Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ghalib Ghallab

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers®
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Creator: Ghalib Ghallab

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab,

Dates: November 3, 2007

Bulk Dates: 2007

Physical Description: 6 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:41:26).

Abstract: Jazz pianist Ghalib Ghallab (1950 - ) formed the Ghalib Ghallab Experience, a jazz band that performs in Las Vegas, Nevada at such venues as Caesar's Palace. Ghallab has recorded many albums including Milestone in My Life. Ghallab was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 3, 2007, in Las Vegas, Nevada. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2007_320

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Jazz pianist Ghalib Ghallab was born on July 25, 1950 in Chicago, Illinois to Juanita and Kay Thomas. Ghallab attended Harlan High School on Chicago’s south side, playing tuba in the marching band and listening to such jazz stars as Ramsey Lewis and George Shearing. In 1968, Ghallab graduated from high school and attended the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago, Illinois, where he took lessons from the world-renowned pianist Willie Pickens.

After a period in the United States military, Ghallab relocated to San Francisco, California, studying music at Napa Junior College and San Francisco State University. He also became involved in the local music scene, performing with such luminaries as McCoy Tyner and Ahmad Jamal and spending hours listening to jazz at the Keystone Korner Club. In 1980, Ghallab released his first record, an LP entitled "Morning Sunrise", which explored the sounds of jazz fusion. In 1985, Ghallab released "Milestone in My Life", showcasing the influence of R&B in his work. The following year, he married Toya Ghallab, and soon returned to Chicago. Ghallab spent much of the rest of the 1980s in Chicago, performing in The Back Room, a local jazz club, alongside artists Paul Taylor and Daryl Jones.

Ghallab performed in Las Vegas for the first time in 1989, drawing audiences that included Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and James Brown and performing at a multitude of venues, including the Jazz Underground and Aladdin Hotel. He eventually moved to Las Vegas, forming the Ghalib Ghallab Experience alongside his middle son, Jihad Ghallab, a drummer, and bass player Blaise Sison. The group performs throughout Las Vegas, in such venues as Caesar’s Palace. Ghallab lives in Las Vegas and has three children, Ghalib II, Jihad, and Khalid.

Ghalib Ghallab was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 3, 2007.
Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ghalib Ghallab was conducted by Jacques Lesure on November 3, 2007, in Las Vegas, Nevada, and was recorded on 6 Betacam SP videocassettes. Jazz pianist Ghalib Ghallab (1950 - ) formed the Ghalib Ghallab Experience, a jazz band that performs in Las Vegas, Nevada at such venues as Caesar's Palace. Ghallab has recorded many albums including Milestone in My Life.

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:

Ghallab, Ghalib
Lesure, Jacques (Interviewer)
Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Ghalib Ghallab--Interviews
African American jazz musicians--Interviews
African American pianists--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 8/15/2011 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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage, November 3, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section A2007_320_001_001, TRT: 0:28:48 2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab discusses his family's background and answers the interview slating questions, detailing his favorite food, color, season, and vacation destination. Ghallab has traced his maternal lineage back to the antebellum period and notes that one of his maternal ancestors was a white slave owner who manufactured pianos on his plantation. He describes his childhood and his
experiences growing up in a racially mixed community located on the West Side of Chicago, Illinois. As a child, Ghallab was not very studious, but remembers several teachers who served as mentors for him. He distinctly remembers being allowed to bang on the family piano when he was just a toddler and recalls his first experience as an entertainer when he performed as Hansel in the school play "Hansel and Gretel". Ghallab enjoyed the praise and encouragement he received due to that performance and began to explore music and entertainment as he matured.

