Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bertha Hope

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616
info@thehistorymakers.com  www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Hope, Bertha

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope,

Dates: November 1, 2007, November 29, 2007


Physical Description: 8 Betacam SP videocassettes (3:58:44).

Abstract: Jazz pianist Bertha Hope (1936 - ) is a jazz pianist and leader of the Bertha Hope Trio. She served as an artist-in-residence under the auspices of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and is the leader of a tribute ensemble, ELMOllenium, and the Elmo Hope Project in honor of her late husband and jazz musician, Elmo Hope. Hope-Booker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 1, 2007, November 29, 2007, in New York, New York, New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2007_315

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Jazz pianist Bertha Hope-Booker was born on November 8, 1936, to Corinne Meaux and Henry Rosemond. Raised in western Los Angeles, California, Hope-Booker attended Emanuel Arts High School. As a youth, she performed in numerous Los Angeles clubs. Hope-Booker studied piano at Los Angeles Community College and later received her B.A. degree in early childhood education from Antioch College.

In her youth, Hope-Booker played music with and learned from other young musicians in her neighborhood. Some of them became famous later, including Richie Powell and Elmo Hope, the latter becoming her husband in 1957. She moved with Elmo Hope to the Bronx, New York, where she worked at a telephone company during the day while performing at night. After her husband’s passing in 1967, she continued to present his music and remained an active force in improvised music within the New York jazz scene. Hope-Booker served as an artist-in-residence under the auspices of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Through this program, she performed in statewide New Jersey music workshops with Dizzy Gillespie, Frank Foster, Nat Adderley and Philly Joe Jones.

Hope-Booker later married Walter Booker, Jr., and the two worked to keep the music of Elmo Hope alive through Hope-Booker’s tribute ensemble called ELMOllenium and The Elmo Hope Project. She also plays with another group, Jazzberry Jam. In addition, Hope-Booker is the leader of The Bertha Hope Trio, which has toured extensively throughout Japan. She is a composer and arranger with several recordings under her name, including In Search of Hope and Elmo’s Fire (Steeplechase); Between Two Kings (Minor Records) and her latest on the Reservoir label, Nothin’ But Love. Hope-Booker has also taught an advanced jazz ensemble at The Lucy Moses...
School and an Introduction to Jazz program at Washington Irving High School in New York City, which was sponsored by Bette Midler. The Seattle-based trio, New Stories, has recorded a CD of Hope-Booker's music entitled, Hope Is In the Air.

Bertha Hope-Booker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 1, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Bertha Hope was conducted by Adrienne Jones on November 1, 2007, November 29, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 8 Betacam SP videocassettes. Jazz pianist Bertha Hope (1936 - ) is a jazz pianist and leader of the Bertha Hope Trio. She served as an artist-in-residence under the auspices of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and is the leader of a tribute ensemble, ELMOllenium, and the Elmo Hope Project in honor of her late husband and jazz musician, Elmo Hope.

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:

Bertha Hope

Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer)

Burghela, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:
African Americans--Interviews
Bertha Hope--Interviews

African American jazz musicians--Interviews.

African American entertainers--Interviews.

African American artists as teachers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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


Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 7/22/2011 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.
Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bertha Hope

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage, November 1, 2007, November 29, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_001_001, TRT: 0:29:07
2007/11/01

Bertha Hope-Booker reminisces about her childhood in Los Angeles, California, including her earliest memory of moving from New York to Los Angeles to meet her grandparents when she was three years old. She remembers her father had a summer job as a Pullman Porter and compares the older part of Los Angeles to the newer neighborhoods, where African Americans began to move. Hope-Booker notes that African Americans lived in the Vernon-Central neighborhood of South Los Angeles near the Dunbar Hotel. Hope-Booker then discusses her life inside the Dunbar Hotel and mentions meeting boxer, Jack Johnson, and singer, Marianne Anderson. She delves into the racial segregation, in particular that Dunbar Hotel was the only lodging available for African Americans. Hope-Booker closes this segment describing the layout of her parent’s home in West Los Angeles near the University of Southern California and her father’s experiences in the Spanish-American War.

African American Families--California--Los Angeles.
African American life--California.
Segregation--California.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_001_002, TRT: 0:30:29
2007/11/01

Bertha Hope-Booker reflects on her family history and how she became interested in jazz. Hope-Booker discusses her father's performance for heads of state from 1915 to the Great Depression; his tour across the country singing spirituals on the Chitlin Circuit; and his acting career in movies with Walter Pincham. She expounds on her mother's career as a homemaker, love for dancing, and her involvement in the local community. Hope-Booker remembers her mother grew their own food and shared it with the neighborhood. Her mother was a leader in the neighborhood watch system during World War II. She then recalls her musical influences, including her mother playing the Metropolitan Opera and jazz programs on the radio, taking piano lessons from Richard Powell, and the music and jazz programs at school. She closes the interview tape identifying the difference between the genres of jazz music.

