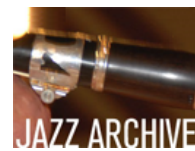


## Copyright Statement

The Hamilton College Jazz Archive has made a reasonable effort to secure permission from the interviewees to make these materials available to the public. Use of these materials by other parties is subject to the fair use doctrine in United States copyright law (Title 17, Chapter 1, para. 107) which allows use for commentary, criticism, news reporting, research, teaching or scholarship without requiring permission from the rights holder.

Any use that does not fall within fair use must be cleared with the rights holder. For assistance in contacting the rights holder please contact the Jazz Archive, Hamilton College, 198 College Hill Road, Clinton, NY 13323.



## Germaine Bazzle

*Germaine Bazzle plays an important role in the musical life of New Orleans as an educator, vocalist and mentor. She embraces all genres of music in her teaching and shares the bandstand with the best of the city's jazz artists. Germaine visited Rome, New York as an instructor with the Louis Armstrong Jazz Camp.*

*Germaine was interviewed in Rome, New York on August 21, 2006 by Monk Rowe, director of the Hamilton College Jazz Archive.*

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

MR: My name is Monk Rowe and we're filming for the Hamilton College Jazz Archive in Rome, New York. I'm very pleased to have Germaine Bazzle with me. Welcome.

GB: Thank you.

MR: Welcome to Rome. And before we were rolling we were talking about your trip up from New Orleans and we're pleased to have you here at the Rome Y camp. It seems like you put a lot of soul into your teaching and the reason I say that is I was eavesdropping while you were teaching.

GB: Oh you were, oh.

MR: I was looking through the window and you really looked like you were involved with those students who you had only just met. How do you warm up so quickly to music students?

GB: Oh wow. First of all I didn't know that you were peeking. But you know when you work with children, children are so open to you. You know they really open their arms because they come to you without any — what shall I say — blockings or anything, any trappings that come to you, very wide open. And these young people came to me this morning very wide open and ready to learn, you know, about what we do insofar as the scatting and that kind of thing. Because that's what they were truly curious about. And they came here with that kind of an anticipation so I had no choice but to try to answer that for them and to convince them that they are capable of doing that, of doing the scatting. Because it seemed like it was a mystery to them but by the time we got throughout little tunes this afternoon they were beginning to feel comfortable and to feel free and they began to understand about the improvisational side of what we do. So because when I see that from them — that kind of interest, that kind of spirit — you know it makes you want to keep driving and get more and more and more and more. So what you saw, I was asking for more and more and more.

MR: It even seemed like you were doing some movement things with them.

GB: Yes. Um hum. Yes.

39 MR: Why is that part of your teaching?  
40 GB: Because I want them to understand that music involves the entire being, you know. It's  
41 not just a spiritual thing, it's not just a physical thing. It's all of you. I mean every part of  
42 your being works with this and to get them to understand the concept of swinging, of the  
43 swinging. It's clapping, it's patting your feet, that kind of thing. And when you're  
44 singing, for me, I find that when I ask them to swing I'm asking you to dig in there and  
45 just let your soul be free and give me two and four. Just give me that swing on two and  
46 four you know. And it made a difference and the song that we were learning today, one  
47 of them, "Pick Yourself Up," and we learned the lyrics and all. Then I said to them "clap  
48 while you sing it." I said "I want you to clap one, two, three, four, one." So they sang it  
49 clapping one, two, three, four. Okay. Now clap it and sing and clap on one and three.  
50 One, three, one, three. I said now clap and sing on two and four. I said "now which one  
51 felt better?" They said "two and four." I said that's it. So to get them to understand that.  
52 It's not rocket science, it's just dealing with what you have and being natural with it and  
53 being free to do that. And this is because I am told that I am a physical singer, and they're  
54 right.

55 MR: And physical in movement but also I think that must mean something beyond that you  
56 move around stage.

57 GB: Yeah, right, yeah, yeah. It's more than that, it's more than that. But it's almost to the  
58 point where I'm conducting you know, because the guys tell me "I saw that shoulder  
59 moving." I say "you did, yeah." So whatever the shoulder means, and I'm singing,  
60 whatever they get out of that shoulder, fine you know. If it's going to bring us in and it's  
61 going to make us tighter, fine. I don't know what it means. They say "well when you're  
62 singing you shake your leg" you know. I say "well I'm keeping time." No there's  
63 something else that's happening when you do that. What am I communicating? I don't  
64 know but whatever it is that they understand it to communicate, that's it. But the whole  
65 thing, Monk, is it's got to swing. It's got to swing. And if I feel like I'm losing that then I  
66 know I am.

