

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vincent Chancey

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Chancey, Vincent
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Vincent Chancey,
Dates:	October 22, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:54:57).
Abstract:	Musician Vincent Chancey (1950 -) was a professional jazz French horn player. He played in the Sun Ra Arkestra, and later recorded albums like <i>Welcome Mr. Chancey</i> and <i>Next Mode</i> with his own band. Chancey was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 22, 2013, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_291
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Musician Vincent Chancey was born on February 4, 1950 in Chicago, Illinois. In junior high school, Chancey played the cornet, trumpet and flugelhorn. However, after hearing the French horn during rehearsals, he switched to the French horn. While performing with his high school band, Chancey was active with local musical groups like the Giles Yellow Jackets, the St. Andrews Hornets and the Des Plaines Vanguard competitive drum and bugle corps. He went on to attend and receive his B.A. degree from the Southern Illinois University School of Music in 1973.

Upon graduation, Chancey was awarded a National Education Association grant to study under jazz musician Julius Watkins, a renowned French horn player. In 1976, he played professionally for Sun Ra Arkestra, where he worked to incorporate the French horn as a jazz instrument, which he would do throughout the remainder of his career. From 1978 until 1984, Chancey worked with the Carla Bley Band. Then, in 1984, he joined Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, where he was featured on all of the group's nine recordings. Chancey later worked with Dave Douglas in the 2000's. He was also a member of the David Murray Big Band, which included him on five of its CDs. Chancey went on to perform with a number of other artists, including Ashford and Simpson, Melba Moore, Peggy Lee, Maxwell, Aretha Franklin, Cassandra Wilson, Freddy Jackson, The Winans, Elvis Costello, Brandy, Charlie Haden Liberation Orchestra, Dave Douglas, and Diana Krall. He also performed with classical groups such as the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Pan American Symphony, the One World Symphony, the Zephyr Woodwind Quintet, and the Netherlands Opera. In all, Chancey recorded with various artists on more than 300 albums, CDs and soundtracks.

In 1993, Chancey released his first solo album, *Welcome Mr. Chancey*; and, in 1998, his second album, *Next Mode*. Later, Chancey released the album *LEGenDES Imaginaires*. In 2000, he was asked to play the French horn at Pope John Paul II's eightieth birthday concert at the Vatican.

Vincent Chancey was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 22, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Vincent Chancey was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on October 22, 2013, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Musician Vincent Chancey (1950 -) was a professional jazz French horn player. He played in the Sun Ra Arkestra, and later recorded albums like *Welcome Mr. Chancey* and *Next Mode* with his own band.

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:

Chancey, Vincent

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Chancey, Vincent --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Musician

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

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Vincent Chancey, October 22, 2013. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 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

Video Oral History Interview with Vincent Chancey, Section A2013_291_001_001, TRT: 1:30:35 ?

Vincent Chancey was born on February 4, 1950 in Chicago, Illinois to Frances Page Watson and Cleo Chancey. His parents divorced shortly after he was born, and his father moved to Oklahoma. In 1953, his mother suffered a nervous breakdown, and Chancey and his five older siblings were placed in foster care. His foster parents, Eleanor Agins and naval ordnance plant worker Claudell

Agins, lived in a basement apartment on Chicago's West Side. There, Chancey was physically abused by his foster mother on a daily basis. After his mother remarried, she tried to regain custody of Chancey and his siblings, but they remained with the foster family out of fear of reprisal. During this time, Chancey joined a Cub Scouts pack, where he heard the bugle played for the first time. He was inspired to learn to play brass music, and later became a professional French hornist. Additionally, Chancey talks about his brothers and sisters, including foundation executive Cleo F. Wilson and his three foster siblings.

Video Oral History Interview with Vincent Chancey, Section A2013_291_001_002, TRT: 2:30:51 ?

