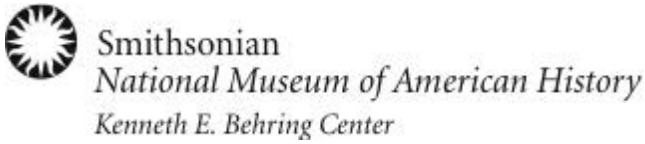

Funding for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program NEA Jazz Master interview was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

SLIDE HAMPTON
NEA Jazz Master (2005)

Interviewee:	Slide Hampton (April 21, 1932 -)
Interviewer:	William A. Brower with recording engineer Ken Kimery
Date:	April 20-21, 2006
Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution
Description:	Transcript, 117 pp.

Brower: My name is William A. Brower. It is Thursday, April 20, 2006. I'm in Carmichael Auditorium, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, conducting an interview with Slide Hampton. Recording the interview is Ken Kimery.

Would you start off, Mr. Hampton, by giving us your full name and date of birth?

Hampton: My name is Locksley Wellington "Slide" Hampton. I was born in Jeannette, Pennsylvania, April 21, 1932.

Brower: That means tomorrow you are seventy-

Hampton: -four.

Brower: Let's start in Jeannette, Pennsylvania. Can you give us a little information about the town and what you recollect of being born there, and your early years?

Hampton: I didn't live there very long, but I do remember very strongly that in Jeannette, for some reason I got the impression that all of America was integrated, because we lived in a family – we shared a house with a white family and our family. I thought that it was that way everywhere until we left Jeannette. Then immediately it changed.

Brower: So you were living in a duplex, two-family home?

Hampton: Yes, two-family home. We left there when I was three years old. So we didn't stay very long, but I had a very good impression of that city.

Brower: Where do you fall in the line of Hampton children in your particular family?

Hampton: Last.

Brower: How many siblings?

Hampton: There were four sisters and five brothers. I always say that by the time my father got to me, all the perfect pitch and everything was gone.

Brower: I want to start with your name, and maybe this can lead you to tell us a little bit about your dad. It's a very interesting name, Locksley Wellington. At lunch, I asked you about it, and you said, Robin Hood. That rang with me, because I used to watch Robin Hood. I didn't read the text your dad probably got it from. I got it from t.v. But tell us about your dad, and the name. I'd like to hear all of the family, all of the names among your siblings.

Hampton: My dad and my mom were wonderful people. That's the one thing that I – the one impression that's very, very – they left with me. After I went out into the world, I found that the standard of values and principles and things that they had was something that you don't find very often. My father was a schoolteacher. He was a carpenter. He was a painter, wonderful paintings. And he was a musician. He played saxophone and drums. My mother played piano and harp. She was like an angel. I learned to love females by the way that my mother was.

Brower: What's your dad's name?

Hampton: My dad's real name is Clark Dehart Hampton.

Brower: How do you spell the middle name?

Hampton: D-e-h-a-r-t.

Brower: And your mom's name?

Hampton: My mom's name was Laura Hampton. So I've always loved the song *Laura* because of her, because she – it seems like they wrote that for her. She was such a wonderful person. Everything she did in her life was for other people. She never did

anything for herself. I just remember this wonderful feeling whenever I looked at her. She always just had this wonderful energy about her. She and my dad got along so well. They stayed married. Once they – his first wife – they stayed married for the rest of their lives.

Brower: Did your mom – was she always in the home, or did she work outside the home, doing things outside?

Hampton: My mom never did anything outside of the home that would take her away from the children. She did everything for us, everything, all day long. It was just amazing. Never stopped.

Brower: From sunup – can't see in the morning to can't see at night.

Hampton: And even after. She was really such a wonderful person.

We had four sisters. They all were musicians. The oldest one was Aletra Hampton. She played piano. The next was Virtue Hampton. She played bass violin. Then it was Dawn Hampton, played alto saxophone, and she danced and sang. They all sang. They were all very talented. They were much more talented than I was. That's the reason I never understood why they didn't stay in music. Also my – I guess the next one after Alitra was Carmelita Hampton. She played baritone saxophone. Also played bass saxophone. So we had almost a big band. We wanted a full band, we'd add some relatives.

Brower: What were your brothers' names?

Hampton: My brother that led the band after my dad retired, his name was also Clark Hampton.

Brower: Did he go by Duke?

Hampton: Duke. That was his professional name. He was a very talented guy. He played all the instruments. He taught me to play trombone. He played saxophone, trombone. He sang. He could play just about anything he put his hands on. I remember he's the one that taught me to do the circular breathing and multiphonics, which is playing more than one note at a time. He taught me those things. The kids always ask me in school, how do you do that? How do you do those multiphonics and that circular breathing? I say it's a lot easier to do that than it is to really play some music. Playing music's a lot harder. Those things you can learn very easy. But to play music, you have to really dedicate yourself to becoming a musician.

After Duke was Marcus Hampton, a trumpet player who played very fine. He's a very fine player. He was also an electrician. Then one of the musicians in the family that first started to compose and arrange was Russell Hampton. We called Russell "Lucky." He

was a saxophone player that played very beautiful saxophone and wrote some wonderful arrangements. Then the real genius of the family was the next brother over me, Maceo Hampton. Maceo was a real – a person that had total recall. He remembered everything that he saw when he went to the movies, everything that he heard. One time, he remembered everything. He also – he wrote a lot of wonderful music. He played all of the instruments in the family band. He played trumpet, trombone, saxophone – tenors, baritones, altos – piano, bass violin. He played everything, and he knew all the parts of the arrangements that we were doing, of all these instruments. So anyone that was missing, he would play their part on their instrument.

Brower: So many different questions that I want to ask you just about the family band. Was your father the first teacher of all of you, and so he knew the whole family of instruments? Or was he limited? Clarify that for me.

Hampton: He – I don't know exactly what his knowledge was of all the instruments. But he's the first one that taught everyone. He gave them at least a basic training so that they could go on from there and develop as musicians. My father was a brilliant guy. He had an incredible mind. So he probably figured out – before he got married, he wanted to have a family band. He wanted to have a band – so he figured out, how many children am I going to have? My mother probably wondered, how many children do we have to have to do this? We have to make this agreement before we get married.

Brower: So the children came right after each other?

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: Bing, bing, 9 months, 10 months, 11 months, 12 months

Hampton: After he'd been married for a while, he had enough people to make up some kind of a band.

Brower: Who were some of the other family that were brought into this process to fill out the band?

Hampton: There were cousins and nieces and nephews.