67 MR: And the part that you were talking about doing, the clapping thing, which I think I  
68 probably will steal that by the way because — it's funny when people start clapping on  
69 one and three, I sometimes don't know how to deal with that. So I love your — ask them  
70 which feels better. Did you have someone when you were a young person helping you  
71 learn?

72 GB: Well I had records. You know those youngsters don't know about these thirty-three and a  
73 thirds you know. But that's what we had. And Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Charlie  
74 Parker, Miles Davis. You know because we listened a lot and I told the students this this  
75 afternoon. For me to learn how to do what I do, especially with the scatting, came from

76 listening to instrumentalists more than vocalists. As much as I enjoyed and learned from  
77 Ella and Sarah and all those ladies, at one time I had to stop listening to them because I  
78 found myself almost trying to do their things, doing their music. And I said but it's not  
79 mine. It's not me yet. So listening to instrumentalists and learning their solos and then  
80 learning everybody's solo on the recording, that was the challenge. And then being able  
81 to sing those solos while you're doing the dishes or whatever, without the recordings you  
82 see. That was the challenge. And there was a group of us in school, I mean that's what it  
83 was. We'd sit in what we call the co-op at the university — it was like a little café or  
84 something. And we'd sit in the co-op and we'd sing these songs and okay, you take  
85 Bird's solo, you take Miles' solo and it was great fun. It was great fun. I never imagined I  
86 would be using it now but at the time I mean I just liked jazz and you just sing it. But I  
87 never thought I'd be using it in this manner.

88 MR: If you were doing a Charlie Parker solo and then you were trying to do a Miles solo,  
89 would you choose different syllables to pull that solo off?

90 GB: Good question. I'm inclined to go with the sound okay, as opposed to syllable. For  
91 instance if [scats] if I'm trying to get into one of Bird's things I would be inclined to try  
92 and match his tone, the sound of his horn, as opposed to using a syllable. And with the  
93 horn it's [scats] that kind of thing. I'm more inclined towards that, which I discovered  
94 what maybe a couple of years ago. Because I didn't realize how much those guys were  
95 influencing me. Are you following what I'm saying?

96 MR: Yeah, yeah.

97 GB: You know, so much so that on the gigs I said you know what? I'm not going to use any  
98 syllables I'm just going to try to get the sound. And when I started doing that I realized  
99 that I was bringing another sound to the whole ensemble, okay?

100 MR: Well musicians talk about singers in that regard sometimes. They say well she's like  
101 having another horn in the band.

102 GB: Um hum. Yes.

103 MR: I remember people saying that about Joe Williams who we knew pretty well.

104 GB: Um hum. Yes.

105 MR: That he was like another horn in the band. Is that a compliment to you?

106 GB: I think so.

107 MR: Okay.

108 GB: I think so because I know that I'm limited in that sound but wherever I am, whatever I  
109 can do within my range, I think that's — oh that's a wonderful compliment which means  
110 I was able to pull it off. But now I'm working with a group at home and the tenor player  
111 and I, whenever anybody is taking a solo he and I will get together and we'll do some  
112 kind of little riff.

113 MR: Oh good.

114 GB: You know, a little background riff or something like that. And it's all a joy. It's all a joy  
115 for me.

116 MR: Having — being educated in music, does it help you in a band situation because you  
117 know — I'm trying to figure out how to say this correctly. You know chords and you  
118 know forms, perhaps more than some singers who are sort of just singing innately. Is it  
119 helpful to you that you have that music education background?

120 GB: Oh yes, yes, yes. Very much so. Because there are just little things that I learned in the  
121 training that I use. For instance if I'm doing harmony with the horn player and he's using  
122 a vibrato, okay, then I think that I should match his vibrato to make it even closer. You  
123 know? And I'll listen to his breathing, where he's phrasing, so that we can phrase alike.  
124 So much of this stuff happens, you know, it's impromptu, you know, it's improvisational.  
125 So to make it sound more like a unit and all of this, those are the little things that I listen  
126 for. Had I not had the training in choral singing and breathing and phrasing and listening  
127 — because I used to play bass you know — and listening to the bands and all of this and  
128 what the people were doing, I don't think I would be as aware, you know, of those little  
129 secrets. Sometimes if we're doing a tune and maybe we're not doing it exactly as it's  
130 supposed to be rhythmically, but I'll listen to what the horn guy is doing and if he's going  
131 to do a little syncopated thing instead of right on, I'm going to match that, I'm going to  
132 work with that. Because it's all about making the music. It's all about making the music  
133 and making that sound you know. And it's all about — how shall I say — experiencing a  
134 oneness.

