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Genevieve Rose

Genevieve Rose first became interested in jazz in 1991. Her story since then has been a publicist's dream. She was 21 years old at the time of this interview and had already played bass with an impressive list of jazz artists, including Dick Hyman, Claude Williams, and 95 year-old saxophonist Benny Waters. She won numerous awards and honors at her high school in Massachusetts, including the state's Overall Outstanding Musician Award from the International Association of Jazz Educators. Genevieve is currently a student at the University of Massachusetts and looks forward to a teaching and performing career in music.

Genevieve was interviewed in Clinton, New York on March 14, 1998, by Monk Rowe, director of the Hamilton College Jazz Archive.

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- 16 MR: We are filming today for the Hamilton College Jazz Archive on the campus at Hamilton.
17 I'm very pleased to have Genevieve Rose as my guest, who I can say through experience
18 is one heck of a bass player.
- 19 GR: Well thank you, it's a pleasure to be here today. Thank you.
- 20 MR: As I was saying before the cameras were rolling, I'm used to interviewing people that
21 could be my grandfather or grandmother, I'm not so used to interviewing someone who
22 could be my daughter, which says something about my age I guess. But it's a pleasure to
23 have you here and I know you've been getting quite a good deal of press lately. How
24 about just telling me about your most recent meaningful gig for you.
- 25 GR: Well the most recent one was at the end of February, at the Academy of Music in
26 Northampton, Massachusetts. And we were playing for Claude Williams' 90th birthday,
27 Claude "Fiddler" Williams. He turned 90 that day, with Bucky Pizzarelli also, he was
28 playing guitar. It was a wonderful performance. The place was packed, and it was the
29 most recent gig.
- 30 MR: So you had what — 75 years age difference, 74, 75, between you and Claude.
- 31 GR: Well 70, right? Well I'm 21 so.
- 32 MR: How do you two communicate with that age gap there?
- 33 GR: Well I think it's just the same as me communicating with anyone my own age or your
34 age. I don't really find it to be too much of a difference because it's all music and music
35 is kind of a universal language. And the generation gap doesn't seem to really change that
36 at all.
- 37 MR: Is there any kind of jazz lingo or phrases that he might use that you're not quite used to at
38 first?

39 GR: Well I suppose so, because he has so many years of experience in playing in a vast
40 variety of settings. I think that's what makes the playing more enjoyable, because he has
41 such a diverse background and I'm relatively new at this.

42 MR: I remember, when we had played together, and during one song he leaned over and he
43 said "channel" to me. And for a minute I didn't know what he was talking about.

44 GR: Yeah, I actually, he had said that one time to me, he was discussing that, and I didn't
45 know either. But then we found out that it meant the bridge of the tune. But yeah I guess
46 that could be a little bit confusing.

47 MR: Yeah, you kind of just pretend...

48 GR: You kind of, sort of hear where he's going and then go on with it. But I find that it's a lot
49 more enjoyable and wonderful to play with players that have more of a background and
50 more experience, because I learn more from that. So yeah there's a lot of new things that
51 I hear while I'm playing, but then again I'm learning from that also.

52 MR: Well what exactly, can you pinpoint what launched you into being a jazz musician? You
53 were born in seventy...

54 GR: Six.

55 MR: '76. So the music that you were listening to as you grew up was what? What was going
56 on in your household?

57 GR: Well I listened a lot to the oldies, '50's and '60's type of music. There is a radio station
58 around my area, it's called Big D 103, and so I would always listen to that all the time.
59 My brother listened to a lot of the current music but I never really did. I mostly enjoyed
60 the oldies. And I think, well I got involved with music pretty early, I was eight years old,
61 and I started with the guitar at the same time my brother started piano lessons. And so
62 really before that I wasn't really concerned too much with listening to music. I mean I
63 heard it but it didn't really hit me with anything. For some reason I wanted to play the
64 guitar. I didn't know why. So I ended up taking ten years of guitar lessons, and it was all
65 classical, classical guitar. I just loved that. So when I was growing up I was playing a
66 guitar. Mostly I listened to the classical guitar music, Segovia, and those. So that's what I
67 had. And then my brother, he did a lot of composing his own music. So I've listened to
68 that. And then towards the end my brother got involved in jazz, so he would play jazz on
69 his radio in his room, different recordings. It was kind of interesting. And I had wanted to
70 play the guitar in ensembles at school because all the other playing I had done was
71 outside groups. And so I wanted to do something in the public school. They already had
72 guitar players in like the jazz band so they said play electric bass. So I had sort of gotten
73 into jazz music that way. And my brother had given me a bunch of blank tapes and he
74 said — oh well, unmarked tapes of jazz music — and he said "listen to these."

