

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bertha Hope

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hope, Bertha
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope,
Dates:	December 5, 2017, November 1, 2007 and November 29, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007 and 2017
Physical Description:	12 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:51:10).
Abstract:	Jazz pianist Bertha Hope (1936 -) was the leader of the Bertha Hope Trio. She served as an artist-in-residence under the auspices of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and was the leader of a tribute ensemble, ELMollenium, and the Elmo Hope Project, in honor of her late husband and jazz musician, Elmo Hope. Hope was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 5, 2017, November 1, 2007 and November 29, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_315
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Jazz pianist Bertha Hope-Booker was born on November 8, 1936, to Corinne Meaux and Clinton Rosemond. Raised in western Los Angeles, California, Hope-Booker attended Manual Arts High School. As a youth, she performed in numerous Los Angeles clubs. Hope-Booker studied piano at Los Angeles Community College and later received her B.A. degree in early childhood education from Antioch College.

In her youth, Hope-Booker played music with and learned from other young musicians in her neighborhood. Some of them became famous later, including Richie Powell and Elmo Hope, the latter becoming her husband in 1957. She moved with Elmo Hope to the Bronx, New York, where she worked at a telephone company during the day while performing at night. After her husband's passing in 1967, she continued to present his music and remained an active force in improvised music within the New York jazz scene. Hope-Booker served as an artist-in-residence under the auspices of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Through this program, she performed in statewide New Jersey music workshops with Dizzy Gillespie, Frank Foster, Nat Adderley and Philly Joe Jones.

Hope-Booker later married Walter Booker, Jr., and the two worked to keep the music of Elmo Hope alive through Hope-Booker's tribute ensemble called ELMollenium and The Elmo Hope Project. She also plays with another group, Jazzberry Jam. In addition, Hope-Booker is the leader of The Bertha Hope Trio, which has toured extensively throughout Japan. She is a composer and arranger with several recordings under her name, including *In Search of Hope* and *Elmo's Fire* (Steeplechase); *Between Two Kings* (Minor Records) and her latest on the Reservoir label, *Nothin' But Love*. Hope-Booker has also taught an advanced jazz ensemble at The Lucy Moses School and an Introduction to Jazz program at Washington Irving High School in New York City, which was sponsored by Bette Midler. The Seattle-based trio, New Stories, has recorded a CD of Hope-Booker's music entitled, *Hope Is In the Air*.

Bertha Hope-Booker was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 1, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Bertha Hope was conducted by Adrienne Jones and Harriette Cole on December 5, 2017, November 1, 2007 and November 29, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 12 Betacam SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Jazz pianist Bertha Hope (1936 -) was the leader of the Bertha Hope Trio. She served as an artist-in-residence under the auspices of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and was the leader of a tribute ensemble, ELMOllenium, and the Elmo Hope Project, in honor of her late husband and jazz musician, Elmo Hope.

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:

Hope, Bertha

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Hope, Bertha--Interviews

African American jazz musicians--Interviews.

African American entertainers--Interviews.

African American artists as teachers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Jazz Pianist

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 Bertha Hope, December 5, 2017, November 1, 2007 and November 29, 2007. 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 Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_001_001, TRT: 0:29:07 ?

Bertha Hope was born on November 8, 1936 in Vicksburg, Mississippi to Corinne Meaux and Clinton Rosemond. Her mother was born in Lebanon, Kentucky to Bertha Pope Meaux and Fredrick Meaux, and grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. As a child, Hope's mother trained in ballet; and, upon graduating from high school, moved to New York City, where she became a dancer at the Cotton Club in Harlem. Hope's father was born in Seneca, South Carolina to Ella McClure Rosemond and Henry Rosemond. After a conflict with a white man, he and his brother fled the South, and joined the U.S. Army. Hope's paternal family moved to a homestead in California while her father was enlisted, and he did not reunite with them until a family friend recognized his surname years later. In California, Hope's father worked as a singer, and appeared in films like Mervyn LeRoy's 'They Won't Forget' in 1937. Rosemond's parents met while working on a production of 'Show Boat' in Europe. They married, and moved to Los Angeles, California.

African American families--California--Los Angeles.

Segregation--California.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_001_002, TRT: 0:30:29 ?

Bertha Hope's parents, Corinne Meaux and Clinton Rosemond, worked in show business until Hope's older sister, Eleanor Rosemond, was five years old. At that time, her mother retired from dancing, and her parents bought a home in Los Angeles, California. There, her father continued to work as an actor, at a time when few roles were available to African Americans. He also maintained vegetable and flower gardens in the family's yard. Hope's mother became a leader of their community on Los Angeles' Westside, and served as an air raid warden during World War II. As a child, Hope listened to opera and jazz programs on the radio. Later, she began listening to West Coast jazz musicians like pianist Dave Brubeck and drummer Shelly Manne. Hope describes her siblings, including her younger brother, Clinton Rosemond; and their chores, such as cleaning the house, tending the garden and caring for the chickens. She also remembers her paternal grandfather's Garveyism.