135 MR: That becomes more possible if you're able to work with the same group consistently. Are  
136 you able to do that in New Orleans?

137 GB: No, no.

138 MR: It's hard isn't it?

139 GB: Which is even more of a challenge now. Because I work with a group now that I've been  
140 working with for a while, but it's only on that one night. But I may work at Snug Harbor  
141 with a whole different group of musicians you know, and I may work at the hotel with  
142 another group of musicians. Mind you now somewhere along the line I have worked with  
143 all of them, but not necessarily that particular grouping. So we are sensitive to each other  
144 but it's always that little unexpected thing, that little surprise thing, that little thing that  
145 you're always looking for that kicks it, puts that extra little spice in it, that makes it work.  
146 So even if I'm not working with the same group all of the time if I work with another  
147 tenor player when something is going on and I'll walk over to him and say “well let's try  
148 this riff,” you know. And he says “okay.” And I'll sing the riff through one time and he  
149 comes in and he does a harmony on it and then we flip flop you know.

150 MR: That's great.

151 GB: Oh it's fun.

152 MR: And it adds so much to the experience for the listeners I think.

153 GB: Um hum, yes.

154 MR: You know the astute listener and watcher will even see that happen, see you walk over  
155 and hum something and then I mean that's great.

156 GB: Yes it is. And I was blessed to be a part of a group with Alvin "Red" Tyler who is a great,  
157 wonderful musician in New Orleans. And I learned a lot from him. Sometimes we were  
158 on the gig and he'd play a little riff and he'd look at me. It was no words. He'd just play  
159 this little riff and he'd look at me and I'd say okay here we go [scats] and I'm trying to  
160 find a gird or something to do it with him in thirds. And that's — I learned that from him.  
161 I learned a lot from him. But that's one of the little secrets. And we called them "Red  
162 Tylerisms" you know the little things that he used to do.

163 MR: Was music part of your life from a young age?

164 GB: Yes. Um hum. I grew up in a home where there was music all of the time. My dad played  
165 piano, my mom played, and my aunts and uncles played, and there was a song called  
166 "Sweet Sue" that my dad used to play all of the time. And I learned to play that song. I  
167 guess I must have been about nine or ten years old. And two years later my mom decided  
168 that I should have some formal training and it went from that. But there was always  
169 music.

170 MR: When did you become aware of the heritage and history of your city, or did it make an  
171 impression on you that you lived there? Sometimes people who live in a certain area  
172 that's known for something don't become aware of it as much as those of us that were  
173 reading about it from outside.

174 GB: Let me answer that this way. I became aware of it because of some things that happened  
175 in New Orleans, the Mardi Gras. Okay? My parents were in a marching club. So at Mardi  
176 Gras they dressed in these costumes and had the band and they marched around. And I  
177 grew up with that. And it was understood that this is a part of you, this is a part of what  
178 we do, you know, you don't have to embrace it but you have to be aware of it. Then  
179 being around, living in a neighborhood where there were many musicians and you'd hear  
180 these guys practicing, you know, you're sitting on the front porch hearing them practice,  
181 you know, playing with their kids and hearing the band practicing in the back yard or  
182 something like that. You grew up with that and it was not anything to be — at least I  
183 didn't take it for granted. Because I felt good when I did it. And I can remember even as  
184 a child feeling good when I did the music, even to the point where I'd put the turntable on  
185 and I'm washing the dishes or something like this, it's always music. And then I decided  
186 that I wanted to do what I saw the Nicholas Brothers do and tapping and getting on the