Brower: How extensive was the family? Was this a family that had a lot of branches?

Hampton: Yes it did.

Brower: And each branch had an ample amount of children? Are we talking about a kind of a clan here?

Hampton: You could call it that. It was a pretty big family.

Brower: Based in Pennsylvania?

Hampton: No, no. We moved from Pennsylvania when I was three years old.

Brower: At the point where the family started, did your family come to Pennsylvania and start a unit? Or was there a family network around Jeannette?

Hampton: Before. We started the musical unit before Jeannette.

Brower: Before Jeannette.

Hampton: Yeah. The band was in existence before I was born.

Brower: So your family had come to Jeannette.

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: Where'd they come from?

Hampton: From Virginia.

Brower: Whereabout?

Hampton: Richmond, Virginia.

Brower: Richmond, Virginia.

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: Do you know where the Hampton name comes from?

Hampton: Not exactly. It's an English name. So it's from some slave owner.

Brower: But you don't track it back to beyond, "we came from Virginia"? We can't go back any further than that.

Hampton: I pretty much know what I'm going to find. So I don't know whether that would be a good idea or not.

Brower: You're three years old, and the family goes to Indianapolis. Do you know why?

Hampton: I think we were just following our dreams. We first went to – we lived in Ohio for a while, after Jeannette. At that time there was music everywhere.

Brower: Where in Ohio?

Hampton: We were in Middletown, Ohio.

Brower: Southern Ohio.

Hampton: Yeah, Middletown, Ohio. We lived there only for a short time. Then for some reason Indianapolis was very attractive for us, because there was a lot of music going on there, because there was an agent, a booking agent, that brought the bands to Indianapolis. They all came to Indianapolis to get their contracts before they went on their tours in the South, all the black bands. So we found that a place that was a very good musical environment to grow in. Right along – actually, I was raised with David Baker and Freddie Hubbard. J. J. [Johnson] was a little before us. A lot of very talented musicians.

Brower: Montgomery brothers.

Hampton: The Montgomery brothers were – we were very – in fact they were very influential to us, because they were very far in advance of us. They had their own thing that they practiced and worked together. They were – they didn't play music by the theory that they had learned. They played by what they heard. So they were much further advanced in theory and all that, and that's because they didn't have any rules that they had to go by. They just had to make the music sound the way that they thought it should sound. They practiced every day, all day long. We used to go over and listen to them practice. My brother could hear everything they were doing. Maceo. He was incredible. He learned so much from them that it was a part of what he used to get him into orchestration and theory and those things. Then we started to study ourselves, reading books, reading scores, participating in any kind of a musical event that we could. All they had to do was say, we'd like you to play with whatever group. It could be in the middle of the night, and we would go. We were in love with music.

Brower: Could you tell us a little bit about the family band's repertoire and the kinds of places that you played? I imagine that you weren't participating when you got to Middletown, at four. When did you first become a part of the family band?

Hampton: I became a part of the band before I started playing. I was – of course they hadn't chose any instrument for me. So I had to sing and dance, because we had a show band, a show and a band together. I didn't start playing until I was 12 years old. I started with trumpet.

Brower: Can you describe what the show was?

Hampton: Yeah. It was kind of based on vaudeville in a way, I guess you would say. It was music, of course, but there was a lot of singing and a lot of tap-dancing and different kinds of dance. My sisters were all very good dancers, and they were all singers. My brothers – Duke was a good singer. All my sisters could sing, and they could all dance, and they all played. It was a lot of different – a variety of things that we did as far as the show was concerned.

Brower: I want to imagine where you were on a particular Friday or Saturday night. I want you to put me in that place. What's it look like? Who's there? What's going on? What's it smell like? What's it taste like?

Hampton: We were playing many different kinds of musical events, but at that time, mostly everyone played dances, because the general public was dancing a lot. Music was what people did for fun and entertainment. That's what they did. They didn't go to theaters or anything like that. They went out to musical events.

At that time, you didn't have to have a name. You had to be good at what you did. That would make it for you. You could work without a name. So we were – often we were playing at a dance or some kind of an affair where we were the main attraction, and we were doing a show, maybe at a state fair or something like that. We were doing the show. We would have the – I had to dance and sing. It was very bad, but I had to take part anyway. My brothers and sisters were all good singers and dancers. So we had developed a show where we had certain numbers that we used, just like the repertoire that you use for a musical ensemble. Finally our repertoire developed into Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Stan Kenton, Dizzy Gillespie. We played music by all the bands. We learned it all by ear.

Brower: Some of those things you would have had to been playing in 1946 and '47 and '48, but you were also doing this in 1943 and 1944 and 1945. See, I'm trying to fix this – is this the tail end of what I think about, when I think about the carnival circuit? Is it a part of the Tough on Black Asses circuit? or the Theater Owners Booking Association circuit, it's also known as? Is it – are you in small theaters? I'm trying to visualize – I know today, it's Carnegie Hall, but I'm trying to figure out what it was in 1943 or '44 – the towns that you were in. I'm getting a general sense, but I'm trying to get a more graphic picture of this experience.

Hampton: There weren't many theaters at that time. We might have played in some theaters, but most of the time we were playing in some kind of a hall, maybe a hall where they would have meetings there otherwise, but for that particular event, they would take out the chairs and whatever they had there, and they'd make it a hall where people could dance. They would have some seating for people. Then, also, most people were standing

in front of the band, listening to music, the real avid music listeners. The dancers were there. They were listening real hard too, but they wanted to dance at the same time. But it was usually halls. Sometimes we'd play a circus, a fair.

Brower: What are some of the other artists with talent that you ran into as part of this, that you were involved – that would also be part of these situations?

Hampton: When we were playing in the '40s, it was – usually you were playing most only with the Hampton band. Later we started doing musical events opposite Louis Jordan, for instance, doing things with Mantan Moreland. That was in theaters. That's coming later in the '50s – the late '40s, early '50s. All the stars that were out there, that were traveling in those circles that we were traveling in, sometimes we'd share the bill with them.

Brower: Is this confined to the Midwest? Are you also covering – are you going Northeast? Are you going South? What's the range of your traveling and touring?

Hampton: Mainly in the South. There's where a lot . . .

Brower: For example?

Hampton: Because . . .

Brower: The Carolinas?

Hampton: We played all those states. Carolina. We played Mississippi. We played all the states of the South.

Brower: Georgia.

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: Arkansas. Louisiana?

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: New Orleans?

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: I guess in the course of doing this – because, once again, you're 12, 13, 14, 15 – your consciousness about race in America had to be being shaped in this experience.

