

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with McCoy Tyner

PERSON

Tyner, McCoy

**Alternative Names:** McCoy Tyner;

**Life Dates:** December 11, 1938-

**Place of Birth:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

**Work:** Bergenfield, NJ

**Occupations:** Jazz Pianist

## Biographical Note

Phenomenal jazz pianist McCoy Tyner was born December 11, 1938, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, of parents with roots in North Carolina. Tyner attended Martha Washington Grade School and Sulzberger Jr. High School. Tyner, with the encouragement of his teacher Ms. Addison and his mother, Beatrice Stephenson Tyner, began taking beginning piano lessons from a neighbor, Mr. Habershaw. Later, a Mr. Beroni taught Tyner classical piano. Although inspired by the music of Art Tatum and Thelonius Monk, it was

his neighborhood Philadelphia musicians that pushed Tyner's musical development. He engaged in neighborhood jam sessions with Lee Morgan, Bobby Timmons and Reggie Workman. Tyner was hand picked by John Coltrane in 1956, while still a student at West Philadelphia High School. Around this same time, Tyner converted to Islam.

After high school, Tyner toured with Bennie Golson and Art Farmer, and can be heard on their hit record, Killer Joe and the album Meet The Jazztet. In 1960, he became a part of John Coltrane's legendary quartet that included Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison. Later, the group included Eric Dolphy, Pharoah Sanders and others exploring themes of spirituality and African identity. Tyner can be heard on Africa Brass, A Love Supreme, My Favorite Things and Kulu Se' Mama. He also recorded as a leader on Impulse! Records' Inception, Night of Ballads, Blues, Live at Newport and several others.

Leaving Coltrane in 1965, Tyner played with a who's who of jazz greats including: Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Gary Bartz, Ron Carter, Billy Cobham, Roy Haynes, Stanley Clarke, Sonny Rollins, and many others. He can be heard on a number of albums, including: The Real McCoy, 1967, Asante, 1970, Sahara, 1972, Trident, 1975, The Greeting, 1978, Inner Voices, 1990, and Infinity, 1995, displaying his variety and flexibility as a jazz musician. An innovator, Tyner performed with strings on 1976's Fly With The Wind and with a big band on The Turning Point , 1991. With over eighty albums to his credit and five Grammy Awards, Tyner was nominated at the 45th Grammy Awards for Best Instrumental Jazz Recording for McCoy Tyner Plays John Coltrane: Live at the Village Vanguard, and in 2004, Tyner's Illuminations won a Grammy for Best Jazz Album, Individual or Group. Like John Coltrane, Tyner strives to elevate his listeners' consciousness.

Tyner's energetic style embraces African, Latin,

Eastern and bebop rhythms, which he plays in bright clusters. His block chords, pentatonic scales and modal structures have earned him international recognition among the top jazz pianists of all time. Tyner is the recipient of numerous honors including the National Endowment of the Arts' Jazz Master Award in 2002 and the 2003 Heroes Award from the Philadelphia Chapter of the Recording Academy. In 2005, Tyner received an honorary doctorate of music from Berklee College in Boston, Massachusetts.

## Related Entries

**Martha Washington Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Mayer Sulzberger Junior High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**West Philadelphia High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**diploma**

**West Philadelphia Music School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Granoff School of Music** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Mayer Sulzberger Middle School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

[EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

