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Melba Joyce Bradford

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THE JAZZ WIDOWS

by

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## **Dedication**

My thesis is dedicated to the memory of Mona Hinton and Nellie Monk and all of the widows who were married to the music and their men.

## **Abstract**

While women have played significant roles within the genre of jazz music, most have been celebrated as vocalists. However, the stories of women who supported their artist husbands in partnership have not, to my knowledge, been documented.

My thesis, *The Jazz Widows*, documents the role of women who spent their lives with their husbands, jazz musicians, and their participation in the success of their husbands' careers. This musical art form called jazz is the music created by the black man. This music is one of the most important in America, because it is indigenous, originating from another Africa, a musical genre called "the blues." Just as Italian music was bought from Italy, and Greek music was brought from Greece, neither ever facing the challenge of being taken or changed, the blues, which evolved into jazz, stand. Whereas the staff and certain notations were used in its organization, these are the elements that, I believe, some white Americans want to use to justify their ownership. This is not enough to claim anything, let alone ownership. This music had to do with the ear of its founders, its creators.

Essentially, because of the importance to the culture of black people, the women are involved in the preservation of the art form, our legacy, our contribution to this country. One would believe that this would be sufficient proof that, just as other cultures contributed to America, so have we.

The made-up story of racism must be defeated. For it is nothing.

My interest in the role of the jazz widow was inspired by the late Mona Hinton, the wife of Milt Hinton, a legendary bassist who was featured with the renowned Cab Calloway and his 18-piece orchestra. The band traveled across the United States and abroad. However, their road trips in America were mostly traveled by bus, which took them to areas that were historically dangerous, due to racism. For black people, especially 18 black men and women, Jim Crow was alive and well. Another hanging would only be another heinous event (an event that was never justified), just for sport, as it had been many, many times in America.

From 2005 to 2008, I was the featured vocalist with the Count Basie Orchestra, touring across the country and abroad. The men in the band were very young, in their twenties and thirties, except the leader, Bill Hughes, John Williams and myself. As we traveled by bus, stopping for food and other supplies, I listened to these men as people who were conscious of the lurking dangers, tales, memories and the feelings of black men in America, feelings of those aware of what could happen. In my heart, I felt hurt that even after so many years and so many changes, they had to experience this kind of abuse. After all, we pay taxes and participate in everything that the law requires of its citizens here in America. Why in the 21st century should we be exposed to such treatment, made to feel this inhuman way?

This is the true reason the women went on the road with their men. They were there protecting their men and the dreams of their men. The Monas who travelled with their men.

Having the experience of watching a documentary of the road trips of Cab Calloway and knowledge of Mona Hinton's story about how her husband, Milt, who was featured with the Cab Calloway Orchestra, traveling across the country and what they had to do in order to stay safe. Although Cab was very light skinned, this was only one portion of the band's protection. He would, most likely, not be attacked. They would park the band bus some distance from a restaurant for safety. Mona was actually a roadie and a security guard. That's what we call assistants who perform errands as the band sits and waits for whatever needs to be done. One black person is not a threat, especially a woman. In this case, Mona would go to the back of the restaurant and purchase food for everyone. As Mona and I spoke about the challenges of riding on the bus with all these men, my heart sank. These are not the words of Mona, but a woman knows the heart of other women. We know the story of an American life and of the mistreatment of black men.

As I revealed that I had seen the documentary, she only had this to say, "Melba, please don't let them forget me."

Over the course of two years, I personally interviewed eight jazz widows, recording their accounts of their lives, struggles and accomplishments. Like the music we created, so revolutionary in spirit, so is the spirit of a black woman who is in love.

I am confident that the reader will appreciate the depth of the jazz song, this road that many of these legendary artists forged with the help and steadfast dedication of their wives.

Thank you.

Melba Joyce  
Jazz artist and author

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## Introduction

Though women jazz musicians have played a significant role within this genre of music, most have primarily been celebrated as jazz vocalists.

Most devotees of jazz have heard of, and enjoyed, Billie Holiday or Ella Fitzgerald or Sarah Vaughan. From the days of vaudeville, with performers such as Ma Rainey and early jazz performers such as Lil Hardin Armstrong, women have been permitted to “show off” on stage, singing and playing to the delight of audiences worldwide.

However, there are a group of women who have spent their lives in jazz whose stories are not well known at all. These women need to be heard, for they too have a story to tell: songs of success, songs of accomplishment, songs of hard work leading to success. Women who have provided needed support for their artist husbands, those who have gone unsung and unknown, staying in the shadows while their husbands and partners appear up front on stage, in the limelight, garnering the applause of a delighted audience. The stories of these women have not, to my knowledge, been fully documented.

I have entitled this thesis *The Jazz Widows*. Its intent is to document the time the wives spent with their late husbands who were jazz musicians (both famous and not-so-well-known), and how these women participated in promoting their husbands’ careers. These women were married to the men and married to the music they helped create. Indeed,



quite a few of these women were first attracted to the music that these musicians created and performed as well as to the men whom they would eventually marry.

For me, this amounts to a family business!

This story was inspired by the late Mona Hinton (1919-2008), the wife of Milt Hinton, legendary bassist with the Cab Calloway Orchestra. This band traveled across the United States performing in concert venues, clubs, and festivals, traveling usually by bus. Of course, when they traveled abroad they traveled by plane and the situation was different, as European jazz fans treated them differently. In the States, in their own homeland, they moved through the mid-twentieth century, through a segregated America. A segregated America meant Colored Only facilities such as toilets and water fountains, hotels and lunchrooms, allegedly, “separate and equal.” Yes, “we want to hear you play, but after your performance you’d better hit the road, Jack!”

Some of these venues where the bands performed were just not safe for the black man. After the gig, the band needed to rest and recuperate. Their accommodations for meals were limited, unless you had a person, a wife like Mona Hinton, a true helpmate on the road (and always), sharing the bus with 17 or 18 men.

So the band would drive to a restaurant, the bus would park some distance from the restaurant, and from the bus would emerge Mona Hinton, a small, dark woman wearing a starched, fancy dress, who would walk to the rear entrance of the place, order food for 18

or 19 people, and deliver the food to the bus. This is a routine Mona would repeat, the task of being the roadie, collecting the food. Some venues the band would do return engagements, maybe every year, sometimes less. After a time, Mona made contact with the women in the towns where they had return engagements, asked the women to cook, and had them bring the food through the backstage entrance. They agreed and brought the food in baskets, with hot chicken and warm biscuits, and “it would be there, backstage, just in time for the intermission of the first set,” said the late Milt Hinton. He spoke of his wife, Mona, “she was a jewel.”

Just as Mona arranged the food for the band, she would also go into the black neighborhood and secure housing for the band to sleep after the gig.

When Mona became pregnant with the couple’s first child, they didn’t know whether she would be able to maintain a pregnancy and manage a baby on the road. She and Milt really wanted to start a family, to have children. Unfortunately, she miscarried. Cab Calloway was very concerned and suggested that Mona not travel if she became pregnant again. Mona came off the road for a while. And when she became pregnant again, she came off the road again. The second time, she carried the child full term and delivered a beautiful baby girl.

After getting to know Mona, having so much in common — Jazz — we became fast friends. I reveled in her stories, which I had seen in a documentary film at the National Jazz Museum in Harlem. Traveling on tour with the Count Basie Orchestra, as their

vocalist, recalling the stories, and living the life of this unusual situation, of discomfort, sleeping all piled up (scrunched up on a small seat isn't the most comfortable place to sleep). Having experienced the rigors of being on the road on a bus with 18 men, I got the idea to call Mona. Relating that we were on tour, I said, "Mona, how did you do it?" She responded, "Melba, don't let them forget me." I answered, "I won't." After some time, and much prayer and introspection, it came to me that, in order to have everyone understand what it has taken to continue doing whatever is necessary to preserve this special and original art form, the best way to insure that Mona Hinton, and the other jazz widows, are not forgotten is to record their stories, to give the world an idea of what it took for these women to support their men and the mission of creating jazz, to record their triumphs, their disasters, to tell the story of lives lived, the true Jazz story.

To the wives and mates who contributed so much for their husbands, contributed to their success creating this music, and again to these women who pitched in when needed, we say, "Thank you."

Here is a short list of the Jazz Widows who are documented, wives like Sandy Jordan, widow of Clifford Jordan, multi-reed artist, composer and big band leader; Bertha Hope, widow of Elmo Hope, renowned composer and pianist, and Walter Booker, bassist and jazz educator; Cecilia Foster, widow of Frank, saxophonist and award-winning arranger; Gloria Ware, widow of Wilbur Ware, bassist extraordinaire.

I find these stories inspiring, stimulating and historically significant. I trust that you will also.

## Me and Bertha

Bertha Hope and I met, it seems, as soon as I arrived in New York in 1987. She was performing at the Jazz Vespers that St. Peter's Lutheran Church presents monthly. There, they feature New York's brightest and most talented jazz musicians. A mixture of spirited, spiritual music, it is a wonderful way to spend Sunday evenings.

The late Reverend John Gensel was the pastor. He really loved jazz so much. I guess that's why they called it the Jazz Church.

After getting acquainted, Bertha and I decided to perform together whenever we could. Sometimes Bertha would get the gig, and sometimes I would be the leader.

I had a gig on Broadway as an understudy for Ruth Brown, Linda Hopkins and Carrie Smith in the five-time Tony Award-winning show, *Black and Blue*. So it happened that I had a vacation coming up and an offer to perform for seven days on a cruise ship to Bermuda. The timing was beautiful, I called Bertha to be in my band, along with Charles Davis on sax, Larry Johnson on drums and Tarik Shah on bass. We had a great time and only performed once. Actually, the crew hadn't seen a show in a long time and they asked that we do a show for them. We complied.

Bertha and I had low tea and high tea with crumpets, hung out on deck and basked in the sun, just enjoying ourselves watching the beautiful scenery. We'd work out tunes and

create wonderful arrangements. Both of us having been married to musicians, we compared notes and talked about our kids. We also dined on extravagant cuisine, being typical vacationers.

The rest of the time we spent with the rest of the band, strolling, sunning, trading musician tales and looking cute in our sun hats and shades.

We have a good relationship!! Bertha Hope is an intelligent woman of beautiful substance, a fine musician and a wonderful human being.

Bertha Hope is one of my most favorite people. Man, as a Jazz Widow, has she got a story to share.

**BERTHA HOPE**



**Jazz Musician — Pianist**  
**Widow of Elmo Hope — Jazz Musician, Pianist**

Richard Williams

**BERTHA HOPE**

Hello, this is Melba Joyce. Today is February 3, 2013. We are in New York City, and with me here for this Jazz Widows interview is my friend Bertha Hope, beautiful jazz pianist and composer. We want to do this interview for jazz widows — a project, the thesis project I am doing for Rutgers University.

**MJ:** Hello Bertha, how are you?

**BH:** I am feeling really good, thank you very much for including me in this project.

**MJ:** Couldn't do it without you. How could I, knowing the way I feel about your work and your life and everything you've contributed to this wonderful music. So I am going to get right to it.

**BH:** Okay.

**MJ:** So you were born in what city?

**BH:** I was born in Los Angeles, California. Ah, that's contrary to some information that's out there that I was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi. So here's another chance to tell people, I was born in Los Angeles, California, in the western part of the city, in the emerging working-class to middle-class black neighborhood that had once been Italian and Jewish — and some of those old families were still there. There was a lot of wonderful music in the neighborhood. Um, my father was a singer and later became an actor there. So he was a big, big influence; and we had a piano in the house, even before I was born — and I was born in 1936, right before World War II and then sort of the end of the depression. So, things were pretty rough in terms of monetary, or in terms of my father making a lot of money in that particular situation. But his prior work was in Europe. And he brought



it...the piano that he had was visited by all the piano players in the city at the time. So people like Nat King Cole and Art Tatum used to drop by and then they would play. That was before I was born, but I know that's the history, you know.

**MJ:** What about Paul Robeson, he was friends with Paul Robeson, wasn't he?

**BH:** Yes, he was — that was earlier also. That was in the twenties, because my father was part of that expatriation from Harlem to Europe.

**MJ:** Oh, so he was a New Yorker?

**BH:** Ah no, no, actually he was from the South. My father was from in Seneca, South Carolina and then they later moved to Arkansas. His father was a preacher, a moving preacher — who moved from city to city and built a little church. And that's pretty much how they moved all the way out to California. So he wasn't a native Californian.

**BH:** My father was a dramatic baritone and the way he got to know Paul Robeson was that he and uh — there was a play called the *Showboat*.

**MJ:** Okay.

**BH:** And my father became the managing director for that play after he had been in Europe since 1915.

**MJ:** Really?

**BH:** Yes, um, playing for, what they did then were command performances for empire — that's when England was all over the globe and they would play command performances for everywhere there was an English footprint — all over the world.

**MJ:** My goodness.

**BH:** So he went to China, he went to Australia, he went wherever those performances took him, where England was colonizing.

**MJ:** When did he meet your mother?

**BH:** He met my mother on the boat — going over after he came back here to get a cast together, which included Paul Robeson, for this, for *Showboat*, for a production that was going to be in London. He came to New York to assemble a cast.

**MJ:** So was your mother a performer also?

**BH:** Yes, she was a dancer, and she was a Cotton Club dancer.

**MJ:** Wow.

**BH:** And she auditioned for this part and she got the audition and she met my father on the boat. So they had this kind of on-the-boat romance.

**MJ:** Love boat — so to speak. Ha, ha, ha.

**BH:** I never thought of that, but in retrospect that sounds pretty close, yeah. So, um...

**MJ:** So you're just full of family people in show business?

**BH:** Really. Yeah. Yes, well, yeah, I grew up appreciating the arts and doing plays in the living room — and you know my sister, I have a sister who was eight years older — she played piano and we had all these opera scores on the piano, strung out on the piano, and Negro spirituals on the piano. And, between the Negro spirituals, so-called at that time, that my father also ended all of his programs with, because he sang in languages, he was a bel canto singer, and he sang in Italian and German. And he always ended his programs with Harry T. Burleigh and Jay Roslyn Johnson spirituals. So I learned to play those for him.

**MJ:** Tell me your father's name.

**BH:** Clinton Rosemond

**MJ:** Clinton Rosemond.

**BH:** Clinton Rosemond, you can look him up.

**MJ:** I wondered what the name of that company he was with. You know, I may research that because of — you don't remember the name of it, do you? It wasn't a T.O.B.A.

(Tough on Bad Asses)?<sup>1</sup>

**BH:** Yeah, he did a tough on bad ass tour.

**MJ:** I found that, I researched a lot of, something called "Blackface" and these men had organized things where they had theaters all over the country that black people actually owned them. Yeah, anyhow, the T.O.B.A. was...

**BH:** The T.O.B.A. circuit, I heard my sister talk about that. She's eight years older than I am and she traveled with my mother when she stopped dancing and had my sister. They traveled because money was so tight and they wanted to be able to be in a position to be solvent when the tour was over. So, for five years my mother was on the road with my father with my sister, until my sister was of age to go to school. And then they settled in Los Angeles where my father's mother had a homestead. They saved enough money between 1929 and 1939 to buy a house with cash.

**MJ:** Wow.

**BH:** So, they went to Bank of America and signed mortgage papers. And then, about a month later went in and plunked down all the money for their house. And they had been saving toward that on this T.O.B.A. circuit.

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<sup>1</sup> T.O.B.A., acronym for *Theater Owners Booking Association*, was the name for the vaudeville circuit for African American performers in the 1920s and 1930s. Many of the African American performers playfully referred to it as the "Tough on Bad Asses" circuit.

**MJ:** That was a very wise way to do that, too, wasn't it? To get the credit first and then come back with all that money.

**BH:** I think so. And to put it right, my mother said, "A man should have his own vine and fig tree."

**MJ:** His own vine and victory...

**BH:** Fig tree. Fig tree. I think it is from the Bible.

**MJ:** Oh, fig — fig tree, okay.

**BH:** Every man should have his own vine and fig tree. Which really means that every man should be rooted.

**MJ:** That's a wonderful clue.

**BH:** Every man should have his own vine and fig tree. Which really means that every man should be rooted, really.

**MJ:** That's why they came on back and settled down with their family.

**BH:** They came and they were able to do it, I would imagine in a fairly short amount of time that — there with three years — from the time that I was born till they bought the house.

**MJ:** Isn't that something.

**BH:** So, it was on the road with the T.O.B.A.

**MJ:** The more things change, the more they stay the same. It is still the way we make the money — on the road.

**BH:** Uh, yeah.

**MJ:** On the road, we don't make money sitting around here, in these concerts here.

**BH:** Unfortunately, and there's a glut of performers — of people who are performing who think they are ready. And we are always getting ready for something else, but it's amazing. You still have to leave this place in order to get a foothold.

**MJ:** So Bertha grows up playing the piano, taking music lessons from...?

**BH:** Well, I took private lessons from a Professor Gray, who was one of the people in the neighborhood who turned his parlor into the classroom and we did programs for each other there, too. But, at the time I grew up and went to school in Los Angeles there was a really, what I called a lush — by today's standard — music program from sixth grade to the twelfth grade.

**MJ:** And you said it was comparable to High School for the Performing Arts, you said, but it didn't have that name. But, what was the name of that school?

**BH:** The school was Manual Arts High. But before that, the junior high school had a fabulous program. So I played — I learned, I played violin, viola and cello in junior high school. And became the pianist for the music teacher's son and we went all over the state of California doing festivals and competitions because he played viola very well and I was his accompanist. So, that was junior high school.

**MJ:** Fascinating.

**BH:** And when I got to Manual Arts, I played drums, timpani — from timpani to triangle — because I learned how to read drum music for the orchestra. So I played drums in the orchestra, and clarinet.

**MJ:** Wow, so you played everything.

**BH:** So, I played a lot of instruments. I learned how to read the viola clef and I played the clarinet. Never could understand why I didn't make the connection between the clarinet and the saxophone. It never occurred to me and there were no women...

**MJ:** That's probably why you did *not* do the connection.

**BH:** You could do flute, if you were a woman in the fifties, and you could do clarinet. But there was no encouragement all over the city for any other reed beyond the clarinet.

**MJ:** Um huh. Um huh.

**BJ:** So, uh, so I spent — I must admit I had a nonmusical reason for learning the drums and that was because the boy that I liked very much in high school was a fabulous drummer and I really wanted to just *stand* next to him. So I learned how to read all of the drum music and it was really, actually a great experience.

**MJ:** I can imagine. Yeah, so then we move on to high school and this exciting boyfriend and all these instruments<sup>1</sup> that you played. That's remarkable; that's really remarkable.

**BH:** It was — it put me in good standing. Really, it was just unbelievable to be in a place like that for so long — from the seventh grade to the twelfth grade — they had music every year. And they had a good rapport between the junior high school teacher and the high school teacher. They were the kind of people who opened the room early in the morning and left it open late at night.

**MJ:** That's wonderful, absolutely wonderful, yes.

**BH:** So there was — it was great, it was great. That in itself, was a blessing in disguise, it really was.

**MJ:** Yes, yes, but you did some singing too, didn't you?

**BH:** I did, yeah, 'cause I sang in the church. I was very involved in the Presbyterian Church and I did all those *Ave Marias*, and Schubert at Christmastime. And, I had a really high voice — high “C” — uh, really clear. And my father had really taught me a lot about singing 'cause he was a really wonderful [singer]. At that time, they had Paul Robeson and Nolan Hayes because they were all pretty much booked by the same agency and did all the same jobs. My father just did not really get the recognition.

**MJ:** Yeah, yeah...

**BH:** And unfortunately, but he was a first-class musician.

**MJ:** I'm going to Google him.

**BH:** He taught me solfeggio. Yeah, he taught me solfeggio and he taught me how to play for him, how to accompany him.

**MJ:** Really?

**BH:** And the first job that I ever had was playing for my father in a church concert. He gave me seven dollars. I mean that was a *lot* of money then, I think. But he recognized that I should be paid. But I used to practice the solfège with him. And he taught me how to listen to where he breathed and where to play. And uh, I really am very fond of playing for singers. There's a whole art to it that's not the same as being a soloist.

**MJ:** Totally different.

**BH:** Yeah, there's a whole other sensibility about playing for a singer, and trying to breathe with that singer and play where they're not and give them support and spur them on with — in places where you don't get in the way. And, um, he taught me a lot about that, just in playing...

**MJ:** It takes a heart of acquiescence, also.

**BH:** I think so, yeah. It has something to do with your being able to subdue your own.

**MJ:** Yeah, I really believe that as a singer, I can understand what you are saying too, you know, from doing it all the time, and how much I appreciate that.

**BH:** Yeah, because, you know, an insensitive pianist can wreck you.

**MJ:** You can't do anything; you can't do anything.

**BH:** So I'm very aware of that.

**MJ:** Yeah, so I tell you, in my research of this jazz period, I saw this little picture of Bertha Hope and Elmo Hope. So how long after high school — did you meet him while you were in high school? Elmo was your first husband, is that right?

**BH:** Yes. No, I met him about four years after that.

**MJ:** Where were you?

**BH:** I graduated in '54. I met him around '58. He was in Los Angeles playing with Chet Baker.

**MJ:** Oh, okay.

**BH:** And I was just running around trying to listen to jazz. I had a car and I think that by then I was working at the telephone company, and I was, that was at night and I was going to City College in the day and beginning to hear all of this music. Billy Higgins and I went to the same high school, so he was my buddy.

**MJ:** Okay. Oh, great.

**BH:** Wonderful. He was the first person that I went to school with that had an interest in the same music I did. And then he started rehearsing with Don Cherry and Charlie Hadden and Ornette Coleman and that was a piano-less group. But they rehearsed in Billy's house. And so Billy...



**MJ:** What year do you think that was?

**BH:** That was around uh, okay, let me think. It had to be right between '54, '55, '56; because I was out of high school. Right around there.

**MJ:** So then you met Elmo when you were chasing around, listening to jazz.

**BH:** Yeah, I was going to all these clubs that I could find that I could afford. Oh, Ornette Coleman was playing; Park Bley was another one that was prominent on that scene.

**MJ:** Was that Carla's brother? husband?

**BH:** Carla Bley's husband. And, the groups from the East Coast used to come out and hire a West Coast rhythm section, that is, usually maybe as a horn player, Johnny Griffin would come out; Sonny Rollins would come out. But they only sent headliners — whoever was sending them — they weren't bringing groups from the east. They were coming and playing with West Coast rhythm sections, and Elmo was sort of like first call to the rhythm section. So, I think the night that I met him he was working with Sonny Rollins. And, by this time, I had been, Billy Higgins and I and another artist named Danny Johnson were listening to all of these records and Danny Johnson gave me a record. He said, "I'm going to loan you this, you can't have it, 'cause you're going to love it — but you have to give it back." It turned out to be Bud Powell.

**MJ:** Wow.

**BH:** And so, Bud Powell kept me up for about three nights, just trying to play *Un Poco Loco* and all the things that were on that same album — I don't remember the name of it, but [that] was on it. So, I heard Bud first, then I heard Thelonious Monk.

