

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Anthony McGill

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616<br>info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com   |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | McGill, Anthony   |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Anthony McGill,  |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | December 2, 2016  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2016  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 4 uncompressed MOV digital video files (1:55:15).   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Classical musician Anthony McGill (1979 - ) became principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic after his decade-long appointment as principal clarinetist of the Metropolitan Opera. He performed at President Barack Obama's 2009 inauguration alongside Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman and Gabriela Montero. McGill was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 2, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2016_112   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Classical musician Anthony McGill was born on July 17, 1979 in Chicago, Illinois to Ira Carol and Demarre McGill. He attended Whitney M. Young Magnet High School and took clarinet lessons at Chicago's Merit School of Music. McGill also attended the prestigious Interlochen Arts Camp in Interlochen, Michigan, and was a member of the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra. McGill went on to earn his B.M. degree in the clarinet from Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 2000.

Before graduating from Curtis Institute, McGill was appointed as associate principal clarinetist in the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was also a recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2000. After four years with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, McGill was appointed principal clarinetist of the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. In 2009, McGill played alongside cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Itzhak Perlman, and pianist Gabriela Montero at President Barack Obama's inauguration, performing John Williams' *Air and Simple Gifts*. The following year, McGill released his first album *Anthony McGill*. In 2011, he joined the faculty at The Juilliard School in New York City. He was an inaugural recipient of the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, awarded annually to classically-trained artists of color by the Sphinx Organization. In 2014, McGill recorded *Mozart & Brahms: Clarinet Quintets* with The Pacifica Quartet. The album was his first to be commercially released as a soloist. Following a decade with the Metropolitan Opera, McGill was appointed principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic in 2014, making McGill the first African American principal in the organization's entire history. In 2015, McGill became an artist-in-residence for WQXR, the nation's most-listened-to classical music station.

McGill appeared as a soloist with numerous quartets and orchestras, including the Baltimore Symphony, the New Jersey Symphony, the Curtis Orchestra, and the Chicago Sinfonietta. He also participated in classical and chamber music festivals nationwide, such as the Marlboro Music Festival, the Sarasota Music Festival, and the Tanglewood Music Festival. With his brother, classical flutist Demarre L. McGill, he performed on *NBC Nightly News*, the

*Steve Harvey Show*, *Today*, and on MSNBC with Melissa Harris-Perry. McGill served on the faculty at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, Bard College Conservatory of Music and Manhattan School of Music.

Anthony McGill was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 2, 2016.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Anthony McGill was conducted by Harriette Cole on December 2, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 4 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Classical musician Anthony McGill (1979 - ) became principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic after his decade-long appointment as principal clarinetist of the Metropolitan Opera. He performed at President Barack Obama's 2009 inauguration alongside Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman and Gabriela Montero.

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# 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®.

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# 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.

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# Controlled Access Terms

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

## Persons:

McGill, Anthony

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

McGill, Anthony--Interviews

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Clarinetist

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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## 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 Anthony McGill, December 2, 2016. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Anthony McGill, Section A2016\_112\_001\_001, TRT: 1:27:34 ?

Anthony McGill was born on July 17, 1979 in Chicago, Illinois to Ira Lake McGill and Demarre McGill. McGill's mother was born in Chicago in 1949 to Eccorena Lake. His father was born in Mound Bayou, Mississippi in 1950, and grew up in segregated Memphis, Tennessee. He later moved with his family to Chicago. McGill's parents met while studying art education at the Chicago Teachers College. His father later joined the predominantly white Chicago Fire Department, where he served as battalion chief and then as deputy commissioner. McGill grew up in Chatham on Chicago's South Side. Gangs were prevalent, and his mother never allowed him to play outside without supervision. From an early age, McGill was inspired by the musical talent of his older brother, flutist Demarre McGill. He was also influenced by his music teacher, Barry Elmor, at the Edgar Allan Poe Classical School. During the fourth grade, McGill transferred to the St. Thomas the Apostle School in Hyde Park, where he began playing the clarinet.

Video Oral History Interview with Anthony McGill, Section A2016\_112\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:57 ?

Anthony McGill began playing the clarinet when he was nine years old. He took lessons from jazz saxophonist Ernest Dawkins, and joined the band at the St. Thomas the Apostle School in Chicago, Illinois. On the weekends, McGill studied at the Merit School of Music, where he received classical training under clarinetists Stanley Davis and David Tuttle, and performed his first solo recital. He also played with his former music teacher Barry Elmore's group, the Chicago Teen Ensemble. At eleven years old, McGill joined his older brother, flutist Demarre McGill, as a member of the majority-white Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras (CYSO). There, McGill played for African American conductor Michael Morgan, who became his mentor. He also performed with the CYSO in Japan. In the same year that he joined the CYSO, McGill received a scholarship to attend summer music camp at the Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan, where he was assigned to the first chair of the intermediate orchestra's clarinet section.

Video Oral History Interview with Anthony McGill, Section A2016\_112\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:09 ?

Anthony McGill studied under professional clarinetists Larry Combs and Julie DeRoche at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois from the age of twelve years old. He began the seventh grade at the Whitney Young Academic Center, a gifted program for middle school students at Whitney M. Young Magnet High School in Chicago. McGill remained there until the tenth grade, and then completed his high school education at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, Michigan. Upon graduating, he successfully auditioned for the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which was the alma mater of his older brother, flutist Demarre McGill. McGill graduated in 2000, and was awarded the Avery Fisher Career Grant. He then auditioned for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and was chosen as the orchestra's associate principal clarinet. McGill was the second African American member of the orchestra, and was mentored by cellist Norman E. Johns, who had been the only black member for three decades.

Video Oral History Interview with Anthony McGill, Section A2016\_112\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:35 ?

Anthony McGill was awarded the Avery Fisher Career Grant upon his graduation from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 2000, he joined the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra as associate principal clarinetist. In 2004, he auditioned for the role of principal clarinetist in New York City's Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. At this point in the interview, McGill describes the audition process for professional orchestras. For the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, he participated in a blind audition, which was

judged by a committee of the orchestra's musicians. At twenty-four years old, McGill won the role of principal clarinetist in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. There, he played with a 100-piece orchestra under conductor James Levine, and accompanied a chorus of fifty opera singers at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. McGill also talks about how he prepares for an audition, and the criteria upon which an audition is judged.