

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lee Koonce

PERSON

Koonce, Lee, 1960-

Alternative Names: Lee Koonce;

Life Dates: January 5, 1960-

Place of Birth: Xenia, Ohio, USA

Residence: Central Valley, NY

Work: Rochester, NY

Occupations: Pianist; Nonprofit Executive

Biographical Note

Nonprofit executive and pianist Lee Koonce was born on January 5, 1960 in Xenia, Ohio to Ida Bent Koonce and Lee Koonce. As a child, Koonce took piano lessons and learned to play the violin, baritone horn, and flute in school. Koonce, who grew up in Chicago, graduated from Bishop Byrne High School in Memphis, Tennessee, where his father had taken a job, in 1978. He received a B.M. degree in piano performance from Oberlin Conservatory of Music and a B.A. degree in Spanish literature from Oberlin College in 1982. After working as a music and Spanish instructor at Elgin Academy in Elgin, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, Koonce went on to complete his coursework for his M.M. degree in piano performance from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester in 1988, earning the degree in 1993.

After graduating from the Eastman School of Music, Koonce became a senior manager at Andersen Consulting, now Accenture. In 1996, Koonce became director of community relations at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Then, in 2001, he was hired as the executive director at the Sherwood Conservatory of Music in Chicago. From 2004 to 2007, Koonce served as the executive director of Opus 118 Harlem School of Music in New York City. In 2007, he became the executive director at Third Street Music School Settlement, serving until 2014, when he was named the executive director of Ballet Hispanico. After two years, Koonce became the first president and artistic director of Gateways Music Festival in association with Eastman School of Music. Under his leadership, Gateway Music Festival was awarded a \$300,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

In addition to his role as president and artistic director, Koonce has served on the board

of directors of Gateways Music Festival since 1997. He also serves as a member of the board of trustees for the National Guild for Community Arts Education and served on the board of the League of American Orchestras. Koonce has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs as well as the Oberlin Conservatory of Music committee chair of the Oberlin College Alumni Council.

Lee Koonce was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 28, 2018.

Related Entries

Dulles School of Excellence [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Bishop Byrne High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Oberlin Conservatory of Music [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.Music and B.A.

Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Master's

Elgin Academy [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1983 to 1986]

Spanish Instructor

Accenture (Andersen Consulting) [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1988 to 1996]

Manager

Chicago Symphony Orchestra [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1996 to 2001]

Director of Community Relations

Sherwood Conservatory of Music [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2001 to 2004]

Executive Director

Opus 118 - Harlem School of Music [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2004 to 2007]

Executive Director

Third Street Music School Settlement [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2007 to 2014]

Executive Director

Ballet Hispanico [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2014 to 2016]

Executive Director

Gateways Music Festival [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2016 to ?]

President and Artistic Director

League of American Orchestras [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

National Guild of Community Arts Education [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Oberlin College Alumni Council [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Committee Chair