

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Julius P. Williams, Jr.

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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>	Williams, Julius P.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Julius P. Williams, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 24, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:12:47).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Music professor, conductor, and music composer Julius P. Williams, Jr. (1954 - ) teaches at the Berklee College of Music. Internationally known, Williams' works have been performed by the New York Philharmonic and the Cleveland Orchestra, among many others. Williams was a music director and conductor of the Washington Symphony Orchestra, has conducted performances at foreign embassies, the National Cathedral and the White House. Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 24, 2005, in Boston, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_077
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Julius P. Williams is a nationally and internationally known conductor and a professor of composition and conducting at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. A prolific composer, Williams has penned operas and works for orchestras and chamber ensembles and for dance, chorus, musical theatre and film. While he is a classical pianist and composer-conductor, Williams is also a master of jazz, gospel and popular music forms.

Williams was born in Bronx, New York on June 22, 1954. He started playing the drums at age eight, but when his parents begged him to choose another instrument he took up the piano instead. Other instruments, like violin, flute, clarinet, and organ soon followed. He attended public schools in New York City, including the High School for the Performing Arts, from which he graduated in 1972. It was in high school that his musical career blossomed as he took part in the All-City Concert Choir program and studied under masters like jazz drummer Max Roach and French composer-conductor Pierre Boulez. By age 20, he was playing keyboards on tour with the pop group The 5th Dimension.

Williams earned his B.S. degree in music from Herbert Lehman College in 1977 and his M.M.E. degree from the Hartt School of Music. He studied composition with African American musical giants Ulysses Kay and Coleridge Taylor Perkinson. In 1978, he attended the Aspen Music School in Colorado and composed scores for musical theatre productions for the Henry Street Settlement for the Arts in New York.

Williams has conducting experience at venues throughout the United States and the world. While he was music director and conductor of the Washington Symphony Orchestra, he conducted performances at foreign embassies, the National Cathedral and the White House. He opened the 20th annual Tri-C JazzFest in Cleveland by

conducting a performance of Duke Ellington's *Sacred Music*. He debuted at Carnegie Hall when he conducted the inaugural concerts of the Symphony Saint Paulia.

His compositions, which include *In Memoriam, September 11, 2001*, have been performed by the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra and the Detroit Symphony. Williams, who was once profiled nationally on *CBS Sunday Morning with Charles Kuralt*, is also an accomplished music educator, well-regarded for his informal teaching method. He also co-founded VIDEMUS, a non-profit group which produces and releases the music of under-represented artists and composers.

Williams and his wife Lenora Williams, a doctor, live in Ellington, Connecticut with their three children.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Julius P. Williams, Jr. was conducted by Robert Hayden on March 24, 2005, in Boston, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Music professor, conductor, and music composer Julius P. Williams, Jr. (1954 - ) teaches at the Berklee College of Music. Internationally known, Williams' works have been performed by the New York Philharmonic and the Cleveland Orchestra, among many others. Williams was a music director and conductor of the Washington Symphony Orchestra, has conducted performances at foreign embassies, the National Cathedral and the White House.

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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:

Williams, Julius P.

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Williams, Julius P.--Interviews

African American composers--Interviews

African American conductors (Music)--Interviews

Pianists--Interviews

African American arrangers (Musicians)--Interviews

African American families--New York (State)--New York

African Americans--Genealogy

Harlem (New York, N.Y.)--Social life and customs

Queens (New York, N.Y.)--Social life and customs

Andrew Jackson School (Queens, New York, N.Y.)

Manhattan School of Music (New York, N.Y.)

Hartt College of Music

Motley, John

Perkinson, Coleridge-Taylor

Kay, Ulysses, 1917-1995

Norman, Fred

Videmus (Musical group)

African American music teachers--Interviews

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

## The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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### Occupations:

Conductor

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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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 Julius P. Williams, Jr., March 24, 2005. 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 Julius P. Williams, Jr., Section A2005\_077\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:21 ?

Composer and conductor Julius P. Williams remembers his childhood in Harlem and Queens, New York. He discusses his parents, grandmother, and grade school. He also talks about working as a young man at Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church, where his grandmother had taken him as a boy.

African American composers--Interviews.

African American conductors (Music)--Interviews.

Pianists--Interviews.

African American arrangers (Musicians)--Interviews.

African American families--New York (State)--New York.

African Americans--Genealogy.

Harlem (New York, N.Y.)--Social life and customs.

Queens (New York, N.Y.)--Social life and customs.

Andrew Jackson School (Queens, New York, N.Y.).

Manhattan School of Music (New York, N.Y.).

Hartt College of Music.

Motley, John.

Perkinson, Coleridge-Taylor.

Kay, Ulysses, 1917-1995.

Norman, Fred.

Videmus (Musical group).

African American music teachers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Julius P. Williams, Jr., Section A2005\_077\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:38 ?

Julius P. Williams recalls his youth in Queens, New York, where he learned music by playing his uncle's piano, taking lessons and playing at church. He went on to Andrew Jackson High School of Music and Art, a summer program at Manhattan School of Music, and spent four years at Lehman College's Hartt School of Music in the Bronx. Williams credits musical mentors including John Motley, Coleridge Taylor Perkinson, Ulysses Kay and Fred Norman who all recognized his talent and encouraged him in his career.

Video Oral History Interview with Julius P. Williams, Jr., Section A2005\_077\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Julius P. Williams discusses his musical growth studying conducting at the Aspen Musical Festival and School and with mentors such as Fred Roland and Coleridge Taylor Perkinson. He recalls his experiences conducting in many different cities over the course of his career.

Video Oral History Interview with Julius P. Williams, Jr., Section A2005\_077\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Julius P. Williams talks about various issues and concerns in his career, including the CD Symphonic Brotherhood, a compilation of African American symphonic music, the music organization VIDEMUS which promotes the work of minority and women composers, and his struggle to be taken seriously as an African American symphonic conductor.

Video Oral History Interview with Julius P. Williams, Jr., Section A2005\_077\_001\_005, TRT: 0:13:18 ?

Julius P. Williams talks about future goals, his values and his hopes for a reunification of the black community.