

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Terrence Spivey

PERSON

Spivey, Terrence, 1961-

Alternative Names: Terrence Spivey;

Life Dates: June 10, 1961-

Place of Birth: Kountze, Texas, USA

Work: Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Occupations: Artistic Director

Biographical Note

Artistic director Terrence Spivey was born in Kountze, Texas to Lillian Cole and Terry Cooper. He graduated from Lamar High School in 1979 and went on to receive his B.A. degree in theater from Prairie View A&M University in 1984. He then moved to New York City, where he studied the Meisner technique at William Esper Studio in 1988.

Spivey worked as an actor and theater director throughout the 1990s. From 2000 to 2001, Spivey served as theater workshop facilitator at the Black Writers Reunion and Conference. In 2002, Spivey became the associate director for legendary playwright J. E. Franklin of the Black Girl Ensemble in Harlem, New York; and, in 2003, he was hired as the artistic director of the historic Karamu House. While there, he directed productions of *The Little Tommy Parker Celebrated Minstrel Show*, *Bee-Luther-Hatchee*, *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, *God's Trombones* and *The Wiz*. In 2008, Spivey joined Kent State University's theatre and dance department as an adjunct professor, becoming the theatre director in residence for productions by the Pan African Studies department in 2013. Spivey was selected as the keynote speaker for the United States Institute for Theatre Technology's fifty-fifth annual conference in 2015. In 2016, Spivey left the Karamu House and began working as a freelance director, acting instructor, theater lecturer and career consultant, and speech coach. With the Powerful Long Ladder Ensemble Theater Company in Cleveland, Ohio, Spivey debuted a production of James Baldwin's *The Amen Corner*. He also directed productions of *The Bloodless Jungle*, *Radio Golf*, *Breath, Boom, Bootycandy*, and *Neighbors*. In 2016, he directed *Objectively/Reasonable: A Community Response to the Shooting of Tamir Rice* at Playwrights Local, which received national acclaim and was featured on NPR's *Going There* with Michel Martin. In 2017, Spivey worked as an artistic associate with the Shore Culture Center in Euclid, Ohio and served as an artist-in-residence at the Cleveland School of the Arts. In 2018, Spivey founded TamiReach to establish the

theatre outreach program at the Tamir Rice Afrocentric Cultural Center. In 2022, Spivey served as professor and director at Allegheny College. He was commissioned to write and direct *An Ocean in My Bones*, a highlight about the Clotilda, the last slave ship, for the Clotilda Descendants Association in Mobile, Alabama, which premiered in 2022.

Spivey has served on the board of the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, the Cleveland Arts Prize, the Audience Development Committee (AUDELCO), and the Cleveland Foundation's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame scholarship committee. He is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

In 2011, Spivey received a proclamation from Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and Councilwoman Mamie Mitchell for his local, regional, and national artistic contributions. Spivey also received the 2013 AUDELCO Award for Repertory Company of the Year for his work with the Karamu House. In 2016, he was honored by Ohio state representative John Barnes, Jr. for his contributions to the arts. In the same year, Spivey was voted Best Director by The Cleveland Scene. In 2017, he received the Best Bold Direction for a Shocking Piece Award for his premiere of *Neighbors* by Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins.

Terrence Spivey was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 27, 2018.

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