75 MR: So you didn't really know who it was.

76 GR: I didn't know who it was and I found out later, like the first one I had and listened to over
77 and over again was Charlie Parker, Bird, you know, with the tune "Laura" and the strings
78 and all of that. And I thought it was great but I didn't know it was Charlie Parker. And so
79 I was listening to that and listening to a lot of other — I know he had a tape of
80 Thelonious Monk, and then there was a tape of some Billy Taylor playing. So I got into
81 listening to that and I was really intrigued by it, and at the same time I was starting to
82 play jazz a little bit, and when I got to my sophomore year of high school I became more
83 interested with the stand-up bass. First I had started on electric bass and then switched
84 over to the stand-up bass because I saw it in a closet at the music school and I was like I
85 want to play that. Nobody I knew played it. And so it was just from playing that I got
86 more interested in jazz. And I did a competition in my sophomore year where I played,
87 the first time I ever played a solo, and I received an award. I couldn't believe it. So that
88 helped fuel me to do more playing of jazz. And that's really how I got into it.

89 MR: Let me take you back for a moment. Listening to the oldies station, as you look back on
90 that, is there anything there that you think you absorbed from that music?

91 GR: Just an appreciation for music and that's for one thing. Secondly I think, I always liked
92 tunes, I figured it out later, that had really good bass lines to them. So I think that helped
93 out. Rhythm you know, they always had pretty good...

94 MR: Yeah as you listen, and they are very arranged almost. It's easy to hear the form of them
95 and it probably instilled a good knowledge of that. Were you ever tempted to play the
96 chords to "Louie Louie" on your guitar?

97 GR: Not really. Because I got so involved with the classical music. My teacher was a classical
98 guitarist and I liked that, so I never played any oldies on my guitar or any jazz on my
99 guitar for that matter either, just basically the classical music.

100 MR: What kind of outlet did you have to perform the classical guitar music?

101 GR: Well I took lessons for ten years at Community Music School Springfield, so they had
102 recitals every year that you could perform in, and they had combos. I had — one year it
103 was two recorders and guitar, another year it was four guitars. So that was nice to be able
104 to have a variety of ensembles to play with. And also the Connecticut Classical Guitar
105 Society, that was based in West Hartford, my teacher was the Executive Director, Penny
106 Phillips. So I was involved with performing in concerts there and also with the
107 Connecticut Classical Guitar Society guitar ensemble, which had maybe between ten and
108 at one point maybe fourteen guitar players. So I was part of that. So there were a lot of
109 opportunities to play, and also through the music school, I did a lot of volunteer
110 functions. I'd play Christmas parties or background music for house tours. A lot of
111 variety of playing. And I think it was a great experience because now I don't feel nervous
112 doing any kind of performing. So there was a lot of years of solo guitar playing.

113 MR: This whole thing about becoming a professional, about playing gigs, showing up on time,
114 all that knowing what's appropriate in the different gigs, I think you probably got pretty
115 early then.

116 GR: Yeah I would say so. Yeah. There was a lot of opportunity for it.

117 MR: When you think of jazz, what was current, gee by the time you — it must have been early
118 80's when you started becoming aware of jazz — is that true?

119 GR: Well not really no, because I didn't start until I was eight and that was in 1985. I didn't
120 really get into the jazz until the early 90's maybe.

121 MR: Oh, gee, all right. So what's current then? Humm. That's only like seven or eight years
122 ago.

123 GR: Yeah.

124 MR: Did you ever get into what, for lack of a better term nowadays is called contemporary
125 jazz, the Kenny G type of thing?

126 GR: No. I wasn't really involved with that. Because my brother had given me tapes of a lot of
127 older styles of music but I didn't actually go out and actively seek to listen to jazz.
128 Because it wasn't something I was really interested in until my sophomore year of high
129 school. You know I enjoyed it but I wasn't actively involved with it. After my sophomore
130 year, and I started to begin to play a lot more, I was concerned about not wanting to
131 sound like a lot of other bass players. I wanted my own individual sound. So I didn't do a
132 lot of listening at first. I didn't learn a lot of history either. I just kind of like played and
133 tried to develop my own sound. So I didn't listen to the contemporary stuff, not a lot of
134 listening, no.

135 MR: That was a conscious decision on your part? That you didn't want to become a copy cat
136 of someone else?

137 GR: Right. Because a lot of people had said well transcribe these solos or these bass lines.
138 And I understand why they say that, it's a good idea to get the style of a certain player.
139 But I didn't want to be copying lines from it. No I wanted to try to bring my own sound
140 to the music.

141 MR: Well let me see if you can remember the first time you came home from high school and
142 told your mother that you were now going to be playing the acoustic bass. Was she
143 familiar with what that instrument really was?

