

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with McCoy Tyner

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Tyner, McCoy
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with McCoy Tyner,
Dates:	September 16, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:09:48).
Abstract:	Jazz pianist McCoy Tyner (1938 - 2020) was a legendary jazz musician and member of the famed John Coltrane Quartet. Tyner made over eighty recordings and won five Grammy Awards. Tyner was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 16, 2004, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_164
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Phenomenal jazz pianist McCoy Tyner was born December 11, 1938, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, of parents with roots in North Carolina. Tyner attended Martha Washington Grade School and Sulzberger Jr. High School. Tyner, with the encouragement of his teacher Ms. Addison and his mother, Beatrice Stephenson Tyner, began taking beginning piano lessons from a neighbor, Mr. Habershaw. Later, a Mr. Beroni taught Tyner classical piano. Although inspired by the music of Art Tatum and Thelonius Monk, it was his neighborhood Philadelphia musicians that pushed Tyner's musical development. He engaged in neighborhood jam sessions with Lee Morgan, Bobby Timmons and Reggie Workman. Tyner was hand picked by John Coltrane in 1956, while still a student at West Philadelphia High School. Around this same time, Tyner converted to Islam.

After high school, Tyner toured with Bennie Golson and Art Farmer, and can be heard on their hit record, *Killer Joe* and the album *Meet The Jazztet*. In 1960, he became a part of John Coltrane's legendary quartet that included Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison. Later, the group included Eric Dolphy, Pharoah Sanders and others exploring themes of spirituality and African identity. Tyner can be heard on *Africa Brass*, *A Love Supreme*, *My Favorite Things* and *Kulu Se' Mama*. He also recorded as a leader on Impulse! Records' *Inception*, *Night of Ballads*, *Blues*, *Live at Newport* and several others.

Leaving Coltrane in 1965, Tyner played with a who's who of jazz greats including: Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Gary Bartz, Ron Carter, Billy Cobham, Roy Haynes, Stanley Clarke, Sonny Rollins, and many others. He can be heard on a number of albums, including: *The Real McCoy*, 1967, *Asante*, 1970, *Sahara*, 1972, *Trident*, 1975, *The Greeting*, 1978, *Inner Voices*, 1990, and *Infinity*, 1995, displaying his variety and flexibility as a jazz musician. An innovator, Tyner performed with strings on 1976's *Fly With The Wind* and with a big band on *The Turning Point*, 1991. With over eighty albums to his credit and five Grammy Awards, Tyner was nominated at the 45th Grammy Awards for Best Instrumental Jazz Recording for *McCoy Tyner Plays John Coltrane: Live at the Village Vanguard*, and in 2004, Tyner's *Illuminations* won a Grammy for Best Jazz Album, Individual or Group.

Like John Coltrane, Tyner strives to elevate his listeners' consciousness.

Tyner's energetic style embraces African, Latin, Eastern and bebop rhythms, which he plays in bright clusters. His block chords, pentatonic scales and modal structures have earned him international recognition among the top jazz pianists of all time. Tyner is the recipient of numerous honors including the National Endowment of the Arts' Jazz Master Award in 2002 and the 2003 Heroes Award from the Philadelphia Chapter of the Recording Academy. In 2005, Tyner received an honorary doctorate of music from Berklee College in Boston, Massachusetts.

Tyner passed away on March 6, 2020.

McCoy Tyner was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 16, 2004.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with McCoy Tyner was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 16, 2004, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Jazz pianist McCoy Tyner (1938 - 2020) was a legendary jazz musician and member of the famed John Coltrane Quartet. Tyner made over eighty recordings and won five Grammy Awards.

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:

Tyner, McCoy

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Tyner, McCoy--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Jazz Pianist

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 McCoy Tyner, September 16, 2004. 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 McCoy Tyner, Section A2004_164_001_001, TRT: 0:30:36 ?

Legendary jazz pianist McCoy Tyner describes his parents and his family's background, giving credit to his family for providing him with love and support, especially his mother. Tyner describes his neighborhood while growing up in West Philadelphia, describing it as a strong black community. Tyner recalls his mother's beauty shop where he played piano for customers, and the empty lots where he would play games with his friends.

Video Oral History Interview with McCoy Tyner, Section A2004_164_001_002, TRT: 0:30:46 ?

Legendary jazz pianist McCoy Tyner discusses the start of his musical career. He describes his formal musical training, naming influential teachers and artists who inspired him. Even more important than formal training was the informal jam sessions in which Tyner played as a teenager in Philadelphia. Tyner describes what it was like playing with jazz legends like John Coltrane, Lee Morgan, Archie Shepp, and Jimmy Workman, showing that Philadelphia was a major center of jazz culture and innovation in the 1950s.

Video Oral History Interview with McCoy Tyner, Section A2004_164_001_003, TRT: 0:29:46 ?

Legendary jazz pianist McCoy Tyner discusses his experiences while playing with the John Coltrane Quartet from 1960 to 1965. Tyner describes his personal and musical relationships with Coltrane and Elvin Jones, and shares the origins of the famous album 'A Love Supreme'. Tyner shares stories from touring with the group, providing insight into Coltrane's personality.

Video Oral History Interview with McCoy Tyner, Section A2004_164_001_004, TRT: 0:30:36 ?

Legendary jazz pianist McCoy Tyner discusses his career after leaving the famous John Coltrane Quartet. Tyner explains why he left the group, and details the new musical directions he took during the 1960s and 1970s. Tyner spends a great deal of time reflecting on the meaning of music and the power of personal expression, and also remembers the great jazz artists who inspired him, including Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and Bud Powell.

Video Oral History Interview with McCoy Tyner, Section A2004_164_001_005, TRT: 0:08:04 ?

Legendary jazz pianist McCoy Tyner reflects on his life and career, considering his choices in life, his legacy, and how he would like to be remembered. Tyner also stresses the need for the African American community to embrace its musical heritage.