187 kitchen table and tapping and looking and seeing my father peek around the door. You  
188 know and I'm sharing all of these little things with you because that's how much music  
189 was in my life or is in my life now. And as I got older I moved into an area called like the  
190 Tremé area of our city where a lot of the music is and where it really came from. You  
191 know we have these second lines and the parades and all of this and the people are  
192 dancing in the street and all, and then I had the opportunity to go to Preservation Hall and  
193 watch all of these older people playing this music. And you start making the connection.  
194 If you can see the Humphrey Brothers and all of these guys over here in Preservation Hall  
195 and maybe walk six or seven blocks away and see the youngsters doing the same theme,  
196 there's that connection right there. There's no denying it. There's no denying what that  
197 music is. And the older I get the more important it becomes that I pass this on to  
198 youngsters so that they can understand that this is ours, this is a part of our culture. This  
199 is what we have brought to America. We've brought this to America. We had all of the  
200 European music come to us. But we brought this. We brought this out of Congo Square.  
201 We brought this from the Dominican Republic. We brought this from all of these places  
202 and now you have all of these rhythms going on. You know. And it's exciting that you're  
203 responding to rhythms and rhythms and rhythms you know. Okay I'm getting excited.

204 MR: No, no, no. You said that very well. My wife and I were in New Orleans just about a year  
205 ago. And we were walking I think on Canal Street I guess, and we could hear this sound  
206 of this band and we literally followed the sound. And then on the corner of I guess  
207 Bourbon Street there was this group of young kids playing. And they were unbelievable.  
208 You couldn't possibly write down what they were playing. And I just thought that was a  
209 joy to see, that that still goes on. Is there any organization to that kind of street corner  
210 playing that you're aware of? Is there a hierarchy or something in how that happens?

211 GB: I don't know. Let me put it this way. It's just that this guy says to this child "take this  
212 horn and I'm going to teach you how to play this, I'm going to teach you how to play  
213 that." And the little child struggles with it and finally he learns how to play and then you  
214 get another kid together. You know it's coming out of the neighborhoods. It's coming out  
215 of the neighborhoods. And it's not necessarily that you're teaching them to read at that  
216 point, it's just teaching them to respond to what's naturally within. And we have many,  
217 many, many musicians who started that way, little ones, they say, young men — what's  
218 this child's name now — Troy Andrews.

219 MR: Oh, the "Trombone Shorty" they call him.

220 GB: Yes. "Trombone Shorty." Okay now the trombone was bigger than he was when he  
221 started playing and he was maybe about that tall but he was playing that horn and he was  
222 getting this big sound. I remember I used to sing with the St. Louis Cathedral Choir. And  
223 we'd do a ten o'clock mass at the Cathedral. And one Sunday I came out of mass and I

224 heard this music but I didn't see these people. And I went to the corner and it's all these  
225 little boys, little boys. Trombone Shorty with the trombone and a little kid with the  
226 trumpet. And I imagine they were like nine, ten years old. There was a whole band of  
227 these kids. I got so excited I ran inside to the rectory and I said "you guys got to come out  
228 here and see this." And I think that the older gentlemen, the older players, just sort of  
229 took them in hand and said okay learn these songs, learn these songs. And these kids just  
230 started playing and playing and finally they got into where they were going to the  
231 training, they got into the formal bit, but they never lost, they never lost that root thing.  
232 They never lost that feeling, that spirit. No matter what they play. No matter what they  
233 play. Whether they're playing the traditional or they're playing the Blues or they're  
234 playing straight ahead jazz or whatever, that feeling is still there.

235 MR: This group I mentioned started playing "Stand By Me," you know? And what they did  
236 with it was indescribable. But it was so great, and they just went on forever — the  
237 endurance even, wow.

238 GB: Yes, oh yes.

239 MR: Did you have any trouble when you started formal music lessons with the fact that you  
240 had — I'm guessing that you had developed a very good ear by the time you started  
241 doing that. Was that a help or a hindrance?

242 GB: It was a help.

243 MR: Good.

244 GB: It was a help. It helped with the sight singing, and then too it helped because I played the  
245 bass. That also helped the ear you know. I started playing the bass when I was about  
246 twelve okay. And all of those things just helped me to develop a fairly decent ear.

247 MR: Was there a point that you can remember where you made a conscious sort of career  
248 decision about — okay music's definitely in me. Now what am I going to do with it?