**MJ:** Oh, right after that.

**BH:** Oh my goodness and I thought, oh this is so unbelievable. My brain had not been in that place. And then I heard Elmo. And some of the things on the record that I heard by Elmo, I started to try and play — Elmo and Thelonious Monk. I started to fool around with them and lo and behold there he was at the Hillcrest Club. And I was like, oh!

**MJ:** This was in Los Angeles — the Hillcrest Club. Okay.

**BH:** Yes, right, and so I went to hear him. And I got up the nerve to tell him that I *loved* his music. You know, that gushy, gushy, almost like, I'm just terrified, love your music!

**MJ:** How much older was he?

**BH:** When I think about it now, I have to laugh. He was about 13 years older than me.

**MJ:** Oh, really? Okay, you like those old guys. Ha, Ha.

**BH:** Ha, ha. Well, I don't know if that was true. I didn't even *think* about age at that point, you know. But he was, yeah, 13 years my senior.

**BH:** So, but I was just, my heart was pumping, because I'm not, I find it very hard to go up and tell people, oh yeah, I love the way you play, because what I usually get is "thank you very much and excuse me."

**MJ:** Little girl, a little kid.

**BH:** I didn't do that. But, I said, "I am trying to learn some of your music." "Oh yeah," he said, "really?" Oh, he just looked at me.

**MJ:** Oh, that got him. You nailed him then, didn't you?"

**BH:** And then I thought, "Do I look real...? Am I being, uh...he's not believing me. But I'm wondering: is he was making fun of me, or does he think I am flirting with him or I am just telling him this to get his attention?" So he took me over and introduced me to Sonny

and he said, “Sonny, this is Bertha Rosemond, she *says* she’s playing *my* music.” And I thought, “Oh, he doesn’t believe me.” So, I invited him to my house.

**MJ:** Oh, no, you didn’t either, Miss 13-years-younger.

**BH:** I took him. I had a car.

**MJ:** Um-hum. You picked him up?

**BH:** Pretty much. Yeah, pretty much. I didn’t look at it like that. But I said, “I have to convince him that I am a musician and...”

**MJ:** You wanted to be like him.

**BH:** I liked his music and I would like for him to help me perfect it, because there were the chord changes — they were really tricky sounding. You know, I didn’t, I had had some theory. I think I was going to, yeah, I was going to City College at the time. But just, the rhythms — everything, they were off kilter. And I really wanted to know a little bit more about them. So I invited him to coffee. And, I don’t even know, and this was after the gig — this wasn’t coffee tomorrow at two o’clock because I had to go to work.

**MJ:** Oh yeah, the next day. Yeah, yeah, yeah, but, wow. So, were your parents awake?

**BH:** No, I was out; I was in my own apartment by that time.

**MJ:** Oh, you were in your own apartment. Okay, okay.

**BH:** Although if my parents had been awake, I really do believe they would have tolerated it.

**MJ:** They would have liked him, because he was legitimate, he was a legitimate musician.

**BH:** Right because, when I took lessons from, I forgot to mention this, that while I took lessons from Ritchie Powell, who was Bud Powell’s brother, while they were in Los

Angeles — Harold Land, Max Roach, George Morrow, Clifford Brown — making that beautiful short-lived band, I was lucky enough to take lessons from Ritchie Powell, who used to come over there. At that time I was still in my parents' house. And, um...

**MJ:** Well, naturally they would approve of him, being real musicians, legitimate musicians. Yes, they would have a respect for them.

**BH:** Real musicians. Absolutely, so I took lessons with him and sometimes because we had an upright grand with a great sound and he was very quiet and polite.

**MJ:** And impressed with that piano.

**BH:** Yeah, he said, "Do you think that after I give you your lesson, would your mother mind too much if I just stayed and played it for a while?" I said, "I don't think so. You stay as long as you like." So, sometimes after my lesson he would sit there and play till 11 and 12 o'clock at night — it was fabulous — till then we would have to call it to a close. But he was so respectful and so beautiful and he would just sit and play solo piano.

**MJ:** And this was Bud Powell's brother? Wow.

**BH:** Yeah, he's the one that, you know, tragically his life ended not too long after that in that horrible accident, with he and his wife. And that band broke up, but I got to hear that band almost every night that they rehearsed because Eric Dorfey was my neighbor. So it's just two blocks from my house and I could walk over there and hear that band. And Eric and I went to City College together.

**MJ:** Did you know Melba Liston back then?

**BH:** You know, I remember her.

**MJ:** She was in your neighborhood, right?

**BH:** Yeah, there were an awful lot of people in that neighborhood and no, I did not.

**MJ:** Did you know Ms. Hightower, the one who had the big band in her backyard?

**BH:** I know Ms. Hightower had the big band and had the, yes, I did not know her either. She got past me. But I always regret the women that I didn't know when I was there in L.A. But, Vy Red is the one woman that really impressed me a lot.

**MJ:** Yeah, tell me about that.

**BH:** Well, she heard me play somewhere and she just came up to me and she said, "Oh, I like what you are trying to do." And she said she had some jobs coming up and she wanted me to work with her. And I was, it was just an honor, really. She introduced me to people who were the newspaper, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* people, and she introduced me to a lot of people. She introduced me to Dinah Washington. Just to make Dinah aware of me she was saying that, "Here, she's a young girl trying to learn the business." Dinah took off her, I think it was either a ermine or sable, some *fabulous* fur, 'cause I'm not a real fur person. I don't like those; I don't like the idea of wearing it, yeah.

**MJ:** Those faces.

**BH:** I used to have nightmares about those little animals that the women used to wear.

**MJ:** Yeah, yeah the faces, they could have at least cut the face off.

**BH:** But she took that cape off around her head and flung it and put it down on the ground in front of me. And, I'm thinking, "Oh, my goodness!"

**MJ:** Wow.

**BH:** I don't know what that meant, but *I* never forgot it.

**MJ:** Yeah, I think it meant something pretty deep.

**BH:** Yeah, it was really very interesting.

**MJ:** Vy did that. I tell you what we are going to have to do, too, I've got to take a picture of you and I together and send it to Vy Red. Because I told you I had an experience with her, I brought her to New York, but anyway, I produced her — the Women's Jazz Festival. So, I'm going to take a picture of us tonight, yeah.

**BH:** I've introduced some of the young horn players here to her by phone.

**MJ:** Oh, great.

**BH:** They wanted to know, "Did you know Vy Red?" And I said, "Sure." She was really gracious with them over the phone. The girls were just thrilled to be able to talk to her.

**MJ:** She's like that, yeah.

**BH:** And, she was so gracious with them over the phone. These are young upcoming women saxophone players who are serious about being, uh, making their mark, you know.

**MJ:** Okay, so you're still looking at Elmo. He's still around town — he's still working in California.

**BH:** Oh, so yes, so then he understood. He saw that I was struggling and moving in the right direction. So he started coming over and playing his songs for me.

**MJ:** Wow, that's a great thing.

**BH:** Yes, so that was — I felt, oh, this is almost like a private lesson. He wasn't giving me lessons but he just played.

**MJ:** That's a lesson. When you have a learned person listening to a learned person, that's a lesson — something different than what the first person was not doing — it is. It is like a lesson.

**BH:** And you have to learn how to listen to what it is that you are needing, you know, and weave it into what you already know, it was instructive.

**MJ:** Hearing is a big deal — when you hear. It is such a big deal, it really is. The ear is a great thing.

**BH:** And the ear is not respected enough, I think, except for transposition. Listening to what somebody else did — but just hearing to see what you make of it. You know, it seems to me...

**MJ:** Your take on it.

**BH:** Yeah, I don't know if that is a neglected art.

**MJ:** I think it is.

**BH:** I think that's the way most people used to learn. I am fascinated by how much I sort of picked up from the way Thelonious used to teach people and what other people told me their experiences were with Thelonious Monk — learning his music. He might have the whole thing written out and not share it with you because he really wanted you to listen.... And I find that I've done that a lot of times on the bandstand to see what if the rhythm section is listening, you know. And sometimes, you know, people say, "Uh-oh, what is Bertha getting ready to do?" 'Cause they know I might just start. I love doing that. I do it a lot less now because of how things have evolved. But the more I get to know the same group of musicians and play with them more often, the more I can do it. Just start and have them listen.

**MJ:** Nail it.

**BH:** And they really wind up having a lot more fun and they are challenged in a different way than standing there just remembering how the song really goes and going off into some other space — rather than being cohesive. I still appreciate that.

**MJ:** Well, you know, I think what happens in a jam session, which I believe is high art; because of the things that you're describing and how people come to learn and they come to give their take on things. And, I think that's what a jam session is. Don't you think that's what it is?

**BH:** Well, a jam session, yeah, a jam session should be a sharing, you know, yeah.

**MJ:** That's what I meant, that's what I meant — a sharing. I hear yours, you hear mine, we get together and come together with something — showing something in common.

**BH:** More often than not, sometimes a jam session has turned into something very different these days.

**MJ:** Well, these days, I'm not talking about what they're doing today.

**BH:** Oh, you're talking about what it should really be, yeah.

**MJ:** Yes, what it has been, what we have known it to be.

**BH:** What we've known it to be. But, you know, the truth of the matter is, if we don't find a way to encapsulate and give it back to these young kids, there won't be jazz anymore. But the jam session won't represent for them what it represented for us. So, I am just appalled to see lead sheets and iPhones, but we are in a new technology that is being used and as soon as that becomes the standard, the old form sort of dies away.

**MJ:** Yeah well, we can't allow that to happen, we are going to have to really, I think we need to make a concerted effort, as far as jam sessions are concerned. I believe, I don't think we can lose that. I think if we lose that, you know, you can't bring any paper. Like



one time I brought paper to the bandstand one time and I got eaten alive. The guys...well, what happened was the young musicians- — and they said, “Oh, we don’t...she’s calling tunes we don’t know.” “Well, if you don’t know them,” I told them, “you need to go learn them!”

**BH:** You know, and I guess I don’t — there’s a place where I know there’s a certain standard of songs, because of the age I am, that you’re expected to know in order to participate in a jam session.

**MJ:** Right.

**BH:** And depending on where you go, what little clannish outfit you invade, you see that there’s another set of standards that they expect people to know that are 10 or 20 years removed from what you know, you know? So, but that doesn’t take away from the idea that even those if they’re going to become standardized, you should use all of your faculties that you have at your disposal without the technology. And these kids today, they really frown on that. So, consequently, you see...you call a song and people will just ask you the title of it and look it up on the iPhone with an app and put it on the music stand and read the changes as they go by. Well, that’s not a jam session to me.

**MJ:** No, it’s not a jam session. But I think if there are enough people who play like you and who consider those things jam standards that they, you know, you want to get so far away from the root of the music until you take it somewhere else. Because this Michael Howe said to me one time, he said, “Well, that sounds good — what you’re playing, but that’s not jazz. You can give it another name, but that’s not jazz.” So, they need to be, I mean, you don’t do that with *Aida*, you don’t do that with, er, you know what I mean.

You don't change European classical music. So why should they be able to just take this thing anywhere they want to go? You know this is a classical music here.

**BH:** Well, that's the truth; there is a body of it that should remain what it is...

**MJ:** Intact.

**BH:** And then you can do your take on it. But the body should...and you might be able to expand the body, if it fits. But if there should be a group, there should be a comprehensive group of songs, compositions that should be considered the core of standard music, 'cause it's black classical music. I try to teach myself not to call it jazz anymore in public. Because it is really is our classical music. Without America, this music wouldn't exist because it's that experience that we brought that makes the music what it came to be.

**MJ:** From Africa.

**BH:** Absolutely.

**MJ:** From Africa to America. And the root of it is, and you can't, I mean, you have no tree without a root, you know?

**BH:** That's right.

**MJ:** So, you have to move from there, if you don't move from there, uh, like one particular musician who made all his money playing the blues, he announced in the *New York Times* that you didn't have to play the blues to play jazz. Say, well, you can call it something, but you can't call it jazz, if you're going to look at it like that. I can't wait to see this guy and I am glad that I haven't seen him lately, because I just probably would have pulled all his long hair out. But anyway, you know, how dare you make money and

you try to rob a generation or some of a generation by making a statement like that? I am very offended by that.

**BH:** I don't know who that is.

**MJ:** I'm not going to call his name on this interview. But he's out of order.

**BH:** That really has no relevance. That has no real meaning because that the blues is the root of this music and...

**MJ:** All of its nuances.

**BH:** You cannot take that away from it. Because then you can call *that* music something else, but if it doesn't have the — going all the way back to the experience that the black man had to endure in this country and even beyond and bring it to where we started to call it the blues, you don't have jazz.

**MJ:** Which I always say that “blues” is not even our word. It is not even our description of it. It's a Western term. They didn't call that the blues, it was spirit music in Africa; it is African music, black music.

**BH:** And over here it became work songs and shouts and hoots and hollers. It wasn't called that. But it had a, it had, it did something, it had a place.

**MJ:** Yes, it did.

**BH:** A purpose in our lives.

**MJ:** And you can feel it, we can feel it and hear it because we know the history lives inside us. I think that's the main thing, the history lives inside us. And of all the things we know is people whose shoulders we stand on, who played the music, who clarified, who codified the music, who did everything with the music and kept that core where it was, instead of changing it so much. You think about — is that how you feel about it?

**BH:** I don't know. There is a group of people who have been able to standardize it, you know, to keep it because they lived it. I mean, there's the learned part and there's that part that you have experienced, you know? And I think the best of the music is when those two marry. And sometimes the marriage doesn't even take place. It's just how you have felt it and how you lived your life through the music, living something that you have something to say about. But if you haven't lived it — it's very hard to express the emotions about it in the music.

**MJ:** Absolutely, that's the reason why they say a lot of African Americans play the music better than anybody else. I mean it sounds like a prejudice but, it is not a prejudice.

**BH:** I mean I think it's a, we are always in a spot where if we grandize ourselves, if we make ourselves the top of the ladder and we put our position where it belongs to be — we have to get knocked down a peg for having done that. But other groups don't do that and we don't expect other groups to do it. You know, I don't know how to play a Jewish klezmer. I have to learn that. It might have something about that music may interlock with something I know, but that might be shared experience — that I don't know about until I examine it. I wasn't born in the South to have that Mississippi Delta blues feeling in my toes, you know? That's what I meant about the feeling.

**MJ:** The Mississippi mud. Yeah, yeah, but you feel what they're doing.

**BH:** But I know what they're doing is my message. Yes.

**MJ:** Yes, you know what they're doing is your message. That's a wonderful way to describe that, that's the best way, it really is. And that's really a wonderful statement, I really like that. I'm glad you said that.

**BH:** Thank you, yeah, it is, it is. I can't separate myself from that.

**MJ:** No, no, you can't. And a lot of people don't even have the experience. You know, I played Billie Holiday — a part of a video — Billie Holiday's singing *Strange Fruit* and the guy who wrote the lyric was a Jewish guy, you know? I had my students to write about it and they were very moved by it. These children were so removed from the history, but it made them feel and reach. And that's what we need them to do was to understand that, you know, like in your face to see what really happened before and they just don't know anything about it. But they begin to sympathize with her, empathize with Billie Holiday and the things that she went through, hiding down on the floor of the bus with Artie Shaw and all those people when she went through the South and all that. Anybody can feel that.

**BH:** Absolutely. And you know, you didn't have to witness that in order to feel that you needed to get on the floor of the bus. You know what I mean? So, it's interesting though that there's something about the art of the song and what that did to wake those kids up. They may or may not have been exposed to the word in the history book about the hangings, lynchings — about that brutal part of the history of this country. But to hear somebody sing about it and to know that that was a personal experience, sort of brings it *right up close*. And you can't, it's hard to deny the art of it and then you have to look at what went behind that. So, it's not just Billy Holiday, it's all of the people that you can think about that passed by a tree, you know what I mean? And feared for their lives in the same way and ran or went to bed terrified. You know, but she embodies it for us.

**MJ:** And got up and played the music. So, it's something so different that comes from that experience. And if you have not had it right in your face, you're not going to play like that. It's just going to be something missing. It's going to be something missing if

you listen to people who did play it before you tried to play it and you didn't have the experience of it. And it's just so terribly important. And people think you are being racist and all that kind of stuff. But when you heard people who played that, been in the midst of them or tried to play with that in saying and work with them, you know it's a different experience. And I try to explain that to folks, but anyway, some people don't want to understand it because they want to turn it into something else — because they cannot play the other music — they have not been able to capture that. So they want to change it and so then they can begin to say that part of it is theirs. You haven't given anything to that situation. That was in the past and some people are still going through it. I don't know why black men don't all have high blood pressure. You know, you walk by and you're black and, you know, and people are arresting you and stopping you because you're black. I mean, that's part of that same experience those people who were hanged experienced.

**BH:** We're still going through that. Yeah, yeah, we really are still going through that. We're not getting hung now, we're getting shot. It's the same.

**MJ:** Right. Or we are getting put in prison, which is the same business that they're doing everywhere — where they're still making money on us. It's just like we came over here to pick cotton and now we are being picked up and put in jail and you're getting paid for that.

**BH:** There is a whole industry that spawns an industry that makes it possible to keep the relationship the same as it was when there was free labor that the whole country profited by. And now, it's low wages and the country is still profiting and all of the complexes and corporations that are just enslaving us in a different kind of way.

**MJ:** Yeah, another kind of slavery.

**BH:** It's a different product at the end. But it pretty much operates pretty much the same as free labor.

**MJ:** Yeah, the brutal part of it, the physical brutal attacks are different. We don't have so much brutal, except picket lines, you know, when they throw water on you or do something like that, but it's not quite the same. But I want to get back, let's get back to the other thing now that we've established this root and this reason for this happening the way it did and the effects of it. So, we hear this good jazz, we hear people improvising and saying it their way and understanding that everybody's story is their way of putting the music together. You know their feeling about being black, their feeling about playing jazz, their feeling about cabaret cards and being taken away from you for this, that reason and this reason. And somebody hitting you in the head when you're Miles Davis because you're standing in front of a fancy car, and you know you don't make that kind of money, so you're pissed off...

**BH:** How about just standing in front of the club where you are working?

**MJ:** That's what I'm taking about, yeah, um-huh. Can't go outside for a smoke, right? But, anyway, it is just a horrible, horrible experience and it'll make you do a lot of things, you know, on your horn and other ways, too. We won't get into all that.

But anyway, and so okay, we are back to Elmo, Ms. Hope. But I mean that's a part of our song, we can't leave that part out. If you leave that part out you are leaving part of the music out, you know, like dropping bars or something like that. You know. Yeah, right, so anyway, something missing. But, anyway, I saw this picture of you with your glasses on — those little cat eye glasses on. I sent you that picture from his magazine of you

sitting there playing the piano and Elmo sitting right there with you and you got your hands on the keyboard. Were you guys married? Yeah, you were married then.

**BH:** Oh, yeah, that was the Riverside record cover. Yeah, 1961 or 2.

**MJ:** So, you're married by this time.

**BH:** Yeah, we were married in 1960.

**MJ:** Did you have any kids yet? Married in 1960. Okay.

**BH:** One, yeah we had a daughter. Monica was already here.

**MJ:** Uh-huh. Oh, tell me the story about Monica and you're getting a gig when she was a baby and you were living near your mother and all that and Monica was born and the gig that you got.

**BH:** Oh, okay, well, the gig I got was with Jeni LeGon, who just passed, I think.

**MJ:** She was a dancer.

**BH:** She just died, yes. Jeni LeGon was one of the first black dancers in Hollywood. I think that they decided [she] was too light to be dark and too dark to be light — sort of the same thing that Lena Horne and several other black women went through — a gorgeous dancer. And, she had a troupe and we came across routes — well, the gig was to go across the country on Route 66. Right at the beginning of the civil rights movement with sit-ins — right through that time. And Monica was three months old. Elmo was having a difficult time getting work. He was sort of in-between jobs after being, you know, on call in the first call pianist — some of that work was diminishing. And this possibility to go across country for three months and return was offered to me. And I thought, this looks like a job I should take because of Elmo wasn't working and I wasn't working at the telephone company anymore. And, so we talked about it and I said, well, you know this is an



opportunity for me to make money and just send all the money back home. It's a troupe traveling; all of our expenses are take care of. Part USO tour and part private clubs all across...

**MJ:** Okay, you mean the USO that goes down and plays for troops?

**BH:** USO, the USO, yeah, no, we went to noncommissioned officers' clubs on Army and Air Force bases and nightclubs in some of those cities, also. So, Elmo really didn't want me to go 'cause I had a three-month-old daughter and I could understand that, but I reasoned with him. I tried to reason with him, "Well, we can stay home while you look for work and work is scarce. This is a *job* that I could take." So, he said to me, "This child is too young to not have her mother; she's going to grow up to hate you!" But, I said, "But listen, I'm leaving her with her *father*! I have such great confidence that you'll take good care of her." Also, we lived about six blocks from my mother. And my mother had said, "You know, if you have to go I'll be right there to help Elmo take care of the baby." So, I thought I was in good shape to leave him. So, after we settled it, he finally came around that it sounded like it might be a good idea.

**MJ:** Well, at least it wasn't chauvinism.

**BH:** No, and plus, I mean, I did have to consider that he felt like maybe he didn't have, but he came from a family of nine brothers and sisters, so it wasn't like he was a stranger to having babies, you know. He was not, yeah. So, and because my mother really felt comfortable that she would be close by. Because I really did leave my daughter with *him*, not her.

**MJ:** Yeah, so, was this your first tour away?

**BH:** Yes, it was, and it was for three months.

**MJ:** Well, having a big family, coming from the family and the musicianship thing, musician thing, you know, him being a musician, you being a musician, your mother, parents — all those things were really working together.

**BH:** I think so.

**MJ:** Well, he was really a big man to be...and then, plus he had developed so much of his own style. There is such a security in having something like that, instead of someone searching — someone who is basically not established. You know, doing that, which is really a wonderful thing that he agreed to do that.

**BH:** I think so, too. I really do.

**MJ:** Yeah, he was quite the guy.

**BH:** Yeah, in retrospect I thought he really did step up. The decision was one that we made together. And, in retrospect, I had to think, “Well, he really did step up and do something that a lot of people wouldn’t have done.”

**MJ:** A lot of men wouldn’t have done.

**BH:** Yes, a lot of men wouldn’t have done.

**MJ:** He was very secure. When you have a man who is not secure, it’s not quite like that. I won’t say anything further, this is your interview.

**BH:** So, on that trip, that turned out to be a very scary trip in a lot of ways, because we ran right into the civil rights movement. And we ran into people in one town, I can’t remember where it was, where there wasn’t even a sidewalk. There were boards that separated the dirt street from where you walk. And people pushed us off the boardwalk into the street, so that they could walk on the wood and we had to walk in the street. And I

remember stopping somewhere to see if we could get some food and we were told we had to go around the back. And, I was livid and a little naïve.

**MJ:** Yeah, California wasn't quite like that.

**BH:** No, California had its own brand of racism, but it wasn't overt, like drinking [at a] fountain, like colored drinking on the bus platform. I went and drank out of the white fountain. I mean I'm just talking about the kind of experiences that could've put me in jail.

**MJ:** Jail!

**BH:** Yes, yes, right, and watching people get hysterical while I drank out of the white fountain and hearing people say, "She's not one of us, she's not from around here — leave her alone." Those kinds of experiences happened to this group as we went across — being stranded on a Tennessee mountain with a flat tire.

