

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Raoul Abdul

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Abdul, Raoul
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Raoul Abdul,
Dates:	November 30, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:51:25).
Abstract:	Classical singer Raoul Abdul (1929 - 2010) was a performer, writer, and former assistant to Langston Hughes. He published several books on African Americans and the arts. Abdul was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 30, 2004, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_241
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Classical singer, author and former assistant to the legendary poet and writer Langston Hughes, Raoul Abdul was born in Cleveland, Ohio on November 7, 1929. Abdul's father was from Calcutta, India, and his mother was able to trace her ancestry back to the pre-Revolutionary War period. Abdul attended John Hay High School, and later earned a diploma from the Vienna Academy of Music. He also studied at Harvard University, the New School for Social Research, the Cleveland Institute of Music, New York College of Music and the Mannes College of Music.

Abdul was involved in theater from an early age, participating in children's theater productions by age six. Following graduation from high school, he began working as a journalist for the Cleveland Call & Post, and in 1951, at the age of twenty-two, he relocated to New York City. There, he began studying music, and sang with such notables as William Warfield and Marian Anderson. During this time, Abdul was a founding director of the Coffeehouse Concerts in Harlem, and was a singer in a number of performances, including shows at Carnegie Hall. In 1961, Abdul became the literary assistant and close friend to writer Langston Hughes, and he remained so until Hughes' death in 1967.

In 1970, Abdul published his first book, 3000 Years of Black Poetry with author Alan Lomax. Over the next few years, he published several more volumes, including The Magic of Black Poetry, Famous Black Entertainers of Today, and Blacks in Classical Music. Abdul gave private voice lessons in his home in New York, based on the Austrian singing technique learned while studying in Vienna.

Abdul passed away on January 15, 2010 at the age of 80.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Raoul Abdul was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 30, 2004, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Classical singer Raoul Abdul (1929 - 2010) was a performer, writer, and former assistant to Langston Hughes. He published several books on African Americans and the arts.

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:

Abdul, Raoul

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

Abdul, Raoul--Interviews
African Americans--Interviews

African American singers--Interviews

Authors and publishers--Interviews

Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967

Music--Instruction and study--Austria

African American music teachers--New York (State)--New York--Interviews

Racially mixed people--Interviews

African American arts--History

Fathers--Death--Psychological aspects

Children of immigrants--United States

Education--Ohio--Cleveland

Newspaper employees--Ohio--Cleveland--Interviews

Music--Germany

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Classical Singer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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 Raoul Abdul, November 30, 2004. 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 Raoul Abdul, Section A2004_241_001_001, TRT: 0:30:34 ?

Singer and author Raoul Abdul provides detailed descriptions of his favorite food, color, phrase, and time of year, using these questions to relate anecdotes about family gatherings at the holidays and his travels abroad in France and Austria. Abdul then speaks about his father, who was born in Calcutta, India, educated in London, and died at a very young age. Abdul describes his father's emigration to the United States, where he settled in Cleveland, Ohio and worked at a steel foundry.

African American singers--Interviews.

Authors and publishers--Interviews.

Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967.

Music--Instruction and study--Austria.

African American music teachers--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.

Racially mixed people--Interviews.

African American arts--History.

Fathers--Death--Psychological aspects.

Children of immigrants--United States.

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Newspaper employees--Ohio--Cleveland--Interviews.

Music--Germany.

Video Oral History Interview with Raoul Abdul, Section A2004_241_001_002, TRT: 0:30:47 ?

Raoul Abdul continues to discuss his father, mother, and family background. Abdul explains how his father capitalized on his Indian heritage, and shares more details about his family lineage. Abdul then discusses her mother and her life growing up in Canada, and how members of her family could have passed for white. After more discussion about his mother's family background, Abdul explains how his parents met.

Video Oral History Interview with Raoul Abdul, Section A2004_241_001_003, TRT: 0:30:14 ?

Raoul Abdul shares childhood memories of his household and neighborhood, focusing on vivid recollections of his father's funeral, who died when Abdul was only four years old. Abdul then describes his first interest in the theater,

recalling many shows he attended in Cleveland, naming many of the star performers and entertainers he saw while he was a child.

Video Oral History Interview with Raoul Abdul, Section A2004_241_001_004, TRT: 0:30:39 ?

Raoul Abdul recalls his early education, from elementary school through high school. Abdul details his childhood interests and personality, painting himself as a boy very different from the rest of his classmates. Abdul explains how his multiethnic background and his unusual interests affected his social life and talks about the sharp tongue he developed as a defense mechanism. Despite these difficulties, Abdul recalls his high school experience fondly, describing his deep involvement in theater, music, and the arts, and the mentors he had while in school.

Video Oral History Interview with Raoul Abdul, Section A2004_241_001_005, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Raoul Abdul describes his first job after high school, when he worked for the Cleveland Call and Post newspaper as a reporter, photographer, and eventually as a music columnist. Abdul explains how he was rebuffed after he asked for a raise that would have rewarded him for his superior work. Abdul then describes his move to New York City, where he met Langston Hughes and began working as his personal assistant. Abdul describes Hughes's personality and talks about the many celebrities he interacted with as a result of his employment with Hughes. Abdul also describes the start of his career in music and his musical education in New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Raoul Abdul, Section A2004_241_001_006, TRT: 0:30:59 ?

Raoul Abdul recalls his experiences studying music in Vienna, and shares his impressions of Austrian and German culture. Abdul found Austrian perceptions of race to be particularly fascinating. Abdul explains how he became enamored with the culture and how he was tempted to stay in Vienna after his studies. Abdul also talks about other black singers who have made a name singing in Germany and Austria, and his book about blacks who contributed as composers and performers of classical music.

Video Oral History Interview with Raoul Abdul, Section A2004_241_001_007, TRT: 0:31:31 ?

Raoul Abdul discusses the importance of music education and talks about his career as a music educator in New York City. He explains his motivations for writing books that help to educate about blacks in classical music, and names many of the musicians who have been featured in his books. Abdul also discusses his book about black poets, and comments on the impact of black artists on society. Abdul then reflects on his life and career and shares his hopes and concerns for the black community, as well as commenting on his legacy and his attraction to German music.

Video Oral History Interview with Raoul Abdul, Section A2004_241_001_008, TRT: 0:15:30 ?

Raoul Abdul discusses how he would like to be remembered, and discusses his affinity for the cities of New York and Vienna.