144 GR: Oh yes well because I had — well I didn't actually just switch, you know. I didn't say
145 I'm playing guitar today and tomorrow I'm playing bass. It was gradual. So I just kind of
146 played bass on the side. I also played, when I was in high school, a year I did bassoon, I
147 played baritone horn in the marching band. I did a lot of different instruments, and bass
148 was just one of them. And so it was really gradual. And it wasn't until like maybe my
149 senior year of high school that I actually decided that I was going to concentrate on the

150 bass. Because up until that point I was doing so much guitar work, and I hadn't had any
151 formal lessons on the bass, you know I'd just basically taught myself, so like my
152 technique wasn't really great or anything. But I started finding more and more
153 opportunities. I was playing, I was enjoying it more, and I really liked the style of music
154 that I was able to improvise and put in my own voice to the music. And so it was just
155 gradual. And my mother's been always very supportive of whatever instrument that I
156 wanted to play. And I think that she's happy as long as I'm happy. And I really enjoyed
157 being able to put my own self into the playing, into the music, through improvisation.

158 MR: How does she feel about you being in these New York City nightclubs?

159 GR: Oh she loves it. Well she drove me down there so I wouldn't have to leave my car down
160 there. But she is very supportive of everything. And for a long time, when I first started I
161 didn't have a vehicle, she was chauffeuring me to every performance and rehearsal, so...

162 MR: She was a jazz mom, not a soccer mom.

163 GR: Yup. It was like her full time job for a while.

164 MR: I want to ask you a little more about a couple of those gigs later. But did you become
165 kind of — how do I put this — an interesting character in high school? Here I mean
166 you're not that big a person either, and here's this young lady playing acoustic bass.

167 GR: Yeah.

168 MR: Were you kind of like this...

169 GR: Well I mean I came from a very sports-based high school too. So a lot of people weren't
170 very supportive of the music department except for the people in there. But I think they
171 thought it was really interesting. I mean there's this huge instrument and you know I had
172 been doing really well playing, and I also played electric bass in all the Top 40 concerts
173 in high school too, so they liked that, so they liked that kind of music. The jazz was just
174 kind of second for the rest of the kids in the school.

175 MR: Sounds like you were a person that they were sorry to see graduate, at least in the music
176 department.

177 GR: Yeah, I don't know.

178 MR: You became like a valuable person to have there.

179 GR: Well I mean I was always there. I mean I tried to do everything in the music department.
180 I did the jazz band, I did the rhythm section for the show choir one year, and so I did a lot
181 of volunteering.

182 MR: Was there a significant live performance along the way that you got to see, or a number
183 of them that heightened your interest in the music? Seeing some well known musicians
184 perhaps?

185 GR: Well I think what definitely helped a lot was doing the jazz workshops in the summer.
186 Like in the summer of '94 and '95 I did the Vermont Jazz Summer Workshop, and that

187 was Atilla's Zoller's Jazz Workshop, and also I did Jazz in July Workshops, Billy
188 Taylor's workshop there. And meeting all those musicians and it was kind of a hands on
189 experience, that really helped a lot. And of course they'd have the concert so you could
190 work with them. I'd say that was a very big influence there. Especially meeting people in
191 person. That was always very important to me. But I can't think off hand of a particular
192 concert.

193 MR: Well who has become your favorite bass players then?

194 GR: Well I enjoy music from a lot of different bass players. I like some of Ray Brown, some
195 of Ron Carter's. There's a bass player on one of Benny Waters' CD's, Bob Bowman —
196 no actually, I'm sorry, that's Claude Williams' CD, Bob Bowman. And I basically try to
197 listen for specific recordings that I like. I don't buy them just for the artist, but for that
198 particular recording. Like for example I like Ron Carter on "Alone Together" with Jim
199 Hall. So particular recordings, that's what I look mostly for. And some of the bassists are
200 no name bassists, and I just enjoy the way it sounds or a particular solo. But I look mostly
201 at a particular recording rather than the artist themselves, for a variety.

202 MR: Is there a gig or a particular series of gigs — it's almost the same question — but that you
203 felt like man this is the big time in the jazz world? When did that particularly happen?

204 GR: Well I really enjoyed performing last October down in New York with Benny Waters, the
205 saxophone player, at Sweet Basil's jazz club in New York. That was the first time I ever
206 really publicly played in New York City and it was a week-long engagement. And I
207 really enjoyed that. Really nice.

208 MR: Well there you are at one of the top clubs in New York, with what he was 95 at the time?

209 GR: Yes that's correct.

210 MR: And I've heard he can be a bit demanding of his rhythm section, is that right?

211 GR: I suppose. We had I think it was like an hour intense rehearsal. He rattled off maybe 30
212 tunes that we'd run through, it was just start, stop, start, stop, start on the Tuesday before
213 we started, just to get an idea of how he was going to be playing, endings and beginnings.
214 But I like that though. I like to have the artist let me know what they want. That's
215 important to me, and still give me a lot of space but I like that, I like a challenge too.