**MJ:** Ohhh, not good.

**BH:** Now, you have to imagine, we are in a station wagon pulling a U-Haul-It with all of the dance costumes and all of the instruments in Tennessee in 1961. And we got stranded on this mountaintop *pitch black*. And we all thought *we were going to die!* So we all got under all of our covers and the driver said, "Okay, you all get as close to unseen as possible — if anybody comes along.

**MJ:** Like the Billie Holiday story — the same thing. And Jeni was so light that she could almost pass [for white]. It's like Johnny Otis, who was Greek, who decided he wanted to be black — kind of the same story.

**BH:** Who I worked with, by the way.

**MJ:** You did? I did too.

**BH:** Johnny Otis with little Esther Phillips.

**BH:** So, Jeni and the driver were in the front and everybody else was in the back of the station wagon under blankets and coats. And we couldn't go anywhere because we had a flat tire and it was in the middle of the night. So, coming the other way was one of those open slat trucks.

**MJ:** Flatbed trucks probably.

**BH:** With the open slats on the side with a couple of bales of hay and two kids sitting in the back and a man and a wife in the front — or a man. And we could just see the headlights coming and he took out his flashlight, and we had a flashlight, and he came across the road — *oh my God*. And he said in his Tennessee voice, “Y’all, good evening y’all look like you have a bit of trouble?” We all just took a deep breath under the blankets. And the driver and Jeni said “Yes, we have a flat tire we are just going to have to spend the night here on the side of the road until we can see what we’re doing in the morning.” And he said, “Well, I have enough room in my truck. I could take one of you down the mountain and get the tire fixed and bring you back and help you put it on. Would that be all right?” And we all did this sigh of relief and sure enough, he took the driver down the mountain and, I don’t know in about two, two and a half hours, they were back and he helped him put the tire on. So that was the kind of positive experience we had in a very negative landscape at that time, you know, that I never forgot. It’s one of those signature things about that whole trip!

**MJ:** Well, tell me, hold on one moment. After the tour with Jen LeGon you were to go — and he wound up in Florida — you were supposed to go to New York to tour...was canceled, right?

**BH:** But since Elmo had family in New York and an offer from a record label to record we decided in a phone conversation that now would be a good time to go to New York. So, I took the bus from Florida after the last working engagement with Jennie, for 33 hours on the bus. It was not an uneventful trip because I almost got arrested during my Rosa Parks moment — when I refused to give my seat to a white passenger. So while I was riding on the bus, Elmo took our baby Monica on the plane to New York.

**MJ:** So he went ahead and met you in New York, but it took you longer to get there.

**BH:** Well, met in New York at his mother's house....Now I remember, I arrived there first and then Elmo arrived with our new baby Monica.

**MJ:** So after you arrived there, did you stay with Elmo's mother?

**BH:** Yes, so she allowed us to stay there until we found our own housing, which was longer than I wanted.

**MJ:** So when was the record date with Elmo? And what month was it when you arrived in New York.

**BH:** We arrived here in New York in May.

**MJ:** How long did it take you to get your own apartment?

**BH:** We lived with Elmo's mother for almost three years. We were moving into our apartment and having a second child almost simultaneously in February 1963.

**MJ:** So how did the work go for you and Elmo and how did that record date with...who wanted you to come? How did that turn out?

**BH:** The date was welcomed by Elmo and the record company. He introduced his own original music on that date.

**MJ:** What was the name of that album?

**BH:** I think it was called *Homecoming*.

**MJ:** Did you find any work playing the piano at that time?

**BH:** Yes, I did look for work and I did go back to the phone company. And, I also would play from time to time on weekend jobs with Jimmy Castor and at Sylvia's Blue Morocco [that was the name of the club].

**MJ:** How was Elmo faring living in New York? How was Elmo doing with everything that was going on?

**BH:** Finding work was difficult and his cabaret card had never been reissued.

**MJ:** Were you able to keep your difficulties in the home? And how about outside forces?

**BH:** I think the outside forces were really inside.

**MJ:** What do you mean? Can you explain that?

**BH:** It was difficult because circumstances made it so we were very crowded and my finances had to cover most of our needs. So there was a lot of tension that was created inside the family.

**MJ:** Did you ever want him to stop playing and get a stable job?

**BH:** No, I don't think that was ever an issue. I came from a family who learned to live within an artist's needs.

**MJ:** In other words, you know how to budget.

**BH:** I knew how to budget and I knew how to respect his needs as a creative [artist] to be a complete and creative person.

**MJ:** Were there potential problems on the road, political influence on music, promoters and so-called friends?

**BH:** I don't know how you want me to address that.... Elmo, he wasn't on the road as much as he was home writing. As a matter of fact, he gave me jobs. In fact, he gave me jobs that he had been called for and that gave me an opportunity to grow.

**MJ:** Okay, how about political influences on music?

**BH:** I think that the music has been divided in categories and that has divided jazz from its roots by the institutions who did not respect the cohesiveness of jazz...blues...gospel. It's all part of the same music, created by the same group of people. And the industry has made it seem as though this music...so blues is almost ignored as the root of jazz.

**MJ:** Okay, so potential problems, so-called friends. Did you experience any of that? Said they came for one reason, but came for another?

**BH:** Yes, I did experience a lot of "hangers-on" who wanted to be closer to Elmo and manipulate him into continued drug use, especially at a time when he was trying to free himself from that. That was a continuing battle.

**MJ:** How were you affected by this, constantly seeing him do this?

**BH:** It got to me eventually, because I started to succumb to this, right in the middle of our marriage. So, I am continually awed by the women who were able to stay focused and concentrated while their husbands struggled with addiction. I did manage to stop using the drugs on my own, but that cost me dearly.

**MJ:** Can you describe what happened during that time?

**BH:** The family was torn apart and took years to reconvene the family and bring it to some sort of wholeness. But Elmo died an early death and left me with three young children, and it still is an ongoing feat to keep the family together.

**MJ:** How old are your children now?

**BH:** They are all adults now with their set of problems. Let me back up, because this is my story. They are in their 40s and 50s — three great children who are continually studying their father's music, just because it exists. My oldest daughter is very talented and is pursuing other interests besides music, but she and I have worked together.

**MJ:** Didn't Monica win a prize for one of her songwriting activities?

**BH:** Yes, she's a gifted songwriter. She won the John Lennon Songwriting Competition, which was a \$15,000 prize worth of equipment and prizes.

**MJ:** So, all in all, through all the struggles you guys are still standing strong and that's a wonderful thing to witness, because you have had a full and beautiful life. And, I am very, very proud to be your friend.

**BH:** I'm very, very glad to share this with you and I do hope it reaches an audience that could make the best use that my story can offer.

**MJ:** Well, Bertha, we are going to wind down this and this wonderful life of service. I want to thank you. Thank you again, since it is certainly something that makes everybody feel hopeful. It gives people hope to know that no matter what happens you can become — just as you're winning now.

**BH:** Thank you so much, Melba. You are a great interviewer.

**MJ:** Thanks.

**BH:** Probably the best that I've ever given.

**MJ:** Okay, so we'll talk soon. We'll be on the high seas again hopefully soon.

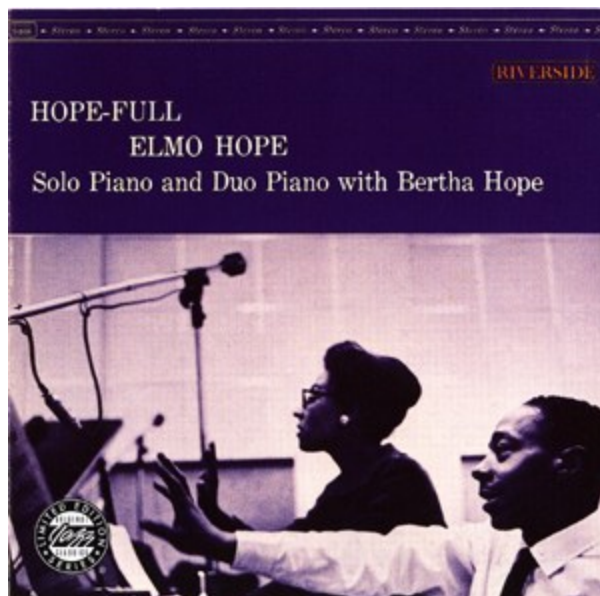
**BH:** We need some high tea for this one.

**MJ:** Thanks, Bertha. Good night.

**BH:** Good luck with all of your work. Thanks so much. See you soon, okay?



**MJ:** Thanks. Good night.



## Biography — Elmo Hope

Pianist and composer St. Elmo Sylvester Hope began his career in bop and mostly hard bop with the Joe Morris band. Beginning in 1953, he recorded as a leader and played alongside Sonny Rollins, Lou Donaldson, Clifford Brown and Jackie McLean. But because of drug use he lost his cabaret card and found it difficult to make a living as a musician in New York. Hope relocated to Los Angeles after touring with Chet Baker. He performed with Lionel Hampton, Harold Land and Curtis Counce before returning to New York in 1961. He did trio performances in 1966, but died just over a year later due to heart failure. Hope's widow, Bertha, is also a pianist and recorded with her husband in 1961.<sup>1</sup>

## Discography — Elmo Hope

- 1953 Introducing the Elmo Hope Trio (New Faces New Sounds) Blue Note
- 1954 Elmo Hope Quintet (New Faces-New Sounds, Vol. 2) EMI Music Distribution
- 1955 Meditations Original Jazz Classics
- 1955 Hope Meets Foster OJC
- 1955 Wail, Frank, Wail Prestige Records
- 1956 Informal Jazz JVC Compact Discs
- 1957 Trio and Quintet Blue Note
- 1959 Elmo Hope Trio Original Jazz Classics
- 1960 Elmo Hope, Vol. 1
- 1961 Here's Hope VSOP
- 1961 High Hope!
- 1961 Homecoming! Original Jazz Classics
- 1961 Hope-Full Original Jazz Classics
- 1963 Sounds from Rikers Island Fresh Soul / Fresh Sound
- 1966 Final Sessions, Vol. 1
- 1966 Final Sessions, Vol. 2 Inner City
- 1980 Hope from Rikers Island Chiaroscuro

Elmo Hope Trio Essential Media Group  
Six Classic Albums Real Gone Jazz

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/elmo-hope-mn0000145307>

## Biography — Bertha Hope

Jazz pianist Bertha Hope-Booker was raised in Los Angeles and studied music at Los Angeles Community College and later received her BA in early childhood education from Antioch College. She grew up with Richie Powell and Elmo Hope and later relocated to New York after marrying Hope in 1957. Hope worked at the telephone company during the day and performed at night. After Elmo Hope's death in 1967, Bertha continued to present his music and remained active on the New York jazz scene. She served as an artist in residence under the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. She performed in workshops with Dizzy Gillespie, Frank Foster, Nat Adderley and Philly Joe Jones. Later, she married Walter Booker and they both continued the legacy of Elmo Hope through a tribute ensemble called ELMOllenium and the Elmo Hope Project. Bertha is the leader of the Bertha Hope Trio and has composed and arranged several recordings, including *In Search of Hope*, *Elmo's Fire*, *Between Two Kings* and *Nothin' But Love*.<sup>2</sup>

## Discography — Bertha Hope

1990	<u>In Search of Hope</u>	Steeplechase
1991	<u>Elmo's Fire</u>	Steeplechase
1992	<u>Between Two Kings</u>	Minor Music
2000	<u>Nothin' But Love</u>	Reservoir (City Hall)

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/bertha-hope-41>

## **Biography — Walter Booker**

Walter Booker was born in Prairie View, Texas in 1933 and moved with his family to Washington, D.C. in the mid-1940s. Amazingly, it wasn't until 1959, at the age of 26, that Bookie began playing the bass while in the Army (serving side by side in the same unit with Elvis Presley). Shortly after leaving the service, he became a member of Andrew White's JFK Quintet, a group of young D.C. musicians accomplished enough to attract the attention of Cannonball Adderly, who produced a recording for them. Bookie's next gig was to tour the United States with the Shirley Horn Trio, along with Billy Hart on drums.

In 1964, Bookie moved to New York City. Almost immediately, he was hired by trumpeter Donald Byrd. From there, he went on to join Stan Getz, and throughout 1965 and 1966, alternated between Getz's group and that of Sonny Rollins. Between 1967 and 1969, Bookie recorded and toured with Ray Bryant, Art Farmer, Harold Vick, Betty Carter and, most notably, as the bassist for Thelonious Monk's last group.

In 1969, Bookie was invited to join the Cannonball Adderly Quintet, an association that lasted until Cannonball's untimely death in 1975. Also during that time he designed, built, and ran the Boogie Woogie Studio, a mecca for musicians from all over the world.

From 1975 to 1981, Bookie was Sarah Vaughan's bassist and continued to produce recordings at his studio. He and the studio helped shape a number of up-and-coming young groups, including Natural Essence. And he became deeply involved with Brazilian

music, ultimately forming Love Carnival and Dreams, one of the more successful Brazilian jazz groups on the New York scene.

After leaving Sarah Vaughan, Bookie went to California with the John Hicks Trio to record an album, a trip that resulted in a West Coast tour with the trio accompanying saxophonist Pharaoh Sanders. The tour culminated in the recording of an unforgettable live video/concert. Shortly thereafter, Nat Adderly asked Bookie to join his new quintet. Bookie played with the quintet until Nat's demise in 2000.

In 1998, Bookie formed the Walter Booker Quintet, playing mainly East Coast venues. At the same time Bookie, together with Jimmy Cobb, actively toured as part of the Bertha Hope Trio. In addition to the Walter Booker Quintet, Bookie also formed Elmollenium, based on the same core group as the Quintet (plus Bertha Hope) and dedicated to playing the music of Elmo Hope. Always greatly in demand for recording sessions, over the years Bookie appeared on more than 300 records.

Bookie continued to play actively on the New York scene until passing away in December 2006.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/walter-booker-mn0000236327>

## Discography — Walter Booker

### As leader

2000 *Bookie's Cookbook* (with Leroy Williams, Cecil Payne, Marcus Belgrave, Roni Ben-Hur, Larry Willis)

### As sideman

- 1973 Cannonball Adderley: *Country Preacher*, *Inside Straight* (OJC),
- 1975 Phenix (Fantasy)
- 1983 Nat Adderley: *We Remember Cannon* (I+O), *On the Move* (Evidence, 83), *Blue Autumn* (Evidence), *Mercy Mercy Mercy* (Evidence)
- 1974 Gene Ammons: *Brasswind* (Prestige)
- 1989 Kenny Barron: *Kenny Barron / John Hicks Quartet — Rhythm-A-Ning* (Candid)
- 1966 Donald Byrd: *Mustang!* (Blue Note) *Blackjack* (Blue Note, 1963–67)
- 1990 Stanley Cowell: *Departure No. 2* (Steeplechase)
- 1967 Stan Getz: *What The World Needs Now — Plays Bacharach and David* (Verve)
- 1995 Roy Hargrove: *Family* (Verve)
- 1966 Andrew Hill: *Change* (Blue Note, [2007])
- 1985 John Hicks: *Inc. 1* (DIW)
- 1966 Milt Jackson: *Born Free* (Limelight)
- 1984 Clifford Jordan: *Repetition* (Soul Note)
- 1968 Charles McPherson: *Horizons* (Prestige)
- 1967 Lee Morgan: *The Procrastinator* (Blue Note)
- 1968 Archie Shepp: *The Way Ahead* (Impulse!)
- 1969 Wayne Shorter: *Super Nova* (Blue Note)
- 1970 Joe Zawinul: *Zawinul* (Atlantic)
- 1967 Pete La Roca: *Turkish Women at the Bath*
- 1967 Hank Mobley: *Third Season*



**ROSE GALES**

**Jazz Musician — Pianist**  
**Widow of Larry Gales — Jazz Musician — Bassist**

Photo by Melba Joyce



**ROSE GALES**

My name is Melba Joyce. This is a Jazz Widows interview. Today is April 2, 2012, and I am using the dialogue from this interview for a thesis in my Jazz History Research class at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey. We are in Los Angeles, California, at the home of Rose Gales, jazz pianist and the widow of Larry Gales, the great bass player who has passed on. Naturally, I have identified that by saying she is a widow. Larry played with Thelonious Monk. He also played with me at the Parisian Room here in Los Angeles, and he was a great jazz musician. Rose is one of the wives, one of the widows, who is also a musician, which makes a very unique situation, in that they were two jazz musicians married to each other and it was a very rich relationship. I can tell how rich it was by looking at the atmosphere and the things she has continued to carry on as she has continued her own career, playing every Sunday night at the venue that Billy Higgins created called World Stage. Right?

**RG:** Um-huh.

**MJ:** So Rose, it's wonderful. Thank you so much for letting me come. I am just so excited, because we have been talking about this for almost a year. We were supposed to come in July and just couldn't make it. But anyway, we are getting started now. And I will be back, because this is not the end of it.

**MJ:** So, please tell me, where were you born?

**RG:** Houston, Texas.

**MJ:** Oh, I'm from Dallas. I'm not supposed to put that in there, but anyhow.

**MJ:** Okay, when did you come to Los Angeles?

**RG:** Um, let's see. About 1959.

**MJ:** Okay. So, you went to school in Houston. Did you do to music school or did you take piano lessons?

**RG:** No. I took piano lessons. Yeah, and I played for the junior choir in church.

**MJ:** What is the name of the church you went to? Do you remember?

**RG:** Oh man, can we hold? Let me see...

**MJ:** So that's all right. Did you just take piano lessons or did you take them in school, or were there private lessons?

**RG:** I took piano lessons and then I joined the glee club in school. Not that I was a singer, but I didn't want to take P/E, so I went to the glee club instead.

**MJ:** To take gym or the glee club, huh?

**RG:** Yeah, it was either or, so I took the glee club, but I wasn't a singer. I was just in the choir.

**MJ:** So then you took piano lessons? And what happened? Do you remember who taught you and what happened then? Were they private lessons?

**RG:** Yes, it was a private teacher, her name was Mrs. Mallard, and she had a son — a great football player. I can't remember his name.

**MJ:** So okay, you went on to high school there. Did you go college?

**RG:** I went to college. I went to City — here in L.A. I didn't graduate though.

**MJ:** CCNY, okay, L.A. And then, did you get a lot of work when you first came to L.A.? Did you always play jazz?

**RG:** Oh, no. I wasn't playing the piano. You know, when I came to L.A., it was just like, I was a late bloomer. It was like, I had never heard jazz, you know, because I'm in the

church all the time. I heard this jazz music and I said, “What kind of music is that?” They said that’s jazz, and I said, “Well, I’d like to learn how to play that.” And so that was how I got started. And then I had a teacher here who passed on, who taught me the chords and stuff....I’ve got sinusitis.

**MJ:** Me too, I’m going through that same thing.

**RG:** My voice is better.

**MJ:** So, then, after that, after you got those chords down...

**RG:** Yeah, well I just started hanging with the cats, trying to learning how to play. Do you remember Chico, he was a saxophone player — he’s dead, now. Anyway, I kinda hung with him a lot.

**MJ:** So you just hung out with the jazz players. You hung out at jam sessions? Did they let you play at the jam sessions?

**RG:** No, I didn’t go to jam sessions. It was like, I was working for the county. So, do you remember Horace Tab Scott? I used to go to his house all the time. Not at his house, but where he was rehearsing.

**MJ:** That’s great. And then were you married — before Larry?

**RG:** Uh-huh.

**MJ:** Okay. Did you have any children with this other marriage?

**RG:** Two boys.

**MJ:** You had two sons. How old are they now?

**RG:** Oh man, let’s see. One is forty, the other is thirty-five.

**MJ:** So you have grands?

**RG:** No, unfortunately, I wish I did.

**MJ:** I have one. I wish I had more than that. Do your sons live in L.A.?

**RG:** No, one lives here and the other lives in San Jose.

**MJ:** Okay. So tell me, what was your first gig in L.A.? About where? Just tell me who you worked with over the years. Who were your bass players and drummers?

**RG:** I'm trying to remember because it wasn't really my gig. It was Chico's gig. It was in Pasadena. And every night it was so hard. And every night I would think, "Oh, man, I'm not going back, I can't do this. I don't know what this is, I'm not doing this." But every night when they blew the horn, I was ready to go, you know. It was so frightening, yeah, because I didn't know what I was doing. And they all were much better than me.

**MJ:** Yeah, but you hung in there, though.

**RG:** I hung in there!

**MJ:** You finally got it together. Were you married then?

**RG:** No, I wasn't married then.

**MJ:** So, when did you get married — the first marriage?

**RG:** Oh, oh, the first marriage. I don't know, that was...uh...

**MJ:** That's not really that important, unless you want to talk about it.

**RG:** No, I don't want to talk about that.

**MJ:** You got divorced. And then, I know it says it in the books, but I want to hear it from you. So when did you meet Larry?

**RG:** When did I meet him? The first time, I went up to San Francisco. He was up there with Monk. And I went up there with some more friends and I met him then. But I was with somebody else.

**MJ:** Another man. Okay. So what did you think when you first saw Larry?

**RG:** Nothing, I was more interested in Monk than I was Larry. 'Cause, you know, Monk was out and playing all this great stuff. "Oh, man, what is he doing?" I asked. And then, I think they came down here to L.A. Do you remember the It Club?

**MJ:** Do I remember it? On Washington, near La Brea. Uh-hum, okay.

**RG:** They came down here and I went to see Thelonious again. And, uh, Thelonious acted up, 'cause he went next door and was shooting pool and stuff. We were sitting there and the band was still playing without him, 'cause he had walked out. And the band was still playing. And they just kept playing for a while. And I'm saying, "Well, where is Thelonious?" And he finally came back, but they had stopped playing. And, uh, then I went on and introduced myself to Larry and said, "I met you in San Francisco. What happened to Thelonious?" He said, "Uh-uh, he's next door shooting pool." Well, I said, "What kind of band is this?" I said, "I paid my money. See, he's going to walk out on us and everything... just leave us sitting here." So, um, he finally came back and I was sitting near the aisle. He came back and hit the table. I started trembling. I said, "Oh, man, what's wrong with this man?" Well, anyway, they came back. I'm trying to remember. They went on back to New York and Larry gave me his number.

**MJ:** Larry gave you his number?

**RG:** I think so, I'm trying to remember. Anyway, they came back out here to L.A. They were at another club, Shelly's Manhole. That was in the sixties.

**MJ:** So, anyhow, did he call you? Did Larry call you?

**RG:** No, I called him. He gave me his mother's number in New York. I asked her if Larry was on the road. She didn't answer. She said, "Oh, he's not here."

**MJ:** And then they came back to L.A. again. And what happened then?

**RG:** I'm trying to remember. We went to Shelly's Manhole a couple of times. I invited him over for dinner. And that was the beginning.

**MJ:** Was this when he quit Monk?

**RG:** Yeah.

**MJ:** Wonderful.

**RG:** We were at this hotel in Hollywood. They were living in this hotel. So he took me there and introduced me — to meet Nellie and Thelonious. Thelonious was in the other room and he came out. Nellie said, "Oh, you're so nice." Thelonious just looked at me and said, "Everything's everything — everything's everything." And started turning around in circles. I said, "Oh, man, this is a nutcase." So, anyway, that's when Larry decided to stay in L.A. He liked L.A. Then he told me that he had two daughters. I think he just wanted to get away.

