

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with H. Leslie Adams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Adams, Leslie, 1932-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with H. Leslie Adams,
Dates:	June 17, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:07:02).
Abstract:	Music professor and music composer H. Leslie Adams (1932 -) founded and served in the capacities of president, executive vice president and composer-in-residence for Accord Associates, Inc., and has served as the president and artist-in-residence for Creative Arts, Inc. since 1997. He has held numerous teaching appointments, including Florida A & M University and the University of Kansas at Lawrence. Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 17, 2004, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_081
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Composer, pianist, educator and arts advocate H. Leslie Adams, was born in Cleveland, Ohio on December 30, 1932. Adams attended the Cleveland public schools and graduated from Glenville High School. He studied voice, piano, and composition at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, where he earned his bachelor's of music degree in 1955. He went on to earn a master's degree in music from the California State University at Long Beach in 1967 and his Ph.D. from The Ohio State University in 1973. He also completed additional studies in composition with Edward Mattila, Eugene O'Brien, and Marcel Dick from 1978 to 1983.

Adams has worked as piano accompanist for ballet and other dance companies and choral music ensembles. He served as the associate musical director at Cleveland's Karamu House from 1964 to 1965 and became the musical director for the Kaleidoscope Players in Ration, New Mexico in 1967. Adams later returned to Karamu House as their composer in residence in 1979 and then served as guest composer at Cuyahoga Community College in 1980. He then served as composer-in-residence at the Cleveland Music School Settlement from 1981 to 1982, and was the founder and president of Accord Associates, Inc. for six years beginning in 1980, and the executive vice-president and composer-in-residence for Accord from 1986 to 1992. He has served as the president and artist-in-residence for Creative Arts, Inc. since 1997.

Adams held teaching positions at Soehl Junior High School, Linden, N.J., in the secondary schools of Raton, New Mexico, Florida A & M University, and at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. He is the recipient of numerous commissions, including those from the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the University of Kansas, and the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. He is the recipient of honors and awards from the National Association of Negro Women, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cleveland Foundation and the Jennings Foundation, among others.

He holds life memberships in Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Phi Delta Kappa, Pi Kappa Lambda, the American Choral Directors Association, and the American Guild of Organists. He has also served on the Advisory Council of the Musical Arts Association of the Cleveland Orchestra.

Adams resides in Cleveland's Glenville Community.

H. Leslie Adams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 17, 2004.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with H. Leslie Adams was conducted by Regennia Williams on June 17, 2004, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Music professor and music composer H. Leslie Adams (1932 -) founded and served in the capacities of president, executive vice president and composer-in-residence for Accord Associates, Inc., and has served as the president and artist-in-residence for Creative Arts, Inc. since 1997. He has held numerous teaching appointments, including Florida A & M University and the University of Kansas at Lawrence.

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:

Adams, Leslie, 1932-

Williams, Regennia (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

Adams, Leslie, 1932---Interviews
African Americans--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

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 H. Leslie Adams, June 17, 2004. 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 H. Leslie Adams, Section A2004_081_001_001, TRT: 0:31:01 ?

H. Leslie Adams was born on December 30, 1932 in Cleveland, Ohio. His mother, Jessie Manease, was born in Camden, Tennessee and attended Tuskegee Institute where she met George Washington Carver, who she described as having an unimpressive demeanor. After Tuskegee, she was hired as a domestic worker for the Briggs family, a wealthy family in Cleveland. Adams' father, Harrison Adams, Sr., was born in Urbana, Ohio. He served in the U.S. Army during World War I and went on to work for the postal service in Cleveland. In Cleveland, Adams attended Miles Standish Elementary, Empire Junior High and Glenville High School. Throughout his education, he received support for his musical development from teachers and his parents. He was particularly influenced by his high school choral teacher, John Howard Tucker, who exposed his classroom to classical and popular music and encouraged Adams to attend Oberlin College. Adams talks about his love for music and running a film series in college.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Leslie Adams, Section A2004_081_001_002, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

