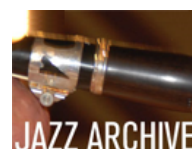


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Dianne Reeves

Dianne Reeves is one of the most respected performing artists in music today. She was born in Detroit, Michigan, attended the University of Colorado and gained valuable experience with Clark Terry, Harry Belafonte and Sergio Mendez. Dianne has recorded steadily since 1982 and is well known for her original songs and for personalizing material from an eclectic mix of musical genres. Her most recent recording on Blue Note Records is "The Calling," a tribute to Sarah Vaughan.

Dianne was interviewed by Monk Rowe and Michael Woods following a performance at Hamilton on October 13, 2001.

MR: My name is Monk Rowe and we're filming for the Hamilton College Jazz Archive at the college, and I'm really thrilled to have Dianne Reeves with me this evening. And I have to try to find an adjective to describe your performance, but I just was thrilled with the amount of imagination that was going on on stage. Can you in any way tell me where that comes from?

DR: Well I think it comes from having a group of — standing inside of a group of musicians that become co-creators on stage, where it's a very intimate exchange that happens between everybody. Everybody kind of feeds off of one another and so it makes the music different from night to night on a certain level.

MR: Yeah. You had an interesting little story in your recent liner notes about learning a Sarah Vaughan note for note — and I mean that's an accomplishment in itself.

DR: Yes I think so.

MR: But your uncle said something about that?

DR: Yeah. Well he'd given me these records and the one that I heard first was with Michel Legrand and she was singing "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life." And it was amazing what she was doing with her voice. Her range was going through the harmonies and she was singing in a way that I didn't know that a song could be sung. And I fell in love with it. So I would play it over and over and over again and I learned it note for note. And then I had my instructor at the time for the big band do an arrangement for me of the song. And I felt really proud. You know I got up there and I sang the song exactly like she sang it. Well my uncle bought the music to the song, because I learned it off of the record, and he said "this is how the actual melody goes, and just so you know, that's probably the way she sang it that time on that recording but after that it was different. She probably never sang it the same way twice, I can guarantee you." So it just kind of busted my bubble a little bit, you know. But it was from that point on I knew that you had to

39 have your own — I guess — concepts when you're dealing with music and songs. So I
40 wanted to develop my own voice from that point on.

41 MR: Were there horn players that inspired you from an improvisation standpoint too?

42 DR: Well you know it's interesting because the one person that comes to mind is Cannonball
43 Adderley. You know I had the opportunity to hear him when I was really young, and I
44 just thought he was amazing. And I think that the thing that inspired me more than
45 anything was that he had this way of creating places and times and pictures with an
46 instrument that had no words, but he could make you have these thoughts and feelings
47 about places that you've been or places that felt very, very familiar. He gave you pictures.
48 So I think early on he was the one. And then I loved when he worked with Nancy Wilson.
49 I thought that was really cool.

50 MR: Was that the best album ever made just about?

51 DR: Yeah that was a great album.

52 MR: Yeah, absolutely. And it's funny because she says that actually the critics gave her some
53 heat about that, or maybe him.

54 DR: Oh critics give so much heat.

55 MR: Yeah. You know your repertoire is so broad based. Do you think critics have a hard time
56 with that because they want to put you somewhere so they can talk better about it?

57 DR: Early on, when I was trying to find out who I was there was a lot of music that I was
58 listening to at the time, and at the time fusion music was the music that was being played.
59 That was the music that I was listening to. And I loved it because it encompassed so
60 many things. It was for me like world music, without even knowing the term, because
61 you'd hear people like Ravi Shankar and you'd hear all of these kind of exotic
62 instruments and places, people from countries that you would not normally hear this
63 music. Even Brazil was very exotic to me at the time. And the musicians had a great deal
64 of respect for the master musicians from these different places. And I was listening to all
65 of this, so I wanted that energy in my own music. So early on I tapped into that as well as
66 the music that was very popular of the day, it was of course the Motown music. I liked a
67 lot of that. I was listening to it and I wanted to do that as well. So when I started
68 recording the critics would always say "oh she's just too broad." When they first started
69 to hear me I was with people like Clark Terry and Louis Bellson and singing more
70 traditional music. But when I did my first record they creamed me.