Give us a sense of what that was like, or what impact that was, or what you saw, what you processed?

Hampton: Strangely enough, it seems as though the places that we stayed, we didn't have much of a problem with racial things. It seemed like we lived in – we usually lived in an area where it was mixed. I remember in Indianapolis we lived on Douglas Street. There were families there from – people had immigrated from all over the world, and the people were living there. We had no problem between – we didn't really know what it was going to be like outside of that. Indianapolis, where we lived, didn't have a lot of problems with people not wanting to live together and that kind of thing.

Brower: But I mean in touring in the South. That's where I'm directing those comments to.

Hampton: In the South you definitely had all of these limits. You had very few places that you could eat, very few hotels. There weren't any hotels, in fact. There were – but somehow we seemed to get through it without it being a big problem.

Brower: How did you travel?

Hampton: Most times we're traveling by cars. Some very funny experiences. Once we were traveling. The cars were in pretty bad shape most times. One car we had, the lights went out on the car. So we didn't have any lights in the front. So we caught a lot of those fireflies and put them in bottles, big bottles, and put that on the front of the car, so that people coming – it wasn't a lot of people on the highway, but that was one of the funny things that happened.

Brower: You're just pulling my leg.

Hampton: No, no, no. That's it. That was it.

Brower: What'd you have, like a thousand fireflies in each bottle or something?

Hampton: There were a lot of fireflies.

Brower: Has that ever made that way into your – is there a firefly suite somewhere that I haven't heard?

Hampton: No. There should have been. It's true.

Brower: You're doing this as you're a young man. Would you consider yourself – how did you achieve an education?

Hampton: My father was a schoolteacher.

Brower: So you were home-schooled.

Hampton: A lot of the times, whenever we weren't able to stay in one place and go to school, my dad was teaching us anyway, because he taught school. He actually taught public school. He was teaching in the South. He was teaching in the white school, but he reprimanded the mayor's son once, and they ran us out of town.

Brower: Where was this?

Hampton: That was in Virginia. But he was a very smart man.

Brower: So, at some point after Jeannette and your families travels, you ended up living back in Virginia, where the family had originated? Or did this expulsion from Virginia, did that lead him to Pennsylvania?

Hampton: That's the part of what led to Pennsylvania, that expulsion. No, we never went back there. I don't think that would have been wise. Though we did most of our – the kids started to go to school in Indianapolis. My dad was still always teaching us anyway. He was – every night he would get us together and read to us.

Brower: What would he read to you?

Hampton: Different kinds of stories. He'd just read to us every night, the whole family. During the day we'd be rehearsing. We'd be practicing. It was always music in that house. My mother was like the mother of the whole block. If you didn't have any food, you could come to our house. We were poor, but there was always food there, because my dad always worked. He worked several jobs at the same time.

Brower: Even as he taught school.

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: Even as he had the family band.

Hampton: Whenever he was with the family band, he still was working jobs. He was a guy that would get up in the morning and start doing something – every morning.

Brower: How long did your dad live?

Hampton: He only lived until 72. It probably was maybe just a fluke that he died at that age, because it probably was a heart attack, which could have been stopped by an aspirin, but we didn't know.

Brower: What about religious training?

Hampton: My dad and mother made us go to church every Sunday, and Sunday school. I hated it. I hated it. I couldn't wait until I was old enough not to have to do that. The people in the church were not the kind of people that you would want to aspire to be. They were very hypocritical. They weren't nice. They were like the – I ran into a woman in front of my bank just a few weeks ago. She's always – I guess she's homeless. I always give her some money. She's come so many times, I said, "Why don't you get a job, please, for yourself?" She said, "I go to this church over here, and God is looking out for me." I said, "Why don't you ask your minister to help you?" She said, "I did, and he gave me a dollar." I said, "That's what I thought." I said, "I don't mind giving you money. What I mind is that the man you're going to church and you're actually being influenced by, won't help you."

It was the same thing about our church. They were constantly judging all the people that had a different life than they had. I never like that. Always thought the people that were going to – if they wanted to be in position to judge somebody, you've got to be a pretty upstanding guy. You could get to be boring.

Brower: What was the denomination? Do you recall?

Hampton: Baptist.

Brower: Did the music influence you at all?

Hampton: Yeah. Yes it did. Yeah, there was always a real good feeling of swing in the churches. The church was a big part of our understanding about the African rhythms and things.

Brower: Did you play in the church?

Hampton: We never really had the chance to play in the church. My sister did, though. But after that church, I went to a larger church where they had a choir. I'm surprised, though, they didn't, because most churches will have an ensemble of some kind, maybe a trombone ensemble and the choir. They didn't have the trombone ensemble, or any kind of ensemble but the choir. They were singing music that was very influential and helped you to – open you up to the influence of rhythm, which was very helpful to us.

Brower: When I hear the clapping in church, I think sock cymbal. I wonder if that doesn't have something to do with – if the early experience with a certain kind of music doesn't influence you later in terms of your ability to handle rhythm as it's handled in jazz. That is, if you're not in a way handicapped, if you don't have that early experience where you didn't even know it was being inculcated, what we call swing, how the rhythm moves. Is there anything to that?

Hampton: Oh yes. There definitely is. The thing that Sonny Stitt said – Sonny was always – whenever you would meet him, he was always teaching you something, asking you some kind of question that you couldn't answer. Once I met him, and he asked me – he said – he always talked fast – "What's-the-most-important-thing-in-your-life?" I'm thinking, well, whatever, the water, food. I gave him all of these answers. He said, "No." He said, "Time is the most important thing in your life. You can do without everything except time. When you don't have time, there's nothing that can help you, when your time runs out." So that's the reason – that's what I – my understanding about music is based on the fact that time is the most important thing in music. Whatever you do has to be done at the right time, in the right time. That's the reason a lot of people, when they're first learning music, they don't realize that the passage of time is so important that you have to study it. You have to research it. You got to get with the metronome. You got to get to the place that you understand that in this amount of space, this amount of time has passed.

Because what happens often with drummers, they learn all the drum cadences. Those cadences usually have a certain amount of notes that are played. You can play those notes, but if you don't play them in tempo, they'll come out in another place, other than where the phrase should end and where the next phrase should start. A lot of drummers weren't really aware of that. They thought, as long as they played the cadence – it's a two-bar cadence – that two bars had passed. But not if you don't play it in the right time. This is very important to know. If you play 16 sixteenth-notes, and you don't play them in the right time, it's not a bar. It's not a bar that's being played at that particular time, whatever music you're playing with.

