

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Maurice Hines, Jr.

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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>	Hines, Maurice
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Maurice Hines, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 8, 2006 and January 9, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006 and 2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:33:21).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Choreographer, entertainer, and stage director Maurice Hines, Jr. (1943 - ) received a Tony Award for his performance in 'Uptown...It's Hot!' Hines was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 8, 2006 and January 9, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_154
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Choreographer, dancer, actor and director Maurice Robert Hines, Jr. was born on December 13, 1943 in New York City. His parents were Alma Hines and Maurice Hines, Sr. He is the brother of the late jazz tap dancer and actor, Gregory Hines. A graduate of Jose Quintanos School for Young Professionals, Hines began studying tap dancing in New York City at age five at the Henry LeTang Dance Studio in 1948. LeTang realized his pupil's gift for dance and began choreographing numbers tailored for Hines and his younger brother Gregory.

In 1954, when Hines was 10 years old, he and Gregory appeared in the Broadway

musical comedy *The Girl in Pink Tights*. Following in the footsteps of the famed Nicholas brothers, they soon began appearing on stage throughout the country. They toured as the opening act for such headliners as Lionel Hampton and Gypsy Rose Lee. Their father joined the act as a drummer, and the threesome became known as Hines, Hines & Dad, performing to rave reviews in New York, Las Vegas and Europe. They made television appearances on *The Pearl Bailey Show*, *Hollywood Palace* and appeared 35 times on *The Tonight Show*.

In 1973, Hines began his solo career singing and dancing as Nathan Detroit in the hit musical National Touring Company of Guys and Dolls with Debbie Allen and Richard Roundtree. After his performance, Hines created a sensation in the hit Broadway musical *Eubie*, which opened at the Ambassador Theatre in New York on September 20, 1978 and closed October 7, 1979. The show also starred his brother Gregory and was choreographed by Henry LeTang. In 1981, Hines returned to Broadway with his performance in *Bring Back Birdie* with Chita Rivera. That same year, he also appeared in *Sophisticated Ladies*.

Turning his talents to the big screen, Hines made his film debut in 1984, in Francis Ford Coppola's *Cotton Club* and during that same time with Mercedes Ellington formed Ballet Tap USA, a dance company. In 1986, he conceived, directed, choreographed, and starred in the musical *Uptown...It's Hot!*. The show played for seventeen sold-out weeks in Atlantic City before moving to Broadway where Hines received a Tony Award nomination as Best Actor in a Musical. He went on to direct several theater productions including the National Tour of the musical *Harlem Suite* with leading ladies Jennifer Holiday, Stephanie Mills and Melba Moore and internationally the musical *Havana Night* in Cuba.

In 2006, Hines collaborated on a new Broadway dance musical, *Hot Feet*, with Maurice White, the creator of the renown R&B group Earth, Wind and Fire and also released a jazz album, *To Nat King Cole with Love*.

Hines resides in New York City.

Hines was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 9, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Maurice Hines, Jr. was conducted by Shawn Wilson on December 8, 2006 and January 9, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Choreographer, entertainer, and stage director Maurice Hines, Jr. (1943 - ) received a Tony Award for his

## **Restrictions**

### **Restrictions on Access**

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### **Restrictions on Use**

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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:**

Hines, Maurice

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Hines, Maurice --Interviews

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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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Entertainer

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Stage Director

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ArtMakers|EntertainmentMakers

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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 Maurice Hines, Jr., December 8, 2006 and January 9, 2007. The HistoryMakers® African

## 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 Maurice Hines, Jr., Section  
A2006\_154\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:15 2006/12/08

Maurice Hines, Jr. was born on December 13, 1943 in New York City to Alma Lawless Hines and Maurice Hines, Sr. His mother was born in Bermuda, and moved with her family to New York City's Harlem neighborhood. There, her mother was a building superintendent, and her father was an elevator operator. Hines' maternal family hailed from the West Indies, Ireland and Richmond, Virginia, where Hines' paternal grandparents also originated. His paternal grandmother, Ora Hines, was a Cotton Club showgirl. Hines' dance training began at New York City's Wally Wanger Dance Studio, where his maternal uncle funded his classes. At home, Hines taught his younger brother, Gregory Hines, to dance from the age of three years old. The brothers came under the tutelage of choreographer Henry LeTang, who brought them to see the Nicholas Brothers dance at the Apollo Theater. The pair excelled as tap dancers, and performed at venues in

Harlem and in Paris, France. With their father, a drummer, they formed the act Hines, Hines, and Dad.

Video Oral History Interview with Maurice Hines, Jr., Section  
A2006\_154\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:15 2006/12/08

Maurice Hines, Jr. and his younger brother, Gregory Hines, studied tap dancing with Henry LeTang in New York City. As children, they opened for singer Ruth Brown at Harlem's Apollo Theater, and performed in Cab Calloway's 'Cotton Club Revue' in Miami, where they first experienced segregation. In 1955, the brothers joined the cast of 'The Girl in Pink Tights' on Broadway. The show was a success, and their agent, Joe Glaser, sent them to Paris, France to perform at the Olympia Theatre. Hines recalls the respect afforded to African American performers in Europe. With Hines' mother acting as their business manager, their father learned to play the drums while Hines and his brother sang in their act, Hines, Hines and Dad. Johnny Carson featured the trio on his show, and they were increasingly invited to perform. When comedians began to refuse to follow their act, Ella Fitzgerald asked them to open for her in Las Vegas, Nevada. Hines also talks about tap dancers Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and John W. Bubbles.