71 MR: How does it affect you? How did it affect you?

72 DR: It just made my skin really tough because there was something stronger than their words,
73 and that was that I really was, in my heart I really felt that what I was doing was correct
74 and that's what I followed.

75 MR: Yeah. Well if we were to look at your list of songs from this evening, you went from
76 John Coltrane to singing that Leonard Cohen was it? But they all sound like they seemed
77 to mesh together really well.

78 DR: It's all music to me. I've always believed that music should be without boundaries. And
79 for me jazz, having a foundation in jazz music really kind of allowed me to be a part of
80 different kinds of music, much like the musicians that were performing, or that created
81 this fusion music. And I just felt that if you could take the popular tunes of the 40's and
82 turn them into jazz standards then there was a possibility that with these new other forms
83 of these other songs, or even songs that are right could even have a kind of jazz
84 sensibility. So I wanted to sing the songs that really addressed my life early on, that really
85 meant something deeply to me. And so that's how all of those kinds of songs came into
86 being.

87 MR: Your last album with the Sarah Vaughan tribute, it must have been an amazing feeling
88 standing front of that orchestra. It was done mostly all live, is that correct?

89 DR: Yeah. Live in four days.

90 MR: Wow.

91 DR: Yeah. It was amazing because, well first of all, and I have to brag, my cousin George
92 Duke is an impeccable musician. He's someone that if he needed to conduct the orchestra
93 he could have done that, if he needed to run the board recording equipment he could have
94 done that. He was there and he really, really made sure that the sound, everything, the
95 approach, the spirit in the room was right. We had these incredible string musicians there
96 who didn't know what the project was about and one came to me and says "you know
97 this reminds me, we used to record for Sarah like this." And I was like "well this is
98 dedicated to Sarah." So once they realized that it became a party. And those four days,
99 they were not long enough, because we had such a good time.

100 MR: Impeccable arrangements. Really creative. You know people are always talking about
101 trying to make the strings swing? Well someone did there.

102 DR: Billy Childs. I've known Billy for a long time. We started working together when we
103 were about 19 years old and our relationship is very, very rich and musically we shared a
104 lot of music together. So when this project came out I asked him would he do the
105 arrangements and he's like "yeah." So we would get together and have cappuccino and
106 talk about the songs. Because it wasn't so much that I wanted to select the songs —she
107 sang so many songs. Sarah sang so many songs. I wanted to really celebrate her artistry,
108 her approach to the music. And so there had to be some certain things that were in the
109 arrangements and I remember he was nervous when we first started and George told him
110 "man you know her like you know the palm of your hand so do what you do." And it was
111 great. And he wrote incredible arrangements.

112 MR: I'm curious, some of the really hip substitutions that were used on like "Lullaby of
113 Birdland" and stuff, did you two sit down and maybe he would try things and say do you
114 like this?

115 DR: Exactly. It was funny because I was touring a lot at the time that we were working on the
116 music and — Billy understands a lot of times that when I'm singing certain things,
117 certain harmonies, certain feelings that I want to project, the harmonies have a lot to do
118 with that, with the poetry of the music I guess, with the lyrics of the music. So we'd sit
119 down and we would talk about different things. I think the thing that we really worked
120 very hard on was "Send In the Clowns." That was, because Sarah's version was just so
121 spectacular, we knew that whatever was going to be done with that song had to be
122 uniquely my own. And so we'd sit down and we would work on things and discuss the
123 lyrics, discuss the mood, discuss the feeling, all of these things. And then he would write
124 accordingly.

125 MR: Did you come from a musical family? I know, well, with your cousin, George Duke.

126 DR: Yeah. Basically yes. I have an uncle who played with the Colorado Symphony for over
127 40 years, and started actually with the San Francisco Symphony. And I had great aunts,
128 two great aunts and a great uncle were musicians and they played the music of the early
129 1900's, so it was Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, all of these more Blues oriented music. And
130 so that was like always in the house. That was very much a part of my growing up.