Brower: Okay. So you play them within the time frame. What about the feel?

Hampton: You have to learn to put these two things together.

Brower: Because I think the feel is what you get in the church.

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: You get a sense of time, and twos and fours, because that's in everything. But it's also how it's supposed to feel, how it's supposed to lay, how it's supposed to move, the impetus – where the impetus is, in the note. It's just driven – to me, it's just driven in.

Hampton: You have – in the church, you have – a real important part of the music is how it flows, because the inspiration that comes, for whatever the accents are going to be, is because how the music has a natural flow. Church music has a natural flow. That's its first basis, is the natural flow. All the things that come as far as accents are concerned, happen, and are effective, because the time is right. The drummer is playing a good time. If his time was bad, it would be hard to make that music. The basis of the music is the thing that's important. That means the people on top can do many different things, but because the basis of the music is time, and it's natural, then all the things can work. All things are possible if the foundation is right. If the foundation is right, nothing's impossible. Nothing's possible almost. Foundation is everything.

Brower: What about the participation, the participation of the audience, the freedom to do that? I think it's different, based on that experience.

Hampton: When the right energy is set up, the audience is going to participate whether they want to or not. That energy makes you move, and it makes you move with something that relates to what's going on musically. This is all very natural. This doesn't – you can't change nature. Nature's been doing all of this long before we even got on the planet. It's been doing its thing, and that's what music is based on, that makes music healthy and beautiful and interesting, is that you allow the energy of nature to guide you. You get in tune with that energy and go. When you do that, there's no limits to the music you can make. See, that's the reason, when a person is going to compose something, and they find their self in the best state of mind that they can, rested, their mind cleared up of all the distractions and all of that, it's unlimited what the composer can do. Because we don't have any idea what we can compose when we're in tune with nature. That comes out on a level over all of our studies and all of our experiences. We can never come up with what you come up with from nature, when you allow yourself to be guided by that energy, because that energy's greater than anything we can ever imagine.

Brower: We went to a philosophical plane and, I guess, a spiritual plane, because what you're talking about has nothing to do with a denomination, per se. It has to do with something spiritual.

Hampton: Yes, the real spirit.

Brower: Can you recall – do you recall the schools that you attended in Indianapolis? I just want to get some specifics about what we'll call your formal education.

Hampton: My formal education was very poor. All my brothers and sisters had a formal education. I didn't. I was actually self-taught. Everything I learned was out of school.

Brower: Explain that to me.

Hampton: Someone – since being the last child, and they had so many things to look after – my mother and dad, they had so many things to look after, that it wasn't easy – it was possible for me to not have to really have the kind of formal education that the rest of the kids had. I was always a rebellious person, because I was always . . .

Brower: So you didn't go to elementary school? You didn't go to McBrewster Elementary?

Hampton: No, I didn't.

Brower: You didn't go to Lincoln Junior High School.

Hampton: No, I didn't go to . . .

Brower: You didn't go to . . .

Hampton: I didn't go to grade school. I didn't even go to grade school. I definitely didn't go to high school. I didn't go to a grade school. But I was being taught at home.

Brower: So, home-schooled, again.

Hampton: So I found that – as I realized that education is so important – you have to educate yourself, and you realize it's important – there's a lot of places for you to get that information. So I did – I went everywhere to find the information that I wanted to use to educate myself, because I wanted to be educated in a way that what I learned was based on the truth. I didn't want to learn any facts about anything that wasn't the truth. From the time I was young, I was very rebellious against that.

Brower: You mean, at 8? at 9?

Hampton: I was already that way, and my son is the same way. He's the same way. He's against injustice to the teeth. He's against somebody doing something unfair to somebody else. This just really bothers him. I was always that way. Somebody doing something that was unfair to someone else always really just turned me off. Justice and principle and integrity was something that was always important to me. If I can have that, I can stand everything else that I have to go through. I don't want any of the luxuries without having those things. Those are the things that were important to me. Those are the things that are important to me, is that when I get something, I get it by doing hard work for it, being fair to get it, being fair to people, and being concerned about other people that might be in a situation that I might have been in, or I might be in. Those are the things that are important to me. Selfishness is a thing that I hate. I hate selfishness. I know some people that are good musicians that are very selfish. I don't like it. There's no need for me to lie.

Brower: So there really is no end to your education.

Hampton: No.

Brower: We can't say that in – I guess, in 1944, you were, what? 12 years old – we can't say that in 1948, you crossed some boundary called high school and went to something else. You, from as long as you can remember, were being shaped to be a musician.

Hampton: Once I heard music, I knew that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to learn about this.

Brower: And from the time you were 3 or 4 years old, until now, at one point or another you have been a performer.

Hampton: I've been at least wanting to learn about music. I've loved music from the very beginning. I've loved the fact that music would take me to places that most other work wouldn't take me. I knew that music would take me to places that I could meet people that were different than me and people that had a different background than me, and I knew that that would be a place that I could learn something.

Brower: In 1952, music took you to Carnegie Hall with the Hampton band. At that point, you had been performing trombone professionally, touring. I think of it as barnstorming. I'd like you to respond to that. But I want you to tell the record, how the Hampton – not the Lionel Hampton band, but the Hampton family band – got to Carnegie Hall in 1952.

Hampton: Besides practicing, there was a contest that Lionel Hampton's band was set up to do this. They were set up to do this, and part of the attraction to wanting to win this competition was that you were going to get to play – open the show for Lionel Hampton's band. We got votes and got people to vote for us. We got enough votes to win this contest. We won it, and we played Carnegie Hall, opening the show for Lionel Hampton's band.

Brower: A lot of people are not going to know what the *Pittsburgh Courier* is, or was.

Hampton: It was an important paper at one time. I guess it still exists. Does it?

Brower: It probably exists in Pittsburgh, but probably not – at one point it was basically a national Negro paper.

Hampton: Yeah. Was it still a Negro paper in Pittsburgh?

Brower: Yes.

Hampton: I think it was.

Brower: Yes.

Hampton: Well, that's the reason it doesn't exist anymore.

Brower: I don't think people know that the *Pittsburgh Courier* had jazz polls and contests. If you look in the historical record about the history of jazz, and someone's writing about the 1950s, they're not mentioning the *Pittsburgh Courier*. They're not mentioning that they had jazz polls, or that they had national contests that would lead a band to where your band got.

Hampton: Yeah. That's the reason – that's one of the reasons that I was so deaf on my education being a certain way, because there's too many things that people should know about that they're not going to know about. When you are trying to learn something, and there's part of it left out, then usually what you learn is more of a detriment to you than a help. Things that are left out really makes your whole search off.

