

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Donald White

PERSON

White, Donald, 1925-2005

Alternative Names: Donald White; Donald E. White

Life Dates: July 9, 1925-July 31, 2005

Place of Birth: Richmond, Indiana, USA

Residence: Cleveland, Ohio

Occupations: Cellist

Biographical Note

Retired Cleveland Orchestra cellist Donald White was a native of Richmond, Indiana. The middle of seven children, White started playing the cello when he was sixteen. After he was drafted into the United States Navy in 1943, White played bass tuba and peckhorn in the Navy band while continuing his cello studies; after leaving the U.S. Navy, he earned a music degree at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

In Chicago, White performed with an African American orchestra and the Chicago Civic Orchestra while studying cello with a member of the Chicago Symphony. Later, White studied privately in New York with Leonard Rose and Luigi Silva; he earned a fellowship from the University of Hartford, granting him the position of assistant principal cellist of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. White received his masters degree from the University of Hartford and worked four years with the University of Hartford Symphony Orchestra.

After a successful audition with Maestro George Szell, White was invited to join the Cleveland Orchestra in 1957; he was the first African American member of the orchestra. Before his retirement in 1995, White enjoyed a successful career with the orchestra, performing at Severance Hall in Cleveland and other venues throughout the world.

White and his wife, pianist, composer, and educator, Dolores White, lived in East Cleveland, Ohio, and raised two children, Diana and Darrow.

Donald White passed away on July 31, 2005, at the age of eighty.

Related Entries

Nicholson School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Richmond High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

H.S.

Roosevelt University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Cleveland Orchestra [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Cellist

Hartford Symphony Orchestra [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Assistant Principal Cellist

Sphinx Organization Inc. [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]