131 MR: Was there pretty much constant support when you decided that you were going to try to
132 go into music as a career?

133 DR: Oh yeah. My mother, she didn't understand exactly what it was that I was going to do, or
134 what I wanted to do, but my mother and father always made a way for me to do it. And
135 my uncle was more my mentor early on than anything. So he was there.

136 MR: You had a fortuitous meeting with Clark Terry somewhere early on, didn't you?

137 DR: Yes. I met Clark — our jazz band won a city wide competition which allowed us to go to
138 Chicago and perform for what was then called the National Association of Jazz
139 Educators. And of course Clark has been affiliated with them for a long time. And he
140 heard me and we started talking, and I didn't know who he was, I just knew he was this
141 nice man. My uncle was "that's Clark Terry" you know. And it's like okay. So when he
142 would come to Denver, there was this jazz party that this man Dick Gibson would give, at
143 the Broadmoor. And the first jazz party that I ever did was with Clark. And he
144 surrounded me with all these great musicians. Once again I still didn't know who they
145 were. My uncle would have to go back and give me records and say "see this is this
146 person, this is this person, that's who you were performing with." And sometimes it
147 would be George Duvivier on bass or Major Holley, which was pretty amazing, or a lot
148 of times it would be Louis Bellson on drums or Grady Tate, Roland Hanna, Jimmy

149 Rowles. It was pretty amazing. Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis. And I would come there with all
150 my music together. My uncle would help me get it together, my keys, and tell them how I
151 wanted to do these little head arrangements, because I was really into that and Clark just
152 stayed in touch. And from that point on we just continued to work together and we still
153 do.

154 MR: That’s interesting you say that you had your keys together and your whole thing. Do
155 vocalists ever — I’m not sure how to even ask this question...

156 DR: Just ask it.

157 MR: Do they ever feel pressured by instrumentalists to really, you know you better know your
158 stuff here?

159 DR: Well I think my uncle just always wanted me to be prepared. I guess they do, but my
160 uncle always wanted me to be ready and be prepared, be able to communicate clearly my
161 ideas and specifically what it was that I wanted to hear or what I wanted. And so that was
162 the training early on. And you know I would go and I would listen to other vocalists too.
163 Because at the time there was not a lot of, there weren’t a lot of schools for jazz, to study
164 jazz music. So the way that you got it was through experience and through other
165 musicians that would help you. At least that’s how I got it. And I would go and hear other
166 singers. Like for instance I would go and hear Carmen McRae and she was very, very
167 open, so I could ask her a lot of different questions about how she was approaching
168 songs, who did this arrangement, why did she do it this way or .. and you know she
169 would tell me. And I remember the first time I saw Betty Carter it was the first time I’d
170 ever seen a vocalist really stand inside of a band and allow the musicians to be these co-
171 creators and really, really use their own personalities as part of the sound in a band. And I
172 wanted to know how do you communicate those things? How do you do that? And I had
173 my own bands early on, and I think that the biggest thing that helped me was the
174 experience and just continuously learning to be very, very clear and to be able to
175 articulate.

176 MR: There’s a certain amount of physicalization that you do. When I think back of when I saw
177 Betty Carter, I can almost see a nice comparison there. Just, I don’t know, the way you
178 use your arms. It works.

179 DR: Oh, okay.

180 MR: I have a couple of little excerpts I’d like to play for you. And it’s not a blindfold test,
181 but... This is from your recent ...

182 [audio interlude]

183 When you ask a horn player what he thinks about when he improvises, you might get a
184 certain answer. Is there an answer from a vocalist that you think might be different?

185 DR: I don't know but I would say that when I have — it has a lot to do with what the song is
186 about for me you know. I know when working with different musicians, I did an album
187 called “The Grand Encounter.” And I remember any time we did a song the musicians
188 would always say “now what were the lyrics to this song?” They always wanted to know
189 the lyrics to the song so that they could really, really tell the story in, I guess in a way
190 without words. And that's basically kind of how I think when I'm, you know — “Lullaby
191 of Birdland” is I think for me, more than anything it's nostalgia. Because when I first
192 heard the song I remember where I was, who I was, how young I was and what an impact
193 it made on me. And I think that when I'm singing I'm thinking about wow, I wish, if I
194 were in that session how I would be, what I would do and I guess that's what that was.

