



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Battle

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Robert Battle
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Battle,
Dates:	August 27, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	2 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:00:17).
Abstract:	Dancer and choreographer Robert Battle (1972 -) is a dancer, a choreographer and the third artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Battle was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 27, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_107
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dancer and choreographer Robert Louis Battle was born on August 28, 1972 in Jacksonville, Florida to Marie Battle. Three weeks after his birth, Battle was adopted by his great-uncle Willie Horne. He was raised by Horne and his daughter Dessie Horne. Battle started dancing in high school and graduated from the New World School of Arts in Miami, Florida. He went on to attend The Julliard School, where he graduated in 1994. Battle joined Parsons Dance Company where he performed and choreographed for the next seven years. During this time, Battle also choreographed his first piece for an Alvin Ailey Foundation dance company; the piece was entitled "Mood Indigo" and was performed by the Ailey II Company in 1999.

In 2001, Battle left Parsons to found Battleworks Dance Company, a company he directed for the next nine years. During this time, Battle developed a close relationship with the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, choreographing his first piece for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, "Juba", in 2003, and working alongside Judith Jamison and hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris to create "Love Stories" in 2004. He continued to provide material for the group and conduct workshops at the Alvin Ailey School from 2006 until 2008. In 2010, Battle's work with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater culminated in the announcement by Judith Jamison, artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, that Battle would succeed her as the company's artistic director in July of 2011.

Battle was named as one of the Masters of African American Choreography by the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in 2005, and has received numerous other awards for professional excellence. He has performed or choreographed for venues such as the Joyce Theater, the American Dance Festival, the Dance Theater Workshop, and the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Robert Battle was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 27, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Battle was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 27, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 2 Betacam SP videocassettes. Dancer and choreographer Robert Battle (1972 -) is a dancer, a choreographer and the third artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

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:

Battle, Robert

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Battle, Robert--Interviews

Choreographers--Interviews

African American dancers--Interviews

African American dance teachers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Alvin Ailey American Dance Center

Battleworks Dance Company, Alvin Ailey American Dance Center

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

ArtMakers

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 Robert Battle, August 27, 2010. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/22/2011 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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage, August 27, 2010

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Battle, Section A2010_107_001_001, TRT: 0:30:36
2010/08/27

Robert Battle slates the interview and discusses his knowledge of his family's background. He describes the circumstances of his adoption by his great uncle Willie Horne, a man Battle refers to as his father. Battle recalls his childhood and being captivated by the pastor's sermon every Sunday. Before he developed his love for the performing arts, Battle thought he might become a minister because they were so charismatic. He describes the dangers of his neighborhood in Miami, Florida. As a child, Battle was quite serious about music; he studied piano, played clarinet, and sang in chorus. Battle began to study dance seriously when he was fourteen. After his freshman year at a public high school, he transferred to New World School of the Arts, a performing arts high school in Miami. In 1990, Battle entered The Julliard School to study dance on full scholarship. He remembers it as a high pressure, yet rewarding environment.

African American families--Florida--Miami.

African American churches--Florida--Miami.

Riots--Florida--Miami--History--20th century.

Performing arts high schools--Florida--Miami.

Performing arts--Study and teaching (Higher)--New York (State)--New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Battle, Section A2010_107_001_002, TRT: 0:29:41
2010/08/27

Robert Battle describes how he came to be involved with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He recalls the inspiration for one of his first pieces, "Takademe". He states he became interested in choreography quite early in his career. Battle recounts his professional dance career with the Parsons Dance Company from 1994 until 2001. That year, he founded his own company, Battleworks Dance Company. He explains the financial difficulty of the first year and the loyalty and devotion of the first dancers with Battleworks. He chronicles his relationship with Judith Jamison, who had been artistic director for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater since Ailey's death in 1989. Battle details the interview process for the position of artistic director of the company and his decision to disband Battleworks when he was chosen for the position with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Kathak (Dance)--India.

Parsons Dance Company.

Battleworks Dance Company.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Ailey, Alvin.

Jamison, Judith.