Brower: Can you take us to that night?

Hampton: Yeah, yeah. It was a really fantastic night. We played. We were good. We were all right. But Lionel Hampton's band was fantastic. They were . . .

Brower: Who was in the band?

Hampton: I don't remember. What I do remember is, though, that they had – at that time they had a conga drummer in the band. They had two drummers. It was the most moving thing that I had ever witnessed. They had the people in Carnegie Hall almost jumping out of the balconies. It was really wonderful for me, because it was New York. It was a chance to hear music played on this level. Because, see, a lot of people don't know about Lionel Hampton's bands. He had some fantastic bands.

Brower: Had you been to New York before?

Hampton: No, this is my first time going to New York. What I remarked about Lionel . . .

Brower: 20 years old.

Hampton: Yeah. What I remarked about Lionel Hampton's band was that they didn't have to use microphones. They could play in a place, a big place that was usually like

where you would have some kind of a car – what do you call it? Like the place here that they have the car . . .

Brower: A convention center.

Hampton: A convention center.

Brower: The Armory or something like that.

Hampton: They'd play in a convention center, with no microphones, and you could hear everything. It was a good lesson for us, because we hadn't had the opportunity to play opposite with a band like that. We played opposite Louis Jordan with his quintet and things like that, which was really wonderful too.

But that was my first chance to go to New York. I had the opportunity to go to Birdland. My brother took me to Birdland. Bud Powell was playing. It was so fantastic. The impression that it left with me was so incredible that all I could think about after that was coming to New York. I couldn't get anybody to come with me, so I couldn't come there when I wanted to, but coming to New York was very important to me after that. Bud Powell was playing at that time when he was at his highest level of playing.

Brower: Were you already thinking about bebop at that point?

Hampton: Yeah. We had already heard Charlie Parker and [Dizzy Gillespie's] *Things to Come* in Indianapolis. That gave us our direction.

Brower: Talk about when you first heard the modern movement, and where you heard it. Talk about its impact in Indianapolis, how it happened in Indianapolis. Were there other people there that were working towards similar ideas? Or, who were the people that picked up the ideas? Were they able to build some kind of a coterie of musicians around it?

Hampton: Part of the – the people that were responsible for people starting to accept a more modern concept of music was the Montgomery brothers. They were very modern. The thing that you hear from them recorded now – because recording companies asked them to record something commercial. But their thing with that they were always searching. They were always progressive. Of course Freddie [Hubbard] was there. Freddie was – we were all being influenced by them.

Brower: Freddie must have been younger.

Hampton: He was younger. He's a little bit younger than me. But J. J. [Johnson] was there. J. J. was already known. He was playing with Illinois Jacquet, and that was a big

influence on all of us. But when we first heard *Things to Come* and the Charlie Parker recordings, that was the thing that made us know which direction we had to go in.

Brower: Do you remember when you first heard him?

Hampton: Yeah, I do.

Brower: Tell us about that.

Hampton: We had been hearing about *Things to Come*, and we were hoping we could find the recording. One day I was in a part of the house, and I heard this music start to play. They started playing. I knew, this has got to be *Things to Come*, because I haven't heard any other music like that. [Hampton sings the opening phrase of the melody.] When I heard that, I could say from wherever I was, that's *Things to Come.* That really did influence us. We were also influenced by . . .

Brower: Where did you hear it from? Where was it – on the radio?

Hampton: No, no. My brother brought the record into the house. He was playing it in another part of the house. Because he was always looking for this.

Brower: Which brother?

Hampton: The one that – the genius brother – the one that was always – he'd go to your house, and if you had *Things to Come*, you had to watch him, because he'd take that record. And he was the most honest guy in the world. He wouldn't steal anything else. But if he saw some music like that, you had to watch him. He was a very honest guy, but music, he just had – we loved music so much. That started to formulate our whole direction and our whole impression of what the level of quality in music should be in our lives, with Charlie Parker and J. J. and Dizzy.

Brower: In Indianapolis, was this music – how were people working with it? Were they working with it in jam sessions? In people's houses, listening to records? Were they trying it out on the bandstand? How was that happening?

Hampton: When you had a dance, you could choose anything you wanted to play at the dance. Most people were probably trying to choose some music that people could dance to and feel comfortable with, more of a swing style. But when my brother and I played, we played bebop at the dances. The people didn't like us. They cursed us on the streets. But that was what we played. We played bebop at the dances. Actually, it's danceable, but sometimes people, when they hear a new music, they make theirselves believe that it's not danceable. But when Dizzy's band came to Indianapolis and played at the Sunset Terrace, they had the people dancing more than Lionel Hampton did. Had Teddy Stewart

on drums. Paul Gonsalves was there. A wonderful bass player. They had a swing that was really intense. They had – those guys had all played in swing bands. They knew what swing was, and all the other kinds of styles of music. So they found a way to play the music that they usually played in concerts in a way that was very danceable.

Brower: When did you first – did you meet Gillespie at that time?

Hampton: No, but I did go – I went to the dance that he played. He was crazy as ever.

Brower: When you played at Carnegie Hall in ’52, could you visualize yourself ultimately being in the Lionel Hampton band?

Hampton: Yeah, I could, in the Lionel Hampton band, but – because I finally was.

Brower: Yeah. That’s why I’m asking.

Hampton: The second band I played with.

Brower: I’m sort of asking the same question. When you went and saw Diz, could you imagine the relationship and how important he and his music would be in your career?

Hampton: I couldn’t imagine being in his band. We were too in awe of that music. Jimmy Heath was the same way. He followed the band for many years before he got a job in it. He was satisfied just following it and hearing the music. I never thought about getting a job in the band. I was just listening to the band and learning from it. They were way over my head.

Another band that was like that was Count Basie’s band. I had heard them from the time I was very young. I never thought about playing with them. They were just too wonderful to listen to them. That was already enough for me.

Brower: What about Ellington?

Hampton: Duke, I’d also – I’d heard Duke many times. They came to Indianapolis many times. Sometimes the band was very good, and sometimes it wasn’t. Finally he asked me to join the band, but I wasn’t available at the time.

Brower: When did that offer come?

Hampton: That came when I was living in Europe.

Brower: Okay. In the ’60s.

Hampton: No, no. I was living . . .

Brower: In the ’70s.

Hampton: I was living in Europe in the ’60s too.

Brower: Late ’60s.