249 GB: Okay. I didn't have that choice. Okay? Talking about a career decision. It had to be  
250 music. It was music. I feel that my calling is to teach it. Okay? Performing — that's the  
251 bonus side of it. But my calling is to teach. Therefore that's where my commitment has  
252 been, to teaching, teaching, teaching. Now what I learned in performing I bring to the  
253 classroom. What I learn in the classroom I bring to performing you see. But teaching is  
254 the thing that I really believe that I've been called to do. And I tried to stop, I tried to  
255 stop. I taught for about twelve years and I said I don't want to do this anymore. I don't  
256 want to be in the classroom anymore. I'll just go on and do the gigs. But there was  
257 something missing so I started teaching privately, teaching at home. But it still was not  
258 enough. Then I got a call to go to the school where I am now and as soon as I walked in  
259 the classroom I said ...

260 MR: I'm home, right?



261 GB: Yeah. Right.

262 MR: What grade levels do you teach?

263 GB: Nine through twelve. High school. And it was just like a good deep sigh, whew.

264 MR: Isn't that interesting.

265 GB: And I love teaching choral music, I really do. But that's what it's turned out to be. But I

266 can still do the gigs you see. I can still sing with the choirs. But I still have — because

267 again, as I said, what I learn in performing I bring back to the classroom. Because

268 certainly maybe something that you saw me doing this evening, had I not been a

269 performer I would not have been able to bring that kind of punch. You know what I'm

270 saying?

271 MR: Um hum. Absolutely. And it makes you, especially if your students can see you perform

272 on occasion, I think it really makes you legitimate in their eyes and gives way to what

273 you pass on to them. And you don't have to depend on gigs to pay the rent.

274 GB: True, oh yeah.

275 MR: What do you tell aspiring students about that these days when they come to you and they

276 just want to be a star?

277 GB: Okay. One of the things that I emphasize to them is to be sure that they talk to their

278 parents about this. Because it's a decision that they have to make, whether the parents are

279 going to support them with that or not. Okay. What are the parents expecting out of them.

280 If you follow music as a career, are the parents willing to support you with that? The

281 other thing is be prepared, you've got to study. You know there are some of us who were

282 born with innate talent you know, but it's not enough. You've got to have some musical

283 training. You've got to learn how to use the voice as opposed to abusing the voice. It's to

284 your advantage to know what key you're singing the song in. It's to your advantage to

285 know the tempo that you want. It's to your advantage to know about dynamics. It's to

286 your advantage to understand that, you know, this horn has to transpose, you know, so

287 that you will know just what's going to happen when you do this tune. It's to your

288 advantage — so the training is important. But even besides all of that, how real can you

289 be with your performance? How honest can you be? How honest can you be with

290 yourself when you are performing? Because your audience demands honesty.

291 MR: What makes honesty in a performance for you? Is that possible to put into words?

292 GB: I think it only comes through your performance. If you can take the material that you

293 have and make it your own and be willing to stand emotionally nude before a group of

294 people, they will get it and they will know that you are for real. They will know it's

295 honest. You can't fool them.

296 MR: Do you think people try to do that before they're ready, when they're too young?

297 GB: To do?

298 MR: To do, to be — well I guess I'm thinking of — maybe I didn't ask that right, but this  
299 phenomenon about American Idol and the over-use I believe of the term "diva" over the  
300 years. I wonder how that effects impressionable young aspiring people?

301 GB: Yes. I understand the question. I watch American Idol. I watch it primarily because I  
302 work with young people. Some of it I don't particularly care for but then that's not me.  
303 You know, it's not about me it's about them. And I understand young people having that  
304 ambition and having that goal, but you've got to prepare for it. That's a rough, rough  
305 business. And I'm not just talking about musically. You've got to be prepared to take the  
306 rough edges, you know, the rough comments. You have to be prepared to cry, you know?  
307 You have to be prepared to accept some of the things that are going to come down the  
308 pike with that. Why? Because if you pursue this career you're going to run into that same  
309 thing. You're going to run into that same thing. Criticisms, people don't like you, people  
310 will say things about you — true or untrue. People will do things to hurt you. They will  
311 do things to — how should I say, I don't want to say, what's the word — to keep you  
312 from being successful, out of jealousy, out of envy. You know, those kind of things, and  
313 you've got to be ready for that. And I think that some of our young people are not ready  
314 for that side of it. And so when I watch that program and I listen to the young people and  
315 I think that there are some demands being put on them that they're not ready for. I  
316 wonder if after rehearsals if they can speak, you know? Because sometimes the demands  
317 are such that you've got to give me this big, big sound and we can do it over and over and  
318 over and over until you get it. Well, whew. I need a break. I need to be able to be quiet. I  
319 shouldn't be hoarse when I finish singing. So I don't know how they do it, you know,  
320 with the young people. I don't know how much they demand of them. But I think that  
321 some of the material does not suit the singer. I really do.

