

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Daryl Waters

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Waters, Daryl
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Daryl Waters,
Dates:	December 12, 2016
Bulk Dates:	2016
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:45:46).
Abstract:	Music composer and arranger Daryl Waters (1956 –) orchestrated such productions as Jelly’s Last Jam (1993), Bring in ‘Da Noise (1995), Memphis (2009), and Shuffle Along (2016). Waters was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 12, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2016_143
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Music composer and arranger Daryl Waters was born in Cleveland, Ohio. From the age of eight years old, Waters studied music at the Cleveland Music School Settlement. While attending Shaw High School in East Cleveland, he played piano and served as a conductor for Karamu Theater and The Singing Angels, as well as conducting at a summer music theatre program and performing with his own band. Upon graduation, Waters enrolled at Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina, where he obtained his B.A. degree in music with a specialization in piano performance in 1978.

Waters returned to Cleveland after graduation, playing various jobs around town, before moving to New York in 1981, where he began working as a nightclub pianist, arranger and conductor. In 1983, Waters became the music director for the European tour of *Ain’t Misbehavin’*, the acclaimed musical revue of the Harlem Renaissance and tribute to Fats Waller. In 1985, Waters landed his first job on Broadway as the associate conductor of the Broadway musical, *Leader of the Pack*, directed by Michael Peters who choreographed Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” and “Beat It” music videos. In 1992, Waters was the associate conductor for George C. Wolfe’s *Jelly’s Last Jam*, joining Wolfe again in 1996 as a co-composer of *Bring in ‘Da Noise, Bring in ‘Da Funk*, which garnered him his first Tony and Grammy nominations. In 1997, Waters supervised and orchestrated *Street Corner Symphony*, a revue of 1960s and 1970s soul music.

Waters worked Off-Broadway as the music director for George C. Wolfe’s *The Colored Museum* (1986), the composer for *In Real Life* (2001), orchestrator for Kirsten Childs’ *Miracle Brothers* (2005), music director of *The Seven* (2006) (a hip-hop adaptation of Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*), composer for *Blue Door* (2006), supervisor/arranger for the highly-acclaimed musical celebration *A Civil War Christmas* (2008) by Pulitzer winner Paula Vogel, and orchestrator for Childs’ *Bella* (2017).

In 2010, Waters earned rave reviews for his orchestration of *Memphis: A New Musical*, receiving both Tony and

Drama Desk Awards. In 2013, he was the conductor for *After Midnight*, under the music direction of Wynton Marsalis, with various stars including Fantasia, Toni Braxton and Kenneth Edmonds, and Patti LaBelle. He arranged, orchestrated and supervised music for *Holler If Ya Hear Me* (2014), *Shuffle Along* (2016) with director George C. Wolfe (for which he also wrote new material), and *The Cher Show* (2018).

In addition to his theatrical accomplishments, Waters became Eartha Kitt's music director in 1986, performing concerts with her on six continents over twenty-two years. He also conducted and arranged for many other stars, including Leslie Uggams, Sammy Davis Jr., Gregory Hines, Cab Calloway, Nell Carter, Patti Austin and Jennifer Holliday.

Waters is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America and the American Federation of Musicians.

Daryl Waters was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 12, 2016.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Daryl Waters was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 12, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Music composer and arranger Daryl Waters (1956 –) orchestrated such productions as Jelly's Last Jam (1993), Bring in 'Da Noise (1995), Memphis (2009), and Shuffle Along (2016).

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:

Waters, Daryl

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Waters, Daryl--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Music Composer and Arranger

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 Daryl Waters, December 12, 2016. 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 Daryl Waters, Section A2016_143_001_001, TRT: 1:27:54 ?

Daryl Waters was born on May 12, 1956 in Cleveland, Ohio to Bernardine Murden Taylor and James Smith. Waters' mother was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, but moved at an early age to Cleveland with her parents, Mary Murden and Raymond Murden. Waters' biological paternal grandparents, Essie Smith and Johnathan Smith, migrated north from Georgia and settled in Cleveland, where Waters' biological father was born. Waters' parents met at East High School, but separated when Waters was a young child. His mother later married Jack Waters, who eventually adopted him. Waters grew up with his five siblings in a middle class neighborhood in East Cleveland, Ohio, where he attended Rozelle Elementary School. From the age of eight years old, Waters learned to play the piano and violin at The Music Settlement. His early influences included piano players Arthur Ferrante and Louis Teicher, and composer Claude Debussy. As a teenager, Waters was introduced to musical theater through a high school production of 'Guys and Dolls.'