195 MR: Do you find that you would change your choice of syllables and sounds depending on
196 what kind of music you're scatting over.

197 DR: It really has a lot to do with placement of pitches and sound. I always look at
198 improvisation, at least for me, as the words that you can't say, the things that come out of
199 your soul. And any song that I sing I will change the sound or the timbre in my voice to
200 fit what it is that I'm trying to say. So that probably is true with improvisation as well.

201 MR: It sounds like good advice for people trying to learn. You know there's an awful lot of
202 method books out now, but did you ever have any of those at your disposal?

203 DR: Much later. Much later. But not early on. Not early on. And really a lot of everything
204 came through experience. I remember when I had a band with Billy Childs and our music
205 was just way out there. We would try to go as far out harmonically, we would perform on
206 stage in a place where they didn't care about the music that we performed. It was a place
207 for artists. So we were very, very fortunate to have that. And we would experiment every
208 night. And I remember things got more and more complicated, more chance taking, and
209 then I ended up with Harry Belafonte. And when I got with him I thought to myself,
210 wow, I can't sing this music. It has like three chords and the melodies are real simple and
211 you know I thought what is this? And at the time I was working with the great vocal
212 coach Phil Moore. And he said “I think that you should definitely do this, have this
213 experience with him.” And he was going to feature me. And what I found in performing
214 with Harry Belafonte was that I had all of these songs that came from all over the world
215 that had all of these dual meanings, you know some social, political meanings. And I
216 found that there was a way that you had to sing them to communicate the message in the
217 song. And that the harmonies were very, very rich and beautiful but simple. The rhythms
218 were interesting and it was just different. And I found from that point on less is more.
219 And so where in my early years when I would sing it was really, really about my
220 instrument. I really, really didn't care that much about lyrics. I wanted to use my
221 instrument. But later on, I think after my experience with Harry, it changed, and I wanted

222 to be able to tell stories and use the colors that I gathered from the very beginning of my
223 career to really, really color the words and to really make my point very clear with the
224 lyrics and the stories that I was trying to tell.

225 MR: Great answer. You work with Sergio Mendez also?

226 DR: Um hum.

227 MR: Same kind of experience with him?

228 DR: Yeah, that was pretty amazing because while we performed the music of “Brazil ’66,” I
229 have to say both Harry and Sergio really were into exposing you to writers that you
230 wouldn’t normally hear about. And when I was working with Sergio he would give me
231 tapes and live performances of people that I had no idea who they were, people like Elise
232 Regina or Maria Batayna or Aykytano Valaise or all or these great writers and singers
233 from Brazil. Yvon Limbs, the first time I heard him was some songs that he had written
234 that he sent to Sergio, he’s like check this guy out. Beautiful songs. And of course I knew
235 a little bit about Milton Nascimento but not as much as I did after working with Sergio.
236 So there was a lot of behind the scenes things.

237 MR: I wanted to read something I recently read in a “Jazz Times” and see if you have a
238 reaction to it or not. Angela Davis was participating in a conference about the basic
239 question was is jazz colorblind. And she had stated she saw you on a concert with Jane
240 Monheit and wondered why Jane Monheit had been on the cover of, I guess it was the
241 “New York Times Magazine,” when you’d been around for ten, twelve years. Do you
242 have any reaction to that?