216 MR: Did you say something about having to sleep in your car that week?

217 GR: Uh yeah.

218 MR: I had to remember that, didn't I?

219 GR: Well actually my mother and I we both, we have a pick-up truck, and we couldn't find a
220 friend who said that we could borrow an apartment for a night to stay in, and we couldn't
221 find a parking spot anywhere near. And finally it got to be like the only parking spots
222 were so far away we didn't think it would be safe to walk to the ... so we ended up

223 driving out of the city, up past like Yonkers and we found a side street and we just kind
224 of camped out in the back. It was very cold.

225 MR: That's going to be a great story when we do this next interview like twenty, thirty years
226 from now, you can talk about your first gig in New York and you had to sleep in your
227 car.

228 GR: It was worth it though. It was freezing but it was worth it.

229 MR: No kidding. I wonder what your mother was thinking — what have we gotten into here?

230 GR: Oh I think she — an adventure you know. It was eventful I think. It was great.

231 MR: Was she there for the gigs?

232 GR: She stayed the first time and then came for the last night. So it was great. She is very
233 supportive and I think that's very important.

234 MR: You had mentioned that you've won about — it sounds like a batting average here — 20
235 consecutive "Most Valuable Player" awards in these high school festivals.

236 GR: Right. At school every year we do maybe six competitions, that type of thing. And since
237 my sophomore year, to my senior year, the first one in my sophomore year, I received an
238 MVP, 20 of them, yeah. So it was great. It really helps. It was a positive reinforcement
239 for me to keep playing and trying harder with the music because you know I'd get done
240 with a competition and I'd say oh that was a terrible solo, or this or that, very self critical,
241 and then I'd get an award and I guess well it wasn't that bad, I'll have to keep trying
242 more and more. And so that really helps. I think it's really important, especially in an
243 educational institution like that, to be able to have positive reinforcement. And it
244 definitely helped me out. Because I would be playing guitar right now if I didn't have
245 that, if I didn't have someone there to say you are doing well and keep going on the right
246 track.

247 MR: Well it's good that you also look at it as a push to improve yourself that you could almost
248 say well gee I'm just winning all these awards, I can just stay the way I am.

249 GR: Yeah but no it's not like that.

250 MR: It doesn't sound like you from what I can tell. You've gotten to play with Dick Hyman
251 and Dave Grusin, was this workshops?

252 GR: This was a workshop, yeah, this is one I did last year, last summer at the Henry Mancini
253 Institute. It was a month long. It was great. I got to meet a lot of wonderful musicians,
254 Bob Mintzer was there. There was a whole philharmonic. So it was the first year that they
255 had the workshop. And I thought it was a great, wonderful workshop, to be able to meet
256 — just like the Jazz in July and the Vermont Summer Workshop, being able to meet top
257 people in the field, and being able to perform along with them. And so they had a
258 philharmonic, they had a big band and orchestra, small groups.

259 MR: Do you have a business card?

260 GR: Well I moved and I have to get one.

261 MR: I'm just curious because it's interesting, as you meet all these people, I'm wondering if
262 you look into the future and say I would like this person to have my name, because you
263 never know. So are you the type — are you a self promoter somewhat?

264 GR: I always try to give out some kind of card. For a while I had ones where I had my picture
265 on the side you know, something different, with the bass. I've always tried to let — well
266 let me see how would I say that ...

267 MR: Let the music speak for itself.

268 GR: Yeah. The music speak for itself. Yeah, I guess that's the best way to play it.

269 MR: I suppose. But your attitude towards I think the gigs is also important too, that from the
270 playing we've done together I know that you're always on time, you always want to look
271 the part, and people notice that.

272 GR: I always enjoy every one too.

273 MR: Tell me about where your education is right now in music and how you feel about it.

274 GR: Well I'm going to U Mass, the University of Massachusetts Amherst and I'm in my
275 junior year, although I probably have about a few more years left because I'm doing a
276 double major in music education and jazz performance. And I'm also taking like the
277 minimum amount of full time each semester now. My first two years I kind of tried to —
278 I thought I would get done in four years and so I took 20, 21 credits, and it was just too
279 much. So now I'm down to 12 or 15 credits, so that I can do my performing on the
280 outside, the gigs at night. So I'm trying to build up my career and contacts while I'm still
281 in school so that I'll have something for when I get out, rather than a lot of students, they
282 try to wait until they get out of school and then say well then I'll go run down to New
283 York or try to make a name, or I don't know. But I think it's better to just build them up
284 gradually at the same time so that I'll have work for when I get out of school. And
285 eventually I'd like to teach, maybe at the high school or university level.

286 MR: Do you feel you have to go to New York to — well you've already been to New York.

287 GR: I think Western Mass is a very nice — it's very convenient to New York and to Boston
288 and upstate New York. So it's a very central location and I like it. And I think I'd just be
289 happy just to commute to any job I get down there.