322 MR: That's a good answer. It must be a little tricky sometimes when parents come to you also.  
323 Have they ever come and said "do you think my daughter should be pursuing a  
324 professional career in music?"

325 GB: There are some, now in all honesty there are some young people, I mean you see it now,  
326 that they're going to be a star. I mean you see it now. But they're learning now. They're  
327 getting the training now. They're not waiting until they get 19, 20 and 21 to start the  
328 training. The training is starting at 9, 10, 11, 12. So that by the time they get of the age of  
329 majority, if you will, by the time they get there, they've had a lot of groundwork there.  
330 And so those are the ones who will be able to survive I think. But I don't think it works  
331 very well when you're 19 and you want to go on the stage at 19-1/2. Because they're in a  
332 hurry. And you have to have patience in preparing for this. But many of them are in a  
333 hurry. You know they want to hurry up and get it so they can hurry up and do this or they

334 can hurry up and do that. You know, so they can hurry up. And when you get to the point  
335 where you can't hurry anymore then what do you have to fall back on?

336 MR: Do students in — are you in a public school?

337 GB: No, I'm in a private school.

338 MR: In a private school, they have a lot of musical opportunities in that private school?

339 GB: Um hum. Yes. And you know we have I think a pretty good fine arts department. We  
340 have piano and instrumental music and vocal music and drama and art and all of that kind  
341 of thing. And those of us who are in that department, we actually — we work together so  
342 that our kids are benefiting from all of the areas, so that a person who is sitting down  
343 watching the speaker, the person who is a singer sitting down watching the speaker has  
344 something to go by, to listen to. Notice things. You know, notice the phrasing, notice the  
345 enunciation, notice these kinds of things so that you as a singer must understand that  
346 that's part of singing, enunciation, phrasing. That's part of it too. Expression. Showing it  
347 on your face. That's part of it too. So look at the actor and then project that through your  
348 singing. And then it's the same thing. The actor looks at the singer and notices well  
349 what's happening here with the dynamics, what are we doing? It works.

350 MR: Yeah. There's something to learn from every art form.

351 GB: Yeah. Exactly. Um hum.

352 MR: Wow. Interesting. In New Orleans, we were talking a little bit on the way in the car about  
353 musical opportunities in the various cities. Is there a lot of competition for gigs in the  
354 city?

355 GB: I don't know so much as competition, I don't know. I don't think there's competition  
356 because we don't have very many musicians back in New Orleans yet. Because  
357 everybody, we're so happy to see each other and we're so happy to hear each other that  
358 we're not competing with each other. You know the place where I work on Monday  
359 nights, some of the musicians, they come in from Texas. One little fellow I think he's  
360 somewhere in Dallas. And he says "I had to come home, I had to come for at least a  
361 weekend, I had to come, I had to come and play." So you know they walk in with their  
362 horns. You know some of them they're out the case before they get — so we're not  
363 competing at this point anyway. I don't think that we're competing as much as we are  
364 enjoying each other and welcoming each other. We're so glad to see each other and  
365 share. That's a very special time, especially since Katrina. It's all special. So if there's  
366 any competition going on it's between us and the good Lord because we're saying come  
367 on Lord, give us more, give us more, give us more, let us do more, let us do more. And  
368 when I say that it's coming because I really believe that the music comes from there and  
369 goes through — you know we're just the vessel.

370 MR: I see.

371 GB: And so we are saying give us more so we can put more of it out, put more of it out. So in  
372 that sense I don't think that we are at that competitive stage. Now maybe when  
373 everybody gets back, you know, it might be. But right now it's just a joyous time.

374 MR: A reunion time.

375 GB: Yes. Um hum.

376 MR: I doubt there was anybody in the city that was not affected by that. Were you personally  
377 affected in a dramatic way?