Video Oral History Interview with Maurice Hines, Jr., Section  
A2006\_154\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:35 2006/12/08

Maurice Hines, Jr. and his brother, Gregory Hines, opened for Ella Fitzgerald at The Fabulous Flamingo in Las Vegas in 1955. They met actress Tallulah Bankhead while performing at the Moulin Rouge Hotel, the city's first integrated hotel. After performing in nightclubs together for several decades, Hines and his brother disbanded. Hines returned to New York City, and joined Debbie Allen, Richard Roundtree and Leslie Uggams in the all-black cast of 'Guys and Dolls.' In 1981, Hines moved to Los Angeles, and took over his brother's role in 'Sophisticated Ladies.' The pair reunited on the set of 'Eubie!', which was choreographed by their former dance instructor, Henry LeTang. Then, Gregory Hines went to Hollywood to pursue acting, and Hines continued in theater. The duo also improvised a scene in Francis Ford Coppola's film, 'The Cotton Club.' Hines went on to

create the show 'Hot Feet' with Earth, Wind and Fire's Maurice White, and to co-found the Ballet Tap USA company with dancer Mercedes Ellington.

Video Oral History Interview with Maurice Hines, Jr., Section  
A2006\_154\_001\_004, TRT: 0:13:06 2006/12/08

Maurice Hines, Jr. conceived, directed and choreographed the dance musical 'Hot Feet,' featuring dancers like Vivian Nixon, Wynonna Smith and Michael Balderrama, and music by Maurice White of Earth, Wind and Fire. He describes the production's positive reception from theater critics, as well the reactions of dancers Chita Rivera and Arthur Mitchell. Hines shares his perspective on critical reviews of Broadway shows, and talks about the need for more racial diversity among critics. Hines also describes the differences between the dancing styles of himself and his brother, Gregory Hines. Whereas Gregory Hines' style was similar to Savion Glover's method of hoofing, Hines' style was more balletic. Hines concludes this part of the interview by remembering his work on the set of the music video "I'll Be Good to You," from Quincy Jones' 'Back on the Block' album, where Hines and Ray Charles taught Jones choreography from the repertoire of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Video Oral History Interview with Maurice Hines, Jr., Section  
A2006\_154\_002\_005, TRT: 0:29:13 2007/01/09

Maurice Hines, Jr. parted ways with his brother, Gregory Hines, and returned to New York City in the early 1980s. However, once there, opera singer Leontyne Price encouraged Hines to return to show business. After solo performances at small venues like Reno Sweeney's cabaret nightclub, Hines took over his brother's role in 'Sophisticated Ladies,' and lent the show his more upbeat rhythm. Hines and his brother also appeared together in Francis Ford Coppola's film, 'The Cotton Club,' in which they performed a tap number choreographed by Henry LeTang. During this time, Hines performed with his company, Ballet Tap USA, at resort venues in the Catskill Mountains, like the Concord Resort Hotel and the Raleigh Hotel. He also created the musical 'Uptown... It's Hot' to celebrate the history of black entertainers. He starred in the show, and was nominated for a Tony Award. Hines

describes his tap choreography, and its similarity to that of Fayard Nicholas; and talks about marketing his musical, 'Hot Feet.'

Video Oral History Interview with Maurice Hines, Jr., Section  
A2006\_154\_002\_006, TRT: 0:29:56 2007/01/09

Maurice Hines, Jr. performed in 'Dreamgirls' alongside Jennifer Holliday, then Stephanie Mills and finally Melba Moore in the leading role. Hines then moved to Los Angeles with his partner, an attorney, and their adopted daughter. Later, while directing the music video for Quincy Jones' 'I'll Be Good to You,' he met the actor Djimon Hounsou. Hines also met dancer Bob Fosse at his 'Pippin' audition, where they had an altercation when Fosse made a racist remark. In the 1990s, Hines toured with dancer Savion Glover and the national company of 'Jelly's Last Jam,' directed by George C. Wolfe. Hines preferred choreography to acting, as he lacked training as an actor. He choreographed the Rockettes' 'The Great Radio City Spectacular' tour, and called attention to the lack of African American members. When the show ended, Hines traveled to Cuba to choreograph 'Havana Nights' for an all-Cuban company. Hines also remembers seeing 'Carmen Jones' at New York City's Rivoli Theatre when he and his brother were children.

Video Oral History Interview with Maurice Hines, Jr., Section  
A2006\_154\_002\_007, TRT: 0:29:14 2007/01/09

Maurice Hines, Jr. met musician Maurice White while they were both clients of the William Morris Agency. White expressed his interest in developing a musical based on the music of his band, Earth, Wind and Fire, and his agent asked Hines to consider a theatrical collaboration with White. Together, Hines and White conceived of 'Hot Feet,' a dance musical version of the film 'The Red Shoes.' Hines also describes the career of his mentor, choreographer Joe Layton, whom Hines met during his audition for the musical, 'Bring Back Birdie.' Hines recalls the early careers of African American dance greats like Carmen De Lavallade, Katherine Dunham, Judith Jamison, Debbie Allen and Mercedes Ellington. In this part of the interview, he reflects upon the impact of his brother, Gregory Hines' death; the development of his



spirituality; and his career accomplishments, including his performances in Francis Ford Coppola's 'The Cotton Club' and on 'The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson.'

Video Oral History Interview with Maurice Hines, Jr., Section  
A2006\_154\_002\_008, TRT: 0:23:47 2007/01/09

Maurice Hines, Jr. remembers his early challenges as an entertainer, when he and his brother, Gregory Hines, performed between five and nine shows each day at nightclubs throughout the United States and Canada. He reflects upon his mother's support, as she was instrumental in preserving the bond between Hines and his brother. Following his brother's death, Hines founded the Maurice and Gregory Hines Performing Arts Center in Columbus, Ohio to preserve his and brother's legacies. He also served as the artistic director of Columbus' Lincoln Theatre. Hines concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.