African American actors.

African American mothers.

African American fathers.

African American families--Social life and customs.

World War, 1939-1945.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_001_003, TRT: 0:29:11 ?

Bertha Hope grew up in Los Angeles, California, where she began playing the piano at three years old. She learned the music of classical composers like Johannes Brahms by ear, and her parents soon enrolled her in lessons. She often accompanied her father to the Dunbar Hotel, where she met celebrities like Lionel Hampton, Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson. Hope began her education at the 36th Street School, where she was taught by civic leader

Birdielee V. Bright. Hope joined the school choir, and learned to play several instruments at James A. Foshay Junior High School. While there, Hope ended her piano lessons after developing a nervous condition, but still performed in the school's musicals. She went on to attend Manual Arts High School, where she was encouraged by her band teacher, Mr. Farrar. From the age of fifteen years old, Hope began her professional career as a pianist at venues in Los Angeles like the Troubadour and Club Oasis.

Music--California--Los Angeles.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

African American children--Education (Secondary)--California--Los Angeles.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_001_004, TRT: 0:29:12 ?

Bertha Hope met singers Marian Anderson and Dinah Washington while performing as a pianist at jazz venues in California. She also befriended vibraphonist Dave Pike, drummer Billy Higgins, saxophonist James Clay, and pianists Carla Bley and Paul Bley. From 1954 to 1956, Hope studied music at the Los Angeles City College in Los Angeles, California. She mostly listened to West Coast jazz, until artist Daniel LaRue Johnson introduced her to Bud Powell's album, 'The Amazing Bud Powell, Volume I.' Hope attempted to play along to the record that night; and, as she listened to more bebop, became interested in musical harmonization and counterpoint. Through her friend and classmate, Eric Dolphy, Hope met the Clifford Brown and Max Roach Quintet, including pianist Richie Powell. She attended the quintet's nightly rehearsals, and took lessons from Richie Powell until he died in a car accident less than a year after their meeting. Hope was also briefly married in 1957.

Jazz--California--Los Angeles.

Bebop (Music).

Music--Economic aspects.

African American jazz musicians--California--Los Angeles.

Hope, Elmo.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_002_005, TRT: 0:29:24 ?

Bertha Hope lived near the home of musician Eric Dolphy in Los Angeles, California, and they often carpooled to the Los Angeles City College. There, Dolphy and Hope both studied piano, and often practiced playing scales together. Later, Dolphy auditioned for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, but was rejected due to racial discrimination. During the early 1950s, Dolph hosted the nightly rehearsals of the Clifford Brown and Max Roach Quintet at his home. Hope frequently attended these sessions, which lasted until the early hours of the morning. Max Roach led the band, and was often focused on combining the sounds of saxophonist Harold Land and trumpeter Clifford Brown. Hope describes the bebop genre of jazz music, which she learned about more from observing the Clifford Brown and Max Roach Quintet. She talks about the emergence of bebop after World War I, when big band music became unaffordable; and bebop's reliance on complex harmonies and rhythms that were difficult for white artists to imitate.

Los Angeles Community College District.

Music--Instruction and study.

Music--Social aspects.

Hope, Elmo.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_002_006, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Bertha Hope studied music theory and harmony at Los Angeles City College in

Los Angeles, California. Although the coursework was difficult, and contradicted much of the jazz theory she was studying independently, Hope found it useful later in her career. She also studied piano with Richie Powell, who often stayed at her house for hours, until Hope's mother urged him to leave. In 1956, less than a year after Hope met him, Powell was killed in a car accident, along with his wife, Nancy Powell, and bandmate Clifford Brown. In 1957, Hope met pianist Elmo Hope at a Sonny Rollins concert in Los Angeles. Like his contemporaries Thelonius Monk and Bud Powell, Elmo Hope was classically trained, and learned to play jazz during the emergence of bebop. Hope talks about musical education in the 1950s and at the time of the interview, as well as the influence of composer Johann Sebastian Bach on jazz music. She also describes the discrimination against black jazz musicians, who were often targeted by police.

African American families--New York (State).

African Americans--New York--Social life and customs.

African American musicians--New York (State).