378 GB: Well not as dramatic as some people. But I did have the flooding to the extent that we  
379 had to gut everything, take out all the walls, even the ceiling, the flooring, because of the  
380 water, and had wind damage. Part of my roof was in the driveway and all of that. But  
381 that's able to be repaired. It's the people whose homes floated down the street, whose  
382 homes just collapsed, their situation is far worse than mine. Because in my area now I  
383 was very glad to see that my neighbors are coming back and working on their homes, that  
384 kind of thing. But the biggest thing for me is that I have not been able to get in to my own  
385 home while they're doing the repairs but I do have a place to live. Okay, I have a place to  
386 live. And I'm in New Orleans and I'm back at work. We have people who can't even  
387 come back because they don't have a place to live. They would like to come back and  
388 work but there's no place to live while they work so they're out there and it's like they're  
389 stranded. And there are many people like that. And believe me, believe me, they all want  
390 to come back home. They all want to come back home. They all want to work. They all  
391 want to be a part of this process of bringing New Orleans back. That's what we're saying,  
392 or rebuilding New Orleans. They all want to be a part of that. But you've got to have  
393 some place to live while you're doing it.

394 MR: I just got a mailing from, I'm not sure, Wynton Marsalis is on a big fundraiser coming up  
395 and there've been a lot of efforts and I hope that they have positive results for all of you  
396 down there.

397 GB: Yes, yes. Well you know there's a special thing going on, this Habitat for Humanities is  
398 doing a thing for a musician's village. So they are — and you know that involves sweat  
399 equity and all of that kind of thing so that the musicians who are applying, who have  
400 applied for a home, they have to come in and do some work, help them in building their  
401 homes. So they are about the business of setting up a place so that the musicians can  
402 come back. And they're going to establish a center, an Ellis Marsalis Center in that area  
403 for children so that you would teach the children the music. So that's looking good.

404 MR: I have you on tape here.

405 GB: Okay.

406 MR: I just thought I would play a little bit.

407 GB: Oy oy oy.

408 MR: I think you'll like it.  
409 GB: Oh my goodness.  
410 [audio interlude]  
411 GB: Oh that's from the jazz fest.  
412 MR: Yes.  
413 GB: That's "A Foggy Day?"  
414 MR: Yes.  
415 GB: Okay.  
416 MR: With Red Tyler.  
417 GB: Yes.  
418 MR: I love this ending.  
419 GB: Oh it's fun. Isn't it fun to do?  
420 MR: I'm guessing okay this was a little like okay what's going to happen?  
421 GB: Yes.  
422 MR: How is this going to end up?  
423 GB: Yes.  
424 MR: Let's find out.  
425 GB: Yeah [scats] that little riff.  
426 MR: I like what the piano player's doing too.  
427 GB: Yeah. I think that's Brian Blade on drums.  
428 MR: You think what?  
429 GB: Brian Blade? I think that's Brian Blade playing drums.  
430 MR: Nicely done.  
431 GB: Thank you. That was fun to do.  
432 MR: I'll bet. And live, everybody together, no overdubbing.  
433 GB: That was not rehearsed.  
434 MR: Not rehearsed even.  
435 GB: Not rehearsed no. That's one of the other things too that happens, that I have been blessed  
436 with is having worked with people like that who, whatever you want to do. "What should  
437 I do?" "Whatever you want to do, we're right there." So I could take freedoms like we  
438 did on this little vamp here you know, just take the freedom and the phrasing, stretching  
439 things out, putting that space in between, and they're right there, they're right there you  
440 know. As long as I want to keep doing it, they're right there. That's such fun.  
441 MR: And I noticed something, near that ending, and that was when the people you were  
442 playing with didn't feel compelled to fill up all that space with — oh here's a space I  
443 better fill it.  
444 GB: Yes.

445 MR: That's important.

446 GB: Space is just as important as the written note. The rests are important.

447 MR: Do you have — when you're trying to teach a jazz concept to people who have been  
448 trained classically, do they get hung up with worrying about making a mistake?

449 GB: Yes. And when we're doing ensemble singings arranged you know, you have your four  
450 part harmony or whatever, so we have to sing these notes. We have to sing these notes.  
451 And we have to sing the rhythm that is there but we can also take liberties. And that's  
452 where some of them have — but that's a quarter note and it's followed by an eighth note.  
453 Okay that's fine. And here's the rest. Quarter note, eighth note, rest. Yeah that's fine. But  
454 suppose I want to make it eighth note, quarter note, rest? What's that going to do to the  
455 effect of the tune? What's that going to do to the swing of the tune? So sometimes they're  
456 uncomfortable with it until we have it in context and you see where it's coming from,  
457 where it's coming from. Let me say something. The Swingle Singers. You are familiar  
458 with the Swingles?

