, c. 1975

- F. 3 Full score
- F. 4 Parts

Journey Into You, c. 1975

- F. 5 Full score and rhythm parts
- F. 6 Brass, woodwind and string parts

Me and My Life, c. 1975

Box 5

- F. 1 Full score
- F. 2 Parts

Strange Love (working title for *Feel All My Love Inside*), c. 1975

- F. 3 Full score and rhythm parts
- F. 4 Brass, woodwind and string parts

Turn Out the Light, c. 1975

- F. 5 Full score and rhythm parts
- F. 6 Brass, woodwind and string parts

Series 2: Television music, c. 1978 & undated

Box 6

- F. 1 *Harris and Company*, c. 1978 (scores, rhythm parts, timing logs)
The Plant Family, c. 1978

- F. 2 Full scores
Unidentified

- F. 3 Finished cues (manuscript and copied rhythm parts)
- F. 4 Sketches