

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Delano O'Banion

PERSON

O'Banion, Delano, 1936-

**Alternative Names:** Delano O'Banion;

**Life Dates:** November 3, 1936-

**Place of Birth:** Chicago, Illinois, USA

**Residence:** Chicago, Illinois

**Occupations:** Choral Director; ;

## Biographical Note

Delano O'Banion was born on November 3, 1936 in Chicago, Illinois. He attended Chicago public schools from elementary through high school. While a student at Phillips High School, he played the clarinet and bassoon in the Phillips Concert Band. As a senior at Phillips High School, O'Banion became a student assistant band director and drum major under Professor Earl Madison. In addition to singing various classical styles of choral music, he learned to sing oratorio and opera in the Hartzell Methodist Church's Young People Choir (1951-1955). During this period, he received a scholarship to study voice with Madame Elsa Harthan Arendt at the Sherwood Music School in Chicago, Illinois.

In 1955, O'Banion received an academic music scholarship to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. While at Fisk University, O'Banion toured the United States and Europe with the famed Fisk Jubilee Singers. During his junior year at Fisk University, O'Banion sang as guest soloist with the Tuskegee Institute Choir at Radio City Music Hall in New York City. In 1958, O'Banion worked with renowned musician, composer and conductor Professor William L. Dawson.

Upon graduation from Fisk University in 1959 with his B.S. degree in music, O'Banion began a teaching career that spanned forty-six years. O'Banion became quite active as a classical soloist, singing oratorio, opera, recitals, and major orchestral works throughout the Midwest. In 1961, along with several alumni friends from Fisk University, O'Banion established The John Work Chorale. His love for conducting this choral group became his primary work. The John Work Chorale specializes in preserving nurturing the perpetuation of singing Negro Spirituals in the original style of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. O'Banion also served as the choral director at Marshall High School for several years.

O'Banion served as minister of music for Grace Presbyterian Church (1960-1966), and serves as minister of music at Hartzell Memorial United Methodist Church, (1977-present). In addition to his work as minister of music, O'Banion serves on the board of the Chicago Dance and Music Alliance, the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra and the Board of Trustees at Hartzell Memorial United Methodist Church. O'Banion has received numerous awards for excellence in music, education, and community service.

O'Banion was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 15, 2006.

## Related Entries

**Wendell Phillips Academy High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Doolittle Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Fisk University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**DePaul University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**University of Chicago** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]