**MJ:** I think it was you!

**RG:** I think it was me, yeah. I wasn't that good of a musician.

**MJ:** Yeah, it was you. Yeah, the way I see it is that, you know, he just said, well, and he knew you were a musician also.

**RG:** But I wasn't that good, at that time.

**MJ:** Yeah, but he knew you were a musician. There is a kinship; we have things in common, okay. I know; I was married to a musician too. Yeah, Bobby.

**RG:** I was trying to play, you remember, *Softly as in a Morning Sunrise*?

**MJ:** Oh, yeah, okay.

**RG:** I don't know what I did. But he said, "Oh yeah, uh-huh." I said, "Something is not right here. Something is wrong with this picture." He just said, "Yeah, yeah, she don't know how to play the piano."

**MJ:** Did he say that?

**RG:** No, but the way he said, "Oh yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh." And he's from New York, too, and all those heavy cats. I played *Softly as in a Morning Sunrise*. I probably didn't have the right meter or anything.

**MJ:** But, you know, it seems like it was a new beginning for both of you.

**RG:** Yeah.

**MJ:** So then, did you ever play together?

**RG:** Uh-huh, yeah, after a long while.

**MJ:** Did he ever teach you anything?

**RG:** No. I'd say, "Larry, show me this." He'd say, "Okay, bye, I'll be right back. Work on that." He had no patience about anything.

**MJ:** Oh, he was always moving.

**RG:** Then he decided — okay, when we got together, "I don't think I want my wife out there playing at night."

**MJ:** Oh, oh.

**RG:** I said, "Wait a minute. I was doing this when I met you."

**MJ:** You sound like an echo from me, girl. That's the same thing I told my husband, "I was out there on a gig getting paid while you were sitting in. Let's get this straight, okay?"

**RG:** Yeah, I said, “Nah, I’m not giving this up.” So then, later on I hear people come up to me and they said, “Oh yeah, you’re Larry’s wife. You play the piano. He told me you’re a musician.” He was out there bragging about me by now. But at first he didn’t want me out there.

**MJ:** Okay, so did ya’ll never did play together at all?

**RG:** Yeah, we played together, but not too often.

**MJ:** I thought you did.

**RG:** ’Cause, you know, I wasn’t in his league.

**MJ:** Yeah, but you were here though, right?

**RG:** Yeah, but he didn’t care too much for...my playing.

**MJ:** So, when did he pass?

**RG:** ’95. 1995. In September. We were just giving him a benefit down at the union.

**MJ:** Did he get sick?

**RG:** He was already sick and he died just before the benefit — like a couple of days or something.

**MJ:** This is really strange. Because, you know the other lady that I interviewed? That’s what happened to her husband. I’ll tell you about it later on. But the same thing happened.

**RG:** He went on tour to Japan and then he and Eddie Harris went to Africa. And he got sick and Eddie Harris got sick with some kind of leukemia — a blood thing...

**MJ:** Yeah, I remember Eddie. He passed though, right?

**RG:** Yeah, he passed after Larry.

**MJ:** Did you ever go on the road with him at all?



**RG:** Yeah, we went to Europe. Yeah, yeah, we went to London and Switzerland.

**MJ:** How did you like that?

**RG:** Oh, it was okay, until...in London, we stayed a week. That was nice. But after that, it was one-nighters — that was different. That's why I never went to Japan again, because in Japan they did one-nighters. I said, "Oh, no. Later for that."

**MJ:** So since he's been gone, did you have any recordings at all?

**RG:** No.

**MJ:** You haven't done any? I did mine. Basically, I did mine on my own.

**RG:** I've got some CDs that people recorded from the audience.

**MJ:** I was recorded live — that's what I did with mine. You know, you need to do what I did. I was in London doing a gig and I had to go to work with these people. So, I told them, would ya'll tape me? They said, "Yeah." So they taped me. I brought it home and listened to it and Carmen, my daughter, said, "Oh, no, Mom, that doesn't sound good." One day, I was praying and I said, "Lord, I need a CD." And God said, "You already have a CD." So I released it — I put that same CD out. And that's the only one I have so far, but I'm going to be doing another one soon. These recording devices, like what we are using now, are so sophisticated, people are making records from these gadgets. So you need to get Jazzie's number so when she gets her next phone — your next, you know, better than this one she's got, so she can tape you, and this one may even be good enough. I'll have to tell you what I did with mine. We'll talk about that later.

**MJ:** So now you are working at the World Stage on Sunday nights?

**RG:** I work on Tuesdays and Sundays.

**MJ:** Tuesdays and Sundays, okay. So you are working at the World Stage, Billy Higgins' old place that he established for us to work at. I'm going to come sit in with you one night. I'll surprise you.

**RG:** Okay. On Wednesdays, I work at this — it's called Industry Café. Do you know where that is?

**Jazzy:** I think I've heard of it before.

**RG:** In Culver City, on Washington.

**MJ:** Jazzy used to live in Culver City.

**RG:** About two blocks west of La Cienega, on Washington.

**MJ:** You work there on Wednesdays?

**RG:** Yes, I've been there for four years on Wednesdays and sometimes...I worked there this weekend, too. Sometimes they call us on weekends, but then I've been at the World Stage for 11 years.

**MJ:** Wow, that's great. So, you're looking forward to that CD, huh?

**RG:** I guess so.

**MJ:** Well, this is really great. So, tell me, who established Larry Gales Day?

**RG:** I did.

**MJ:** Oh, you did? Oh, that's beautiful.

**RG:** 'Cause, you know, we used to have barbeques and things like that in the backyard.

And, uh, I liked parties and he didn't really like parties, but he would have more fun than I would, because I would be working. And he would be, ahhh, playing cards and all that kind of stuff.

**MJ:** Did you establish Larry Gales Day before he passed or after?

**RG:** After he passed on. All the cats would come. We called it Larry Gales Day.

**MJ:** So you turned it into something special. Yeah, that's wonderful, that's a wonderful tribute. You know what I mean? You know, what it is to carry on his name — that's really great. Jazzy, what other questions do you think I should ask? Do you have any suggestions?

**Jazzy:** How do you hope to see Larry remembered in the future — in future jazz music and as an artist, as a musician? How did you want to see him remembered?

**RG:** I guess he's already remembered on March 25. There's this deejay, he said, "I play Larry." I told him, "Play some of Larry's tunes on the 25th, because that's his birthday. And he did.

**Jazzy:** That's a beautiful way to remember him. So the young people will remember him too.

**MJ:** Isn't that beautiful?

**RG:** The deejay said that he'd play Larry's music, but I play Larry all the time.

**MJ:** We have to get your CD out there soon, Rose.

**Jazzy:** Yes.

**MJ:** We have to do that. So this corporation that he had, you called it Titibone. You know, that was a rhythmic thing, but, uh — ti-ti-bone, ti-ti-bone, ti-ti-bone — that's what the drums say, ti-ti-bone, it's a rhythm. Yeah, so you said his corporation was named this, remembering jazz, protecting your ownership. Did you consider yourself in business together or was it just one of things?

**RG:** It was ours, my name was a part of everything in the business. I, as his heir — our business.

**MJ:** Composer, composer. So, ya'll moved in this house together? You bought this house together.

**RG:** Yeah, yeah, 'cause when he came out here we lived at another location. Did you ever come to the other house?

**MJ:** No, I didn't make it over there.

**RG:** Oh, okay. It was on Gramercy and New York's 15th Street. And then, he got a real good gig and he was working like, four nights a week. So I started saving money.

**MJ:** Oh, good. That how we do.

**RG:** Yeah, and then when I said, "We're going to buy a house," he said, "We've got money?" Yeah, I said, "We got and I've got money, too." He didn't even know. I couldn't leave the money laying around.

**MJ:** Because he would spend it, right?

**RG:** That's right!

**MJ:** Yeah, yeah, that's really great!

**Jazzy:** It's really a blessing and an honor to meet you and to hear your story.

**MJ:** She's [referring to Jazzy] a young person, she's studying, doing African studies and she's very interested in our ancestors, you know, our ancestors here and in Africa. She's really aware, has a wonderful awareness. I'm hanging out with the right girls. It was really a blessing that she was able to help me out like this. So anyway, we are going to come to the party tonight.

**RG:** Yeah, I was just going to say, it starts at 8:00 pm.

**MJ:** So, for now, thank you Rose Gales. I am so happy that we finally got together. So long for now.

**RG:** It was my pleasure.

## Biography — Larry Gales

Larry Gales was best known for his work as the supporting bassist of the Thelonious Monk Quartet from 1964-1969. Born Lawrence Bernard Gales in 1936, Larry learned to play the bass at 11 years of age and later attended the Manhattan School of Music. Before connecting with Monk, Gales played with J.C. Heard, Herbie Mann, the Junior Mance Trio and Joe Williams. Eventually, he settled in Los Angeles and worked with Erroll Garner, Willie Bobo, Red Rodney, Harry Edison and others. In 1990, Gales led his only lead recording session, which was a Candid CD called *A Message from Monk*, featuring his own song “A Message from the High Priest” as well as five Thelonious Monk songs.<sup>4</sup>

## Discography — Larry Gales

### As Leader

**1990** *A Message from Monk* (Candid, 1990)

### As Sideman

1961 **With Bennie Green** *Glidin' Along* (Jazzland)

1960 **With Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis** *Afro-Jaws* (Riverside)

### With Johnny Griffin

1960 *Tough Tenors* (Jazzland) with Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis

1961 *The First Set* (Prestige) with Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis

1961 *The Tenor Scene* (Prestige) with Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis

1961 *The Late Show* (Prestige) with Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis

1961 *The Midnight Show* (Prestige) with Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis

1961 *Lookin' at Monk!* (Jazzland) with Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis

1961 *Change of Pace* (Riverside)

1961 *Blues Up & Down* (Jazzland) with Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis

1961 **With Junior Mance** *Junior Mance Trio at the Village Vanguard* (Jazzland)

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/larry-gales-mn0000781641>

**With Thelonious Monk**

- 1964 Monk (Columbia, 1964)  
1964 Live at the It Club (Columbia, 1964)  
1964 Live at the Jazz Workshop (Columbia, 1964)  
1966 Straight, No Chaser (Columbia, 1966)  
1968 Underground (Columbia, 1968)

1962 **With Charlie Rouse** Bossa Nova Bacchanal (Blue Note, 1962)

1963 **With Sonny Stitt** Stitt Goes Latin (Roost, 1963)



**DONA CARTER**

**Jazz Musician — Pianist**  
**Widow of Charles McGee — Jazz Musician — Trumpeter**  
Photo credit  
Melba Joyce



**DONA CARTER**

This is Melba Joyce. We are here in New York City interviewing jazz musician and pianist Dona Carter. Dona, thank you for allowing this Jazz Widows interview.

**MJ:** I want to talk about you and Charles McGee. Charles was a fine musician, whose instrument was the trumpet. Dona, where were you born?

**DC:** I was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, but grew up in Hartford, Connecticut with my four sisters and a brother. And after graduating high school, I came to New York to go to college. I was a child player. I went to the Hartford Conservatory.

**MJ:** So how old were you when you started?

**DC:** About eight or nine.

**MJ:** When did you start playing jazz?

**DC:** I tried when I was a teenager and I didn't get it. I was classically trained, read the notes. And then, I tried again in my early twenties and I had some excellent mentors, you know. I wanted to play jazz because my father played jazz in our living room. He was a guitar player.

**MJ:** Oh.

**DC:** And he'd put on Jimmy Smith on the record player, and he'd play along like he was in the band. And we thought that that was the coolest thing. And he'd go to the piano and play chords. He could play a riff, just by ear. Hearing him, I really wanted to do what I heard him play — those riffs on the piano. (Recalling the times she heard her father play, Dona became very excited, smiling as she talked about it.)

**DC:** I finally got it, and I studied the music in order to teach it. You know, the history of it and all about the jazz musicians and you know the heydays, and also, I really loved studying it, playing it and we loved the jam sessions. Charles thinks we met at a jam session either with Jazz Mobile or St. Nick's. We were friends and would just say "hi" and wave.

**MJ:** Okay. When did that change?

**DC:** As I said, we'd see one another around town. We were friendly. I'd hear him down at Slugs with Roland Kirk. We were friends in jazz. One day, years and years later, I was frequently playing at the St. Nick's Pub, here in Harlem, at the jam session. And Charles would sit in and play a blistering solo and then he would just walk out. He'd get everyone excited — the crowd would really give him great applause — and he'd just walk out and leave. One night, I was sitting near the door at St. Nick's. He came over to me and instead of just waving "hi" or whatever, he took my hand and he kissed my hand and looked into my eyes. You know, I couldn't even look at him (she blushes). He was being so forward. And my first CD had just been released, and that was an excuse to call me. I said to him, I never got a record deal, but I did get a man, because he would call every day and say, "Do you need a trumpet player in your band? You know, I loved the such-and-such song, can I have a lead sheet to it?" And each day he'd call with another excuse, and then he played at a club called The News Room, up in the Bronx, and he invited me to the club. He sent a car to pick me up to come up to the club to sit in with the band. My girlfriend said, Dona, he likes you. (She blushes again.) So then, I accepted that, you know, the facts.

**MJ:** Okay, so what happened after that? Did you ever start playing together on other occasions?

**DC:** Well, we played that night and we got together at my place and played my tunes. I've written over a hundred pieces. I'm known in a little circle as a composer and he respected that, you know. So, he asked me out on a date. We went to the Novotel in midtown. He was playing there with Sarah McLaughlin. Little did I know that we were babysitting two teenagers. We took them with us. The two guys were trumpeters who sat in. After the evening ended, we took them in a cab home. After we dropped them at their apartment, I said, "Charles, our first date and we're babysitting?" He explained that he was a mentor. This situation taught me something. I really respected him. I didn't know that side of him. I knew him as being funny, dramatic, you know, the guy who liked to have a good time, who played a beautiful trumpet, but I didn't know that he was caring about these youngsters. So then, after that, there was never a day when we weren't together. You know, he'd find a reason to cook. He'd say, "I want to try this dish on you," or he'd say, "Do you mind if we could rehearse "The Lighthouse," or whatever song I had done. He recorded a CD with me and it was through one of his illnesses. We were in the studio and he was so ill, that the guys in the band physically held him up so that he could play his part, sat him back down. I said, Charles, you know you don't have to come. We can postpone this. He said, "Oh no, I'm gonna make it, I'm gonna be there." He was in between chemo treatments. Then it was time for him to play and the guys would hold him up again, up to the mike, and he would burn, it would be beautiful, and then he rested and, actually, I am a Manhattan person, so he took me home, and by the time the recording session was over, he was feeling better.

**MJ:** So, you weren't married by this time?

**DC:** No, we didn't actually get married until — this was 1996 when we started to date — 1998 when we started to prepare for the next recording. We recorded at Andre Strobert. We got married in 2000, and sadly he passed away in 2002, the fall of 2002. But we had been together since 1996 on a daily basis.

**MJ:** Do you have your wedding pictures?

**DC:** Yes.

**MJ:** May we see them?

**DC:** Can you see that?

**MJ:** Just beautiful!

**DC:** He wanted it to be held in a church with a best man. We'd go to church and play. [This is him with his daughter] by his first wife. She'd come and visit and stay a while. I still stay in touch with her.

**MJ:** So both of you were working musicians. So you both, just lived in that way, thriving. When both husband and wife work together, I look at that as being a family business.

**DC:** We really worked at this. We had resumes as a couple. If I got a gig, I'd always put him on it, because I would always get more gigs more frequently. He would get gigs to play as a sideman. But I'd get a gig, say, with Paul Brown, where he called me to perform on the The Hartford Festival in 2002, then I'd get the band together and, of course, I'd choose Charles, Patience Higgins, and we had a singer, bass and drummer. I had more gigs and could hire more musicians.

**MJ:** I understand what you're saying, because I think that piano players and singers get more gigs than horn players unless the horn players work with a steady band. Because

when people get ready to hire, there is often the salary to consider, and often they will hire a smaller group which doesn't even use a horn, just a singer with a rhythm section, and also a pianist who can play solo. Did you ever feel in competition with each other?

**DC:** Oh no, I wasn't as outgoing as he, but I was a diligent person who would practice every day, and I also have students and regular students. Charles used to say, "I practiced long ago, so I don't need to practice now. So, he would have a gig at Chez Josephine every Friday or Saturday. As I said, it was easy to be hired, just him, so he did a gig every weekend. I was just happy to be a part of the whole scene. He would say when we had the big band, and clients would want to speak with him, he'd tell them, "Oh, you have to discuss that with my wife." He'd put all the girls on me. It was nice that way and I would always try to enhance them in all they did and encourage them. I remember once he said, ... understanding that we both had careers before we got together. But our first CD is what brought us together. I wanted to play *Time Out*. That's when he asked me, "Do you have the sheet music?" He said that he wished that he had written my tune, "Silent Promise." We had a lot of hurdles, but he was battling cancer.

**MJ:** What kind of cancer did he have?

**DC:** He had multiple myeloma, but that wasn't diagnosed until later.

**MJ:** A lot of people say that, it's really amazing because you knew that he was ill when you met him.

**DC:** Yes, the *New York Times* reporter really covered the event, because we had the wedding pics and the reporter had each of us to make comments on the other's playing styles. And Charles said, "Oh, Dona's music is like Beethoven. Her phrasing is so distinctive, I hear it and I just know that it's her. That's what he said about me. And I said

to the reporter that when he asked me to marry him, I didn't hesitate, because I would have been there anyway. Things were good then. He was in remission.

**MJ:** So you knew that he was ill before you married?

**DC:** Yes, but he had been in remission. Recovered supposedly, but, when we first got together romantically, he wasn't ill, at least, I didn't know that and he didn't know it. That was in '96. But by 1999, he did know. We had a bout of chemo, but he bounced back. He always wanted to do something meaningful every day. And that's why our days would be busy and fun and that's why DC Jazz hit the spot because at the end of the day, we'd be in the glow of being together.

**MJ:** Tell me about his parents. Did you ever meet them?

**DC:** No, by the time I met him, his parents were deceased, but I did meet his three daughters. I helped them unify in his last years. We traveled all throughout the South: one was in Alabama and two were in Mississippi. His first wife married soon after they broke up 34 years ago and continued her family. She wrote me a lovely letter when he passed. The letter read, "I want to thank you for giving my daughter the opportunity to come to know their father and for them to have closure and have a loving feeling between them, so I felt that we had done a good thing. I have one child, a grown man and Charles used to call him, "my son."

**MJ:** That was a good thing.

**DC:** One night, after one of his illnesses, he asked me, "Is there anything that you want?" I said to have my compositions played by a big band. He said, "Well, you know, we can do that." He said, "You get the place for rehearsal and I'll get the musicians." So, I said, how are they gonna come to big band rehearsals and not get paid? We don't have a

grant. He said, "Just get the place." I got the union hall, since I am a member there and members can rent the stage room and we had a once-a-month experience of a big band. And they played at his tribute concert a few months after he passed, as we were able to award scholarships for two kids to go to college. He was thinking, what you want to do in life and for him, I guess he'd done just about everything, and our marriage was like the frosting on the cake, so to speak. He thought he'd had a great life. He had toured many places, with Charles Mingus and other big names. I hadn't played with so-called 'big artists.

**MJ:** What about Jackie McClean?

**DC:** Oh yeah, I played with him for a play and gigs. Jackie McClean. He was wonderful. And his son, Rene, had written a play called *Unfinished Women*. A musical. I was the musical director and Jackie was the composer. Jackie McClean. So, I used to list that stuff on my resume. I didn't list it all the time.

**MJ:** Well, I would say that those were fine accomplishments. Someone missed out not knowing about these times. Jackie McClean made quite a mark on jazz.

**DC:** Charles wanted us to feel fulfilled together and after having the big band and having a singer, I would work with them. We even had strings at one time. I'd do notation on my computer. He'd yell as he wrote, "Okay Dona, I need an ending chord for the end of the song and maybe I'd give him flat nines or flat fives to make the sound full. His harmony was pretty basic. He had started out playing the piano, I loved his playing. You know a lot of horn players can play piano, like, Coltrane could. So that was something like having a dream come true. I remember being up in front of the band conducting and he said, "Okay Dona, this is our last session. You've got to say something to the guys now.

Because I'm not as outgoing as he was, and he was reminding me what to do. He's all up there being flamboyant and I'm at the piano, happy to be behind this, sitting at the piano and playing my music. So I got up in front of the guys and thanked them for coming out and how much I appreciated them and how I hoped we would continue. A son and his father were there. We had refreshments at this last session. The son — who had been homeless because he ran away from his father's home — this young guy played an instrument and Charles was his mentor. His father came and they hadn't seen each other in months. His father said, "Thank you for bringing us together." It was just wonderful. These were the side stories. As I remembered, that is what a humanitarian he was. One of the songs he dedicated, "Now and Forever," he wrote for the big band. We recorded it.

**MJ:** Was this collaboration?

**DC:** That was his dedication. Written for all those who were affected by the twin towers, including the injured, missing, those who lost their lives, those who were displaced and all the people who served for the benefit of all. That was his dedication on the piece. I set up the page. This song is on one of his recordings. This was Charles' only CD as a leader, entitled *Charles McGee, Finally*. It was completed and released the final year of his life, in 2002. He asked me, "What should I name it?" I said how about 'Finally'? You finally got this done and it has "Now and Forever," this song he wrote for the big band, but this recording was a smaller version. On this CD is a wonderful song called, "A Song of Love," an easy title. He also recorded a couple of tunes: "At the Top" and "The Lighthouse." He even sang again. He also recorded, "Just a Closer Walk with Thee," a song we'd play in church at St. James Church nearby. That was his favorite song to play.



[Dona's apartment has Charles' instruments still in place, his trumpet and organ. These treasured things seem to bring a feeling of warmth, along with scores of their music, a tapestry as proof of their love and their combined accomplishments.]

Now, this was the first CD that we did together, called *Dona Carter – DC Jazz*. And Charles is featured on here playing several songs, including “DC Jazz After Hours,” the ballad, and he's also playing, “The Lighthouse” and this is the one where he wasn't feeling so hot at the studio and when it was time for his solo, this is the session where the band members would lift him up to the mike, as I mentioned before, and then sit him back into a chair. But, we had a great time, in spite of it all. This CD was played at quite a few places. It got us quite a few gigs.

This is a photo of Charles and me in one of my other Riverside Drive apartments. I lived in other apartments on the river. He wasn't feeling too strong that day. He'd been working so steadily with Charles Mingus, Roland Kirk and Archie Shepp, so he had a long legacy behind him. And I was happy just to hear the stories about them. He would always say, “Oh, we should have gotten married 20 years ago. All these years, we shouldn't have been just friends, we should have been together.” I said, well better late than never, Charles. And, I was telling you, he said, “What do you really want to do?” I said that I really wanted my compositions played by the big band. So we did that. We were able to get 20 musicians together and I conducted. We had Kenny Forest, Bryce Sebastian. We'd have different personnel once a month. It was a thrill to have my songs like “Minor Beauty” and so many of the ones I wanted scores. I could hear how they sounded. My friend's son comment, “Dona can conduct. I didn't know that she could do that.”

