

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Voza Rivers

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Rivers, Voza
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 29, 2018 and October 24, 2018
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2018
<b>Physical Description:</b>	11 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:08:51).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Theatre director Voza Rivers (1942- ) produced the Broadway musical <i>Sarafina!</i> and served as president and executive director of the New Heritage Theatre Group. Rivers was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 29, 2018 and October 24, 2018, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2018_094
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Theatre director Voza Rivers was born on December 27, 1942 in Harlem, New York City. After graduating from George Washington High School in 1959, Rivers received his A.S. degree in police science from the College of Police Science at the City University of New York and worked as an undercover officer with the New York City Police Department. He later received his M.A. degree in communication arts from the New York Institute of Technology.

In 1964, Rivers joined Roger Furman's New Heritage Theatre, and became New Heritage Theatre Group's executive producer in 1983. Under his leadership, New Heritage Theatre Group produced a series of South African plays and collaborated with black South African playwright Mbongeni Ngema in the 1980s. Their first play, *Woza Albert!*, heralded for its satirical take on the South African Apartheid, won over twenty awards worldwide. The second collaboration, *Asinamali!*, went to Broadway and was nominated for a Tony Award. Rivers received acclaim for the introduction and presentation of the third collaboration with Lincoln Center Theatre, *Sarafina!*, the South African musical by Ngema, depicting students involved in the Soweto Riots in opposition to apartheid. The Tony and Grammy nominated *Sarafina!* premiered on Broadway in 1988 at the Cort Theatre, and following 597 performances and eleven previews, closed in 1989.

Rivers has produced award-winning works Off-Broadway as well as productions at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Manhattan School of Music, Carnegie Hall and the world famous Apollo Theater. He has worked with artists including Nina Simone, James Brown, Ray Charles, the Count Basie Orchestra, Tony Bennett, Max Roach, and Celia Cruz. Rivers has also produced more than 1500 events featuring world-renowned artists in the United States, South Africa and Japan, and has produced for artists such as: Ruby Dee, Luther Vandross, Ashford and Simpson, George Benson, Tito Puente, Lionel Hampton, Isaac Hayes, Little Jimmy Scott, Miriam Makeba, and Chaka Khan. Films executive produced by Rivers include: *Hughes Dream Harlem* (Langston Hughes), *Sutton: A Man for All Seasons* (Percy Sutton), *A-Alike* (2003 Oscar nominated

student film), *Lifted* (2007) and *The Savoy King: Chick Webb & the Music That Changed America* (2012).

In 1997, together with playwright, author, director and educator Jamal Joseph, Rivers co-founded the youth group IMPACT Repertory Theatre, which was later nominated for an Oscar and Grammy for Best Song for the film *August Rush* in 2008. Rivers has served as chairman of the Harlem Arts Alliance since 2001. From 2015, he has served also as the executive producer of Harlem's Gertrude Jeannette's The H.A.D.L.E.Y. Players theatre. He was the first vice president of The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce and the executive producer and vice chairman of HARLEM WEEK.

Voza Rivers was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 29, 2018.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Voza Rivers was conducted by Harriette Cole on April 29, 2018 and October 24, 2018, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 11 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Theatre director Voza Rivers (1942- ) produced the Broadway musical *Sarafina!* and served as president and executive director of the New Heritage Theatre Group.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Rivers, Voza

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Rivers, Voza--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Theater Director

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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## 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 Voza Rivers, April 29, 2018 and October 24, 2018. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:36 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_001\_002, TRT: 2:31:45 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:34 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:15 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_001\_005, TRT: 5:29:55 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_001\_006, TRT: 6:27:54 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_002\_007, TRT: 7:28:01 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_002\_008, TRT: 8:32:01 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_002\_009, TRT: 9:30:42 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_002\_010, TRT: 10:28:40 ?  
Video Oral History Interview with Voza Rivers, Section A2018\_094\_002\_011, TRT: 11:12:28 ?