H. Leslie Adams was raised in a racially diverse and harmonious area in Cleveland, Ohio and remembers his childhood holiday traditions and visiting family friends on Sunday afternoon. He attended Antioch Baptist Church in Cleveland, and Glenville High School where he received a high quality education and had the opportunity to read classic literature and studied Spanish. He graduated in January of 1951, and after passing a rigorous audition process and music theory test, enrolled at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. Adams attended Oberlin in the 1950s, prior to the turbulence of the 1960s; he was engrossed by his music studies at the conservatory and had little interaction with the surrounding town. He remembers his professors; in Professor Herbert Elwell's music composition class Adams composed a song based on a Psalm. Adams attended weekly chapel at Oberlin, which featured speakers on various social and art-based issues; Adams remembers HistoryMaker Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus speaking at chapel.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Leslie Adams, Section A2004_081_001_003, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

H. Leslie Adams created and directed a ninety-minute production and sang in the Oberlin College Choir while at Oberlin College. His parents paid his tuition to Oberlin College, so he did not have to work during the school year. However, during his college breaks he worked as a postal worker to contribute to his education. After graduating from Oberlin in 1955, Adams moved to New York City, where a cousin, Frederick O'Neal, who started the American Negro Theater, lived. In New York, Adams worked as a typist and ballet accompanist, continued his musical studies, had a revue at Steinway Hall and Judson Hall and taught music in Linden, New Jersey. After a year, he returned to Cleveland, where he played piano for Karamu House and toured with the company on its only European tour. Adams went on to earn his M.A. degree from California State College at Long Beach. After he earned his degree, he moved to Raton, New Mexico, where he served as a chorus director for the town's public schools.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Leslie Adams, Section A2004_081_001_004, TRT: 0:29:31 ?

H. Leslie Adams began taught vocal music to junior and senior high school students in Raton, New Mexico immediately after completing his M.A. degree at California State College at Long Beach. When he began students were unenthused, but he was determined to turn the program around. He did extensive vocal testing on the students throughout the schools and, several months into the semester, restructured the program. He describes programs he put together with

the students and their reception in Raton; and explains his method for working with choirs. After a year, he left Raton to work as musical director for the six month nationwide tour of 'Lost in the Stars.' When the tour ended Adams taught briefly at Florida A & M University, then began his doctoral studies at The Ohio State University. There, he took course on historical musical notation and bibliography with Keith Mixter, and wrote his dissertation on high school music education. Adams was generally unengaged in the social movements of the 1950s and 1960s.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Leslie Adams, Section A2004_081_001_005, TRT: 0:30:55 ?

H. Leslie Adams taught at the University of Kansas while completing his dissertation at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. At Kansas, Adams taught a number of courses, including concert choir. For this course, he took students out into the community to given them more opportunities to perform beyond two end of semester concerts. Adams continued to teach at Kansas after earning his Ph.D. degree in 1973. He took a sabbatical in Bellagio, Italy, where he wrote a symphony. After returning, he shifted to administrative duties in Kansas, but soon decided to leave the university to compose full-tim. Adams returned to his hometown, Cleveland, Ohio, to work on his opera 'Blake,' which tells the story of a fugitive slave just prior to the Civil War, and was accepted into Yaddo, an artists' retreat in upstate New York. Adams founded Accord Associates in 1980 and completed 'Blake' in 1985. He explains how he promotes his music, and how the launch of Sputnik 1 impacted arts education.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Leslie Adams, Section A2004_081_001_006, TRT: 0:26:07 ?

H. Leslie Adams values artistic autonomy and therefore has chosen to seek few government grants. His beliefs about the way money impacts content also leads him to seek out independent news sources. Adams strongly supports women's right to abort a pregnancy and is an ally of the LBGTQ community; some of his papers are housed in the gay/lesbian archives at the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio. Adams reflects upon how religious traditions are built, offers commentary on American fundamentalism and expresses worry about hearing damage due listening to music too loudly. He describes his creative process and what he tries to convey through his music; and offers advice to young composers. Adams concludes by performing one of his compositions.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Leslie Adams, Section A2004_081_001_007, TRT: 0:10:47 ?

H. Leslie Adams narrates his photographs.