

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Oz Scott

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Scott, Oz
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Oz Scott,
Dates:	April 26, 2005 and October 2, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:22:07).
Abstract:	Stage director, television director, and television producer Oz Scott (1949 -) brought, "For Colored Girls Who Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf," by Ntozake Shange to Broadway. Scott has also produced or directed episodes of The Jeffersons, Archie Bunker's Place, The Cosby Show and 227, among many more. Scott was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 26, 2005 and October 2, 2005, in Culver City, California and Sherman Oaks, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_109
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Director and producer Oz Scott was born Osborne E. Scott, Jr. September 16, 1949 in Fortman Row, Virginia. His father was Army chaplain Brigadier General Osborne Scott, Sr. and his mother, Jean Sampson Scott, was the president of the Schomburg chapter of the African American Genealogical Society. Raised in Japan and Germany until he was twelve years old, Scott attended Baumholder

School and Bad Kreuznach American School. In Mt. Vernon, New York he attended Graham School, Pemberton School and graduated from Mt. Vernon High School in 1967. Starting at Friends World College, he transferred to Marlboro College where he started doing theatre before earning his B.A. from Antioch College in 1972. Already working with Back Alley Theatre and Arena Stage, he received an MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in 1974.

Scott began his theatrical career at Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage where he managed The Living Stage. In New York, Scott staged and took to Broadway, *for colored girls who considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf* by Ntozake Shange in 1977. He also directed Sonia Sanchez' *Sister Sonji*; Richard Wesley's *The Past is the Past*; and *Fences* by August Wilson. A director with writing skills, Scott started his television work in 1976 with *The Jeffersons* and *Archie Bunker's Place*. In the 1980's Scott directed episodes of *Hill Street Blues*, *Gimme a Break!* *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, *The Cosby Show*, *227*, *L.A. Law*, and *Dirty Dancing*. In the 1990s it was *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*, *Picket Fences*, *Party of Five*, *Chicago Hope*, *JAG*, *The Practice*, *Ally McBeal*, *Family Law*, *Time Cop*, *Get Real* and *Any Day Now*. Since 2000 he has directed *Soul Food*, *Strong Medicine*, *CSI*, *Ed*, *Lizzie McGuire*, *The Guardian*, *dr. vegas* and was both director and supervising producer to CBS TV's *The District*. Scott's movie credits include: *The Cheetah Girls* (2003), *Play'd A Hip-Hop Story* (2002), and *Crash Course* (1988).

Scott has received the NAACP Image Award, the Drama Desk Award, and a Village Voice Obie Award for off Broadway, Genesis Award and the Nancy Susan Reynolds Award. He serves on the board of directors of the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, the Deans Council for California State University at Northridge's College of Arts, Media and Communication. Scott directed the video that introduced Rev. Jesse L. Jackson to the 1988 Democratic National Convention and the Nelson Mandela Rally for Freedom at the Los Angeles Coliseum in 1990.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Oz Scott was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 26, 2005 and October 2, 2005, in Culver City, California and Sherman Oaks, California, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Stage director, television director, and television producer Oz Scott (1949 -) brought, "For Colored Girls Who Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf," by Ntozake Shange to Broadway. Scott has also produced or directed episodes of The

Jeffersons, Archie Bunker's Place, The Cosby Show and 227, among many more.

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:

Scott, Oz

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Scott, Oz--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Stage Director

Television Director

Television Producer

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers|EntertainmentMakers

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 Oz Scott, April 26, 2005 and October 2, 2005. The HistoryMakers® African American Video

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).

