Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616
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Creator: Doris Jones

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones,

Dates: July 25, 2003

Bulk Dates: 2003

Physical Description: 4 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:41:59).

Abstract: Artistic director and dance instructor Doris Jones (1913 - 2006) co-founded the Capitol Ballet Company, which is the oldest predominately African American ballet company in the United States. In 1980, Jones also formed the Jones-Haywood Youth Dancers in order to provide more opportunities for younger dancers. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 25, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2003_169

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artistic director and dance instructor Doris Winnefred Jones was born in Malden, Massachusetts on June 3, 1913, to Maddie Lightfoot Jones and Walter James Jones. She grew up with aspirations of being a ballet dancer, but found it difficult to find dance schools that would accept her as a student because of the paucity of African Americans involved in classical dance. At a young age, Jones was already a formidable tap dancer and was offered an opportunity to tour with Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, but her parents would not allow her to go. As a teenager, she traded tap dancing lessons for ballet lessons at a classical dance school in Boston, Massachusetts.

In 1941, Jones and another young dance teacher, Claire Haywood, founded the Jones-Haywood School for Ballet in order to provide young African American students with the opportunity to learn classical dance. Jones and Haywood later formed the Capitol Ballet Company as an integrated performing troupe. Jones served as the company's artistic director until 1982. Today, the Capitol Ballet Company holds the distinction of being the oldest predominately African American ballet company in the United States. In 1980, Jones also formed the Jones-Haywood Youth Dancers in order to provide more opportunities for younger dancers.

During her long career, Jones both trained and studied under some of the biggest names in classical dance including Chita Rivera, Hinton Battle, Sylvester Campbell and Sandra Fortune-Green. She also served as director of the Washington, D.C. Public Schools Dance Program. Over the years, she has choreographed for the Washington Opera Society and the Washington Civic Opera. She has been the recipient of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Medal for Outstanding Service in Human Rights and the Metropolitan Theatrical Society's Mainline to Stardom Award.
Doris Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 25, 2003.

Doris Jones died of pneumonia on March 21, 2006, in Washington, D.C.

**Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Doris Jones was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 25, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Artistic director and dance instructor Doris Jones (1913 - 2006) co-founded the Capitol Ballet Company, which is the oldest predominately African American ballet company in the United States. In 1980, Jones also formed the Jones-Haywood Youth Dancers in order to provide more opportunities for younger dancers.

**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:**

Jones, Doris

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Doris--Interviews
Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Doris Jones

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Capitol Ballet Company

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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


Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/22/2011 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, July 25, 2003

Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones, Section A2003_169_001_001, TRT: 0:28:40
2003/07/25

Doris Jones slates the interview. She discusses her lack of knowledge about her family's background. She recounts a brief story that had been passed down on the maternal side of her family. Doris Jones shares her childhood memories of her parents, especially her father, Walter James Jones. She credits him as being her first dance teacher and explains that he was a self-taught musician who played the piano and the harmonica. She also describes her childhood in Boston, Massachusetts where she was an average student with little interest in school. In fact, her mother would allow her to miss school every Monday for several years in order to attend the theater. Jones also recounts her genesis as a dance teacher at the age of fifteen when she began to give tap dancing lessons at a classical dance academy in repayment for being allowed to study ballet there.

African American families--Massachusetts.
African American fathers--Massachusetts--Boston.
Dance--Study and teaching (Secondary)--United States.
Ballet--Study and teaching--Massachusetts--Boston.

Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones, Section A2003_169_001_002, TRT: 0:29:15

2003/07/25

Doris Jones discusses the origins of her interest in ballet. She explains that it took several years to find a teacher who was willing to take her as pupil. There were no ballet classes in Boston for African American girls at the time. She recalls meeting Claire Haywood one summer when she was a dance teacher at a summer camp in 1938 or 1939. Haywood convinced Jones to move to Washington, D.C. in order to seek more opportunities to teach children with an interest in becoming serious dance students. Jones mentions the influx of African Americans into Washington during World War II. She also mentions several neighborhoods in Washington and their histories. Doris Jones co-founded the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in 1941. Capitol Ballet Company grew of the school shortly thereafter as an opportunity for the students to perform around the area. Jones mentions several of her favorite students and their artistic achievements.

African Americans--Migrations--History--20th century.
Migration, Internal--Washington (D.C.)--History--20th century.
World War, 1939-1945--African Americans.
Dance schools--Washington (D.C.)
Historic districts--Washington (D.C.)
African American dancers--Washington (D.C)
Haywood, Claire.
Jones-Haywood School of Ballet (Washington, D.C.)
Capitol Ballet Company.
Rivera, Chita.

Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones, Section A2003_169_001_003, TRT: 0:31:00

2003/07/25

Doris Jones recalls the most difficult challenges of trying to run the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet. She describes the evolution of racial segregation within Washington D.C. over time. She describes her disappointment in education for black youth in Washington, D.C. Jones expounds on the differences between ballet and African dance. She recalls her experience
traveling to Moscow, Russia with Sandra Fortune, prima ballerina for the Capitol Ballet Company in 1972. She remains awestruck at the splendor and luxury of the Bolshoi Theatre. Doris Jones addresses whether she has regrets and expounds on what she would like her legacy to be.

Washington (D.C.)--History.
Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs.
Washington (D.C.)--Race relations.
Public schools--Washington (D.C.)
Riots--Washington (D.C.)
Cold War.
Ballet dancing--Competitions--Soviet Union.
Theaters--Russia (Federation)--Moscow.
African Americans--Conduct of life.
Capitol Ballet Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Doris Jones, Section A2003_169_001_004, TRT: 0:13:04
2003/07/25

Doris Jones narrates her personal photographs.