My son said, "I want to learn how to conduct, Momma." I said it just like anything else; you can learn it; you just have to stick to it. We have photos of the family, the students to whom we gave some scholarships. The event was named, "The First Annual Charles E. McGee Musical Scholarship Award. Of course, the only missing person on the picture was Charles, because he had passed away. For a whole year, I gave free piano lessons in his memory. I had more students than I've ever had. The second year my sister said, "Now, Dona, you have to begin charging." Jimmy Owens played at the scholarship engagement, from one trumpet player to another. And Tulibu. Donna Cumberbach sang, "We Share the World." She was lovely. She's also on one of my albums, the *DC Jazz*. The event was written up in the musician's newspaper, a variety of fine musicians appeared in support. So, the year we went to Spain was the same year as 9/11. I remember everyone saying, "Oh, you can't travel, referring to the terrorists, and Charles was brave and I agreed with him. We weren't going to stop our plans, so we went ahead and we played. We just had fun. We always had fun together. We had a good time. Even in the bad times, he'd say, "I'm out of my medication, so doesn't anybody mess with me. On Saturdays and Sundays, we'd call one of our relatives and say, "Who are we taking to dinner?" We always took people out to dinner or breakfast or brunch. Every day was like an adventure. I never lived so much, you know, make every day count. That's what we lived and we reminded each other that we were doing that, you know, live a day to the fullest, because we don't know. We might have, like, 20 years, we might not. So every day is going to mean something and we'll do something good for somebody. So that was our creed and there were enough people around to need us for it actually to be fulfilling. It was a lovely life.... I don't want to start crying.

**MJ:** Thank you so much, Dona. When I saw you guys and heard that you'd married, I said, "This is so good," as I watched you on the jazz scene. And as I thought about the two of you, I said, "This is love." When people get together who love this music, it can turn out to be so good, because you shared so much of the same thing, so much in common.

**DC:** Yes, we did love each other. We would say it to each other, because living each day was important. We didn't know what the future held. One time, we were at Chez Josephine and he took his trumpet out and played, "My Funny Valentine." He came off the stage and came right to me and was playing to me and, of course, I'm just smiling away. It was very touching. And all I had to do was to be there and share it with him.

**MJ:** Well, I'm going to say thank you again.

**DC:** You're welcome.

**MJ:** This interview celebrates the love of jazz and the life of two jazz musicians — a widow recalling the joy of playing jazz "an instrument of peace."

## Biography — Charles McGhee

Born in Laurel, Mississippi, McGhee was a trumpeter and composer who performed with Max Roach, Lionel Hampton, Lou Rawls, Pearl Bailey, Frank Foster, Roland Kirk, Charles Mingus, and others. After graduating from Jackson State University with a BA in Music, he relocated to New York and soon found himself touring with Archie Shepp's Big Band and the Sam Wooding Orchestra. McGhee not only performed and composed, but also was a band instructor and educator.<sup>5</sup>

## Discography — Charles McGhee

- 2012 [Street Corner Symphonies: The Complete Story of Doo Wop, Vol. 9 \(1957\)](#) Composer
- 2009 [Only the Best of Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Vol. 1 Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Personnel, Trumpet
- 2009 [Only the Best of Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Vol. 2 Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Trumpet
- 2006 [Introducing: Rahsaan Roland Kirk Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Trumpet
- 2006 [The Impulse Story Archie Shepp](#) Trumpet
- 2005 [Impulsive! Unmixed](#) Trumpet
- 2004 [Everything I Do Gonna Be Funky](#) Trumpet
- 2003 [Verve Remixed, Vol. 2](#) Trumpet
- 2003 [Verve Remixed/Unmixed, Vol. 2](#) Trumpet
- 2000 [Dona Carter DC Jazz Dona Carter](#) Trumpet
- 2000 [Les Incontournables Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Trumpet
- 1999 [Left Hook, Right Cross Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Trumpet
- 1999 [Transcendence: Impulse in the Spiritual Groove](#) Trumpet
- 1994 [Atlantic Jazz Saxophones, Vol. 2](#) Trumpet
- 1994 [Atlantic Jazz: Best of the '60s, Vol. 1](#) Trumpet
- 1994 [Atlantic Jazz: Saxophones](#) Trumpet
- 1993 [Does Your House Have Lions: The Rahsaan Roland Kirk Anthology Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Trumpet
- 1984 [Down Home New York Archie Shepp](#) Primary Artist, Trumpet, Vocals, Voices
- 1981 [Tribute to Sidney Bechet Archie Shepp](#) Trumpet
- 1979 [Attica Blues Big Band Archie Shepp](#) Trumpet
- 1978 [The Vibration Continues Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Trumpet
- 1976 [Jazz Alchemy Heiner Stadler](#) Primary Artist, Trumpet
- 1974 [The Loud Minority Frank Foster](#) Flugelhorn, Trumpet

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.jazzhouse.org/gone/lastpost2.php3?edit=1032811125>

- 1973 [The Art of Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) [Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Trumpet  
1973 [The Cry of My People](#) [Archie Shepp](#) Trumpet  
1972 [Attica Blues](#) [Archie Shepp](#) Soloist, Trumpet  
1971 [Blacknuss](#) [Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Personnel, Trumpet  
1969 [Volunteered Slavery](#) [Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) Group Member, Trumpet

The Manifesto of Rare Groove



## Biography — Dona Carter

From Hartford, Connecticut, Carter attended the Hartt Conservatory and earned a BA in music from Columbia University. She has recorded several CDs: *Make a Wish*, *DC Jazz*, *Heart to Heart* and the *Best of Dona Carter*. She has performed across the United States and Europe and has written and directed a musical theater piece titled *Portraits in Major and Minor*. Carter is also an educator, with an MA from Lehman College.<sup>6</sup>

## Discography — Dona Carter

- 2000 Dona Carter — DC Jazz Kiki Records
- 2004 Heart to Heart Dona Carter
- Make a Wish Kiki Records

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<sup>6</sup> <http://donacarter.webs.com/donacartersshortbio.htm>

### **Hanging Out with James Moody**

For 40 years, I had sung “Moody’s Mood for Love,” a great song taken from one of my favorite albums. It gives vocalists a chance to show off their jazz chops: great intervals, spacious range, and fun lyrical content. The jazz singer can really stretch out. At one performance, the audience really sang the whole song, every note, together as we sat at the Blue Note. The tune went on without a glitch.

In the back of our minds, I suppose that every artist who embraces a song, especially those that we perform so often, is curious about the author, Eddie Jefferson. But we do know who wrote that beautiful melody, so cleverly taken from *I’m in the Mood for Love* — James Moody.

Often, I have had the glorious privilege of sharing the bill and getting to know some of the artists, some of the wonderful artists with whom I’ve performed. And this one day was no exception. Here we were, Mika Millory and I, walking around Finland at the Pori Jazz Festival and there was James Moody. So we just decided to spend the rest of the evening together and we had a wonderful time. I recall that day when we were both scheduled to go on, and we did. I was with Mika’s big band — Mika Mallory is a great trumpet player, arranger and big band leader — and hanging out with James Moody. So we just stood around and basked in this beautiful sunlight, it was really the evening, but typically in Finland in the summer the sun shines way into the night. And so, we walked around talking about the festival, talking about the music, and laughing and carrying on. You know, Moody was so full of humor, he laughed all the time and he kept everybody else laughing too. Someone came and asked to take a picture and we did. Then we carried on our conversation — moving toward the restaurant to enjoy some of this Finnish food —

or maybe we went to the commissary. So the day was filled with all about something — that happens when we share the wonderful spirit of this fine art form called jazz. The bright sunshine, late into the evening, and we basked in this wonderful energy in this sunlight in this music that brought us together, an instrument of peace — that is jazz. And so, Moody, I say good night.



**LINDA MOODY**

**Widow of James Moody — Jazz Musician — Saxophonist (Alto and Tenor)**

Photo by Melba Joyce

**LINDA MOODY**

**MJ:** This is Melba Joyce. The date is October 16, 2012. We're at the Robert Treat Hotel with Linda Moody and we are taping for my thesis project, Jazz Widows, and a documentary coming up in the future. Thank you, Linda Moody. We're going to talk about the life of Linda Moody and her advocacy and love of jazz music and what she's doing. She's got a big job ahead of her and has been doing a great job. Linda is the widow of James Moody, legendary saxophonist. James was also a wonderful human being with whom I had the pleasure of sharing the stage in Pori, Finland in 2000. We're going to talk about Linda and a little bit about Moody. Linda, are we recording now?

**LM:** Yes, I'm recording now. The numbers are moving and it better be moving.

**MJ:** I want to ask you, did you love jazz before you met Moody? Did you ever listen to jazz before then?

**LM:** I was divorced for six years and going and listening to jazz was my outlet. Because, as you and I talked about, I was so busy with my children and they came first. So when I wanted to go and do something fun, I would listen to jazz and I would go out to listen to jazz. And jazz people are so wonderful, so wonderful. They're brilliant cats, and delightful to be around. I felt safe when I went out alone and nobody bothered me. I enjoyed the music and went home and it was great. My sister is seven years older than I and she'd buy jazz records and she bought "Moody's Mood for Love" when she was 12. And so, I kind of grew up listening to that music. Well, I'm sure that[']s why I had an appreciation for it. So, I love it.

**MJ:** So where were you born, and what was it like growing up?

**LM:** I was born in Tacoma, Washington in 1945. I'm now 67 and just a single mother. My father drowned two months before I was born.

**MJ:** I am so sorry.

**LM:** I was seven at the time and she raised both of us. She came from Norway. Out of 14 brothers and sisters, she was the only one that ventured over to America.

**MJ:** Wow!

**LM:** It says a lot about her.

**MJ:** Not afraid of anything

**LM:** No, no, she was a very strong woman, and such a great model.

**MJ:** Yes, yes.

**LM:** She never remarried and so it was just three of us. And because she was seven years older, a lot of the time, it seemed as if I was an only child. When I became a teenager, she got married. But it was a wonderful childhood.

**MJ:** Great. So your maiden name was Petersen.

**LM:** Yes. Petersen

**MJ:** I knew it was Scandinavian.

**LM:** My mother always made a point that “-en” was Scandinavian and that “-on” was Swedish, and don’t get them mixed up.

**MJ:** I can see her coming, that being from a big family. I’m an only child and I noticed that I attached myself that when I was around a big family, that one more wouldn’t make a difference — big families are great. So you grew up hearing “Moody’s Mood for Love” never imagining that you’d be marrying Moody.

**LM:** Well, I was asked by a friend of mine to take her, she didn’t drive at night, and she said, “Would you please ask me to take her to see James Moody.” I didn’t know who he was, didn’t know his music. Certainly, I didn’t associate “Moody’s Mood for Love” and I

don't think at the time I even knew the name of the song, just remembered hearing it all the time. And so, finally she talked me into it and so that's how we met, through a friend.

**MJ:** So you met him that night when you took your friend.

**LM:** Um-hum.

**MJ:** Wow.

**LM:** So we went to Catalina's.

**MJ:** Yeah.

**LM:** There in L.A. was the old Catalina's.

**MJ:** There on Cahuenga.

**LM:** No, that's the new one, the old one was, yeah, it was on Cahuenga. Yeah, you got a good memory.

**MJ:** Yeah, there by the newsstand. I just love Los Angeles.

**LM:** Is it still there?

**MJ:** I don't know. I wasn't by there the last time I was there.

**LM:** Anyway, so he was there, it was his opening night, it was a Tuesday. He was, uh, he had a wonderful band with him and lots of friends and Sarah Vaughan was there (they grew up together), and Jerome Richardson, his daughter Michelle and lots of friends were in the lobby. You could tell that everyone loved him as a person, he just gave out with so much warmth. So we met then, and we just said hello. And then the next year he did come to San Diego to play and so my friend and I went again, and a...so, she said to Moody, "You remember Linda?" The same lady you met before. And he said, "I do, how are you?"

**LM:** And I thought, that's a bunch of crock. He's only met 5,000 people in the last

year, why would he remember me? And so, three months later, we married.

**MJ:** So you courted and...

**LM:** It was just magic.

**MJ:** Yeah, it sounds like it was.

**LM:** And, we didn't know each other at all. I mean, how could you — someone in three months?

**MJ:** It happens.

**LM:** Oh, what a blessing he was to my family, he was.

**MJ:** That's wonderful. I can ask you this question, because every time I saw him, I saw you. When he worked, you were always there.

**LM:** Yes, at rehearsals and when we were together, we were together.

**MJ:** I read where you said that he was the love of your life.

**LM** Oh!

**MJ:** And I know about that. Tell me about that. When you were apart did it feel like you were missing something special?

**LM:** And we could never be. And, we had to be touching. And we sat on the bench touching each other with our legs wrapped around each other as if one of us was going to go somewhere. You know it was just.... And he taught me all that. He taught me unconditional love. He taught me how to love and how to be intimate with someone. He had such a special feeling. He was, he was amazing and he contributed so much and so much to my children and how to be an adult.

**MJ:** How wonderful.

**LM:** My boys were 19 when we got married and he just had a fit when they would walk

into the house with their hat on. He'd give them a look and they'd take that hat off and fix their hair. They called him Buddy, they called him everything, but they called him, Dad. They had cute little nicknames for each other.

**MJ:** You know that people believe that when you're been married the first time, you know more, but you really don't learn anything, because you're in the middle of being married and having children. What you don't learn a lot, something about being together and not having time to know what's going on. But you do learn a lot in the second marriage. You said that you were married for six years. It's like a whole new thing, because you have to start courting again.

**LM:** Well, in my first marriage there was not a closeness. I felt like I was single in my first marriage. He has his life and I made my own life, and when he spent a Saturday home from the golf course, I would think, "Why are you home?" I had all the set things planned to do with my boys. There just wasn't, you know. Moody would go on the road and when we first got married he left for three months — oh, on the Philip Morris tour.

**MJ:** Yes I remember those.

**LM:** Remember those? So we got married in '89 and he left for three months. I remember talking to him, I think he was in Australia. I said, "You know, I don't really feel married — you left right away."

**MJ:** I know that that tested your nerves.

**LM:** He said, "You know, honey, we could do that together when I get home." I said, "Oh, we're going to do that together?" He changed my life in every aspect. He changed my whole family dynamic. He was such a gentleman and so filled with so much love for everybody, everybody. So, he wasn't so well for ten months and the doctor who operated

on him said that he'd had the tumor for four years and that's why, everything made sense, as he was feeling tired and differently. The doctors couldn't figure out. I could do a whole interview about doctors and their egos and their mistakes. It was a sad situation, but it was supposed to go the way it went. All I could do is love him and be there for him and I'm sure that he lasted, that he lasted for ten months instead of three, because of all the things I had him on, the herbs and vitamins. And the head surgeon said that he lived that long because of our love. Of course, that's what makes it work. That's what gave him the fuel to keep him going.

**MJ:** Clearly, he didn't want to leave you.

**LM:** He didn't, he didn't — the love.

**MJ:** Did you think about what you would be doing after he passed on?

**LM:** Oh no, oh no. I couldn't even think about that. I was so distraught. I wanted his last months to be perfect and I couldn't even think about it. I couldn't even wonder about it. I just hadn't gotten that far. So, anyway...

**MJ:** So, you answered my questions about him being the love of your life. When he was away from you though, that "something" was missing.

**LM:** We talked on the phone six times a day. It didn't matter whether he was in Africa or Finland or Australia. Or, we would figure out the time, and lots of times he would call me when I was asleep. That really, really helped. There was no catching up when he got home, we talked and talked. And people thought that he was crazy, but during the three months after we met for the second time, he went on a State Department Tour with Dizzy and was gone for three months. The ambassadors said Moody come and use our phones because his phone bill was \$1,200 a week. No matter where he was, we'd talk and talk all

the time.

**MJ:** So when did you decide to do the scholarship fund?

**LM:** The scholarship came about because we've had one at Purchase College in New York for several years, since 2004-2005 was our first fund raising concert and it was such a huge success and everybody got behind it because they loved Moody. It was a benefit and they would come to me and say, Linda can I play? I want to be there for Moody. It was just so wonderful to see how people loved him so much. So, that was such a huge success and we'd give two \$2,500 scholarships a year. That one is now endowed. I said to Moody, why don't we start one in Newark for children in Newark only, because Purchase was for Purchase. If we did one for Newark, then the student could go to any school of their choice. They could go to Berkeley or any school of their choice in the United States. So, that's what we're working on, now. We've had two concerts so far at the Blue Note, and we'll have the third again in next March in 2013 — I think the fifth of March.

**MJ:** This is going to keep you very busy.

**LM:** Well it does. It's all for him, whatever I can do for him.

**MJ:** Yes, he loved the music.

**LM:** Educating children was very important for him, because he didn't have a musical education when he was young. He wanted to give kids what he didn't have.

**MJ:** I read that he started playing when he was 16.

**LM:** He got his first saxophone. It was beat up old silver from his uncle, Uncle Louis. And Uncle Louie had a trumpet. He wanted Moody to play trumpet, but Moody told him that he wanted a saxophone. He loved that horn. He loved that saxophone and brought it



to bed with me. He loved it, he loved that horn. He got drafted and, of course, and the Air Force was segregated and so they wanted to start a band, and so somebody said, who has an instrument and Moody raised his hand, and as he said so many times, they didn't ask me if I could play it, they just asked if I had one. His mother sent the horn and he learned from the white band and went on the other side, and they learned whatever they could and pretty soon they were so fantastic, of course, and the white band was coming over to hear them, and that's how he met Dizzy...was in Greensboro, North Carolina. And Dizzy came through, and they did a concert, and when you guys get out, why don't you come and try for the band? It was Dave Burns and Joe Gales and Moody and, you know. So it was great.

**MJ:** I read something about that the first time he didn't make it.

**LM:** They said, "You can't be in this band because you don't play loud enough." OK. You can't be in this band, you don't play loud enough. And Moody was crushed. And then, two months later, he got a telegram, his mother, he walked in the door one night, she had it hidden underneath the towel (she demonstrates), and it said, "You start with us tonight." It was at the Spotlight.

**MJ:** I heard about him and Dizzy's closeness and how when Dizzy transitioned. I was a part of Dizzy's family. That's what he used to tell my mother, because my Dad sang with the band. That's such a wonderful relationship. But let's get back to you and what you're doing.

**MJ:** When we talk about you (she said to me) without talking about him.

**LM:** We were just like this; we were intertwined.

**MJ:** It takes that. I guess everybody would like to have...

**LM:** And you know, Melba, not a day went by that we didn't talk about how much we appreciated each other. We didn't take anything for granted. And we understood what a special thing we had. And we looked at other friends who had married for 47 years, 10 years, and nobody had what we had.

**MJ:** Yeah.

**LM:** Nobody. What we had and we were so appreciative of what we had.

**MJ:** Sounds like he was a special, special.

**LM:** He was a special, special. He was just amazing.

**MJ:** That's wonderful. I know when we hung out, he and Mika — a fine trumpet player from Finland who is now someplace in England. He was such a wonderful guy. I met he, his wife and baby. I remember him conducting a band with the baby tucked in one arm. Hope it isn't too noisy here.

**MJ:** Back to our conversation about the next fundraiser. We're looking forward to it — next year's concert.

**LM:** The scholarship's next fundraiser is in Newark in March, and I don't want to start giving scholarships until we have a \$100,000 and it can grow and get the interest and part of the interest will continue to grow. Like last year's, we had \$9,500 that I wanted to stick to the two \$2,500 scholarships. We could leave this money so that the interest can grow.

**LM:** The important thing is to get the \$100,000. And then what I'd like to do is, I have several people on the committee who are going to help me pick the scholar and we're going to talk to the teachers — go into high schools around Newark and see who has a gift and needs us. Maybe they don't have a supportive home, not just financially, and don't have support from their family.

**MJ:** It is an important thing to see the success of people and their parents, to have a mother like Moody's mom who had that telegram waiting for him.

**LM:** She was amazing mother. Everything fabulous about him.

**MJ:** So Moody was born in Savannah. How long did he stay there? Two weeks?

**LM:** She was visiting her in-laws. She was looking for her husband. He joined the circus, he was a trumpet player and left her. They were married.

**MJ:** So Moody and Sass were close. What else do you want to tell us about yourself?

**LM:** Moody and I were like open books. Whatever anyone wanted to know about us, we talked about.

**LM:** Moody was remarkable and he drew the best out of me. He trusted everything I said. He loved playing. He never thought about making a living. I was glad that I could be there for him so that he could just be James Moody, so that he could do what he was put on this earth to do.

**MJ:** So how many years from 16 to...

**LM:** Well, he did his last gig beginning of February 2010 and then he died in December 2010. January 2010, we came to New York to the Jazz Master event and a couple of other things, and he went to play for Grammy in the schools up in California, and that was his last thing. And then he had the operation and all hell broke loose.

**MJ:** I should know this, but did he ever write anything for you?

**LM:** He did write something called "Honey," which was his nickname for me. The CD is called *Honey*. I think it was on the RCA Novice label, and then he wrote something called "Honey's Tune." [She sings.]

**MJ:** When we do the documentary, we'll add this song into the documentary as we edit,

and when I come to San Diego, we'll walk along the beach talk about the things we've talked about and play that song as the camera rolls. we'll play *Honey* on the soundtrack.

**LM:** Claudia Roditi wrote a beautiful song that is on one of Paquito de Rivera's CDs. The CD is called *Who's Smoking?* but the tune that Claudia wrote is called "Linda's Moody."

**MJ:** So, I'm looking forward to this tribute, this concert that's gonna happen.

**LM:** It's just amazing; it's all week.

**MJ:** Yes, it's a festival.

**LM:** Then, the concert is Friday night; it's called, "For Love of Moody." And most of the musicians are close friends of ours that loved him to pieces. George Benson still sings "Moody's Mood for Love" on all of his concerts. Aretha Franklin is joining too and the Manhattan Transfer — were all very close to him and Paquito de Rivera and John Faddis. You know Moody and Dizzy met when John was 15. And so, and then of course Moody's band.

**MJ:** Sounds like a great lineup. I'll do my best to get here. So anyway, I'm going to wind it up, because this is not the end. The documentary they need to see your faces. They need to see the woman behind the music. No one does anything alone. It takes support, it takes love, it takes attentiveness and understanding mostly with musicians, let alone jazz musicians.

**LM:** They do go through a lot. No one really understood him except his mother and I. His mother and I loved each other immediately. She said, "I finally have a daughter." She was just amazing. When we first got married, I spent a lot of time with her and she said, "You know, baby, he's 65 years old," and she still calls him baby. "You know baby, now I

don't have to worry about you." Can you imagine being in your 80s, actually, she was in her late 70s then, you have to worry about your child?

**MJ:** He did have the right wife. Because it's about that quote unquote, helpmate. Not just the money, but the other stuff that seems to come up.