African American actors--movies.
African American mothers.
African American fathers.
African American families--Social life and customs.
World War, 1939-1945.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_001_003, TRT: 0:29:11
2007/11/01

Bertha Hope-Booker recounts her family life. She recalls the influence of the only two African American women teachers in her school district, and their influence on the African American students in the neighborhood. She describes how she always wanted to become a musician since she was three years-old. Hope-Booker identifies the instruments she played, including the piano, violin, viola, cello, classical percussion. Hope-Booker believes her spiritual life was instrumental to her music career. Hope-Booker majored in music at Los Angeles Community College, but did not complete her degree. However, later
in her life she received a degree in early childhood music education from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She ends the interview tape sharing how she met her first husband, Elmo Hope, at the Troubadour Club and was married in 1957.

Music--California--Los Angeles.
African Americans--Education, Higher.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_001_004, TRT: 0:29:12 2007/11/01

Bertha Hope-Booker talks about her musical discussions with Henry Louis, who was the first conductor of Los Angeles Philharmonic. She recalls how they practiced scales together, and when she attended rehearsals of his Bebop band with Max Roach, Clifford Brown, and Harold Land. In 1956, a car accident killed several members of the band. Hope-Booker then explains how to define Bebop music and the generations of musicians who evolved through those genres, including Elmo Hope, Thelonious Monk, and John Coltrane. Hope-Booker describes the economic and historical factors that contributed to the break away from swing and big bands music. She concludes the interview tape by sharing her perspective on the role of individualism among African American musicians, how the dynamics of the audience changed, and how people first learned of jazz music in their houses.

Music--California--Los Angeles.
Bebop (Music).
Music--Economic aspects.
African American jazz musicians--California--Los Angeles.
Hope, Elmo.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_002_005, TRT: 0:29:12 2007/11/01

Bertha Hope-Booker shares her experiences at Los Angeles Community College and the friendships she developed with Bud Powell, Elmo Hope, and Thelonius Monk. She discusses the difference between learning music at school and from playing in bands. In addition, she says that it is important to have dedicated band and music teachers in educational institutions. Hope-Booker also identifies the role of the music industry in homogenizing an individual's playing style and points to the importance of artists' interpretation of music as opposed to just reading the sheet music. Hope-Booker ends the interview tape reminiscing about the evolution of her husbands' musical style.

Los Angeles Community College District.
Music--Instruction and study.
Music and society--United States.
Hope, Elmo.


Bertha Hope-Booker discusses her marriage and the birth of her first child. She moved to Bronx, New York and describes specific places in the city including Phipps Houses, a social experiment to keep people in their homes during the Great Depression in Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan. Hope-Booker shares her work experience for a telephone company as a day job, and at night, she worked with Jimmy Castor of the Moments, filling in for her husband at shows. She concludes this interview section discussing her involvement with drugs.
beginning in the early 1960s.
African American families--New York (State).
African American--Social life and customs--New York.
African American musicians--New York (State).

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_002_007, TRT: 0:29:20
2007/11/29

Bertha Hope-Booker discusses the drug subculture and the difference between living in Los Angeles and New York. She experienced a culture shock when she moved to Bronx, New York, because of the spatial confinement. She briefly discusses her drug addiction in which the drugs affected her marriage. Hope-Booker describes her self-imposed process of quitting heroin. Both of her husbands, Elmo Hope and Walter Booker, Jr. influenced her musical style. She discusses the El Mollelnium Tribute group, honoring Elmo Hope, and the Bertha Hope Trio. She recounts her involvement with the New Jersey State Council of the Arts; performing with musicians and singers, Sarah Vaughan, Rachelle Ferrell, Philly Joe Jones, Frank Foster, and Dizzy Gillespie; and her work with Nat Adderley at a school in Italy. Hope-Booker ends the interview with a discussion of the healing power of music for the soul.

Drugs & society (New York, N.Y.).
Hope, Elmo.
Elmo Hope Trio.
Musical groups.
Booker, Jr., Walter.

Video Oral History Interview with Bertha Hope, Section A2007_315_002_008, TRT: 0:30:50
2007/11/29