Hampton: ’68, I started living in Europe. But I think it was in the ’70s that I played a concert in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Duke played the concert also. I was conducting the band. It was my music. He asked me to go with him.

Brower: Taking us back into the ’40s and the range of bands – you said the Basie band. What about the Basie band had an impact on you?

Hampton: They were unexplainable, fantastic. They were just so good. They just made music feel so good.

Brower: Are we talking about the Old Testament band or the New Testament band?

Hampton: Both of them. It started back with the band with Lester Young. They had this love of playing together. That’s what a lot of bands that were really good didn’t have, especially Duke’s band. They definitely didn’t love playing together, but some nights they would play together fantastic. Count Basie’s band played together every night with this love of, we like to play together. You can feel it. They made music that was very consistent. They were very consistent at playing good.

Brower: What about the trombone section?

Hampton: It was always wonderful.

Brower: Was there anybody in that section that jumped out at you or that you gravitated towards?

Hampton: One time, Dicky Wells and all the guys were there. Those were our idols. That’s when Lester was there. Dicky Wells was there, and Sweets [Harry Edison] was in the trumpet section. Herschel Evans was in the saxophone section. So there were stars there. But the thing was with them that they had this great love of making the performance feel like: we’ve done a lot of work to make this final result of this music. It was always with a lot of feeling. That was always very impressive to me.

Brower: What did you think about Count?

Hampton: He was the best bandleader for that band possible, because he was only doing exactly what he had to do to make that music what they wanted it to be, because he was a piano player that played stride and all that. He never did that in the band.

Brower: Subtracted all that and just put . . .

Hampton: He actually – what you would call it. I'm trying to think of the word. It means, leave all this out. Don't play here. That's what he would do. He'd leave all that out, just to play, "blink, blink, blink, ahhhhhhh," and it was so effective, it was so moving, that the people would get such a good – he must have made a lot of people well. He must have made a lot of people that were feeling sick, feel well when they left his . . .

Brower: You took lessons from that band?

Hampton: I was there at every chance I had.

Brower: Did you take lessons from Ellington?

Hampton: Oh yeah. Duke was very – he was very influential, especially in all modern music. All of us that are orchestrators and arrangers, we learned a lot, because, besides Duke, of course you had Billy Strayhorn. Strayhorn was incredible. Never got his just due. But he wrote incredible music. For all of us that wanted to write modern, they had a lot of the things in their writing that would give us the clues and the keys to . . .

Brower: So you spent time with their scores?

Hampton: Oh yeah.

Brower: Or spent time aurally dissecting what they did.

Hampton: Yes. Especially with the recordings.

Brower: Any particular recordings? Any particular pieces that you'd like to . . . ?

Hampton: There's one recording. It's called *Duke Plays Standards,* I think. I think that Strayhorn wrote all the arrangements. The arrangements are just fantastic. This guy was a genius at orchestration. He didn't get a chance to show it as much, being with Duke, but he probably should have been writing for the films and having his own things. He had real – he was a very highly trained guy that had an idea of his own, how he wanted music to feel.

Brower: What about the [Jimmie] Lunceford band?

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Hampton: They were very important.

Brower: Did you get a chance to see them?

Hampton: I heard them.

Brower: Was that part of – was it coincident with your touring experience? Or is it something that you went to see, because you wanted to see it?

Hampton: Heard them in Indianapolis. The thing that was important about Lunceford is that Lunceford's band was the band that inspired Billy Eckstine's band, is the band that inspired Dizzy's band.

Brower: More than Earl Hines?

Hampton: Earl Hines was a part of that also. Those bands were all coming out of one another, and a lot of the music that was played in each band was coming from the band before. Then they would build a repertoire from there. But they were all – Dizzy and them had a lot of experience playing in all these bands. So that's what made it possible for them to go into this new kind of music that took technical genius to play.

Brower: You talked about touring, some of the bands that you've played with, and a sense of the emerging new music. But it was also a time in which you could, as you cited with dances – you'd hear the swing. You'd hear the more advanced modern music. And if there's a Louis Jordan there, you're hearing something else. You're hearing jump swing or some other variation, some other genre. Then you do things later in your career, like with Buddy Johnson, with Lloyd Price, even Motown, because as time goes on, the separations between the musics are more definite. You don't find them on the same bill, played by the same musicians, as close – the branches are more separate. In your mind, as a musician, particularly in the mid-'50s as you developed your career, were these things separate? Or not?

Hampton: Especially in the '40s and '50s, you would find some of these bands on the same bill. You'd find Dizzy's band on the same bill with one of the swing bands, because people didn't find it necessary to separate them. That came later. Everything started becoming more separate later, because the people that were in – the booking agents wanted to separate the things, so that they could finally have control over something. But all of those musics have a lot in it that's related. Louis Jordan played a lot of things that must have sounded – that must have influenced Charlie Parker in his own improvsations.

Brower: [Eddie] Cleanhead Vinson?

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Hampton: Cleanhead Vinson was definitely – he was definitely an influence to all of the guys that were playing modern. I lived in Houston for a year. Cleanhead was there. Cleanhead could just – you'd say, "Play *All the Things You Are*," and he would make up an ensemble, right on the spot, that sounded like something that somebody had worked over and thought about it and changed until they got it the way they wanted. It was that way the first time. He was really incredible with that. A lot of stuff that Miles [Davis] took credit for, Cleanhead had actually composed those songs.

Brower: I have, as your first recording session, a session with Vinson. Is that accurate?

Hampton: It was in the same company that he was in, but we didn't record. He was recording for King, also.

Brower: You didn't do a session that had *Lonesome Train* and *Person to Person.* Your man says you did. That's our first . . .

Hampton: No, I never recorded with Eddie. I would like to have. I know that Eddie was recording with King Records at one time, and we recorded with the family band on King, but we only recorded two sides, because we weren't really – we didn't have something that was really valuable enough for them.

Brower: This is the sessions – there was April 7th, 1953, Duke Hampton?

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: *The Push, Red Riding Hood Blues, Nasty Man Blues, Please be Good to Me, He's Mine, Stomp your Feet, Sweet Stuff.*

Hampton: That was all of our compositions, our recordings?

Brower: Um-hmm.

Hampton: Some of them they didn't release. They only released *The Push* and something on the other side of that.

Brower: So it was a 45, or a . . . ?

Hampton: It was a vinyl – what you would call those? A 33 or something like that?

Brower: 33⅓. No, 78?

Hampton: 78. Vinyl 78.

Brower: Do you remember that session?

Hampton: Sort of. Not really. It was kind of blurred.