243 DR: Well yes I do, and I think my reaction is more about the industry. Whether her picture
244 was on the cover and mine wasn’t, that is not, for me not an issue. But I think the issue is
245 that you know when I think of someone like Sarah Vaughan who was 59 years old before
246 she won a Grammy, and she had this extraordinary body of work that she performed with
247 all of these people and was just this incredible artist who was not a star but an entire
248 universe. I look at the industry and I think sometimes, well I draw strength from that.
249 Because sometimes in the industry, here you have some young singers that are coming up
250 and they say well they’re the next Sarah and the next Ella and the next this, and that
251 really, really is like fingernails on a chalkboard to me. Because when you think of people
252 like Ella and Carmen and all of these great — Betty Carter, Abby Lincoln, all of these
253 great singers who have spent their lives developing their craft and really working at this
254 music, you can not dismiss them. To me it’s dismissing them by saying this person is the
255 next. Because jazz is a music of maturity. And I think that in the industry, and it’s not just
256 in jazz music but it’s all the way across the board, everybody is looking for that person
257 that they can make a star overnight. And I think what it does is it really takes away from
258 that young person because they never have the opportunity, really, to develop their own

259 voice, their own divine uniqueness. And here you have them, you say this is what — they
260 are like a blank piece of paper and there is some producer or something that wants to fill
261 in the spaces and make them who they think that they should be. And I think as the
262 listener, we lose out on something that could have been really beautiful and really unique.
263 I have a lot of young vocalists that come to me all the time. Some of them have major
264 recording deals who are really fighting for their own voices. They say “you know they
265 want me to do this and I’m not feeling this and how do I do this?” I think that if I had to
266 record now in this industry I would probably go crazy because of the controls that are on
267 these young lions that come in. But there are some that are coming through and they are
268 fighting for their own voices, their own sound, their own concept, their own way that they
269 view the music and I think that the broad listening audience needs that. Because there is
270 such a sameness in the music and that goes even in jazz music. I have young musicians
271 that come to me you know “I want to do this but I need a hook for the publicist to use
272 me.” And it’s like no, you need your own voice, you need to really fight for your own
273 voice. Because that’s what’s the most important thing. And so I think more than anything
274 I think that the industry really gets in the way of the growth of the organic, beautiful,
275 unique qualities that somebody might have.

276 MR: Yeah. It’s almost like what nerve to say someone is the next Ella after one album.

277 DR: Yeah you can’t. Or even to — I know one thing, when I was doing this Sarah Vaughan
278 record I just really wanted people to know that I was not trying to do a commentary on
279 Sarah. And that’s what happens. And I won’t let anyone say that I’m the next, I just want
280 to be Dianne Reeves. And that’s what I stress with a lot of young people that come. It’s
281 like you must stress, in the very beginning, that you want to be your own self. Because
282 that’s what is needed. And I find that I guess it’s easier for the people who write the
283 articles to say that but to me it’s not a well thought out statement.

284 MR: You have a pretty good relationship with Blue Note?

285 DR: Yeah. I have to say one thing about Blue Note is they do allow their artists total artistic
286 freedom which is really great.

287 MR: That’s good. I have one more little piece of music that I’d like to play for you. It’s been a
288 favorite of mine and I think it was a favorite of yours.

289 [audio interlude]

290 I was impressed by what you were playing between your breaks too. What led you to
291 this?

292 DR: Well see it’s about a country preacher and when you listen to the way that he is playing,
293 and when you listen to the song, you feel all of those things. And that’s why I wrote the
294 lyrics to this, because I love this.

295 MR: This part kills me here.

296 DR: Yeah.

297 MR: I wish I had been there for that moment. It's just unbelievable.

298 DR: Yeah.

299 MR: Interesting that George Duke ended up with Cannonball too.

300 DR: Yes.

301 MR: You guys had a mutual ...

302 DR: Actually I saw him with Cannon.

303 MR: Yeah?

304 DR: Yeah. It was like wow, this is incredible. The other thing I liked is when he was on stage

305 he really let the audience know what they were going to do, what the music was about, so

306 you felt you had an education. You were waiting for certain thing to happen because he

307 said that this is what this song is about and this is, you know, he kind of educated his

308 audience, which I loved.

309 MR: Well this has been really fascinating to talk to you. I'm going to invite my colleague

310 Michael Woods in for a few questions if you don't mind.

311 DR: Okay.

312 MR: And we'll see you in a bit.

313 DR: Thank you.

314 [pause]

315 MR: It's not really fair tag-teaming somebody, is it?

316 DR: I know. I'm in the hot seat.

317 MW: Your concert tonight I thought was absolutely fabulous.

318 DR: Thank you.

319 MW: From many, many standpoints. From the variety of the songs that you sang and from the

320 energy level that each song reached, which I thought was scintillating. I wanted to ask

321 you where or how did you come by such conceptual strength?