459 MR: Um hum.

460 GB: I love them. I love them. I love them. And I tried to get a group of people, musicians,  
461 especially vocal music teachers, I tried to get a group of them together. Because I wanted  
462 to do Swingle Singers. And more than one told me that they didn't think that they could  
463 do that. And I said "why not?" I can't imagine Bach as a jazz piece. I said "back off."  
464 Have you really listened? Have you really played I mean just a simple two part  
465 invention? Have you really played it, have you really listened to all that's going on in that  
466 piece? And I'm not just talking about the dynamics that's written there. I'm just asking  
467 you have you really listened to it, the little things that you have going against each other.  
468 And all you've got to do is put a back beat to it and it's swinging. Bach swings. And I  
469 imagine that I guess I would call Bach the swingiest Baroque musician. I mean really, I  
470 mean for the audience, I mean you're playing, your bringing this music for people.  
471 You're playing for an audience all the time. You're writing your music for performances.  
472 Swingle singers did it with just a bass and a snare drum and everybody else was singing  
473 other parts [scats]. It was right there. And we tried it sometimes. Sometimes I get bold  
474 enough to try to do something counter to what the guys are doing. And we have two  
475 horns, three horns on the stage you know and I'm doing a tune and it's kind of like a look  
476 and I'll say "come on, come on, everybody get in, let's just play." You know and  
477 everybody is just, we're just free to do this. And that's another kind of experience.

478 MR: Um hum. You're doing some kind of polyphony there.

479 GB: There we go.

480 MR: Well you're in the right city to do it, I mean that's what the pioneers were doing too.

481 GB: Yes, exactly. Exactly so. And I just know that I don't do it all of the time but the guys  
482 have given me permission, so to speak, to say "okay guys let's do this." You know "what  
483 I'd like us to do this little riff right here." "Okay. And it goes from there. It develops from  
484 there. You don't have to have a whole book of stuff, just let it work itself out. And after  
485 it's over and the night is over you say oh that was a good night.

486 MR: Felt good.

487 GB: Yeah it felt good. Good spirit.

488 MR: Any new things coming down the pike for you?

489 GB: Not that I know of. Not that I know of. I'm hoping — there are some things that I'd like  
490 to do now that my teaching load has gotten smaller I have a little bit more freedom now  
491 to do things. And I'd like to do more jazz festivals. I'd like to go different places. I'm not  
492 talking about 90 days anywhere. You know, but go to someplace, do a jazz festival, eat  
493 and go back home. Go somewhere else. Once a month maybe. You a jazz fest a month  
494 wouldn't kill me. I still would be able to do it and still work with my kids.

495 MR: Right. Well I have a feeling that your students are very lucky to have you.

496 GB: Oh thank you. It's interesting because some of them don't know that I do the jazz bit so  
497 we had — sometimes we have groups to come perform at the school and guys called me  
498 up one time to sing a song with them. And I started singing and started scatting and one  
499 of the students — and she sat that way for the entire song. And when we were finished  
500 she came to me and she says "you fooled me, you fooled me, you don't act like that in the  
501 classroom. Why you don't act like that in the classroom?" I said "it's two different  
502 situations." "You fooled me." I said "okay, that was fun."

503 MR: That's neat. Sometimes the impression you make on students is immediate and  
504 sometimes it's years later that they realize what it was.

505 GB: True. And it is. Because they do come back and they tell you.

506 MR: Well it's been a fascinating conversation for me.

507 GB: Well thank you.

508 MR: I hope you enjoyed it. And I hope I can come back to your city on a Monday night.

509 GB: Yes.

510 MR: And come down to your gig.

511 GB: Yes. Well I want to thank you for the opportunity. Because sometimes I don't know how  
512 much I have to say or if I have anything to say but it's a pleasure to be able to share  
513 whatever it is that I have.

514 MR: Well I got a lot off it.

515 GB: Well thank you. And you gave me some very thoughtful things. Now I've got to go home  
516 and think about this. Did I answer that correctly?

517 MR: Well it's like jazz, there's really no correct answer. There's just different ways to  
518 approach it.  
519 GB: Right exactly. Well I thank you so much.