Brower: Was Thomas Badger part of family?

Hampton: No. What did he play?

Brower: Alto.

Hampton: Oh yeah. Let's see now. Who was the Badger? The Badger. That's what we called him. The Badger. I can't remember exactly. We did have some friend that we had in the band. One was Thomas Badger, and also Bill Pennick.

Brower: Because this group has Alerta Hampton.

Hampton: Aletra.

Brower: Aletra, Marcus "Lucky" Hampton, Carmelita Hampton, Julius "Billy" Brooks?

Hampton: Yeah, okay. Billy Brooks, a trumpet player.

Brower: Yes.

Hampton: A trumpet player from Cincinnati, Ohio.

Brower: Leo Cornett, somebody named [Ira] Ferguson, Russell Hampton. Who was Ferguson?

Hampton: I'm thinking that Ferguson was – Ferguson, Ferguson. They don't have any other there for him.

Brower: I-l-d – Ild.

Hampton: Ira Ferguson, trumpet player.

Brower: Harry Bell.

Hampton: Harry Bell I don't remember.

Brower: Played trombone.

Hampton: Harry Bell. I don't remember him.

Brower: Virtue Hampton . . .

Hampton: My sister.

Brower: . . . Whitted.

Hampton: Virtue Hampton Whitted. Yeah. She played bass.

Brower: Is she somehow related to Ferris Whitted?

Hampton: No, that was Thomas Whitted that she was married to.

Brower: Okay.

Hampton: Drummer, a very good drummer.

Brower: And Dawn Hampton and Calvin Shields.

Hampton: Calvin Shields, Calvin Shields. What did he play? Drums?

Brower: Right.

Hampton: Calvin Shields, drums. Oh, Eagle Eye. Eagle Eye Shields, a very fine drummer. Played with Lionel Hampton and stayed around Indianapolis most of the time. We had him on this session.

[recording interrupted]

Brower: I'm William Brower. It's April the 20th, 2006. I'm in Carmichael Auditorium, the National Museum of American History. We are about to commence tape 2 of the oral history with Slide Hampton. We ended the first tape talking about the relationship or the time in music when there wasn't that much separation between the styles of – we'll call it modern blues, rhythm-and-blues, jump swing, bebop, and swing. We could find these things coexisting besides each other oftentimes, not so much in a recording situation, but in a live performance situation. Can you give us a sense of what that era – what it meant to your music, and what the passing of that era meant? That is, when you could begin to see that things were becoming more separate, separate markets, separate venues they were being played in, and now the mixture of audiences is no longer there, and maybe that means a mixture of generations is no longer there – your reflections on that.

Hampton: I remember that listening to a band that was considered a swing band, which was Count Basie, that they were playing some of the arrangements that Dizzy's band was

playing. And Dizzy's band was playing some arrangements that some of the swing bands were playing. So they felt as though, at that time, that the audience could be broad-minded enough to relate to these different kinds of arrangements in the bands. It was a thing where they were borrowing from each other and they were influencing each other, because there were often battles of the bands, and they would play on the same stage. It was a thing that was very important in the development of music. When this thing started happening about the separation of music, that wasn't the musicians that did that. They were always listening to each other and learning from each other and being influenced by each other. That's the reason they went so far with music. When it started to change, then that was the businessmen that were taking over, because they wanted to be able to say that this music was better than that music. That's what they wanted, and that's what they've done today. They say, this is the good music, that's the good music, because that way they can control where the audiences are going, in general the audiences go.

Brower: A band that I think most people in jazz probably wouldn't even think of as a jazz band, that I think was important to you, was the Buddy Johnson band. Can you talk about that band? One of the things that I observed in looking at the discography, is that many of the names, like a Harold Minerve, for example, are names that I associate with jazz. But they were a part of that experience.

Hampton: Buddy was a very open-minded bandleader. He allowed people to try things that they believed had value. When I wrote for the band, he let me write anything I wanted to write, because he knew that I wrote different than some of the guys that were writing for the band. He actually did it because he knew it was different, because he thought, being different, it could be some kind of a thing that might inspire something in the band that would be good for the band. Besides the fact that he was a very fine pianist and a composer, he was a very fair guy. He was my kind of guy. He treated the musicians with a lot of respect and love. He didn't mind you doing something that wasn't like he did. He did his thing. It was very strong. It was very strong in its composition and its whole feeling about – because see, when he did – he had certain guys that wrote music for him. He would give them a composition to write. They knew exactly what to write to make him feel good about what they were trying to get out of his composition. By the same token, when Gil Askey or myself wanted to write something different, he was very encouraging.

Brower: It sounds like the band – I almost want to say it had, in a way that Basie had a signature, that the Buddy Johnson band had a signature.

Hampton: They definitely had a signature.

Brower: How would you characterize that?

Hampton: The blues. They were a blues band.

Brower: A big blues band. Would you call it a big jazz blues band, or just a big blues band?

Hampton: They played things that were also touching on jazz, but their main ingredient was blues. So whenever he wrote a beautiful melody, there was some blues there. Because this is what he felt. He was searching for anything. He already had what he was looking for.

Brower: Like Basie did.

Hampton: Yeah. But at the same time, he would still – for new ideas. He was interested in new ideas, because I think he thought as though the new ideas opened his mind up more to do what he wanted to do. He had a repertoire of things that he did that are really wonderful compositions.

Brower: What were some of your favorites?

Hampton: What's the name of this song? *Since I Feel for You, I Wonder Where My Love Has Gone?* – still I love that song. He had a lot of great songs like that, and his sister was just perfect singing them.

Brower: Ella Johnson?

Hampton: Ella was perfect, singing. Arthur Prysock was there, too, one of the beautiful voices, but Buddy's music just fit him so well.

Brower: Arthur Prysock, one of the many Billy Eckstine – I don't want to call him clones.

Hampton: Influenced.

Brower: Influenced singers. So there's another kind of a continuity in Buddy Johnson that comes out of the '40s. You think it's a band that's gotten its due in posterity?

Hampton: No. It hasn't gotten any due.

Brower: Within that band, besides Harold Minerve and Gil Askey, what other jazz players were there?

Hampton: There was a trombone player that was playing lead. He was a Muslim, I remember. I can't remember his name, but he played. He really played. He was a jazz player. And there was Purvis Henson, tenor saxophone player.

Brower: Do you mean Haleen Rasheed?

Hampton: Yes. He played the trombone really well. There was a good band. They were playing a music that you could enjoy, even if you didn't know that style of music. You could enjoy it, because they were playing good ensemble work. They had a good swing. They had a good drummer. It was really a good band.