**LM:** But he dealt with that really well, by not dealing with it, which is why we had Ena. She was the most marvelous manager and friend. People would call our house or try to either talk to him or talk to me so that they wouldn't have to pay a commission, and I was up front with everyone. I said, you know, we could talk about this, but Ena is still going to get paid. They'd say, "Oh, you do?" And we'd say, "Yes, we do." And we just trusted...and he would...somebody...Moody, would you do this or that? He'd say, "Here's the number." He didn't get in the way of anything. He kept me laughing all the time. We laughed all the time. It's wonderful to have someone to laugh with.

**MJ:** Music seems to be all of my life lately. Anyway I still have jazz.

**LM:** Dorthaan and I were just talking about you getting your master's. You are amazing — getting your master's.

**MJ:** Thanks so much. We're gonna say, so long for now. These interviews I've done, Sandy Jordan and Bertha Hope and a woman I want to introduce you to in L.A. — Rose Gales. So, until next time, so long.



L to R: James Moody, Melba Joyce, and Mika Mylleri at the Pori Jazz Festival in Pori, Finland, 2000.  
[Also need photo credit.]





[scan of "Moody's Mood for Love" sheet music, page 53]

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## MOODY'S MOOD FOR LOVE

Music and Lyrics by JAMES MOODY,  
DOROTHY FIELDS and JIMMY McHUGH

*Slowerly ♩ = 68*  
(Tune by James Moody)

*mp*

There I go, there I go, there I go, there

I go pret - ty ba - by, you are the

soul who snaps my con-trol. Such a fun-ny thing but ev-ery time I'm near you, I

Moody's Mood for Love - 7 - 1  
19545

© 1935 (Renewed 1961) EMI RECORDS, INC. N.Y.C.



[scan of "Moody's Mood for Love" sheet music, page 54]

never can be - have... You give me a smile and then I'm wrapped up in your mag - ic, mus -

ic all a - round me, cra - zy mus - ic, mus - ic that keeps call - ing me so ver - y close to you,

turns me... your slave... Come and do with me an - y lit - tle thing that you want to,

an - y - thing, ba - by, just let me get next to you. Am I in - sane or do I real - ly see heav - en

Moody's Mood for Love - 7 - 2  
PF5545



[scan of "Moody's Mood for Love" sheet music, page 55]

55

in your eyes, - bright as stars that shine up a-bove you.

in the clear blue skies? - How I wor-ry 'bout you, just can't live my life with-out you. Ba-by, come here, - don't

have no fear. - Oh, - is there won-der why - I'm real-ly feel-ing in the

mood for love? - So - tell me why, stop to think a-bout this

Chords and Fingerings:

- Fm7 (3)
- Bb13(b9) (11)
- Bb13(b9)
- Ebmaj9 (5)
- Cm7 (3)
- Fm9
- Bb13(b9) (11)
- Ebmaj9 (5)
- Cm9 (8)
- Fm11 (6)
- Bb13(b9)
- Bb7(b9) (15)
- Ebmaj13 (6)
- Am7(b5)
- D7(b9) (15)



[scan of "Moody's Mood for Love" sheet music, page 56]

weath-er, my dear, this lit-tle dream might fade a-way. There I

go... talk-in' out of my head a-gain. So ba-by, won't you come and put our two hearts to-gether,

That would make me strong and brave. Oh, when we are one, I'm not a -

fraid, I'm not a - fraid. If there's a cloud up a - bove us, go

Moody's Mood for Love - 7 - 4  
PF9545



[scan of "Moody's Mood for Love" sheet music, page 57]

57

Fm11 E9

on and let it rain;—I'm sure our love to-gether would en - dure a hur-ri-cane... Oh my ba-by, won't you

Ebmaj13 Gm7 C7(9) Fm7 Bb7 Bb7(b9)

please let me love you and get a re-lease from this aw-ful mis-er - y. What is all this talk a-bout

Ebmaj9 Cm7 Fm9 Bb13(b9)

lov-ing me—my sweet?— I'm— not a - fraid,— not an - y-more, not... like be -

Ebmaj9 Abm7 Gm7 Am7(b5) D7(b9)

fore.— Don't you un-der - stand— me, oh, ba-by, please— pull your-self to -



[scan of "Moody's Mood for Love" sheet music, page 58]

geth-er, got-ta do it ver-y soon. My heart's on fire, come on and take me. I'll

be what you make me, my dar-ling. Oh, pret-ty ba-by, you make me feel so good, ooh,

let me take you by the hand. Come, let us vis-it out there in

that new prom-ised land. Oh, may-be there we can find a good

Moody's Mood for Love - 7 - 6  
PF9646



[scan of "Moody's Mood for Love" sheet music, page 59]

59

Fm7 Ebm11/A<sup>b</sup> Ebm11/F Fm9 E9

place to keep a lov-in' state of mind. I'm so cra-zy, ma-ma, nev-er knew what love was all a-bout.

James Mood-y, will you come on in, man. You can blow now if you want to, we're through.

**Rubato**  
N.C.

(Tenor Sax: James Moody)

[scan of “Moody’s Mood for Love” sheet music, extra page]

## BIOGRAPHY — JAMES MOODY

Saxophonist and flutist [James Moody](#) joined Dizzy Gillespie's bebop orchestra after serving in the Air Force (1943-1946). He and Gillespie became great friends and toured Europe together. Moody remained overseas, working with Miles Davis, Max Roach and other renowned European players. In 1952, he scored a hit titled "Moody's Mood for Love." Upon returning to the United States, Moody formed a septet that lasted for five years. He then took up the flute and from 1963 to 1968 played with Dizzy Gillespie's quintet. During much of the '70s, Moody worked in Las Vegas show bands before returning to play with Gillespie and recording with Lionel Hampton's Golden Men of Jazz. Moody alternated between alto and tenor and is also known as one of the best jazz flutists. He recorded as a leader for labels including Blue Note, Prestige, Mercury, Argo, Muse, Vanguard, Novus, and more. On December 9, 2010, in San Diego, California, James Moody died of complications from pancreatic cancer. He was 85 years old.<sup>7</sup>

## DISCOGRAPHY — JAMES MOODY

- 1948 [James Moody and His Modernists](#) Blue Note
- 1950 [James Moody: His Saxophone and His Band](#) Dial
- 1951 [James Moody with Strings](#) Universal Distribution
- 1951 [James Moody in France](#) Roost
- 1952 [James Moody \[Roost\]](#) Jive/Novus
- 1954 [Moodsville](#) Mercury
- 1954 [Moody](#) Prestige Records
- 1954 [Moody's Mood](#) Prestige Records
- 1955 [James Moody and His Band](#) Prestige Records
- 1955 [Wail, Moody, Wail](#) OJC
- 1955 [James Moody's Moods](#) Prestige Records
- 1955 [Moody's Moods](#) Prestige Records

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/james-moody-mn0000786080>



- 1955 Workshop Prestige Records
- 1956 Hi-Fi Party OJC
- 1956 Flute 'n the Blues Chess
- 1957 Moody's Mood for Love GRP / Verve
- 1958 Last Train from Overbrook Argo
- 1959 James Moody [Argo] Verve
- 1959 Hey! It's James Moody
- 1961 Moody's Workshop
- 1961 Cookin' the Blues Argo
- 1961 Moody with Strings Argo
- 1962 Another Bag Universal Distribution
- 1963 Comin' on Strong Argo
- 1964 Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Sax Cadet
- 1964 Great Day Chess
- 1964 Running the Gamut Sceptre
- 1967 Moody and the Brass Figures Original Jazz Classics
- 1969 Don't Look Away Now Original Jazz Classics
- 1969 The Blues and Other Colors Original Jazz Classics
- 1970 The Teachers Sanctuary
- 1971 Too Heavy for Words MPS Records
- 1972 Never Again Muse
- 1972 James Moody and the Hip Organ Trio Muse
- 1973 Feelin' It Together Savoy Jazz / 32 Jazz
- 1976 Timeless Aura Universe
- 1977 Beyond This World Vanguard
- 1986 Something Special Novus
- 1988 Moving Forward Novus
- 1989 Sweet and Lovely Novus
- 1990 Honey Novus
- 1995 Moody's Party Telarc Distribution
- 1996 Young at Heart Warner Bros.
- 1997 Moody Plays Mancini Warner Bros.
- 2000 Beyond the Borders Orchard
- 2000 JVC Jazz Festival Highlights Gmn.com
- 2004 Homage Savoy Jazz
- 2005 The World Is a Ghetto Fuel 2000
- 2005 Kite Hill Music Isle
- 2007 Fly Me to the Moon [Remastered] Lone Hill Jazz
- 2008 Our Delight IPO
- 2009 Moody 4A IPO
- 2010 Moody 4B IPO

### **The Kirks and I**

I believe that I speak for most jazz artists or any artist whose frame of mind is very much like mine. Within our quest, we understand that preparation is the key to winning in life. We allow that part of us which has a knowingness that performance is inevitable and that what we are preparing for is just around the corner. When the call comes to either accept or decline the engagement, and usually we find ourselves making the decision to accept — when the deal is a good fit, the necessary question is: who else is on the bill? Although the other acts are separate, somewhere there is unity.

When the producer of the Watts Jazz Festival approached me, I informed him that I would have my agent phone him, knowing that that was the most professional way to deal with all negotiations. Though my agent approved it, it was a no-brainer. Even if he hadn't agreed, this time I would have had to go over his head. The headliners were Rashaan Roland Kirk, Miles Davis, Bobby Hutcherson, Harold Land, Gene Ammons, Willie BoBo and myself, Melba Joyce. This was excellent company!

With the exception of Bobby Hutcherson, Willie BoBo and Jimmy Smith, I had not met the others. Bobby and Willie and I lived in the same neighborhood. We had met in Altadena and Pasadena, but hadn't performed together or shared billing. I would run into Jimmy Smith here and there. I was overjoyed. To top it off, my band was The Gerald Wilson Big Band. It was my intention to at least meet the other members of this cast. Most of us spoke to each other, just hanging out back stage. I watched each act, awaiting my time to go on.

My career as a jazz singer began in Dallas, Texas, when I was featured with the house band, who was David “Fathead” Newman’s “Red Tops.” Most of the time, Fathead was on the road with Ray Charles. Every Sunday after church, folks filed into the historical American Woodman Hall with their brown bags. Dallas was dry on Sundays. The finest jazz talent was there every Sunday: Red King, James Clay, LeRoy Cooper, Roger Boykins and others. It was great fun. Then a big break arrived, and I had the opportunity to sing with and have the invitation to join the Louis Armstrong band. However, I had to decline due to family matters. But the gigs kept coming.

So here we are again on this venue, above most. That night at the Shrine, as I mentioned, I was in the wings, awaiting my turn to go on. Rahsaan’s music was not quite like anything I had ever witnessed up close. After his stunning performance, someone took his horns and gave him a wooden chair which he proceeded to bang against the wall of the stage. He fiercely banged it over and over again until the chair was in splinters. Remember, the Watts Riots had happened just before this show. This was his protest — violently intense. This demonstration, I clearly understood. I had had my activism — beginning at 15 years of age when I led the first ever boycott against the State of Texas. Taxation without representation was what the matter was, among many, many other atrocities. Then, there was the Vietnam War. By 1969, I was in California and the Hollywood USO was not sending any African American women to entertain the black troops. I volunteered. My protest was to the Hollywood USO, as I approached its leadership demanding an answer. My request was satisfied, and then I became a soloist with the

Operation Breadbasket Choir. Breadbasket was the economic arm of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King was the leader.

And so it was that I, too, was involved in my belief of the truth, just as Rahsaan. Deciding that we should become acquainted down the road, I was satisfied that we had a shared position in how to do something through music to bring attention to the constant challenge of the injustices of racism.

Fast forward to New York in the nineties. I met Mrs. Kirk, the “First Lady of Jazz.” We hit it off immediately. Dorthaan is like a butterfly, moving about, shedding her style of joy — a mover and a shaker who is always on the case for jazz. And so, I never saw Rahsaan again, but knowing that I can share Dorthaan’s Walk is good enough for me. There was so much tension created by the display of Rahsaan.

**DORTHAAN KIRK**

**“First Lady of Jazz”**

**Widow of Rahsaan Roland Kirk — Jazz Musician — Multi-Instrumentalist: Tenor Saxophone, Clarinet, Stritch, Manzello, Nose Flute, Flute, Cor anglais**

Photo by Melba Joyce

## **DORTHAAN KIRK**

Jazz Widows, October 12, 2012 — interview with Dorthaan Kirk.

**MJ:** This is Melba Joyce. We are in Newark New Jersey at Radio Station WBGO, 88.3 FM. I am here to interview Dorthaan Kirk, the widow of Rahsaan Roland Kirk, who was a multi-instrumentalist. Thank you, Dorthaan, for allowing me to interview you for this Jazz Widows thesis program that I am working on at Rutgers University.

**DK:** You're welcome.

**MJ:** I'm so happy to be here, with one of the founders of this great jazz station, who has just been in jazz forever and ever, except for the times when, as a kid in Texas, you were listening to the Coasters. According to my research, you're from Texas. I also found out that you are the mother of three girls.

**DK:** Yes, but one is deceased.

**MJ:** I am so sorry to hear this — that's a hard one. Now, your appreciation for the music...how long ago, except for the period in your life when the R&B Coasters occupied your young mind, did you really finally discover jazz? So, were you literally taking jazz lessons through Rahsaan?

**DK:** We were living jazz history. In my generation, like hip-hop and all other music of today, jazz and R&B is [was] that kind of music that we grew up on. And the big bands, maybe we thought of them as jazz, but I grew up on all of it in Texas. And oddly enough, I listened to country and western music, and when I tell people that they look at me as if I'm crazy. But the radio is what we did. We actually grew up with not having a TV in our home. My mother didn't have a TV until after 1955, when I had moved away to California. But back to what you were saying. My first husband was from Baltimore and

he had several friends that used to come over to our house and they would sit around and listen to jazz records. And one of the friends was a local drummer. Rahsaan didn't like that that word "local," but he wasn't a known drummer. And through him we found out that he knew Rahsaan, because he was from a small town in Texas — I can't remember the name of it, somewhere in west Texas. Of course, we didn't believe him, because he was just a local cat. So he said, "the next time he [Rahsaan] comes to town, I'm going to take all of you to see him." And it happens he really did know Rahsaan. And the first time I saw Rahsaan was probably 1961 or 2 at the It Club on Washington Boulevard in L.A.

**MJ:** Near La Brea.

**DK:** Yeah, in Los Angeles. This was back in the day when musicians wore suits. And in his band he had Vernon Martin, Rhan Burton and I cannot remember who the drummer was, and yeah, the It Club.

**MJ:** Yeah, the It Club, I know about it. Dorothy Donegan's husband owned that club, didn't he?

**DK:** I have no idea. I was in my early 20s. I didn't know anything about much. I lived down the street on Harcourt.

**MJ:** I know where Harcourt is. I lived in L.A. county for 29 years.

**DK:** Oh.

**MJ:** We lived in Altadena.

**DK:** Altadena was white back then.

**MJ:** Yeah. [We both laugh.] I didn't know about Altadena. We got there in the late sixties.

**DK:** So Rahsaan's record was one of the records that these friends were listening to that day. I spoke about the drummer — that the drummer said he knew him. I don't remember which album it was. It could have been *The Whistle Man*.

**MJ:** I was surprised to hear Rhan Burton's name, he's been around a long time.

**DK:** Yes he has. He and Rahsaan go back to what Rahsaan called the starving days. I think that Rhan was from Kentucky and they met up in Ohio. That was back when you played for practically nothing.

**MJ:** Where did you say Rhan is from?

**DK:** I think Kentucky, but I don't really know — but somewhere in my mind he had something to do with Kentucky, you know.

**MJ:** Let me ask you this. I once heard a jazz musician's "significant other" say that after a while she couldn't discern herself from him or the line that separated them. Did you ever feel that kind of inseparability or, say, attachment, to Rahsaan?

**DK:** Ask that in a different way.

**MJ:** Did you feel that when you were with, or were apart from, Rahsaan that you were missing some part of yourself?

**DK:** We were, but I didn't feel like that because I had my own life and he had his own life and we had our lives together. I'll give you an example.

**MJ:** Okay.

**DK:** See, some of the wives were more involved with their husband's music world.

Rahsaan had somebody to travel with him. Mitchell Hill, Lauren Hill's uncle, he traveled with him, helping him with his instruments, going to the record stores, what have you. If we were at home and Rahsaan needed to go to New York, he might have Bruce



Woody, who used to play bass with him — and they go back to Ohio. Rahsaan always felt that the wife should be the wife and that's what she did. He had Jack Whitmore who booked him and he had an accountant who took care of all of his accounting. I did not collect receipts on the road. Well, I did collect receipts on the road, etc., etc., but he always felt that. That's not to say that he didn't want me involved in the music, but he had all of these other people who took care of that. Some of the musicians were so needy, and I probably shouldn't name any names, examples or anything like that, but there was this musician whose wife would set up his drums. Some of the musicians needed babysitting and Rahsaan didn't want that. He didn't need that. So when I traveled with him, I was here with him as a mate, as opposed to all of the other stuff. And maybe a part of that also was because he was sightless. Maybe that was a part of his independence, you know. For example, when we were on the road, I didn't go to the club with him every night. On the road, over the years, I got to know people in different cities, etc., etc. I might be at a girlfriend's house or they may come to the hotel. I remember being in Chicago and Rahsaan got me tickets to somewhere else to see BB King, because I love BB King. I would go there and then I might meet him at the club at the end of his set. When we were home — not on the road — my girlfriends and I went shopping or something like that — fun things. And at the time, me, Rashaan and the girls would do things together. So, I guess you would say our lives were as close to being a normal day-to-day relationship, like somebody that who worked nine to five. So, no, I wasn't one of those that needed to depend on him for much of anything.

**MJ:** Yes, this article I read, it said that when you were at Ronnie Scott's in England, where he said that you have to get around here by yourself.

**DK:** Yeah, he did.

**MJ:** Now, were you talking about your independence, right? [We laugh.] He was reminding you of your own independence in these places.

**DK:** I have to say this, my first work or so, while I was in London, I cried every day. Every day there was so much culture shock. It was in the winter and it was cold. They didn't believe in heat. You could put your hands on the radiator and it would not burn you. And he told me not to order bacon and eggs one day. I would never forget. I thought to myself, I said to myself, knowing he had been to England and knew the lay of the land for years before. But I was hungry and I wanted some doggone bacon and eggs and he told me not to order. He said, "It's not what you think it is." I was thinking, "What can one do to bacon and eggs?" Well, the moral of this story is, I should have listened to him. But I ordered them anyhow, and I tasted it, and I cried some more. But finally I did realize, because whenever Rahsaan went to Ronnie Scott's, we are going to be going from the States for six weeks. The first month was at Ronnie Scott's, the last two weeks was spent doing concerts in Germany; even though we kept London as our headquarters. You know, over there you can go to another country in an hour and come back. So he would have a series of bookings after Ronnie Scott's. So something clicked in my head and said, "You'd better get accustomed to this, 'cause it is a long haul. So, my next trip to England, I knew to take my own cigarettes, toilet tissue. They have that, but they don't have the same brand — they tasted different. I knew to take my own toilet tissue. I felt crazy, but I learned.

**MJ:** I know that it is a very sensitive issue — learning to take one's own tissue.

**DK:** It is, but it's true. I read even though somebody tells you something, it's hard to imagine certain things, especially coming from here. So, I guess we are spoiled Americans.

**MJ:** Yes, we are. I was thinking about how late you have to eat at Ronnie Scott's. You've got wait until 11 o'clock. I guess that's when you get off.

**DK:** No, that's not when Rahsaan started, till 11. You know why? I first went there, Blossom Dearie was the opening act. When I first met Blossom Dearie, she would open for Rahsaan, but yeah, I couldn't wait to get there to get Joe's cooking. Joe's in the kitchen at Ronnie Scott's — best chicken Kiev — it was as close to American food that I could get.

**MJ:** And the Indian food...

**DK:** Oh, I know that's how I was. The scope I discovered Indian food, yeah, that kept me surviving. Yeah.

**MJ:** I really like Indian food now, and that was the first time that I've ever had it.

**DK:** I actually know how to make some dishes.

**MJ:** When are you going to invite me for dinner? [laughing]

**DK:** Christmas, Christmas. 'Cause you know what? My children, especially my grandchildren, they don't like that. And I have a five-year-old grandchild who calls it holiday food. So I don't get much for chicken and dressing up turkey and dressing. I get there for Thanksgiving. I always go to Houston for Thanksgiving and at Christmastime. The last four or five years, I started making chicken curry instead of what they call holiday food and they love that.

**MJ:** Do they live here?

**DK:** I have five grandchildren: Tony graduated from Temple last year and he lives in Philadelphia and he works for, oh God, I forget the name of that company. Iris, who is my princess granddaughter, graduated from Montclair State last year. She lives in Maplewood and she works in a dentist office. She got her B.A. in science; he got his in business. This is her brother [she shows me the pictures]. This is her brother. He dropped out [showing me the pictures]. They are the children of my child who died. They live with their father who is a physicist. This is my grandson who was sitting in front of my house when I left him this morning. He lives between his father's house and my house. He'll be 18 October 26. And his brother. My last granddaughter is an adult challenged, who also is the daughter of my daughter who died, and she lives with me and my youngest daughter.

This is how it goes: I was born in Texas, my children were born in California, and all my grandchildren were born in New Jersey.

**MJ:** Okay, three generations. Are any of them musicians or interested in music?

**DK:** No. Even Rahsaan's own sons — he gave Rory drum lessons when he was very young. I think it's because that's a lot of responsibility to put on a child when their parent's someone who is very famous or excelled or what have you. And, even though I took those children to WBGO Children's Series when they were really little — that was giving them a foundation of music. And they did find some stuff that struck me, even though they weren't trying it, and then had an interest in music. Tony, the one who graduated from Temple last year, he told me secretly that he wants to have a recording studio. He told me, "Man, I wish I had paid more attention." I said, "That's okay, at least you retained something now that you are older." He gets it.

**MJ:** But you know, hearing our music gives us a sense of identity, our history is so rich.

**DK:** Oh, absolutely. So again, they get it. They may not run to a jazz club or concert.

He's [Tony's] the one that got it the most. When this one was growing up, if jazz was on the radio, he didn't call it jazz. He said, that's Nana's music."

**MJ:** Oh.

**DK:** So they know it's important.

**MJ:** Yeah, I just wish that more of our kids knew how important it is.

**DK:** That's why this jazz concert series that I've coordinated for WBGO is very important, because the purpose of it is to introduce young people to jazz at a very early age. You've got to catch them early.

**MJ:** I did that series. You don't remember, but I did that series.

**DK:** Sure, at the Priory Jazz in New Jersey — the last jazz club to just close.

**MJ:** Being familiar with the work that you are doing for jazz, the appropriateness of the title of the song, Dorthaan's Walk, written for you by your late husband, Rahsaan, the title of the song sure fits with the work you've done; especially the work you've done with the Jazz Vespers at Bethany Baptist Church in Newark.

