

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Doris Humphries

PERSON

Humphries, Doris

Alternative Names: Doris Humphries;

Life Dates: September 10, 1924-

Place of Birth: Chicago, Illinois, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Dancer; Dance Group Manager; Dance Instructor

Biographical Note

Dancer Doris Humphries was born in Chicago, Illinois, on September 10, 1924. While still a child, Humphries would mimic the dancers that she saw in the movies, and to reproduce the tapping sound of the tap dancers, she attached bottle caps to the soles of her shoes. At the age of eleven, Humphries began taking lessons from legendary choreographer Sadie Bruce; at fourteen, she took up rhythm skating with a group called The Musketeers. While attending Englewood

High School in Chicago, Humphries met up with her dancing partner, Junior; the two would go on to be known as Dinky and Junior.

Following their graduation from high school, the Junior and Humphries auditioned for Berle Adams of the prestigious William Morris Agency; he quickly signed them, and they began touring the United States dancing with bandleader Louis Jordan. As they toured, the duo performed with Sarah Vaughan, Billy Eckstein, and Dizzy Gillespie. In 1945, Humphries met Sergeant Hedrick Humphries, and the two were married the following year. Humphries went into retirement to raise her family, but after the birth of her third child, she returned to dancing, focusing on Latin dance. Continuing her training, Humphries enrolled in Jimmy Payne's Afro-Cuban dance class, where she met her next dance partner; the two created a duo known as Tony and Tanya Belle, with which they gained fame for their innovative coupling of Latin and soul.

In 1986, Humphries was awarded a grant from the City of Chicago to create an outreach program; her group, The Closet Performers, was an immediate success, with students in her classes ranging from age three to ninety-two. In 2004, Humphries again contributed to the dance education of Chicago residents by opening the Chicago Human Rhythm Project's Fourteenth Annual Dance Festival with an appearance as a panelist for a discussion on African American Women in Tap. In addition to her work with the City of Chicago, Humphries continued teaching ballroom, Latin, and tap dancing, at the South Shore Cultural Center for over ten years, as well as classes at Oak View Park Center and Moraine Valley College.

Related Entries

Englewood High School [STUDENTOF]
[\[from ? to ?\]](#)

Austin O. Sexton Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Brown W. Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Corpus Christi Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Lucy L. Flower Technical High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

[STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

South Shore Cultural Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to 1981]

Teacher

Oak View Park Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1975 to 1979]

Teacher

Moraine Valley College [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1998 to 2003]

Teacher