

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Doris Jones

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jones, Doris
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones,
Dates:	July 25, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:42:01).
Abstract:	Artistic director and dance instructor Doris Jones (1913 - 2006) co-founded the Capitol Ballet Company, the oldest predominantly African American ballet company in the United States. Jones formed the Jones-Haywood Youth Dancers in 1980. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 25, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_169
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artistic director and dance instructor Doris Winnefred Jones was born in Malden, Massachusetts on June 3, 1913, to Maddie Lightfoot Jones and Walter James Jones. She grew up with aspirations of being a ballet dancer, but found it difficult to find dance schools that would accept her as a student because of the paucity of African Americans involved in classical dance. At a young age, Jones was already a formidable tap dancer and was offered an opportunity to tour with Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, but her parents would not allow her to go. As a teenager, she traded tap dancing lessons for ballet lessons at a classical dance school in Boston, Massachusetts.

In 1941, Jones and another young dance teacher, Claire Haywood, founded the Jones-Haywood School for Ballet in order to provide young African American students with the opportunity to learn classical dance. Jones and Haywood later formed the Capitol Ballet Company as an integrated performing troupe. Jones served as the company's artistic director until 1982. Today, the Capitol Ballet Company holds the distinction of being the oldest predominately African American ballet company in the United States. In 1980, Jones also formed the Jones-Haywood Youth Dancers in order to provide more opportunities for younger dancers.

During her long career, Jones both trained and studied under some of the biggest names in classical dance including Chita Rivera, Hinton Battle, Sylvester Campbell and Sandra Fortune-Green. She also served as director of the Washington, D.C. Public Schools Dance Program. Over the years, she has choreographed for the Washington Opera Society and the Washington Civic Opera. She has been the recipient of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Medal for Outstanding Service in Human Rights and the Metropolitan Theatrical Society's Mainline to Stardom Award.

Doris Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 25, 2003.

Doris Jones died of pneumonia on March 21, 2006, in Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Doris Jones was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 25, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Artistic director and dance instructor Doris Jones (1913 - 2006) co-founded the Capitol Ballet Company, the oldest predominantly African American ballet company in the United States. Jones formed the Jones-Haywood Youth Dancers in 1980.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Jones, Doris

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Doris--Interviews

African American dance teachers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Capitol Ballet Company

Occupations:

Artistic Director

Dance Instructor

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones, July 25, 2003. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones, Section A2003_169_001_001, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Doris Jones was born on June 3, 1913 in Malden, Massachusetts. Her grandmother was the first African American to own a house in Malden, Massachusetts. Her mother, Mattie Lightfoot Jones, was from Virginia. Previously married to a Mr. Richards, her mother had four children before his death. Jones' father, Walter James Jones, was born in either North or South Carolina and worked as a butcher at Swift & Company in Boston, Massachusetts. He was curious, loved to play piano and harmonica by "ear". When Jones was young, the family moved from Malden to Boston, where her mother supported the family by renting rooms to boarders. Jones attended vaudeville shows with her mother where she describes having seen the last performance of Josephine Baker before she left the United States for France. Jones talks about her interest in dance and theatre. She attended Concord Street School, Everett Elementary School and Practical Arts High School.

African American families--Massachusetts.

African American fathers--Massachusetts--Boston.

Dance--Study and teaching (Secondary)--United States.

Ballet--Study and teaching--Massachusetts--Boston.

Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones, Section A2003_169_001_002, TRT: 0:29:19 ?

Doris Jones describes her relationship with her ballet teacher, Miss Philbrook, which started when she was eight and was refused admission to Philbrook's classes because of her race. In her late teens, Jones began exchanging classes with Miss Philbrook. She describes talking to her about discrimination many years later. After developing a program for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority featuring young students, Jones began teaching students for fifty cents a week. She also taught dance at a summer camp in upstate New York, where she met Claire Haywood. Jones both moved to Washington, D.C., where she started a dance school with Haywood. The studio was located on U Street. She also talks about the start of her ballet company, Capitol Ballet, and some of the dancers that worked with them including Hinton Battle, Chita Rivera, and HistoryMakers Sandra Fortune-Green and Louis Johnson.

African Americans--Migrations--History--20th century.

Migration, Internal--Washington (D.C.)--History--20th century.

World War, 1939-1945--African Americans.

Dance schools--Washington (D.C.).

Historic districts--Washington (D.C.).

African American dancers--Washington (D.C.).

Haywood, Claire.

Jones-Haywood School of Ballet (Washington, D.C.).

Capitol Ballet Company.

Rivera, Chita.

Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones, Section A2003_169_001_003, TRT: 0:30:58 ?

Doris Jones describes the difficulties of procuring space for the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in Washington, D.C. Jones and Claire Haywood purchased a house for the school after the 1968 riots and had the school operating within a week. Jones also talks about how her outwardly focused teaching style differed from Haywood's inwardly focused style. In 1973, she travelled to Moscow, Russia, with her student, HistoryMaker Sandra Fortune-Green, who was competing in the Second International Ballet Competition. She describes the Bolshoi Theatre and Fortune-Green's lack of focus affected her second performance. Jones reflects on highlights of her career and her hopes and

concerns for the African American community. She also talks about the difference between African dance and ballet. Jones reflects upon her life, her legacy, and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes by narrating her photographs.

Washington (D.C.)--History.

Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs.

Washington (D.C.)--Race relations.

Public schools--Washington (D.C.).

Riots--Washington (D.C.).

Cold War.

Ballet dancing--Competitions--Soviet Union.

Theaters--Russia (Federation)--Moscow.

African Americans--Conduct of life.

Capitol Ballet Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones, Section A2003_169_001_004, TRT: 0:13:04 ?

Doris Jones narrates her photographs.