Video Oral History Interview with Daryl Waters, Section A2016_143_001_002, TRT: 2:27:31 ?

Daryl Waters enrolled in classes at The Music Settlement in Cleveland, Ohio, where he received piano and violin lessons, and learned the fundamentals of music education. He later attended Shaw High School in East Cleveland, Ohio, where his grades suffered as he focused his attention on music. In addition to performing in his own band, Life is Real, Waters was also a member of a group called The Singing Angels. During his sophomore year, he became involved with the Karamu House as a theater music director. After graduation, Waters was awarded a scholarship to attend Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina, where he arranged the music for the marching band, and directed the homecoming talent show, the Startime Revue. He became close to his English professor, K. Wilhelmina Boyd, who helped him adjust to living in the South. In 1978, Waters graduated from Livingstone College, and then worked as a substitute teacher while playing gigs around Cleveland. He moved to New York City in 1981.

Video Oral History Interview with Daryl Waters, Section A2016_143_001_003, TRT: 3:31:42 ?

Daryl Waters saw his first Broadway play, 'Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope,' at seventeen years old. Years later, he moved to New York City in 1981, and started working as a house pianist at a dessert club in Manhattan. There, he worked with performers and artists like composer Michael Skloff and actress Sandra Santiago. In 1983, he was hired as the onstage pianist for the European tour of 'Ain't Mishbehavin'.' Upon his return, he was hired as the music director for the off Broadway play 'A...My Name is Alice.' He also joined the Broadway production of 'Leader of the Pack' as the associate conductor, working with choreographer and director Michael Peters who choreographed Michael Jackson's 'Thriller' music video. Waters was later introduced to Eartha Kitt, who hired him as her music director at Eartha Kitt Productions in 1986. In working with Kitt, Waters traveled internationally, and was introduced to her expansive musical tastes and repertoire that included Afro-Caribbean and Latin fusion.

Video Oral History Interview with Daryl Waters, Section A2016_143_001_004, TRT: 4:29:38 ?

Daryl Waters served as the associate conductor for George C. Wolfe's Broadway play 'Jelly's Last Jam.' The show featured performers Gregory Hines

and Savion Glover, and ran for a year and a half. During this time, Waters married Tracey Waters. At this point in the interview, Waters describes the rehearsals for Broadway productions, and the business component of working as an independent musician. 'Jelly's Last Jam' was nominated for thirteen Tony awards and thirteen Drama Desk Awards. In 1995, Waters composed and helped orchestrate the music for the Broadway show 'Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk,' which chronicled black history from slavery to present and incorporated elements of hip hop, tap dance and funk. Waters and the other composers, Ann Duquesnay and Zane Mark, were nominated for Best Original Score. In 1997, he worked on the music for 'Street Corner Symphony,' followed by 'In Real Life' in 2000. Later, Waters won an Audience Development Committee Award for Best Music Director of 'Harlem Song.'

Video Oral History Interview with Daryl Waters, Section A2016_143_001_005, TRT: 5:30:20 ?

Daryl Waters composed the music for 'Drowning Crow' in 2004, which was written by Regina Taylor and set in the Gullah Islands of South Carolina. He then arranged the music for 'The Color Purple,' which was a massive success that ran from 2005 to 2008, earning eleven Tony award nominations. Waters was also involved in the 2005 production of 'Miracle Brothers,' which featured a Brazilian score that included samba music and other Brazilian styles. In 2006, Waters served as the musical director for the off-Broadway production hip hop musical 'The Seven.' In 2009, he won a Tony Award for Best Orchestration for the musical 'Memphis,' written and directed by David Bryan. Waters later worked with Wynton Marsalis on 'After Midnight;' and also arranged, orchestrated and supervised the music for 'Holler If Ya Hear Me' and 'Shuffle Along, or, the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed.' He concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon his life and memorable musical collaborations.

Video Oral History Interview with Daryl Waters, Section A2016_143_001_006, TRT: 6:10:35 ?

Daryl Waters worked on several Broadway productions throughout his career, including Reg E. Gaines' 'Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk.' He reflects upon black representation on Broadway, and talks about the challenges for aspiring actors. Waters also talks about his close friends and family; describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community; reflects upon his legacy; and concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Daryl Waters, Section A2016_143_001_007, TRT: 7:08:06 ?

Daryl Waters narrates his photographs.