West Side (Chicago, Ill.)--History--20th century.
Chicago (Ill.)--Social conditions--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section A2007_320_001_002, TRT: 0:29:09 2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab mentions his three siblings and describes the religious background of his family. They were Lutheran and often attended church on Chicago's West Side. Ghallab recalls being inquisitive as a youth on the subject of religion and mentions studying Buddhism while in the military. He describes his high school experiences. Ghallab remembers being exposed to a variety of musical artists, due to his father's eclectic taste, but being immediately drawn to jazz. He was involved in extracurricular activities and played several musical instruments in the band. Ghallab mentions his parents' preference that he and his siblings date other children whose families were in the church. In order to avoid confrontations with gangs in Chicago, Ghallab moved to Detroit, Michigan to live with his biological father for about two years. He returned to Chicago and returned to his former high school before dropping out to join the United States Air Force.

Gangs--Illinois--Chicago.
African American youth--Illinois--Chicago--Social conditions.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section A2007_320_001_003, TRT: 0:29:11 2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab discusses his work experience prior to the military. Ghallab recalls his job at Carson's, a clothing store in Chicago, as a valuable experience. Due to his young age and then his position in the military, Ghallab did not consider becoming very active in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. He remembers the social climate of Chicago during this time and community activism in the form of the Contract Buyers League. Ghallab does not recall much overt racism in the Air Force. He returned to Chicago after being discharged and worked as an aquatics instructor at the YMCA. Ghallab describes the life transition he experienced upon having his first child and moving to the San Francisco Bay Area. He returned to school and helped to form the Black Student Union at Napa Valley Junior College. Ghallab mentions the tendency for aspiring artists to add gravitas to their work as they mature and recalls encountering pianist Ahmad Jamal.

Chicago (Ill.)--History.
Contract Buyers League.
United States.--Air Force--African Americans.
Jamal, Ahmad, 1930-.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section A2007_320_001_004, TRT: 0:28:57 2007/11/03
2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab continues to discuss jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal and recounts the fable of the Hawk and the Rabbit. Ghallab cites this story and the encounter with Jamal as being life-altering. He describes unraveling the meaning of the fable. After their meeting, Ghallab ceased his consumption of alcohol and purchased as many of Jamal's albums as possible. He became consumed with music and eventually lost his job. This was of no consequence to Ghallab because his only ambition was to master his skills and become a great jazz pianist. He began practicing for hours every day in order to improve. Ghallab moved back to Chicago in 1976 and worked as a music teaching assistant while performing around Chicago. He recalls that disco was gaining popularity at the time. Ghallab shares how he chose his Muslim name, explaining its significance and meaning. He credits his religious faith for his personal and musical maturation.

Jamal, Ahmad, 1930-.
African American jazz musicians.
Jazz musicians--Illinois--Chicago.
Names, Personal--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section A2007_320_001_005, TRT: 0:26:25

2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab remembers meeting his wife, Toya, on Father's Day 1980. The couple married in 1986, and Ghallab credits his wife's support for his success as a husband, father, and musician. He spent much of the 1980's touring Europe as a performer. Ghallab emphasizes his love of travel and his belief the human desire to be entertained is universal. He discusses having an epiphany regarding Las Vegas and his career. Ghallab investigated the opportunities available in Las Vegas and discovered he could make a comparable amount of money there to what he had made previously traveling the world. Ghallab and his family relocated to Las Vegas where he honed the craft of his music and the skill of entertaining an audience. He mentions his son Jihad joining his band the night he graduated from high school. Ghallab notes his support of the American Society of Muslims, headed by Imam Warith D. Muhammad.

African American families--Nevada--Las Vegas.
Jazz musicians--Nevada--Las Vegas.
Music--Vocational guidance.
Islam--United States--History--20th century.
Muhammad, Warith Deen, 1933-2008.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section A2007_320_001_006, TRT: 0:18:56

2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab answers philosophical questions. He provides his perspective on African American life and music. He believes his legacy is using the medium of music as a form of communication, and he offers advice to aspiring musicians, encouraging them to become as educated about every aspect of the entertainment industry as possible. Ghallab concludes the interview by narrating his personal photographs and event memorabilia.

African American religious thought and life.
Music--Vocational guidance.
Music--Philosophy and aesthetics.