290 MR: So are you telling me that you don't see a future as a full time jazz musician for yourself?

291 GR: Well I would like to, but eventually I'd like to teach. But also do a lot of playing. That's
292 why I'd like, maybe at the university level, because then there's less — you can leave.

293 MR: You have to be there 3-1/2 days a week.

294 GR: Well you know like public high school, originally I was thinking about that, but it's a big
295 time commitment.

296 MR: It sure is.

297 GR: You know you have marching band after school, and I still want to be able to continue
298 performing and playing. Because you have to keep up with it, you can't just...

299 MR: We've talked with a number of, actually a lot of musicians who are mostly self-taught,
300 because when they were growing up there was not jazz education. Do you feel that your
301 experience and your classmates' experience is enough to make them be able to function
302 in the real world of jazz music?

303 GR: Well I think the classroom is part of it maybe. But I think one of the most important
304 things to remember is like how jazz started out itself, which would be like musicians
305 getting together and performing publicly or anything. I tend to learn on the job if you
306 want to put it. Each gig is a learning experience for me, and a lot of those types of
307 learning experiences from gigs, you don't learn in a classroom. It's like those last minute,
308 and if something goes wrong on the job, you learn from that. It's kind of an off-the-cuff
309 type of thing.

310 MR: Is it possible to create that atmosphere in the school somehow?

311 GR: I don't think so. I mean they can also have performances, but I think you have to have a
312 variety. If you keep it always playing with the same musicians too, you know, it's many
313 different musicians, different ages, who have different experience levels, and being able
314 to perform with them, in a variety of different setting. You know there's shows, there's
315 small clubs, big bands, combos, all types of different situations to perform in, or
316 rehearsals. I think that's a very important thing in the learning, is a variety. And
317 classroom is one aspect of that but there's a larger picture that you have to include too.

318 MR: Do you remember when we played one of the schools up near here and one of the
319 students asked you "doesn't it hurt, what you're doing?" Is it physically demanding?
320 Have you ever had any like, your body telling you that this is really hard work, playing
321 the stand up bass?

322 GR: I think yeah the bass is a physical instrument, I mean just by the size and the strings. I
323 think all instruments in some way are demanding, whether it's a wind instrument and it's
324 air capacity and all that. I mean I've had problems, I had played a very large seven-
325 eighths bass for a while, and my hand just isn't that big. And it had a very high action,
326 and I injured my hand and for a whole year I couldn't play with my pinky. And I'm just
327 recovering from that right now. I mean when I played down at the Sweet Basil's I
328 couldn't use it. It was like three fingers. I had to play a smaller size bass, five-eighths
329 with very low action. So it can be very physically demanding, but you get, your hand gets
330 stronger as you do more playing too, so I mean it's physically demanding but you also
331 get used to it too. The calluses are built up already, so I don't have to worry about that.
332 So just as long as you take it easy, and not play instruments that are too big or set up the
333 wrong way.

334 MR: Did you ever feel left out because you couldn't spend a lot of time doing your long nails?
335 GR: No, I never felt that at all, no I never got into that. From the guitar you know, it was
336 always, well a lot of nail work, but that was like you had to make sure your nail was in
337 perfect condition so you could play the concert the next day.
338 MR: It wasn't so much that you could put the polish on.
339 GR: No I never got into the stereotypical like junior high, high school type of — nope, to me,
340 music was my focus.
341 MR: Can you think of some gigs that you've played, this may take a minute for you to think
342 of, but that have been really difficult for one reason or another? Just like wow I'm glad
343 that's done with.
344 GR: Well I know, we were talking about physical difficulties before, like I did a performance,
345 I think I was called up to do a performance of a Latin band. And I never played Latin
346 music before. And so like the week before, one of the guys in the band said "well I'll
347 show you what the bass lines are like." And a lot of them are, like the Salsa music is all
348 fifths. So you're using your first and your fourth finger to play fifths on the bass. And I
349 was playing the big seven-eighths bass and I ended up playing a whole night of Salsa and
350 Marengue and all that type of music. That was very physically demanding. So I would
351 say that was a performance that was difficult in that way.
352 MR: Also, Latin music, it's very specific what the bass does too. I mean they always seem to
353 be anticipating in some of that music.
354 GR: Well in the Salsa music, yeah.
355 MR: Did you know that when you went into it?
356 GR: Well that's why I needed somebody to show me what it was first, because I was like
357 wow. But I was very careful, I listened to exactly what they said, and I mean the gig
358 turned out great, it was wonderful, I did a lot of Latin music after that, which contributed
359 to my hand injury. But it's just paying careful attention. He showed me a couple of
360 different styles of music, some examples, the guy played them on the piano also, showed
361 me the bass line on the piano. So I was able to do that. And I like that kind of music you
362 know. But let me see...
363 MR: We were talking about just difficult gigs.
364 GR: Okay. There's been other times when like at first when I didn't have a lot of tunes
365 memorized. I remember there was one job where they had a singer come up and there
366 were maybe 30 tables, it was a big band number, and they were having the singer come
367 up and do some tunes with a small groups, just a combo, a piano, bass and drums combo.
368 And she said she wanted to play a little game with the audience, and that she knew all,
369 thousands of tunes, and they could rattle off a tune and that she'd do a little part of it.
370 And I was concerned about that because I didn't know all these tunes, I'd only been