**DK:** I've very much enjoyed doing this work at the church over the years.

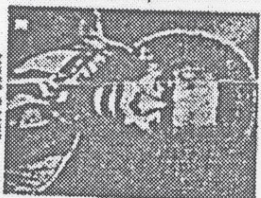
**MJ:** I want to thank you for your tireless contributions to and for jazz, and for participating in my thesis project. The late Frank Foster, who has given clarity to this music, as he describes it, said, "Jazz is America's indigenous art form." Like diamonds, there is such a beautiful and multi-faceted prism of clarity in this person named Dorthaan Kirk. We are fortunate to have witnessed and to be a part of Dorthaan's Walk. Thank you again, Dorthaan. Stay strong.



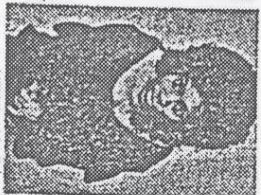
# Top Artists in Jazz World to Play at Shrine



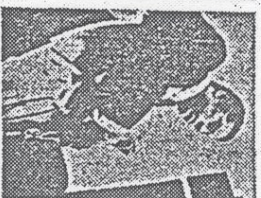
JIMMY SMITH



MILT DAVIS



MELLA JOYCE



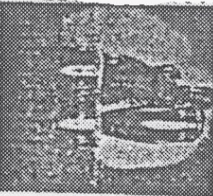
KENNY BURRELL



CAL TJADER



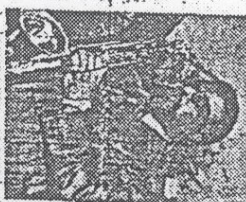
ROLAND KIRK



FRANCISCO AGUABELLA



BOBBY HUTCHERSON (left) and HAROLD LAND



GENE "JUG" ADAMS

## Jazz Greats Stated for Giant Watts Summer Festival Concert August 20-21

Julius Telle, executive director of the Shrine Auditorium, announced today that the Shrine Auditorium will host a series of three jazz concerts on Friday and Saturday evenings, Aug. 20 and 21, at 8 p.m. Admission is \$4.50. The series will begin promptly at 8 p.m. and will be held in the Shrine Auditorium, 1351 N. Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles. The series is being presented by the Shrine Auditorium, which is the largest and most modern of the city's entertainment venues. The series is being presented by the Shrine Auditorium, which is the largest and most modern of the city's entertainment venues. The series is being presented by the Shrine Auditorium, which is the largest and most modern of the city's entertainment venues.

## Biography — Rahsaan Roland Kirk

Born Ronald Theodore Kirk in Columbus, Ohio, Kirk is arguably one of the most exciting saxophone soloists to ever grace the stage. At the age of 2 he became blind. He was known for mixing and matching elements of from jazz history. He played several horns at once, the harmonica, the nose whistle, the piccolo, and even made his own instruments: the trumpophone and the slidesophone. In 1956, Kirk recorded his first album called *Triple Threat*. In 1960, Kirk moved to Chicago and recorded his second album titled *Introducing Ronald Kirk*. He then toured Germany for three months with Charles Mingus and thereafter led his own group, The Vibration Society. He also led the Jazz and People's Movement, a group dedicated to creating new opportunities for jazz musicians. In protest of the small number of African Americans employed by networks and recording studios, the group interrupted TV and radio broadcasts. Though he suffered a stroke in 1975, Kirk's unique saxophone technique allowed him to continue playing. He played one-handed until his death a year later.<sup>8</sup>

## Discography — Rahsaan Roland Kirk

- 1960 Soulful Saxes Affinity
- 1961 Kirk's Work OJC
- 1961 We Free Kings Mercury
- 1962 Domino Universal B.V. /Verve
- 1963 Kirk in Copenhagen Verve
- 1963 Reeds & Deeds Mercury
- 1963 Roland Kirk Meets the Benny Golson Orchestra Mercury
- 1964 Gifts and Messages Jazz House Music
- 1964 I Talk with the Spirits Verve
- 1965 Rip, Rig and Panic Japanese Import
- 1966 Slightly Latin Limelight Records
- 1967 Funk Underneath Prestige Records

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/rahsaan-roland-kirk-mn0000864257>

- 1967 Now Please Don't You Cry, Beautiful Edith Verve
- 1967 The Inflated Tear Rhino/Warner Bros.
- 1968 Left and Right Collectables
- 1969 Volunteered Slavery Collectables
- 1970 Rahsaan Rahsaan Collectables
- 1971 Blacknuss Collectables
- 1971 Natural Black Inventions: Root Strata Atlantic
- 1972 I, Eye, Aye: Live at the Montreux Jazz Festival Rhino / Atlantic
- 1972 A Meeting of the Times Warner Special Marketing/ Warner Bros.
- 1973 Prepare Thyself to Deal with a Miracle Collectables
- 1973 Bright Moments Rhino
- 1973 The Art of Rahsaan Roland Kirk Atlantic
- 1975 The Case of the 3-Sided Dream in Audio Color Collectables / Atlantic
- 1976 Other Folks' Music Collectables
- 1976 Kirkatron Warner Bros.
- 1976 The Return of the 5000 Lb. Man Collectables
- 1977 Boogie-Woogie String Along for Real Warner Bros.
- 1995 Soul Station Chess
- 2000 Third Dimension JVC Compact Discs
- 2003 Compliments of the Mysterious Phantom Hyena Records
- 2005 Copenhagen Concert Lone Hill Jazz
- 2006 Brotherman in the Fatherland Hyena Records





### **Knowing the Fosters: Frank and Cecilia**

Getting to know the Fosters was a relationship, though simple, but not so easy to describe. After the death of Count Basie, and Thad Jones became the new leader of the Basie Band, and for my daughter, Carmen Bradford, who had been hired by Mr. Basie, found that the change proved to be a bit of a challenge after the transition.

Carmen was confronted with yet another test after Thad Jones' time as a leader of the band ended, and the new leader became Frank Foster. Though Frank Foster's arrangements were a staple for the band for years prior to his becoming the leader, Carmen had not yet had the experience of singing Frank's arrangements. Saxophonist Eric Dixon had been writing Carmen's arrangements. So, accustomed to Eric's writing, Carmen made the statement that she was satisfied to continue having Eric to continue to write her arrangements. Frank was able to make the adjustment for her and the issue was soon resolved. Needless to say, Frank began writing arrangements for Carmen.

When the band, which was East Coast-based, finally appeared in California where I lived, I finally had the opportunity to meet Frank Foster and Cecilia, his wonderful wife. As we were both parents of talented offspring, we hit it off immediately. After returning to New York, Cecilia and I communicated by phone. It really felt good to me that Carmen was in the midst of such splendid people.

Frank composed, “Bring on the Raindrops” and “Poppa Fos” especially with Carmen in mind. Both songs were hits, with Frank receiving a Grammy for “Poppa Fos” for best arrangement. We were all so happy about another hit for Frank.

And so, year after year, the Fosters sort of raised my daughter out there in this big, sometimes strange world. I am so grateful for what they did for Carmen and will forever cherish those memories we made together.

**CECILIA FOSTER**

**Widow of Frank Foster — Jazz Musician — Tenor and Soprano Saxophonist,  
Flautist, Arranger, Composer**

Photo by Melba Joyce

**CECILIA FOSTER**

**MJ:** Today is October 22, 2012, and I am here in New Jersey doing a Jazz Widows interview with my dear friend, Cecilia Foster. I am so excited about this particular interview. Thank you, Cecilia, for participating with us in this interview. Cecilia is like family, just as she is a friend to everyone in the community of jazz. Cecilia is the widow of Frank Foster, saxophonist, arranger, band leader, icon. We're at NJPAC (New Jersey Performing Arts Center). I am very excited to be here with you. I really appreciate it.

**CF:** My pleasure, my pleasure.

**MJ:** Dorthaan and I were talking about all of the wonderful things you have done for all of us. So you wound up managing Frank, being his agent and taking care of all of his business.

**CF:** And all of the running the advertising, because I was the director of Human Resources as well as senior vice president as well as director of account services for Uniworld World, the largest black ad agency in the world. So I was doing all of that.

**MJ:** When the band wasn't working, some of the guys were hired by you. You kept them going. The jazz people would come to you when they had no gigs. Lots of musicians worked at Uniworld.

**MJ:** We don't have anyone like you any more, Cecilia. People don't open themselves to helping jazz artists. Don't know how and what is going to happen, but we do know that it's going to turn out all right.

**MJ:** So what are you doing now? Are you retired?

**CF:** Living in Chesapeake, Virginia. There is not much jazz there. I am extremely involved in my United Methodist Church. I teach Sunday school and on too many

committees. I'm heading up being a secretary on other committees. I just finished my autobiography, but I haven't found a publisher and I'm struggling with trying to finish Frank's, because he left his in tatters, after working on it for 35 years. I worked on mine for five, and between everything else.

**MJ:** That's a long time.

**CF:** I have four grandchildren and very involved in their little lives.

**MJ:** You have always been. You used to keep them sometime.

**CF:** I guess that's how I spend my life. I love it in Chesapeake.

**MJ:** Do you really like it over there?

**CF:** It's low key and without my Frank, well, with my Frank I traveled a great part of the world, was exposed to so many different cultures, things. Gleaned so many things that I always thought were important in life. There were so many. So now, things, travel and what have you, are not my priority.

**MJ:** You've done so many things.

**CF:** I been there and done that. And now my time, going through Frank's last five years were really traumatic, so demanding, for he was quite ill. And when he finally passed in July of 2011, I was tired. I miss him terribly. We were together for 50 years.

**MJ:** 50 years.

**CF:** Legally married for 46 and I guess I'm just sort of resting my memories. I have so many memories.

**MJ:** Now, I'll have to call on you to help me.

**CF:** I think about so many of the musicians as I go through various files and I uncover and I realize people I've helped like Gill Scott and Oscar Brown Jr. I managed at one

time Gil and Oscar. With my little knowledge, or what I thought it was little knowledge, they thought that I was.

**MJ:** But you had them booked. ...of us have, but you just seem to have a hand for business. Did you do this before? You didn't do any of this before? You didn't know when you were at home?

**CF:** I didn't do any of this before. I didn't go to college — just a high school education. But I've always sort have been the leader of the pack. For whatever reason, as a youngster — my bunch of girls, we called ourselves the Dukettes. There were ten of us. I was the youngest, but the other girls mothers would say if Baby Ann is going, if Baby Ann is going, it's okay, if Baby Ann is doing it, it's okay.

**MJ:** What were the Dukettes? Who were they?

**CF:** My friends who I grew up with in Pontiac. Nobody listened to jazz. All my rhythm and blues friends. Where did the name come from? I had a maddening crush on a boy named Ralph Peterson who was of the Duke, not that Ralph Peterson. I had a mad crush thing on a guy named Ralph Peterson. This Ralph Peterson from Detroit from the two Dukes. The other duke was...became...Jackie Wilson.

**MJ:** Oh my goodness.

**CF:** He was originally known as Sonny Wilson. When he went to the Dominoes, he became Jackie Wilson. He and I were the same age. He referred to me as my brother, and Ralph I absolutely loved. They were such talented young men. When I was 15, that's going to be the name of our group, our girls, we're gonna be named the Dukettes. That's how that came about.

**MJ:** Oh, yeah.

**CF:** Now, in 2012, there are four of us left.

**MJ:** Oh wow. Music, music, music.

**CF:** So, as far back as I go, I guess I've been surrounded by either the swing era, the big band, the smaller groups, rhythm and blues, the poets. That had its impact.

**MJ:** I was gonna ask you something. Most people form 50 questions. I said, this is special stuff. I can't give these women the same questions because, you know, everyone is so different. And the wives of these musicians are so different. I have pull on what I know, what I feel, let them talk about what they've done. What was it like with being the cousin of Elvin Jones? Did you ever go on your dad's gigs?

**CF:** I was too young when my father was leading the band. World War II broke the band up. I was really a child, about 3 and 4. It was a local band around Pontiac. Hank was still in high school and his mother used to fuss at my dad, because she would say, Hank has to go to school and he's and you're keeping him up for these rehearsals, staying up late at night.

I was so young that my mother would hire Elvin to babysit with me and my brother. Can you imagine Elvin Jones being your babysitter? And apparently my mother realized what a terrible mistake she had made, because he wasn't my babysitter very long. He was in high school at that time.

**MJ:** But what about Thad?

**CF:** Thad hadn't seen. I was in my rhythm and blues glory, and Thad had gone on off to do whatever. When I found him in New York in 1960, I hadn't seen him for 10 years. I had never heard the Basie Band live. And wasn't interested in hearing it. I was interested when I came to New York and found out that my cousin, Thad Jones, and had happened



to hear that he played in this Count Basie Orchestra. And I said, the night that I met him, he took me to Birdland. The band happened to be in town. And introduced to me to all the band and to Mr. Basie. All the band but Frank Foster. Didn't introduce me to Frank, the only one. And I said, is something wrong with him? Is there a reason you didn't introduce me? You don't need to meet him; he's married. I said that aren't the rest of these men married? I think Frank was a playboy. You didn't introduce me to him. I think Frank was a playboy. I don't want you to be involved with any musician.

I was 24 at the time and escaping from a very physically abusive marriage. And I had literally run from that — I came to New York.

**MJ:** Oh, my God. I know that it was so different with Frank, because he was so gentle.

**CF:** Oh, Mr. Gentle, the original gentleman.

**MJ:** Yeah, the two of you together were really something. I'm really so...the children and — it's so wonderful to be in your life. I felt like you guys were raising my daughter, Carmen.

**CF:** And many times we felt like we were raising your daughter. But that was when you were...

**MJ:** Yeah, yeah.

**CF:** And times raising my daughter. Carmen came in my life, I guess, when Frank took over the band, because Eric Dixon was writing for her. She said, I don't need a new arranger. I happy with Eric. She didn't know about Frank. When she came to his memorial service, when she said, best arranger I ever had.

**MJ:** All right, I know he was, I know he was. I know she loved his music. Carla Cook have two arrangements, we both use the same the arrangement, and we recorded one of

them with the Basie Band. That's really something. I know George Gee just worshipped Frank's writing, just...but anyway, it's just been wonderful having a chance to talk about you, about your life and everything. Knowing how open you are, yeah.

**CF:** When I met Frank, I was 24, but I guess that was along time ago, somehow. Next month, I'll be 78.

**MJ:** Really? Well, you've got three years on me.

**CF:** Well, you're still out there doing it, Melba, climbing over mountains. And wanting to. I'll rest on my memories. Not my laurels, my memories.

**MJ:** As far as I'm concerned, you're resting on your laurels. I'll bring the cameras up there. Mostly as we will talk more about Cecilia.

I'll do more, adding to this interview on film. We'll spend the day with you and see where you live and see Frank's memorabilia. We'll talk about Cecilia, the mother, the helpmate, the manager, the agent, the lover, more of that you know and see how you've lived and how you enjoyed it when you were together. So, okay. Thank you so much.

**CF:** Anytime you want to come.

**MJ:** Thank you so much. This ends our interview, and Cecilia has given us permission to visit her, to come over to Chesapeake and finish this wonderful thing. Alrighty.

**Frank Foster**



Jazz Saxophonist

## Biography — Frank Foster

Foster was a tenor saxophonist, flutist, arranger and composer who played off and on with the Count Basie Orchestra from 1953 to 1995. After graduating from Wilberforce University, Foster began his career in Detroit, then joined the Army. During the time in which he played with Basie, Foster contributed arrangements including “Down for the Count,” “Blues Backstage” and the standard “Shiny Stockings.” In the ’70s, he played with Elvin Jones and the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Big Band. He was an artist-in-residence at the New England Conservatory of Music in 1971. He also taught in Harlem’s public school district and was an assistant professor of Black Studies at SUNY Buffalo. He formed several groups, including the Loud Minority and Living Color. In 1986, he became the leader of the Count Basie Orchestra and received two Grammy awards for his arrangements. After suffering a stroke in 2001, Foster was unable to play the saxophone, yet continued arranging and composing until his death in 2011. He is survived by his wife, Cecilia Foster, and their six children.<sup>9</sup>

## Discography — Frank Foster

1954 New Faces, New Sounds  
 1956 No Count Savoy  
 1957 Two Franks, Please! Savoy  
 1963 Basie Is Our Boss Universal Japan  
 1965 Fearless Frank Foster Original Jazz Classics  
 1966 Soul Outing! Original Jazz Classics  
 1968 Manhattan Fever EMI Music Distribution  
 1969 Frank Foster [1969]  
 1974 The Loud Minority P-Vine Records  
 1976 Here and Now Catalyst  
 1978 Twelve Shades of Black Leo  
 1978 Roots, Branches and Dances Bee Hive

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/frank-foster-mn0000161637>

- 1978 Shiny Stockings Denon Records
- 1979 Non-Electric Company EPM
- 1982 The House That Love Built SteepleChase / Steeplechase
- 1983 Two for the Blues Original Jazz Classics /Pablo/ OJC
- 1984 Frankly Speaking Concord Jazz
- 1996 A Fresh Taste of Thad Jones and Frank Foster Hänssler Classic
- 1996 Leo Rising Arabesque
- 1998 Swing Challenge Records
- 2002 Live at Feuerwache Mannheim
- 2003 We Do It Diff'rent Mapleshade Records

In Case You Didn't Know jazz2jazz  
Little Red Broken Audio

**SANDY JORDAN**

**Widow of Clifford Jordan — Jazz Musician — Saxophonist**

**SANDY JORDAN**

**MJ:** Sandy, thanks for agreeing to be a part of my Jazz Widows thesis project, for my master's at Rutgers. I know that you have some valuable information to share.

**SJ:** It's my pleasure, Melba.

**MJ:** So, let's get started. Were you born in the U.S?

**SJ:** Yes, I was born at the hospital in Baltimore, but raised in Relay, Maryland, a suburb of Baltimore.

**MJ:** What was life like growing up in Relay? Do you come from a large family?

**SJ:** Not really. There were four of us, two sisters and one brother.

**MJ:** Your family history is very interesting. My research includes valuable information dating back to your grandfather. Your mother's father was born during slavery in 1849.

There were, in total, 3,200,000 slaves. The state of Maryland had the greatest amount of freed slaves than any other place in the country. In 1863, your grandfather and his second wife's father built the house which your family still occupies. Where did you attend school?

**SJ:** Before integration, the black people attended the Benjamin Banneker School in Catonsville, Maryland.

**MJ:** Benjamin Banneker was a very famous African American. He was an inventor and a surveyor.

**SJ:** Yes, he was. Benjamin Banneker was appointed by President George Washington as assistant to the French architect, Major L'Enfant, who planned the layout of the District of Columbia. Major L'Enfant died and Benjamin Banneker had to finish the

job. Banneker is listed in history as the man who saved Washington, D.C., and is included on the list of 100 Greatest African Americans.

**MJ:** As a matter of fact, a few jazz giants were born in Baltimore. Would you share famous African Americans involved in jazz history, especially since we're talking about jazz. Because of the blues (its American name) an African music which is the root, therefore, jazz would not have existed without the root. And what would we have without the root? I'll tell you, mostly waltzes, from Europe.

**SJ:** Billie Holiday, Cab Calloway, Baby Lawrence and Chick Webb were from Baltimore.

**MJ:** Great. Now, let's get back to you, growing up in Relay. And after integration, you left Banneker. Where did you attend high school?

**SJ:** We attended Catonsville High School.

**MJ:** So, were you listening to music as a teen?

**SJ:** There was a jazz disc jockey on the radio whose name was Chuck Richards. He played jazz from 10:30 to midnight, and between 11:00 p.m. to 11:15 p.m., he'd play Do-Wop, like *Devil or Angel*, his concession to the teenagers. "I would listen to jazz; it just seeped into my brain. We also has two teen jazz clubs, on one side of town, the group was called The Interracial Jazz Society. The club that I was in was called The Yard Birds. Gary Bartz belonged to the Interracial Club, and we met during that time and are still very good friends. We'd meet at each other's homes and listen to the music. One of the fathers got us into a club called The Casino, which was across the street from another jazz club called the Comedy Club. They were both located on Penn Street.



**MJ:** What an unusual setup. Tell me more about this club where the person's father arranged for all of you to go.

**SJ:** The club had us away from the bar, sitting on a raised platform. As we listened to the music, they served us Coca-Cola.

**MJ:** Man, you kids really had it made being exposed to jazz so early in life, just hanging tough! So, what groups did you hear play there?

**SJ:** We heard Miles Davis, Philly Joe Jones, Bill Evans and Coltrane. This was in 1957.

**MJ:** What an interesting time to be in touch with jazz. I really wish that more young people could be exposed to jazz. It would be such a beautiful and cultural experience for them. You kids really had it good, and that was around the time when that particular group recorded *Kind of Blue*. So I wonder where Cannonball and Paul Chambers were?

**MJ:** So I guess you could say that Baltimore was sort of a jazz kind of town back then. So, did you graduate from Catonsville High?

**SJ:** Yes, I did. In 1958. And went to New York to attend the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

**MJ:** Did you complete your degree there?

**SJ:** Yes, I did and returned home to Relay.

**MJ:** After being in New York, you must have suffered culture shock coming back home.

**SJ:** I couldn't locate a job in Relay as an artist and decided to move back to New York.

**MJ:** Any luck with that?

**SJ:** Yes, first I was lucky to get my apartment back, which was great; landed my job at a graphic arts company. There were two graphic arts businesses who shared the space. After a time, one of the businesses moved. I stayed with the Lutz Company and stayed there

for 47 years. Also, back then, being able to get my old apartment was a plus. I was able to get a new roommate there at the Mohawk Hotel. Lucky for me that my roommate, Doris Welcher, loved jazz.

**MJ:** So you two hung out?

**SJ:** Yes, the apartment was walking distance from the Coronet Club, which was a jazz club. Doris was friends with Vivian Johnson, wife of JJ; we met at the Coronet. One night we went to hear Blue Mitchell, and there was Cliff on the bandstand with him.

**MJ:** Wow! Here we go! Did the two of you get acquainted?

**SJ:** Yes, but by this time, we were married to someone else. Cliff's wife had a boutique and I would buy clothes from her. Years later, we met again in 1972, and both of us were divorced.

**MJ:** So, what happened then?

**SJ:** Doris had moved into her apartment by 1975, and I had moved to mine here in New York with my daughter, Jennifer, from my first marriage. Doris had gone on vacation. I did not remember this and phoned her. Cliff answered the phone. He told me that he was staying in her apartment while some repairs were being done at Charlie Mims, his roommate's place. Cliff and I discussed his new album and my designing the cover. Cliff was appearing with Cedar Walton at Bloomer's Jazz Club in the Village. I went to hear him. On the break, we talked and our relationship began.

**MJ:** Did you have a long relationship before you were married?

**SJ:** That was the weekend of Thanksgiving, 1973.

**MJ:** So when was the wedding?

**SJ:** We were married in 1975, on Jennifer's birthday, in Baltimore at The Famous, who rented out space to the Left Bank Jazz Society on Sundays. We had two receptions, one in Baltimore, the other in New York at The Seafood Place on West 48th.

**MJ:** What was life like, after becoming Mrs. Clifford Jordan?

**SJ:** I travelled with Cliff to gigs out of town. I did this as much as I could, having a seven-year-old daughter and holding down a full-time job.

