

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joel Hall

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Hall, Joel
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Joel Hall,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 24, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:29:47).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Choreographer and dance instructor Joel Hall (1949 - ) co-founded the Chicago City Theatre Company, which later became the Joel Hall Dance Center. He has created over forty ballets, and has taught at several universities. His company has performed three seasons at the prestigious Joyce Theater in New York, and he has led the company on nine international tours, beginning with the Glasgow May Fest in 1985. Hall was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 24, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_238
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Joseph “Joel” Hall was born in Chicago, Illinois, on April 20, 1949. Hall began his dancing career in 1968 under the tutelage of Ed Parrish, and the following year, he moved to New York City, where he studied under Denise Jefferson. Returning to Chicago, he earned his B.A. degree in sociology from Northeastern Illinois University in 1972.

In 1974, Hall and Joseph Ehrenberg co-founded the Chicago City Theatre Company, which later became the Joel Hall Dance Center. Hall now serves as the artistic director and principal choreographer for the Joel Hall Dancers, and director and chief instructor of the training studio. Over the years, the Joel Hall Dancers have gained an international reputation and Hall has been widely acclaimed as a choreographer. His company has performed three seasons at the prestigious Joyce Theater in New York, and he has led the company on nine international tours, beginning with the Glasgow May Fest in 1985. Hall has created ballets for the Chicago City Ballet, the Zenon Dance Company in Minneapolis and Ballet Tennessee in Chattanooga, as well as choreographing the opera *The Pearl Fishers* at the Chicago Opera Theatre and Goldie Hawn's film, *Wildcats*. In 1991, Hall choreographed the 50th Anniversary presentation of Duke Ellington's musical *Jump for Joy*. In addition to these productions, he has created more than forty ballets for his own company.

Hall has also gained attention as an instructor of jazz dance. He has taught at Wayne State University, New York State University, Northern Illinois University, and Western Michigan University. He has also taught internationally, conducting classes in Liverpool, Glasgow, Inverness, Kirkcaldy, Belfast, and the United Kingdom. At the time of the interview, the Joel Hall Dance Center in Chicago offered 2004.170 more than 150 classes a week to students ranging from age three to adults.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Joel Hall was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 24, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Choreographer and dance instructor Joel Hall (1949 - ) co-founded the Chicago City Theatre Company, which later became the Joel Hall Dance Center. He has created over forty ballets, and has taught at several universities. His company has performed three seasons at the prestigious Joyce Theater in New York, and he has led the company on nine international tours, beginning with the Glasgow May Fest in 1985.

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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:**

Hall, Joel

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Hall, Joel--Interviews

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Choreographers--Interviews

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African American dance teachers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

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African American dancers--Interviews

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Rural-urban migration--United States

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Cabrini-Green Homes (Chicago, Ill.)

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Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs

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Runaways

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Children of alcoholics--United States

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Juvenile detention homes--Illinois--Chicago

---

Black Arts movement

---

New York (N.Y.)--Social life and customs

---

Beatty, Talley

---

Dance--Illinois--Chicago

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Ailey, Alvin

---

Robinson, Cleo Parker

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Prostate--Cancer

---

African American gay men--Interviews

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AIDS (Disease) and art--United States

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## **Occupations:**

Choreographer

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Dance Instructor

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ArtMakers

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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 Joel Hall, November 24, 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 2/5/2020 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 Joel Hall, Section  
A2004\_238\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:12 2004/11/24

Noted dancer and choreographer Joel Hall begins by describing his family background and later tells of his family's migration from the South. He also discusses his mother's decades-long institutionalization and its effect on him. Hall details his earliest years in Chicago. Hall describes the sights, sounds and smells of his Cabrini Green neighborhood and other anecdotes from his childhood.

Choreographers--Interviews.

African American dance teachers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American dancers--Interviews.

Rural-urban migration--United States.

Cabrini-Green Homes (Chicago, Ill.).

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs.

Runaways.

Children of alcoholics--United States.

Juvenile detention homes--Illinois--Chicago.

Black Arts movement.

New York (N.Y.)--Social life and customs.

Beatty, Talley.

Dance--Illinois--Chicago.

Ailey, Alvin.

Robinson, Cleo Parker.

Prostate--Cancer.

African American gay men--Interviews.

AIDS (Disease) and art--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Joel Hall, Section  
A2004\_238\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:15 2004/11/24

Joel Hall details his hardscrabble childhood in Cabrini Green in Chicago, explaining how decline in family fortunes due to his father's alcoholism led young Joel to run away from home and spend four years in a juvenile detention center. Hall explains how his incarceration stunted his educational development, and describes the positive effects of his enrollment at the Central YMCA Community College. Hall then explains how the rise of the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s inspired him to begin a career in dance and move to New York City.

Video Oral History Interview with Joel Hall, Section  
A2004\_238\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:35 2004/11/24

Joel Hall describes his experience living in New York City, and explains why he returned to Chicago to pursue his dancing career. He talks about opening the Chicago City Theater Company, an integrated troupe that eventually became the Joel Hall Dance Company. Hall discusses the great mix of talent in the Chicago dance community and the successes of his company. He also briefly discusses his mentor, choreographer Talley Beatty, and his influence upon Hall's dance career.

Video Oral History Interview with Joel Hall, Section  
A2004\_238\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:23 2004/11/24

Joel Hall details his experiences leading the Joel Hall Dance Company, recalling successes, naming talented dancers in the company, and reliving memorable performances from his three decades with the company. Hall then names some rising stars in Chicago dance and praises fellow choreographers Alvin Ailey and Cleo Parker Robinson.

Video Oral History Interview with Joel Hall, Section  
A2004\_238\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:22 2004/11/24

Joel Hall shares his many triumphs and some losses,

including a fire that destroyed his studio. Hall chronicles his battle against prostate cancer and a lifetime of prejudice against him as a gay black man. Hall also discusses how AIDS decimated the art community. Finally, Hall reflects on his life and career and narrates his personal photographs as they are recorded on videotape.