371 playing for a few years. But it worked out really good. You know it was a lot of
372 concentration, it was draining that way. The ears were open, and I could see the piano
373 player's left hand from about ten feet away, and so that was demanding. But you know I
374 like the challenge, I like that. I think it makes me work harder, and I think I learn a lot
375 more that way.

376 MR: That's tough in two respects because a lot of times the women's voices, if they're doing
377 standards, you're not doing them in the standard key anymore. You're doing "Misty" in
378 B flat and stuff like that.

379 GR: Well another one I think was when I was down with Benny Waters in New York I think it
380 was at the St. Peter's Church, and we did a performance. Cyrus Chestnut was on piano
381 and a gentleman, Dean Johnson on drums. And Benny had called off a tune, a ballad I'd
382 never heard of before. And I think there were about three hundred people at this
383 performance. People were sitting on the floor, I mean it was packed. And all of a sudden
384 Benny calls out this tune, he's calling it off, and I have no idea, I've never heard of it
385 before, it does not ring a bell, and I look over at Cyrus, you know, like help me out. So he
386 was really good, he was playing some of the bass notes, and I could hear where he was
387 going with it, and I kind of memorized it. You know we did the first chorus, he took a
388 solo then Benny took a solo, then he had me take a solo on it, and I was lucky just by
389 being able to memorize it. By the time my solo came around I kind of knew how the
390 piece went. I don't even remember the name of the piece. Well that was demanding too,
391 but I love that, I mean that was a great challenge.

392 MR: Did you ever get in those situations where it's like a jam session and you're playing one
393 tune for fifteen or twenty minutes and all the horn players finally get their thing done, and
394 then they give it to you?

395 GR: Then the bass solo. Yeah, right. Yup, I've had that. That's fun. That's a physically
396 demanding type of playing. But that's good, I like that.

397 MR: Well talking about memorizing tunes, do they help you out in school with suggestions,
398 like here's tunes you should know?

399 GR: Well I haven't really found that, no. But I haven't really taken any — I took one jazz
400 composition class at school, but I don't have any jazz lessons. Like my lessons are
401 classical, and all my harmony has been classical and ear training has been classical. So I
402 find that I just apply that to jazz. So we'd be studying like a Bach prelude or a Bach
403 fugue and the harmonic structure of that, and the ear training, where we'd have to sing
404 and do solfeggio. That's all helped with memorizing tunes. But nobody's actually said,
405 I've never had any jazz classes that say well you should memorize this, or this is how you
406 should improvise. I haven't gotten to that yet.

407 MR: You haven't gotten to jazz classes yet?

408 GR: Well not really. I mean there's one improv class that I took but that was more like, it was
409 really basic. This is a seventh chord, or that type of thing. So most of it, my jazz playing
410 has been learning from on the job, learning from performing with different musicians.

411 MR: Well I kind of made a joke before the cameras were rolling about reincarnation, I'm
412 beginning to think that maybe it's really true. You were a jazz bassist in the 20's and
413 30's.

414 GR: I don't know. I love it though. I love the bass, it's great, it's a great instrument and I'm
415 glad I ran into it.

416 MR: Has there been a process of working backwards with learning the history of the jazz bass
417 for you?

418 GR: Well definitely, now that I'm doing a lot of playing and obviously I'm interested in the
419 instrument, I love it. Now I want to learn more about it and learn more about different
420 bassists' individual styles. Now do the transcriptions, that type of thing. Well I've already
421 learned like I've started to develop my own sound. Now I want to learn all that history
422 part of it. So yeah I think it is working backwards a little bit. I mean I started into it like
423 playing rather than learning about it.

424 MR: If I could see your collection of albums and/or CD's, would I get a hint as to what your
425 real favorite stuff is?

426 GR: Well favorites are always changing too, but I also like listening to a lot of vocalists. One
427 of my favorites is Shirley Horn and I think it's a newer one "You Won't Forget Me" it's
428 called. It has Buster Williams on bass so I like that.

429 MR: Oh, he's one of the greatest.

430 GR: And I like one of the discs Benny Waters told me to get, it was one of his, "Swinging
431 Again." I really enjoy playing that one. I got a Ray Brown "Bass Face." There's another
432 vocalist, Larry Brown, "Swing Bean." He's not really that much known. I met him up at
433 the Vermont Jazz Summer Workshop one year, but the musicians on the disc are just so
434 wonderful to listen to. So then again a lot of them are just hearing something I like and
435 then going out and buying that, rather than for the artist itself. I just picked up the Jobim
436 Jazz Masters, the Verve one there, and I love that one. I heard that one a lot of times and I
437 finally broke down and bought it. So a lot of variety.

