

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Sylvia Waters

PERSON

Waters, Sylvia , 1940-

Alternative Names:

Life Dates: January 22, 1940-

Place of Birth: New York, New York

Residence:

Occupations: Dance Group Manager; Dancer

Biographical Note

Dance group manager and dancer Sylvia Waters was born in Harlem New York on January 22, 1940. Her parents were Benjamin Franklin Waters and Britannia Rachel Waters. She began dancing at Edward Stitt Junior High School and joined an after school dance group when she was twelve years old. She went on to attend The Julliard School, where she studied with Martha Graham, Jose Limon, and Anthony Tudor. She received her B.A. degree from Julliard in 1962 and continued her study at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance. In 1964, Waters danced with Donald McKayle's dance company and toured Europe performing in Langston Hughes' "Black Nativity." Subsequently, Waters moved to Paris, France for three years, where she appeared on television and danced with the Paris Opera Ballet under Michael Descombey.

Waters performed at the 1968 Summer Olympics located in Mexico City, Mexico in Maurice Bejart's "Ballet of the Twentieth Century." Alvin Ailey's "Revelations" was also performed at the event. Upon her return to the United States, Waters began touring as a principal dancer with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. In 1974, the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble, later renamed Ailey II, was founded in order to provide a bridge for Ailey dance students into the professional world. A year after its creation, Waters became the artistic director. Ailey II has since toured all over the country as one of the most successful dance companies in the United States.

Waters has received numerous awards, including an honorary doctorate from the State University of New York at Oswego, the Dance Magazine Award, Syracuse University's Women of Distinction Award, and the Legacy Award from the Twentieth Annual International Association of Blacks in Dance Festival. She has also served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and the

New York State Council on the Arts and was a guest lecturer at Harvard University in 2001.

Sylvia Waters was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 27, 2010.

Related Entries

Waters, Britannia Rachel Hall [CHILD_OF]
Mother

Waters, Benjamin Franklin [CHILD_OF]
Father

PS 186 Harlem [STUDENT_OF]
[from ? to ?]

Edward W. Stitt Junior High School [STUDENT_OF]
[from ? to ?]

Evander Childs High School [STUDENT_OF]
[from ? to ?]

The Juilliard School [STUDENT_OF]
[from ? to 1962]

B.S.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater [EMPLOYEE_OF]
[from 1968 to ?]

Dancer

Ailey II [EMPLOYEE_OF]
[from 1975 to ?]

Artistic Director

National Endowment for the Arts [MEMBER_OF]
Panelist