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 Oz Scott, Section
A2005_109_001_001, TRT: 0:28:15 2005/04/26

Oz Scott was born on September 16, 1949 in Hampton, Virginia, to Jean Sampson Scott and Osborne Scott. Scott's mother was born on January 31, 1926 in Zanesville, Ohio. A well-known genealogist, she traced her ancestry to the early 1600s, to the Mayflower, as well as to Native American lineage. Her father, Theodore Sampson, was a race car driver who taught auto mechanics at Wilberforce University. Scott's father was born on February 5, 1917 in Hampton, Virginia. He attended George P. Phenix Training School and became a youth minister at the age of fifteen. While attending Hampton Institute, he served as the president's aide, and enrolled in ROTC. After graduating in 1938, he attended Oberlin College to study theology alongside HistoryMaker Reverend Gardner Taylor. Scott's father also served as a chaplain in the U.S. Army, and was instrumental in establishing churches in Korea after the Korean Conflict. While stationed in Louisiana, he drew attention to racial

discrimination towards African American soldiers.

Video Oral History Interview with Oz Scott, Section
A2005_109_001_002, TRT: 0:29:29 2005/04/26

Oz Scott's parents met in Hampton, Virginia, and later earned their masters' degrees in education from Columbia University. Following his service as a chaplain in the U.S. Army, Scott's father was appointed by Joseph Copeland, president of City College of New York, to establish an Urban and Ethnic Studies Department, where he was colleagues with Leonard Jeffries. Scott's mother taught grade school in Larchmont, New York. Scott and his brother, Michael Scott, were raised in a number of places, including Shanks Village, New York; Mount Vernon, New York; Tokyo, Japan; and Baumholder and Bad Kreuznach, Germany. While stationed in Europe, Scott traveled extensively with his family. Growing up with unconventional parents, he learned to converse about current affairs and his spirituality. Scott's paternal grandfather, Ernest Scott, joined Scott's family in Germany after retiring from the U.S. Postal Service. Scott also recounts an amusing anecdote about Richard Pryor's time in the U.S. Army.

Video Oral History Interview with Oz Scott, Section
A2005_109_001_003, TRT: 0:29:05 2005/04/26

Oz Scott remembers his responsible personality as a young boy. While his mother underwent experimental cortisone treatment for a pituitary tumor in the 1960s, Scott learned to navigate the challenges that it posed to their family. He attributes his interest in music, theatre and his creativity to his mother. Scott enjoyed reading as a child, and his exposure to television and comedies while growing up influenced his work as a director and producer on comedies such as 'The Jeffersons'. While his father served as a chaplain in the U.S. Army, Scott attended Graham School in Mount Vernon, New York, military schools in Baumholder and Bad Kreuznach, Germany, public school in Pemberton, New Jersey, and Mount Vernon High School, where his teacher exposed him to Broadway plays such as 'Marat/Sade' at an early age. Influenced by his father's religious beliefs, Scott attended Mount Vernon Heights Congregational Church, where he

was active in the youth group.

Video Oral History Interview with Oz Scott, Section
A2005_109_001_004, TRT: 0:28:29 2005/04/26

Oz Scott attended Mount Vernon High School in Mount Vernon, New York, where he participated in the school council, played soccer, and joined a fraternity. Scott recalls race relations in Mount Vernon. After graduating from high school in 1967, he attended Friends World Institute in Long Island, and spent six months studying at Michoacan University in Morelia, Mexico. In search of a more structured academic program, Scott transferred to Marlboro College in 1968 to join the theatre program, and to Antioch College's satellite program in Washington, D.C. the next year. While there, he worked at local theatre companies, and took a year off to work at Arena Stage. Scott convinced the theatre program at Antioch to grant academic credits for his work experience, and graduated ahead of schedule in 1972. His science project report on the heavy metal content in fish caught in the Potomac River was overseen by environmental biologist Ellen Silbergeld and contributed to a ban on fishing in Washington, D.C.