438 MR: Have you had a chance to record yourself?

439 GR: A little bit I've done some demos for other people, not my own, but played on other
440 albums. And I just got one in the mail actually a CD that I had — it's more toward the
441 Folk type of music. So a variety. I don't have anything of my own yet, I'm waiting.

442 MR: Well you've got a few years.

443 GR: Yeah, I've got a whole lot of time to prepare for that.

444 MR: Bass players often times complain that the soundmen don't get their sound in the studios.
445 So I hope that doesn't happen to you when you finally get a...

446 GR: Well there's a lot of variety. I mean like the last one I did it was just a mic on the bass.
447 And other times it's direct. But I'm in no rush to really do my own recording yet, I'm
448 waiting for that.

449 MR: Do you feel that being a young woman bass player is a help or a hindrance in the world
450 of music. Have you had any indication of that yet?

451 GR: Not really, not a lot, no, either way. I mean there's been little situations but I think with
452 any musician there's always some kind of block or help. I feel that since jazz music is a
453 very open form of music, it doesn't really make a difference of like your gender or how
454 old you are or your background. I haven't really found that to be the case, no. I've found
455 that I just try to let the music speak for itself and I haven't really found it to be a
456 hindrance at all, no.

457 MR: Is it ever — I'm trying to think of the word — a little imposing — not imposing, a little
458 threatening working mostly in the world of men in situations like that?

459 GR: No I mean I just basically consider each musician a musician. They could be blank, as far
460 as, I don't really differentiate.

461 MR: I know what you mean.

462 GR: It's just I go by playing. It's not, I mean I don't really think when I walk into a gig, oh
463 well there's a group of men and I'm the only woman, or there's only one other woman. I
464 don't really see that. That's the saxophone player, and there's the drummer, and you
465 know, and everybody gets together and they play and that's what counts. It's making the
466 music, not who's making it.

467 MR: Right. Are you keeping up your guitar these days?

468 GR: Well I'm planning on getting back with it a little more. I had the hand injury and so I'm
469 just trying to do the bass right now until the hand totally heals. It's a nerve problem you
470 know, if it got pushed down on the string I'd get a really sharp pain. So basically I'm just
471 doing the minimal amount of playing on the bass that I can, and no extra instruments, just
472 the bass.

473 MR: I'm kind of always fascinated, when you think of the bass players in kind of the pre
474 amplifier days, how they were expected to drive the part of the rhythm, to drive like a big
475 band. And how were they heard?

476 GR: Well I think one of the big things that a lot of people may forget about is that back then
477 the bands didn't play as loud, so they would only play as loud as they could hear the bass
478 player. So even though the bass player had high action string, really loud, that style of
479 playing, the bands weren't all that quadruple forte that they play now. They were a lot
480 softer, so you could hear the softer instruments. They didn't cover up the sound of the

481 bass. So I mean every once in a while I'll still rehearse with the string bass acoustically
482 with a big band, but it's not the same because a lot of the time they're just playing as if
483 you had an amplified bass. The horn players are blaring out and the drum is just as loud,
484 and that's why it doesn't work a lot of time, having an unamplified bass, because the
485 other musicians forget, like they have to play softer like they used to back in the 20's and
486 30's and 40's.

487 MR: And when they were backing up singers too.

488 GR: That's right.

489 MR: The singers had to hear themselves.

490 GR: Right, yeah. And recording. If everybody played softer the levels were down farther.

491 MR: I think society in general is louder.

492 GR: Possibly, yeah. Definitely. Rock music is definitely loud.

493 MR: If we had a chance to do another interview in twenty years, gosh, what would you hope
494 you could tell me about?

495 GR: Well I hope that hand injuries wouldn't keep me from playing the bass and that I could
496 still keep doing what I really love and that's performing and playing, and that I've just
497 been enjoying and having a lot of more experiences performing. I'd like to be able to
498 travel around to different places. I know like this summer I'm going to Europe, to Greece
499 and Turkey to do a little bit of playing there. So I hope to do more experiences like that.

500 MR: Wow. You're going over to play?

501 GR: Yes.

502 MR: With whom?

503 GR: Well there's a group at U Mass, it's called Tradewinds, and it's like a faculty and some
504 extra musicians too, form a little core of a jazz combo, that plays for the chorale, the U
505 Mass chorale. So there's chorale music and then they do some playing on the side. But
506 it's a great opportunity, it's traveling, it's seeing places. I just hope to keep doing what I
507 like.