Vincent Chancey moved with his foster family to the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois in 1959. They were the first African American household on the block, and many of their white neighbors moved away in the following years. Chancey began studying piano at ten years old at the Chicago Musical College. He then joined the Boy Scouts of America, where he learned to play the coronet, trumpet and flugelhorn. Chancey went on to play the mellophone in his middle school band, despite the discouragement of his teacher, who told him that his dental alignment made him unfit to play brass instruments. At thirteen years old, he joined the all-black Golden Eagles drum and bugle corps as a soprano bugler. He was one of the corps' youngest members, and quickly began to outperform his older bandmates. In 1964, Chancey enrolled at the all-black Parker High School. He joined the concert band as a French hornist, despite being told by his white music teacher that his lips were too big for the mouthpiece.

Video Oral History Interview with Vincent Chancey, Section A2013_291_001_003, TRT: 3:29:52 ?

Vincent Chancey became interested in jazz music during his freshman year at Parker High School in Chicago, Illinois, when he joined the all-black Giles Yellow Jackets Drum and Bugle Corps. During this time, he also read the works of James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison, and developed his racial consciousness. After joining the predominantly white Des Plaines Vanguard, Chancey faced discrimination from white bandmates who criticized his Afro. He also played the French horn in the school band, where his training was neglected by the white instructor. Chancey graduated in 1968, and enrolled in the classical music program at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. There, he played with the concert band, but was denied entry to the orchestra because of his race. Upon graduating in 1973, Chancey moved to New York City's East Village, where he frequented jazz clubs like the Village Gate. In 1974, he sought instruction from jazz French horn pioneer Julius Watkins, from whom he learned to improvise.

Video Oral History Interview with Vincent Chancey, Section A2013_291_001_004, TRT: 4:30:33 ?

Vincent Chancey auditioned for the Sun Ra Arkestra, a large ensemble led by experimental jazz composer Sun Ra, in 1976. He played exclusively with Sun Ra for two years; and, during that time, he honed his improvisational techniques. In 1977, Sun Ra released the album 'Taking a Chance on Chances,' which featured duet performances with Chancey. At this point in the interview, Chancey recalls stories from his tours with the Sun Ra Arkestra, which often attracted attention because of their Afrofuturist attire. He also remembers Ra's influence on the band members, and his reason for leaving the Arkestra. In 1978, Chancey was recruited to accompany jazz singer Carla Bley, with whom he toured internationally. During this time, he learned about the music industry and gained widespread recognition as a jazz French hornist. He went on to collaborate with composers like Henry Threadgill, and performed in Broadway shows like Micki Grant's 'It's So Nice To Be Civilized.'

Video Oral History Interview with Vincent Chancey, Section A2013_291_001_005, TRT: 5:31:53 ?

Vincent Chancey left Carla Bley's band in 1984, and joined Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy. There, he played French horn arrangements of pop songs by Whitney Houston and Michael Jackson. In 1999, Lester Bowie was diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. He played with the band until two days before his death; and, per his wishes, the band then completed the remaining leg of its European tour. During the 1980s and 1990s, Chancey performed at events like the Monterey Jazz Festival in Monterey, California, and taught master classes at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He also offered private lessons in improvisational jazz. In 1993, Chancey released his first solo record, 'Welcome Mr. Chancey.' He formed the Vincent Chancey quintet in 1995, and released the album 'Next Mode' in 1998. Chancey talks about the Julius Watkins French Horn Festival, and his method of articulating notes on the French horn. He concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon his life.

Video Oral History Interview with Vincent Chancey, Section A2013_291_001_006, TRT: 6:21:13 ?

Vincent Chancey played the French horn on nearly three hundred jazz albums. He recorded as both a sideman and a bandleader, and collaborated with artists like jazz singer Dianne Reeves and deejay Frankie Knuckles. Chancey also toured with the pop dance band Abstract Truth, and created film scores for director Spike Lee. Chancey reflects upon his career and his favorite musical artists. He also plays his original composition, 'The Barefoot Bahian Girl,' on the French horn. He then talks about the spirituality behind his music, and reflects upon his life and legacy. Chancey shares his advice for children living in abusive homes, and describes how he would like to be remembered. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.