Video Oral History Interview with Oz Scott, Section
A2005_109_002_005, TRT: 0:30:19 2005/10/02

Oz Scott graduated from Antioch College in 1972 and moved to New York City. Scott recalls his time as a cab driver, including when he had Sidney Poitier as a passenger. While working as a booking agent for Hospital Audiences Incorporated, he auditioned and was accepted to the directing program at New York University. While at NYU, Scott was mentored by Edgar White and Joseph Papp of the Public Theatre. Scott also took courses in film, but later decided to focus on the theatre program. While working on a play by Reginald VelJohnson for his senior thesis, Scott realized his calling as a director. After graduating in 1974, he collaborated with HistoryMaker Ntozake Shange and her sister, Ifa Bayeza, to compile Shange's poems into a play called 'For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When The Rainbow Is Enuf,' which premiered in 1976. During this time, he also met his future wife, Lynne Yearwood Scott, and directed a

documentary film set in New Orleans featuring gospel vocalist B.J. Crosby.

Video Oral History Interview with Oz Scott, Section
A2005_109_002_006, TRT: 0:29:49 2005/10/02

Oz Scott remembers being asked to direct his first Hollywood film in the late 1970s. The film, 'Bustin' Loose' from Universal Studios, starred Richard Pryor and Cicely Tyson and showcased Pryor's comedic style. Scott recalls casting the children who appeared in the film, many of whom had no prior acting experience, although a few went on to act professionally. As a director, Scott elicited and captured Pryor's improvisational ability in scenes like the one involving a pyromaniac child and the classic Ku Klux Klan scene. He reflects upon Pryor's career as a film actor and remembers directing Vincent Price in 'Bustin' Loose.' Around this time, Scott and Lynne Yearwood Scott married and had their first child, Osborne Yearwood Scott. Following 'Bustin' Loose,' Scott began his career in television, directing Norman Lear's 'Archie Bunker's Place,' and in the 1980s, his first episode of 'Hill Street Blues.'

Video Oral History Interview with Oz Scott, Section
A2005_109_002_007, TRT: 0:29:40 2005/10/02

Oz Scott directed classic television series, such as 'The Jeffersons' and 'Archie Bunker's Place.' He continued directing half-hour and one-hour television shows through the 1980s and 1990s, and his credits include 'Hill Street Blues,' 'The Cosby Show,' and 'Picket Fences.' During this time, Scott directed films such as 'Bustin' Loose,' the Boogedy Series, and 'Crash Course.' Scott describes the pace of television directing and the importance of ratings in Hollywood. While taking a break from Hollywood in the late 1980s, Scott joined HistoryMaker Lloyd Richards' National Playwrights Conference, directing plays such as 'Fences' and 'From the Mississippi Delta.' During HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's presidential campaign, Scott directed the video introducing Jackson's appearance at the 1988 Democratic National Convention. Scott also directed a rally for Nelson Mandela's visit to Los Angeles in 1990 and served on the board of the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science.

Video Oral History Interview with Oz Scott, Section
A2005_109_002_008, TRT: 0:30:06 2005/10/02

Oz Scott was invited by the National Playwrights Conference to participate in an exchange program with Russia, where he directed John Henry Redwood's 'The Old Settler' with a Russian and American cast that included HistoryMaker Lorraine Toussaint, C.C.H. Pounder, and Jeffrey Sams. Scott consulted with lawyers and doctors while directing shows such as 'Boston Legal' and 'Chicago Hope.' Scott also directed a motion-based platform ride for Seattle's Experience Music Project, where he brought singers James Brown and Bobby Byrd together. In reflecting upon his work as a director, Scott notes the importance of drawing upon lived experience and business knowledge as well as artistic vision. He shares his hope to someday to tell the stories of important African Americans such as Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Langston Hughes, George Washington Carver, and Booker T. Washington through his work as a director. Scott reflects upon his career, his legacy and his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Oz Scott, Section
A2005_109_002_009, TRT: 0:26:55 2005/10/02

Oz Scott describes the lack of funding for the arts and how artistic endeavors might be made profitable and self-sustaining. Scott and his wife, sculptor and artist Lynne Yearwood Scott, have three children, Robert, Osborne Yearwood and Brittany Scott. Scott describes how he would like to be remembered. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.