508 MR: Right. Are you going to take your own bass over there or do they have to line up an
509 instrument?

510 GR: No I've got one to take over there, not a good one, but just in case.

511 MR: Who of the real veteran bassists around these days have you been able to meet? I'm
512 interested if you've met Milt Hinton yet?

513 GR: No I haven't. I met Rufus Reid for like a minute a couple of years ago at a Massachusetts
514 Music Educators' Convention. But no I haven't been able — I met Ray Brown this past
515 summer at that Henry Mancini Institute. But I look forward to meeting them.

516 MR: Are there any other women bass players on the scene? I mean I know there's some, but
517 are you familiar with any of them, or does it not make that much difference?

518 GR: I don't know any personally really. I know of some but I don't know them. But that's not
519 something I really pay attention to.

520 MR: You just do your own thing.

521 GR: Yeah.

522 MR: I'm curious if you've been or seen any of these what they call jazz parties recently. They
523 are gigs that they book a lot of mostly veteran musician into like a hotel, and they have a
524 whole weekend of music. Have you been aware of those kinds of things?

525 GR: Yeah, I'm not quite sure.

526 MR: Well I suspect that someday you're going to get a call to do one, that's why.

527 GR: Okay.

528 MR: And you can say yeah Monk told me about that.

529 GR: All right. Wonderful. Thank you.

530 MR: It's interesting because they don't book bands, they book individuals and then ...

531 GR: Bring them together.

532 MR: The promoters put together a certain ensemble and you play for an hour and then a
533 different group of people get up. But to do that you have to have the language down and
534 you have to know those kind of tunes that Benny Waters might turn around and say blah,
535 blah, blah.

536 GR: Right.

537 MR: Did he even tell you what key you were in by the way?

538 GR: Yeah, you know I don't remember, all I knew was that I had no idea what the tune was,
539 and so, but it worked out fine, it was good, but it's the challenges that I really...

540 MR: What was it like to be — we talked about the gig at Birdland a little bit. Did you get good
541 feedback from the audience?

542 GR: Oh you mean Sweet Basil's?

543 MR: Sweet Basil's, I'm sorry, yeah.

544 GR: It was a great audience, and it seemed to be packed in there, and yeah I think they really
545 enjoyed it. And it was good because it was a jazz club, people were there to hear the
546 music. There's so many places that sometimes you end up playing where there's a
547 television going on. But this was, the people were there to hear the music and they
548 enjoyed it, and it was great, it was great. And I enjoy having an audience that's receptive
549 and appreciative.

550 MR: From a financial standpoint, are you pleased — I don't know if you have a basis for
551 comparison, but have you heard about what the going rate for playing jazz gigs in New
552 York is these days?

553 GR: I wouldn't know exactly, no. I mean it depends on what kind of gig it was. I mean at a
554 club would be different than ... I don't know, what do you...

555 MR: I'm just wondering if it looks to you like you could make money actually doing that kind
556 of thing at this point.

557 GR: Well I think the key is one not to concentrate yourself into one specific spot too. Like I
558 try to get out, I did the playing, a little bit in New York, and a little bit in the Boston area,
559 up in Vermont, as far up as Burlington, over here to Utica, I think it's important to spread
560 out, also in Connecticut. So that you have a lot of different contacts. So one night I'll be
561 playing in Western Mass and the next night I'll be playing in Connecticut, and two days
562 later I'll be up in Vermont.

563 MR: Have bass will travel.

564 GR: Exactly. So I mean so far it's worked out very well. And if it's enough just so that I can
565 keep up with the instrument, the equipment, a roof over my head and transportation to get
566 there, that's what makes me happy.

567 MR: Okay. Well I think you ought to move to Utica then. We'll give you enough to pay your
568 gas. Well this has been fascinating talking to you. I wondered if there's anything that
569 you'd like to take an opportunity to say that I haven't asked you about.

570 GR: Oh boy. Off hand I can't really think about it.

571 MR: What's the next kind of important gig you have coming up? Any name people?

572 GR: That's hard to say. I mean I know like I'll be doing the Jazz in July workshop in the
573 summer as a kind of like a faculty member, and I did that last year too, as the house
574 rhythm section for vocalists. And I've got something that should be, I think it's October
575 17th with Sheila Jordan and Harold Danko as a piano player, and Greg Caputo is the
576 drummer, and that's at the Iron Horse in Northampton. But that's a little far off right
577 now. But that will be one of the first gigs under my own name, so that will be nice.

578 MR: Well you're certainly rubbing shoulders with some good company.

579 GR: I enjoy it yeah. It's great. I think it's important to be able to perform and have the
580 experience playing with experienced musicians, I learn so much from that, every
581 performance, so I'm really grateful for that.

582 MR: Well the music's been good to you and I think you're being good to the music, so I wish
583 you the best in your career.

584 GR: Thank you.

585 MR: Thanks for being here today. It was a pleasure, thank you very much. I enjoyed this,
586 thank you.