322 DR: Well without even going into great detail, the music saved my life. And I know growing

323 up the music that I would listen to was really a backdrop for the Civil Rights movement,

324 for the Vietnam War, the music was full of hope and brotherhood and positivity on all

325 levels, not just songs that had political or social meanings but also about how men felt

326 about women, vice versa, all of it was very, very beautiful. And I needed to hear all of

327 those things. For me I think performance is more like meditation than it is giving a

328 performance. It's a spiritual place for me. So I just want to make sure a lot of times that

329 the words that I sing about or the things that I sing about are things that I really, really

330 believe in my soul that are really, really a part of who I am. And I think a lot of that is

331 really what kind of shapes the music, the concept, my approach.

332 MW: Let me ask you this. The songs that you sang tonight, all of them were profound. They
333 were gripping. Much of the music that I hear in the pop world today is so surface. And
334 even if it were to be sung well it wouldn't mean much because the lyrics don't take me
335 anywhere. What in a set of lyrics attracts you to say yes I'd like to sing that song?

336 DR: I like lyrics that tell a story, that have very, very, that really, really kind of most of the
337 songs really address my own life, things that I really think about, that I think that I can
338 give my own emotion and understanding to, so that the audience understands it more the
339 way that I'm hearing it, more than maybe the way the person wrote it. Also I think just, it
340 really all comes down to just really feeling very humble, to be able to have the
341 opportunity to do what it is that I do. I think that's the greatest thing.

342 MW: That's fantastic that you would say that because I've always thought there's tremendous
343 spiritual connections between what a person performs and what they actually think and
344 live out and do. It gives your music this elusive quality we call authenticity. I want to ask
345 you about one of your incredible skills, and that is when you're singing a lyric and when
346 you're scat singing, you seem to be able to go back and forth between the coloration of
347 the word and between the scat symbol with such unbelievable ease. When did you know you
348 had such a skill? How do you practice something that is that spontaneous and that
349 creative? How do you perfect that?

350 DR: Wow I've never been asked that. I really think that it goes back to just the experience of
351 having — being in these different settings with different bands and musicians that are
352 really great at what they do, and always feeling more comfortable being hungry. I always
353 feel comfortable being hungry. So I put myself in positions that are, I don't know, kind of
354 scary, that make you dig really deep and find things. And I believe that for me
355 improvisation is my soul utterance. So whatever I'm singing in the lyrics, whatever I
356 improvise, they're kind of one and the same. And I think just throughout the years of
357 constantly doing this, early on I remember the longest time on stage for me was between
358 songs. Because I didn't know how to speak to an audience. And I didn't want to just like
359 introduce the next song, but I needed something to do between the songs so that I just
360 didn't feel like I was naked in front of the audience. So what happened was these vamps
361 on the ends of songs. And from that came the storytelling. And I think that's where all the
362 — my way of improvising came into being — telling stories. I could sing it but I couldn't
363 say it so I would always sing over the top of it so it kind of came from, like I said,
364 experience, purely experience. Having the opportunity night after night, going out there
365 and finding something in myself that I didn't know existed.

366 MW: You say you could sing it but you couldn't say it.

367 DR: Yeah. I can say it now but then I couldn't.

368 MW: That's so fantastic because there's so many people who would like to sing and they think
369 and they feel the things that you feel but they couldn't find the notes to sing it with so I
370 think you give them that outlet. Like when I see Michael Jordan I realize I can't jump
371 over the Sunday sports page. I want to ask you, there's a word that I heard you use
372 several times tonight, which I think is a fantastic word, and I don't hear that many
373 vocalists use that word. And I would like to know what your sense of musicianship is tied
374 to that word. You used the word sensibility. Fantastic word.

