

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Terence Blanchard

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Blanchard, Terence
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Terence Blanchard,
Dates:	October 8, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:32:21).
Abstract:	Trumpet player and music composer Terence Blanchard (1962 -) was a five-time Grammy Award-winning musician and a prolific film score composer. He released twenty jazz albums and wrote over fifty film scores for Spike Lee and other directors. Blanchard was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 8, 2014, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_248
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Jazz trumpeter and composer Terence Oliver Blanchard was born on March 13, 1962 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Wilhelmina and Joseph Oliver Blanchard. Blanchard began playing piano at the age of five, but switched to trumpet three years later. While in high school, he took extracurricular classes at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts. From 1980 to 1982, Blanchard studied at Rutgers University in New Jersey and toured with the Lionel Hampton Orchestra.

In 1982, Blanchard replaced trumpeter Wynton Marsalis in Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, where he served as musical director until 1986. He also co-led a quintet with saxophonist Donald Harrison in the 1980s, recording five albums between 1984 and 1988. In 1991, Blanchard recorded and released his self-titled debut album for Columbia Records, which reached third on the Billboard Jazz Charts. He also composed musical scores for Spike Lee's films, beginning with 1991's *Jungle Fever*, and has written the score for every Spike Lee film since including *Malcolm X*, *Clockers*, *Summer of Sam*, *25th Hour*, *Inside Man*, and *Miracle At St. Anna's*. In 2006, he composed the score for Lee's four-hour Hurricane Katrina documentary for HBO entitled *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*. Blanchard also composed for other directors, including Leon Ichaso, Ron Shelton, Kasi Lemmons and George Lucas. In all, he has written over fifty film scores.

Blanchard has also recorded several award-winning albums for Columbia, Concord, Sony Classical and Blue Note Records, including *Simply Stated* (1992), *The Malcolm X Jazz Suite* (1993), *In My Solitude: The Billie Holiday Songbook* (1994), *Romantic Defiance* (1995), *The Heart Speaks* (1996), *Wandering Moon* (2000), *Let's Get Lost* (2001), *Bounce* (2003), *Flow* (2005), *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)* (2007), *Choices* (2009), and *Magnetic* (2013).

In the fall of 2000, Blanchard was named artistic director of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz at the University of Southern California. In 2011, he was appointed artistic director of the Henry Mancini Institute at the

University of Miami. Blanchard also composed music for a number of Broadway plays, and, on June 15, 2013, he premiered his first opera, *Champion*, with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Throughout his career, Blanchard received thirteen Grammy Award nominations and won five. His other honors include an Emmy nomination, a Golden Globe nomination, a Soul Train Music nomination, two Black Reel nominations, and the Miles Davis Award from the Montreal International Jazz Festival. He received honorary degrees from Xavier University and Skidmore College in 2012.

Terence Blanchard was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 8, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Terence Blanchard was conducted by Harriette Cole on October 8, 2014, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Trumpet player and music composer Terence Blanchard (1962 -) was a five-time Grammy Award-winning musician and a prolific film score composer. He released twenty jazz albums and wrote over fifty film scores for Spike Lee and other directors.

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:

Blanchard, Terence

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Blanchard, Terence--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Trumpet Player

Music Composer

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 Terence Blanchard, October 8, 2014. 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 Terence Blanchard, Section A2014_248_001_001, TRT: 1:27:54
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Terence Blanchard was born on March 13, 1962 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Wilhelmina Ray Blanchard and Joseph Blanchard. His paternal great-great-grandfather was French, and may have migrated to Louisiana from St. Lucia. Blanchard's father was raised near Lake Charles, Louisiana, and moved to New Orleans as a young man. He trained as an opera singer and musician, and was mentored by Osceola Blanchet, who sought to popularize opera among African Americans. Blanchard's father also sold insurance during the day, and worked as a hospital orderly at night. Blanchard's mother was born and raised in New Orleans, and later became a schoolteacher. She met Blanchard's father when he became the choir director at her church. Blanchard was an only child, and lived with his parents and paternal uncle until he was five years old. At that point, his family moved to the city's Lower Ninth Ward. When Blanchard was seven years old, they moved to the home of his maternal grandmother, who had recently become blind.