**MJ:** That wasn't so easy, I would imagine.

**SJ:** After a while, work fell off for Cliff.

**MJ:** Did you ever at any time want him to get a steady job?

**SJ:** No, there would have been no living with the man. I could never imagine that. He did try to teach once, to have a stable sideline. There was never any question of it being his career. And he was a wonderful instructor, but a dismal failure at the regimentation of it. I think it was the whole concept of "day gig" that got to him.

**MJ:** What would you believe that a jazz musician's wife should be?

**SJ:** To love the music as much as they do, if that's possible. And LOVE IT, not because your husband plays it. This creates a big understanding of what's involved in the jazz "world." I can't say if this love is a virtue as much as it is an instinct. It makes you want to ensure that this music thrives and survives — so whatever role you're called upon to play becomes easier because there are times when the relationship can be awfully one-sided. Develop an understanding and realization that this music is bigger than you or your husband. This may sound a bit lofty, but for me it worked and is still working.

**MJ:** Sandy, this has been a wonderful experience for me to be able to document your life in this true story of a life in jazz. To be able to look back at a life, a marriage sharing the

music and having such a vast knowledge, experiencing the joys and sorrows of jazz and how you've lived through it is refreshing to witness your victory.



Sandy and Clifford Jordan: May 6, 1988  
Photo by Martin Cough

## Biography — Clifford Jordan

[Clifford Jordan](#) was a saxophonist known for his unique sound on tenor saxophone.

Before moving to New York in 1957, he did a few stints in Chicago with [Max Roach](#), [Sonny Stitt](#), and some R&B. Soon after, he made a huge impression, leading three albums for Blue Note. He performed in Europe with [Eric Dolphy](#) in the 1964 [Charles Mingus Sextet](#). Jordan was a reliable player, but often overlooked because he was not as avant-garde as others. While touring in Europe, Jordan was in a quartet headed by Cedar Walton in 1974-1975. He led a big band during his final years. Jordan recorded as a leader for Blue Note, Riverside, Jazzland, Atlantic, Vortex, Strata-East, Steeplechase, Criss Cross, Bee Hive, Milestone and Mapleshade. He passed away on March, 27, 1993.<sup>10</sup>

## Discography — Clifford Jordan

- 1957 [Blowing in from Chicago](#) Blue Note
- 1957 [Cliff Jordan](#) Blue Note
- 1957 [Cliff Craft](#) Blue Note
- 1960 [Spellbound](#) OJC / Riverside
- 1961 [A Story Tale](#) Jazzland
- 1961 [Starting Time](#) Original Jazz Classics
- 1962 [Bearcat](#) Jazzland/OJC
- 1965 [These Are My Roots: Clifford Jordan Plays Leadbelly](#) Koch Jazz / eOne
- 1968 [Soul Fountain](#) Wounded Bird
- 1969 [In the World](#) P-Vine Records
- 1973 [Glass Bead Game, Vol. 2](#) Charly Records
- 1974 [Half Note](#) Steeplechase
- 1975 [The Highest Mountain](#) Muse
- 1975 [Night of the Mark VII](#) 32 Jazz
- 1975 [On Stage, Vol. 3](#) Steeplechase
- 1975 [On Stage, Vol. 1](#) SteepleChase / Steeplechase
- 1975 [On Stage, Vol. 2](#) SteepleChase / Steeplechase
- 1975 [Firm Roots](#) Steeplechase

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/clifford-jordan-mn0000157487>

- 1976 Remembering Me-Me Muse
- 1977 Inward Fire Muse
- 1978 The Adventurer 32 Records / 32 Jazz
- 1980 Hello, Hank Jones East World
- 1984 Repetition Soul Note (Italy)
- 1984 Two-Tenor Winner! Criss Cross
- 1986 Royal Ballads Criss Cross
- 1987 Live at Ethell's Mapleshade Records
- 1988 Dr. Chicago Bee Hive
- 1990 Play What You Feel Mapleshade Records
- 1990 Four Play DIW (Japan)
- 1996 Magic in Munich Steeplechase
- 2002 Meets Klaus Weiss

Harlem Roots

Live at Condon's, New York

Spellbound/Starting Time/Bearcat Fresh Sound



Handwritten musical score for "VIENNA" by C. JORDAN.

Tempo/Feel: SLOW FOUR 12/8 FEELING

Section: INTRO VAMP

Chords and notation for the Intro Vamp:

- Staff 1: C- (C major), Bb13 (Bb major 13th)
- Staff 2: C- (C major), Bb13 (Bb major 13th)
- Staff 3: C- (C major), D7 (D dominant 7th)
- Staff 4: G7 (G dominant 7th), C7 (C dominant 7th), F-7 (F minor 7th), Bb7 (Bb dominant 7th)
- Staff 5: Eb- (Eb minor), Ab7 (Ab dominant 7th), DbΔ (Db major), D-7 (D minor 7th), G7 (G dominant 7th)

Section: INTERLUDE (8 BARS) BEFORE EACH SOLO

Chords and notation for the Interlude:

- Staff 6: CΔ9 (C major 9th), AbΔ (Ab major), 4xs (4 times)
- Staff 7: DbΔ (Db major), C-7 (C minor 7th), F7 (F dominant 7th), BbΔ (Bb major)

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### **Celebrating with Gloria Ware**

Gloria Ware is a lovely woman whom I met through Sandy Jordan. I have found that anyone that I have ever met through Sandy Jordan is very special, just as she is simply wonderful. Also, it really appears that all of the women whom I've met in jazz who are in a relationship with a significant other or wives of jazz musicians are just about the coolest women I have ever met. So attuned to being what they need to be, to being at one with all that the music gives, in order to really be there for the music and its remarkable quality, its evolutionary and revolutionary purpose, so strong and beautifully at one with all that the music is and the life of the music, which carries with it a mystique, merely, the jazz life. There is sincerity between us. I suppose that is because the music can't be faked, therefore it attaches itself to those people who strive to be sincere. Meeting Gloria was no different. We became friends.

Being married to an artist, and I was at one time for 13 years, is no jive. For that matter, anyone who is married to an artist requires a special woman or man.

I never met Wilbur Ware, one of the greatest bassists in the business. I've heard him play through the magic of recordings and his music is a sheer delight.

I wish that I had known Wilbur Ware.

It is a joy to see how Gloria is allowing us to share him and his art through the Wilbur Ware Foundation, which further glorifies the music and the goal of keeping Wilbur's compositions, his works, alive for future generations.

Thanks, Gloria Ware, for keeping the flame burning!

## GLORIA WARE

**MJ:** Today, I am here in New York at the lovely apartment of Gloria Ware, who has kindly consented to allow this interview. Gloria, thank you for participating in my thesis project, Jazz Widows.

**GW:** Melba, you are welcome. The Jazz Widows interviews are exciting according to what I heard from one of the other widows. I am happy to be a part of it.

**MJ:** Gloria, I am excited that you are joining us in telling the real stories of another part of the history of Jazz and “how we got over.” It has taken more than most know how the survival of our music and what it has taken, for those who really created this great and original genre of music. Gloria, where and when were you born?

**GW:** I was born in Denver, Colorado, on July 7th. Do you need the year? [laughing]

**MJ:** Not really. [laughing] Tell me this, do you or did you sing or play an instrument?

**GW:** I’m not singing or playing the piano now, but I did at one time. I sang with a gospel choir. I played the piano in my father’s church. He was a minister.

**MJ:** About that gospel choir. I feel where the Jazz comes in. We know the history of Jazz and its connection with black churches. I was just about to ask you about your family. Tell me about them.

**GW:** My family consisted of my two parents and two brothers. One of my brothers was twelve years my senior. I hardly ever saw him; he was in school at Grambling. My father would be assigned to go and establish churches all over around the country. The first that I remember was the Macedonia Baptist Church in Denver. Then we moved to California for a while, and then to Philadelphia, where he built the largest church in Philadelphia, Greater Ebenezer Baptist Church.

**MJ:** I heard through the grapevine that you are an ordained preacher. Is that true?

**GW:** Yes, I am!

**MJ:** I knew that there was something different about you! That's wonderful! Do you ever preach?

**GW:** If needed.

**MJ:** Did you attend college, and if so, where?

**GW:** Yes, I graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, majored in English.

**MJ:** Did you like jazz at an early age?

**GW:** Yes, I liked jazz and listened to it while in college.

**MJ:** When did you meet Wilbur?

**GW:** Some of my friends and I went to a local club in Philly, the Aqua Lounge, and Wilbur was playing there.

**MJ:** Was it love at first sight?

**GW:** There was a guy, I'll never forget his name, Dan Jones, who asked me if I wanted to meet Wilbur Ware? I agreed to meet him. Wilbur came over and we met. I guess Dan wanted to be some kind o guy who wanted everyone to believe that he knew an important person. It wasn't until long after that I found out that Dan didn't know Wilbur (Ha).

**MJ:** Yes, it sounds as if he wanted to make some kind of impression, pulling a stunt like that. So what happened when your eyes met?

**GW:** Wilbur was so charismatic, so engaging. He invited me out to dinner and off we went. He was amazing!

**MJ:** WOW! So you got married right away?

**GW:** Not right away. We hung out for a while, moved from Philly to New York. As a matter of fact, we moved to Brooklyn to the building where Billy Higgins and Esther lived.

**MJ:** That must have been something, all of that music in one place.

**GW:** Yes, it was something.

**MJ:** How did you spend most of your days?

**GW:** We had gotten married in 1976 and while still in Philly, I had applied for a teaching position at Philadelphia Community College. Wouldn't you know, they called after we had moved to New York. I accepted it, commuting for a while.

**MJ:** That must have been hard.

**GW:** It was okay.

**MJ:** Did Wilbur ever go on the road?

**GW:** Sometimes he did, but not too often. He was working with Clifford Jordan's band, Chris Anderson was on piano and they got a gig in Guadalupe. Although I hadn't gone with him to a couple of gigs in Canada, I decided to join them for this one. Sandy was there also. Guadalupe was beautiful and it was so much fun! All of us together. We had a good time. It was a good vacation kind of gig for the band. They worked one hour a day.

**MJ:** Did you and Wilbur have children?

**GW:** We wanted children. We even applied to adopt children, but Wilbur became very ill and the agency wouldn't allow us to adopt them. They said that it wouldn't be a good experience for them to see him so ill.

**MJ:** That is too bad. That must have been hard for you.

**GW:** Yes, it was. Wilbur and I had an idea to start to start a jazz institute. He was too ill to do anything so strenuous. The institute would insure that the music would be taught in the way that it was created to be, in order so that that it would be protected and properly preserved. That was, it would not lose its authenticity.

**MJ:** So the institution was founded after his death.

**GW:** As we watched him fade, Sandy Jordan knew that we wanted it as much as he, and she asked him if he would give us permission to form the institute. Wilbur agreed. That was in the early eighties. Unfortunately, we hired an unscrupulous attorney, who gave us so much trouble that we had to wait for a while to restructure. We proceeded on in order to save our mission.

**MJ:** So you're carrying on the legacy?

**GW:** Yes, we're operating the Wilbur Ware Jazz Institute. Last year, we celebrated Wilbur 2012 at Merkin Hall, here in New York. Grammy award-winning jazz pianist and educator Barry Harris was one of the featured performers.

**MJ:** Yes, I was there and really enjoyed it.

**GW:** Yes, the Institute is a jazz organization of advocacy, celebrating jazz. A part of the original name of the institute was, know it, love it, understand it.

**MJ:** How wonderful.

**GW:** Yes, it's dedicated to preserving the history of jazz as seen and experienced by the innovators and master musicians who created, performed and perpetuated the art form. We are the dream keepers, keeping the flame burning.

**MJ:** We are all blessed that you and your friends are here to help carry on the ideas and ideals of Wilbur Ware and other jazz musicians who knew and know the truth about real jazz. When is your next event?

**GW:** In 2014, we are celebrating the Melba Liston Collective. Did you know that in 1987 Melba was the first female instrumentalist to win the NEA Jazz Master Award?

**MJ:** Melba Liston was an extraordinarily gifted musician.

**GW:** Melba's work is archived at the University of Chicago. There, a group of jazz scholars are studying "Our Music, Our Culture," Melba's compositions. They describe them as, "Emotional Excitement!"

**MJ:** Gloria, I want to thank you for being a part of Jazz Widows. I wish for you the best there is in your wonderful plans. I thank you for giving credit where credit is due. We look forward to the next Wilbur Ware Institute production, in the name and through the power of jazz music.

**GW:** Thank you, Melba Joyce.

## Biography — Wilbur Ware

Wilbur Ware was an influential bassist with an unmatched sense of swing. He was not afraid to shift the rhythmic emphasis by varying note lengths and leaving space between phrases. Born in Chicago in 1923, Ware played banjo, drums, and violin before picking up the bass. He hit the jazz scene in 1946 after serving in World War II, playing with Roy Eldridge, Sonny Stitt, Junior Mance and Johnny Griffin. In 1956, Ware joined Art Blakey's band and moved to New York. A year later, he joined Theolonious Monk and played with John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins' A Night at the Village Vanguard concerts. Later that year, he recorded his only album as a leader, titled *Chicago Sound*. During the late '50s, Ware's health worsened and he did not return to the jazz scene until 1969. He eventually moved to Philadelphia, where he died in 1979.<sup>11</sup>

## Discography — Wilbur Ware

### As leader

- 1957 *The Chicago Sound* (Riverside), with Johnny Griffin
- 2012 *Super Bass* (released posthumously) The Wilbur Ware Institute

### As sideman

- 1961 With Tina Brooks *The Waiting Game* (Blue Note, 1961)
- 1957 With Sonny Clark *Dial "S" for Sonny* (Blue Note, 1957)
- 1957 With Kenny Dorham *2 Horns / 2 Rhythms* (Riverside, 1957)
- 1957 With Kenny Drew *A Harry Warren Showcase* (Judson),  
*A Harold Arlen Showcase* (Judson),  
*I Love Jerome Kern* (Riverside),  
*This Is New* (Riverside),  
*Pal Joey* (Riverside)
- 1956 With Matthew Gee *Jazz by Gee* (Riverside)
- 1961 With Grant Green *Remembering* (Blue Note)
- 1956 With Johnny Griffin *Johnny Griffin* (Argo, 1956),  
*Way Out* (Riverside, 1958),  
*Johnny Griffin Sextet* (Riverside, 1958)

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.allmusic.com/search/all/wilbur+ware>



- 1956 With Ernie Henry *Presenting Ernie Henry* (Riverside, 1956),  
Seven Standards and a Blues (Riverside, 1957),  
Last Chorus (Riverside, 1956-57)
- 1957 With Clifford Jordan *Jenkins, Jordan and Timmons* (Prestige, 1957) -
- 1961 With John Jenkins and Bobby Timmons *Starting Time* (Jazzland, 1961)
- 1958 With Blue Mitchell *Big 6* (Riverside)
- 1957 With Thelonious Monk: *Thelonious Himself* (Riverside) on one track only,  
Monk's Music (Riverside),  
Mulligan Meets Monk (Riverside),
- 1961 *Thelonious Monk with John Coltrane* (Jazzland)
- 1956 With J. R. Monterose *J. R. Monterose* (Blue Note)
- 1958 With Sonny Rollins *Night at the Village Vanguard* (Blue Note)
- 1956 With Zoot Sims *Zoot!* (Riverside)
- 1958 With Toots Thielemans *Man Bites Harmonica!* (Riverside)



## **Methodology**

*The Jazz Widows* is the brainchild of jazz vocalist, Melba Joyce, song writer, jazz educator and big band leader. These interviews were conducted face to face with the women featured. We were either at their homes or in hotel lobbies, restaurants, in parks or at my home. For one interview, I traveled to California en route to New York after an engagement in Washington State.

In making this presentation, we are honoring the black jazz musicians for their sacrifices, the mistreatment they experienced as they moved about, facing the threat of bodily harm. These men performed, earning a living for the family, and fulfilling a dream, a desire to create art. These are the unrealized dreams, the stories that they shared with their families, those they loved and of those who loved them. In the midst of their pain, some never having the opportunity to properly pursue performing because of the unjust treatment suffered by the black musician as their woman stood beside them.

This is the story of the power of real jazz, which will forever prevail. Though others may do their best to change it by using other methods of teaching it — to what they call enhancing it — as they add some lackluster method, you may call it something, but please create another word. Don't call it jazz. Everybody wants to own a piece of the rock, but you may as well try to polish the sun, for jazz is carved in stone, needing no change. Just do your best to try to clone, Pops, Freddie Keppard, Buddy, Miles, Wynton, Coltrane, Diz and the Bird. You know the names of all of them, dead and alive!

Jazz is the music of the black man. He was forced to come to America where he had no luggage, he possessed only the song in what became his heavy heart, a seed that blossomed out of many days of sadness. But out of the sad seed that germinated blossomed the beautiful sounds of an unfamiliar song. As the lyric goes, “the music was good, yet very strange, blew the squares right off the stage, few could play along, but the melody still lingers on.”<sup>1</sup>.

The Original Dixieland Band was not the original anything. In their desperation and lies to gain acceptance, they claimed that they created the music that they so desperately tried to copy, and made fools of themselves. They clowned and mocked, trying to sound like jazz music, selling many, many copies of their recordings, but they just didn’t have it. People were excited. Even though they played incorrectly, in the middle of all the tomfoolery one could discern something, but — and because of the circus atmosphere they created, because this was the closest they could get — they had to resort to clowning, and for a while they kept the attention of the audience. Eventually, the people heard the real thing and it was all over.

When a black man performs jazz, it is with pride, for he is cognizant of his creativity, his gift, this amazing song resounds as nothing that has ever been made. These are gifted people, possessing a lovely song of depth, beauty and power!

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<sup>1</sup> Chaka Khan’s lyric from Dizzy Gillespie’s melody, “A Night in Tunisia.”

## **Conclusion**

This is a collection of stories and histories documenting the lives of women and their husbands. Those featured in this thesis are called the Jazz Widows. There are tales of sacrifice and pain that speak of important events, which create threads that are meant to form an understanding of the meaning of disrespect and the solution of respectfulness.

Out of the pain of inhumane acts, of the attempt of trespassing, is a re-run of acts committed by the greed of many who would be clones.

It is a proven fact that when one plants an apple tree, it must bear apples.

The music is called the blues, a name most black jazz musicians would not recognize.

Even today, the so-called blues song can be heard in Africa, the Motherland, because it was born there.

We can't take this away from Mother!

This song called JAZZ incubated from that.

**MELBA JOYCE BRADFORD**

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New York, NY 10031

212-281-3187

**EDUCATION**

- 1999 Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center, New York, NY  
Course work: Screenplay writing
- 1994 Teachers College at Columbia University, New York, NY  
Course work: Children's Music Workshop
- 1989 American Place Theater, New York, NY  
Course work: Drama
- 1979 B.A., Antioch University, Los Angeles, CA  
Major: Vocal Music, Psychology
- 1979 Venice Art School, Venice, CA  
Course work: Drawing
- 1968 Pasadena City College, Pasadena, CA  
Course work: Voice
- 1967 Mt. San Antonio College, Pomona, CA  
Course work: Dance
- 1957 North Texas State University, Denton, TX  
Course work: Business Management

**FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AWARDS**

- 2001 Letter of Commendation from President Bill Clinton
- 2001 Song Writing, American Music Center, New York, NY
- 1999 Jazz Ambassador, State Department Tour Assignment  
AFRICA: Angola, Cameroon, Namibia and Nigeria
- 1998 Great Women in Harlem, Harlem Red Cross
- 1985 Facets of California's Finest, AKA Sorority, Altadena, CA
- 1984 The National Endowment for the Arts Award: Jazz for Special People
- 1975 Proclamation, Texas House of Representatives (the 68<sup>th</sup> Legislature)  
Outstanding Jazz Singer Award

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Teaching

- 2001 Gospel Workshop, New York, NY  
Creator/Workshop Facilitator
- 2001 SUNY College at Old Westbury, Westbury, NY  
Professor, Music of Global Cultures; History of Jazz
- 2001 Melba Joyce Master Vocal Jazz Workshop, New York, NY  
Creator/Workshop Facilitator
- 1999 The Jazz School, Kokola, Finland  
Master Class Instructor
- 1999 Balkan Jazz Workshop and Festival, Serbia  
Master Class and Performance
- 1998 Hartford Academy for the Arts  
Jazz Master Class Instructor
- 1998 Jazzmobile School, New York, NY  
Instructor
- 1997 Jazzmobile, Bronx, NY  
Artist in Residence
- 1997 Bank Street College of Education, New York, NY  
Artist in Residence
- 1997 WBGO-National Public Radio, Newark, NJ  
Children's Jazz Workshop, Instructor
- 1988 Drake Business College, Staten Island, NY  
Instructor
- 1985 Adelphi Business College, Los Angeles, CA  
Instructor
- 1981 Montebello School District  
South Pasadena Unified School District, South Pasadena, CA  
Teacher/Instructor

### Management/Administration/Public Relations

- 1990 Intercultural Educational Fund, Inc. New York, NY; Executive Director
- 1982 Bradmoore Music Publishing Company Inc.; President/CEO
- 1981 ALTA/PAS Educational Institute, Altadena, CA; Publicist
- 1978 Antioch University, West at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA  
Administrative Assistant to Financial Aid Officer

### Committees, Panels

- 1991 New York State Council on the Arts, New York, NY  
Panelist and Assistant Board Chair

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (continued)

### Selected Productions

- 2004 The United Nations Conference on Women, University of Texas at Dallas —  
“What Is Power?”
- 2001 The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, New York, NY  
“Pops”: Celebrating the Life of Louis Armstrong
- 2000 Flushing Town Hall, Flushing, NY — Mary Lou Williams
- 1999 Women’s Jazz Festival, Westchester, NY; Executive Producer
- 1995 The 4<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on Women, Beijing, China —  
“One Nation, One United World”; Workshop Presenter and Performance
- 1993 California Women’s Correctional Prison, Corona, CA; Jazz Performance
- 1993 The United Nations Church, New York, NY  
United Nations African Women’s Association; Jazz Performance
- 1992 Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY  
A Women’s Jazz Festival; Founder/Producer, Performer
- 1991 The City College of New York, New York, NY  
History of African American Music (The Spiritual)  
Producer, Director, Performer
- 1991 Congressional Black Caucus, Washington, DC — Women in Jazz Forum
- 1984 California Institute of Technology  
Musical Director, Producer: 100 Years of Jazz in Pasadena
- 1984 National Endowment for the Arts  
Cities and School Districts, Jazz for Special People  
Pasadena, CA, Los Angeles, CA and Malibu, CA
- 1969 Citrus College, Philadelphia Community College, Philadelphia, PA  
Lecture: The History of Jazz
- 1969 Mt. San Antonio College, Pomona, CA  
Producer Director, Performer: The History of Jazz Lectures

### Selected Performances

Shared billing with Carmen McCrae, Dick Gregory, Kirk Lightsey, Jessye Norman, Smokey Robinson, Benny Golson, Doc Severinsen, Sarah Vaughan, Odetta, Donald Harrison, Marvin Gaye, Joe Pass

*Black and Blue*—Broadway (New York, NY): Understudy; Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Principal

The Golden Harp, Russia’s First International Harpist Competition; Panelist/Performer



**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

AFTRA

AGMA

Broadway Cares

NAACP

Screen Actors Guild

Women in Action