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_002_007, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Bertha Hope met pianist Elmo Hope at a Sonny Rollins concert in Los Angeles, California. When Hope told him she played his music, he was initially skeptical, but was impressed when he heard her perform. They became friends, and eventually dated. The couple married in 1960, after Hope became pregnant with their first child, Monica Hope. Hope continued to perform as a pianist in California, and was booked on a national tour with dancer Jeni Legon. In 1961, after the final portion of the tour was cancelled, Hope joined her husband in New York City. They initially lived with his mother in the Bronx while searching for a home. Together, Hope and her husband recorded 'Hope-Full: Solo Piano and Duo Piano with Bertha Hope' with Riverside Records, and were booked around New York. Hope had been sheltered from drugs in California, but was exposed to them in New York City's jazz community, and began using heroin with her husband.

Drugs & society (New York, N.Y.).

Hope, Elmo.

Elmo Hope Trio.

Musical groups.

Booker, Jr., Walter.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_002_008, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Bertha Hope moved from Los Angeles, California to New York City in 1961. She joined the local jazz community, and began using drugs with her husband, pianist Elmo Hope. Soon, Hope was fired from her day job at a telephone company, and played piano only infrequently. After several years, Hope overcame her addiction. Her husband passed away due to a heart problem in 1967, and Hope returned to college. She attended several institutions in New York City before receiving a degree in early childhood education from Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Hope was hired to teach jazz at an experimental elementary school, and married bassist Walter Booker, Jr. Together, they founded the Bertha Hope Trio and ELMollenium, an Elmo Hope tribute band. Through the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Hope held annual jazz education workshops at Stockton State College with musicians like Rachelle Ferrell, Philly Joe Jones, Frank Foster and Dizzy Gillespie. She also talks about the healing effects of music.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_003_009, TRT: 9:29:26 ?

Bertha Hope became interested in jazz music as a teenager at Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles, California, where she listened to the works of Art Tatum, Nat King Cole and Elmo Hope, whom she would later marry. Although she played for her high school's band, Hope often took the trolley to Thomas Jefferson High School on the city's Eastside to learn from jazz greats like Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray. In 1961, Hope joined Jeni LeGon's dance troupe as an accompanist on a tour which travelled along U.S. Route 66 from Los Angeles to Florida. At the end of the tour, Hope and her husband decided to move to the Bronx, New York with their daughter, Monica Hope, as her husband had received several studio invitations there. Once there, Hope went to work for the American Bell Telephone Company to provide for her growing family. At this point in the interview, Hope talks about classical composer Johann Sebastian Bach's influence on jazz music, and the various techniques used by jazz musicians.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_003_010, TRT: 10:29:27 ?

Bertha Hope began playing the piano at three years old; and throughout her childhood, she learned to play several other instruments in both the string and brass families. Years later, she listened to the music of Elmo Hope while attending Los Angeles City College in Los Angeles, California. The two eventually met and married. At this time, Hope began playing the piano in many of the city's popular nightclubs like the Rubaiyat Room and the Oasis Club. In 1961, she moved to New York City, where she found work at the American Bell Telephone Company. On the weekends, she performed with Jimmy Castor and other prominent jazz bands in New York City and Boston nightclubs. She also recorded an album, 'Hope-Full,' with her husband. As a woman in a male dominated industry, Hope faced pay inequalities and sexual harassment from her male peers. In 1967, Hope's husband passed away from drug related complications. Following his death, Hope quit performing for two years, and went to work for a Head Start program.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_003_011, TRT: 11:28:46 ?

Bertha Hope was the director of the music program at the Goddard Riverside Community Center in New York City from 1969 to 1982. During that time, she returned to school and earned an education degree from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio in 1976. She also co-created a band with the help of Cobi Narita, a music promoter who worked to create collectives and venues for female musicians. In 1982, Hope returned to music full time, and joined the all-female Kit McClure Band as a vocalist and pianist. With this band, Hope performed across the East Coast and Japan. Then, in the mid-1980s, Hope formed her own band, Jazzberry Jam, which performed at the Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival and Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in New York City, and internationally. In 1984, Hope met her second husband, jazz bassist Walter Booker, who played with jazz greats such as Sonny Rollins and Thelonious Monk. Together, they worked to bring the music of Hope's first husband, Elmo Hope, to a wider audience through the ELMollenium project.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_003_012, TRT: 12:24:47 ?

Bertha Hope created the ELMollenium project to preserve the musical legacy of her first husband, Elmo Hope, by teaching his work to other artists. Hope talks about the intricate style of his music, and the difficulties in both learning it herself and teaching it to others. Beginning in the 1990s, Hope recorded several solo albums through Reservoir Records, including 'Elmo's Fire,' 'Nothin' But Love' and 'Reservoir.' Hope reflects upon the state of jazz music and instruction at the time of the interview as compared to other popular styles. Bertha's

daughter, Monica Hope, followed in her parents' footsteps, and became an award winning musician and playwright. She wrote a one woman musical, 'Ashes From My Wings,' about her life and musical journey. Hope talks about her plans for the future, and reflects upon her life and legacy. She concludes the interview by sharing her advice for aspiring musicians.