Video Oral History Interview with Terence Blanchard, Section A2014_248_001_002, TRT: 2:27:13
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Terence Blanchard began studying piano at five years old. He also joined a football team, and developed an aspiration to become a professional athlete. After seeing Alvin Alcorn perform at an assembly at Mary Dora Coghill Elementary School, Blanchard decided to learn to play the trumpet. He took trumpet and piano lessons throughout his elementary school years, and continued while attending P.A. Capdau Junior High School. During the summers, Blanchard attended a music program at Loyola University New Orleans, where he met Wynton Marsalis and Branford Marsalis. He was accepted to St. Augustine High School, a private school for African American boys. Although it had a strong music program, Blanchard sought a more intensive music education. After his sophomore year, he transferred to the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), where the Marsalis brothers were enrolled. NOCCA was a part-time program, so Blanchard spent half of the school day at John F. Kennedy High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Terence Blanchard, Section A2014_248_001_003, TRT: 3:29:35
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Terence Blanchard grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he enjoyed walking down Bourbon Street to hear the live jazz played in the clubs. Blanchard developed an interest in jazz music at an early age, although his family encouraged him to study classical music. Upon graduating from the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, Blanchard enrolled at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. After arriving on campus early, he stayed with band director Paul Jeffery. Jeffery played with Lionel Hampton's band, and invited Blanchard to a practice session. Upon hearing Blanchard play, Hampton invited him to perform with them regularly. The band's trumpet player, Oliver Beaner, became Blanchard's mentor. While at Rutgers University, Blanchard studied under William Fielder, who taught him to use proper breathing technique. Blanchard's understanding of breath was also influenced by Herbie Hancock, who introduced him to Buddhism. At this point, he talks about the importance of exercise for brass musicians.

Video Oral History Interview with Terence Blanchard, Section A2014_248_001_004, TRT: 4:29:05
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Terence Blanchard left Rutgers University in order to tour with Art Blakey's band in 1982. During the subsequent four years, he met jazz icons like Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis. In 1986, Blanchard and Donald Harrison signed a recording contract with George Wein. After producing two albums, they were signed to Columbia Records, where Wynton Marsalis and Branford Marsalis also recorded. Blanchard focused on socially conscious music, including on the albums 'Black Pearl' and 'Sing Soweto.' After his first son was born in 1988, he settled with his wife in Brooklyn, New York, and continued to travel frequently. In Brooklyn, Blanchard befriended a woman from New Orleans, Louisiana, whom he later discovered was his half-sister. In 1989, Blanchard was hired to play on the soundtrack of Spike Lee's 'Do the Right Thing,' and later 'School Daze.' When Lee began producing 'Mo' Better Blues,' he hired Blanchard as a soloist and coach for Denzel Washington.

Video Oral History Interview with Terence Blanchard, Section A2014_248_001_005, TRT: 5:28:59
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Terence Blanchard created the score of Spike Lee's 'Jungle Fever' in 1991, which was the start of their long term partnership. Next, he composed the score of Lee's controversial film 'Malcolm X,' where Fruit of Islam members served as security on set. In the following years, Blanchard scored movies like 'Eve's Bayou,' 'Original Sin' and 'The Inkwell,' along with Lee's other films. During this time, Blanchard continued recording jazz music. In 1997, he scored Lee's first documentary, '4 Little Girls,' about the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. He was working on Lee's 'Inside Man' when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, Louisiana in 2005. After relocating his family to Los Angeles, California, Blanchard agreed to score Lee's documentary about the disaster. The film included footage of his mother, Wilhelmina Ray Blanchard, returning to her home for the first time after the flood. At this point in the interview, Blanchard talks about the governmental failures that worsened the effects of Hurricane Katrina.

Video Oral History Interview with Terence Blanchard, Section A2014_248_001_006, TRT: 6:09:35
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Terence Blanchard was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, he and his family were treated with kindness by strangers while displaced from their home. He also witnessed his community's struggle to rebuild their lives. Blanchard agreed to score Spike Lee's documentary on the disaster, 'When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts,' and aimed to create music with a universal sound. In 2011, Blanchard was named the artistic director of jazz at the Henry Mancini Institute, which was part of the University of Miami Frost School of Music.