375 DR: Well I feel that I come from a place, a foundation that allows for the celebration of
376 uniqueness. That's how I view jazz music. And through that I am able to take the kinds of
377 songs, lyrics, ideas and give them that kind of freedom, free sensibility, the ability the
378 change from night to night and that's what I love. Because to me that's what life is. And I
379 think jazz is life. I equate jazz with life and life experience. And so I guess that's what I
380 mean when I say that. I need to be able to take the music and breathe life in it, just like I
381 learned. Just like when I listen to — any time I put on a great jazz musician or a great
382 jazz vocalist, there's life in the music. How do you make that? How do you draw a
383 picture and make it have dimension? And I think that's — you look at it, you see how, for
384 me I see how it addresses my life and sometimes there are songs that don't necessarily
385 address my life but they are places that I need to get to. And I believe that there is power
386 in words, and so that's why I select them to sing because I'm trying to get to that place.

387 MW: You told us about stories. You sang the song for us "When You Were Nine Years Old."
388 That song just transported me. I thought I was going to come out of my chair. Because it
389 was so vivid. It was so descriptive and beautiful and alive. Tell us a story that you
390 haven't put to melody yet.

391 DR: Well..

392 MW: Let's say it's 2004 and you've traveled all over the world and sung all different kind of
393 places, and you're going to an album and you're going to tell us another story. Tell us
394 about this one. Just take me there in your imagination.

395 DR: Well I think that the first word that comes to my mind is grace. I think the story would be
396 about maybe where I am right now, how I feel and how I view life right now. Because
397 there are a lot of things that are happening, like I've given my life to music. I've created a
398 kind of imbalance in my life because I haven't really given much to my personal life.
399 Now I need to know what that's about, and I want to write about that journey of finding
400 that balance. And grace has a lot to do with that. Living in a state of grace.

401 MW: I'll ask you one more question.

402 DR: I've never had anybody ask me that but that's a good one.

403 MW: I go some strange places too.

404 DR: That's okay, I like it.

405 MW: And I try to get creative in the classroom and probably we will wind up showing this
406 video in my classroom. As a matter of fact several of my students were there to see you
407 tonight and I played for them, to their sensibilities, in order to know how to appreciate
408 your skill level, I played for them “Fascinating Rhythm.” I played “Send In the Clowns,”
409 and I played “Lullaby of Birdland.” And so they kind of had some idea of what to expect.
410 But if you could sing anytime, anyplace, about any subject, and you knew that the power
411 of your voice would change, improve, enhance, inspire the sonic landscape, and anybody
412 within the throw of your voice, how would you sing to America after September 11th?

413 DR: I guess the way that I am now, from my heart. The interesting thing about what happened
414 September 11th is it brought about, God, a profound sense of fear that I don’t think that
415 I’ve ever felt before. But also it made me think about some of the stories that my
416 grandmother used to tell me of the things that she went through. And I heard the stories
417 but I didn’t feel that kind of fear. Didn’t know what she’d been through, being like just a
418 couple of steps out of slavery. And one of the things that came out of it was forward
419 thinking perseverance, and now allowing the fear to take you down. So in answer to your
420 question I think I would just continue to sing songs about strength and forward movement
421 and try to stay aware and clear and present. Because there are so many things right now
422 that are happening that can seduce you into feeling like maybe — not that it’s worse than
423 what it is, but losing your, I don’t know, your things that you believe in. Breaking down
424 your belief systems. And you can’t let it do that. So I will continue to sing the kinds of
425 songs the kinds of music that I’ve always sung, the kind of music that’s always gotten me
426 through, and the kind of music that really has gotten me through this time.

427 MW: Gotta make it through the night.

428 DR: Yes, absolutely.

429 MW: Well listen I just want to, first of all I want to tell you I think you’re more than a great
430 vocalist.

431 DR: Thank you.

432 MW: I think that your gift, the voice that you have, is a gift to people all over the world. Not
433 that many people on this planet that will ever live and breathe on this planet will be able
434 to sing like you do.

435 DR: Thank you.

436 MW: And I want to thank you immeasurably for bringing that skill to Hamilton College.

437 DR: Thank you very much.

438 MW: Thank you.