Brower: What were the venues? What was the touring like of that band?

Hampton: We were doing the dances, mainly dances.

Brower: Similar to what you did in the Hampton band.

Hampton: Yeah, except they played more theaters than we did.

Brower: How'd you get in that band?

Hampton: I was living in Houston. I was playing with a band there, because I had left home, trying to go to New York by myself. I went to Cincinnati, Ohio, where – I had enough money to get to Cincinnati, which was 100 miles away. I didn't have any money to go any further. So I stayed in Cincinnati for two weeks. I played there with Miles Davis for the first time. He was traveling as a soloist then. I played with him. He was always very encouraging to me. I never really tried to play with his band, but he always – we had a very warm . . .

Brower: Is that to a time when Miles was kind of based maybe in Detroit?

Hampton: I think so. Just going out and playing different places with different rhythm sections.

From there I went – my friend found out that I was there, that lived in Houston, and asked me to come to Houston. I went to Houston and played with his big band, because he had a big band that played.

Brower: Which was the . . .

Hampton: The Buddy Harrell band. We played in a very beautiful place there in Houston. We played there for a year in this place. That's where Buddy Johnson heard me, was with this band. Then he asked me to come to New York with him. I finally went with him.

Brower: Was his band based in New York, Buddy's band?

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: Where was his touring like? Was his touring the South?

Hampton: Everywhere. He went everywhere. He was very – Buddy was very successful.

Brower: Bill Doggett. I see a recording session with Bill Doggett in Cincinnati, King Records. Where does that fit in the chronology, and how did it . . . ?

Hampton: It was probably something that wasn't released, but then, years later, when we played the Savoy Ballroom, we played opposite Bill Doggett's trio. That's where we really learned what swing was about.

Brower: Elaborate.

Hampton: They were incredible. In the Savoy, there's two bandstands. Had you been there before?

Brower: Oh no.

Hampton: Too young. Two bandstands, and they usually had two bands. On one side was Benny Goodman. The other side was – what's his name? – drummer.

Brower: Chick?

Hampton: Chick, yeah.

Brower: Webb?

Hampton: Chick Webb. The people were dancing, a thousand people dancing. The floor's going up and down like this. It was fantastic. The bands were playing great, because one band would play a tune and then the other band would play a tune, back and forth like that all night. We played there opposite Bill Doggett. He was on the other bandstand.

Brower: We who?

Hampton: The family band. We had played one week in the Apollo Theater with the family band. At that time, some of the people in the band didn't read music. But we had to play this show, which was a lot of music. So the ones that read taught the people that didn't read the parts. They memorized them. We rehearsed all night. We played the show, and we had a big success there. After we left there, we went to the Savoy Ballroom, right

opposite Bill Doggett, I think it was. That little trio, impossible to follow. They were so – they were swinging so hard. They really taught us a lot. Then we went back into the Apollo after those two weeks, by popular demand, and played another show with the band. I tried to encourage my sisters and brothers to stay in New York, but they wouldn't. They wouldn't stay.

Brower: Why? Different reasons, I'm sure, but if you could sum it up, why?

Hampton: They felt more comfortable in Indianapolis, because they knew people there. They knew the city.

Brower: What in you was different?

Hampton: They felt that New York was fast. It was fast. They just didn't have the desire to stay there. There were a lot of opportunities there. They wouldn't stay.

Brower: We think about the Marsalis family, but they only have a sextet.

Hampton: Didn't want to work Mom too hard.

Brower: It seems as if your band was ahead of its time. If you had been – if your dad had come along about 30-some years later, I don't know – maybe you might be running Lincoln Center.

[recording interrupted]

Instead of being raised in the '30s, if you were being raised in the '60s, then America might have been ready for you, and your opportunities, I think, may have been very different.

Hampton: I think that, for me, the thing that's important . . .

Brower: We're not running, are we?

Kimery: I did now.

Brower: Okay, that's fine.

Hampton: For me, the thing that's important is that in my later years I understood that there's a lot more music out there to learn than I've learned. That's the thing that really has made my whole life more enjoyable now, is that I found out that the whole happiness in the thing is the learning process. That's where the real joy is. It's not – the performances usually are more – there's more tension and things connected with that,

than there is pleasure. The pleasure's in the learning and accepting the fact that you never stop learning. That's the thing that really makes it a joy.

Brower: Let's go back to the history stuff. I think there will be a parallel current, because you are such a philosopher, or have such a philosophy about life and about how music should be, how it should go, and what's involved with it. I saw that in what you were giving to the students today. You were giving them life lessons, and much of what you are sharing with us, are life lessons, beyond the facts of the matter – the essence of the matter, which is the life lessons. That seems to be very paramount to you, very important to you.

Coming out of the Buddy Johnson experience: why did you leave that band?

Hampton: Buddy was giving me an opportunity to write and play. I was always looking for something that could help me further my knowledge about music and about playing. When I joined the Lionel Hampton band, they had some more experienced musicians in there, because Lionel Hampton had more money to work with.

Brower: So Lionel Hampton was the next big . . . ?

Hampton: He was the next one, yeah, after Buddy?

Brower: How'd you get there, though?

Hampton: The thing that was important about it was that Buddy wished me all the best things in the world when I left his band. He said, "You've been . . ." – he really appreciated me. Then he said, "I hope – if you can find something that will help you to become better at what you're doing, I'm behind you 100%." It was really wonderful. I was . . .

Brower: Were you recruited by Lionel? How did that happen? How'd you get there?

Hampton: Let's see. I'm trying to think of who got me that job in the band, because there were a lot of musicians in the band at that time that were jazz players. It could have been Curley Hamner. That was the other guy that was the drummer in the band, and danced. He was a tap dancer. He and I were very close. He could have been the one that recommended me for the band. I took the audition.

Brower: Do you remember the audition?

Hampton: Auditions at that time were: you would go on a concert stage and play the music without a rehearsal. That was the audition.

Brower: So there was a gig, and you played the gig.

Hampton: You had to play a gig. That was the audition. So you had to be able to read. You had to be able to not play when you shouldn't be playing. All that was part of what made them decide that they wanted to have you there.

Brower: You knew Hamp's book?

Hampton: No. No, I didn't. I didn't know the music. I was reading a lot then, though. When we were in Indianapolis, we studied reading and all that stuff, every day, all day long – reading of all kinds of music, all the different clefs, all the different concepts of music. We read violin music. We read french horn music. We read every kind of music there was.

Brower: Who was driving that process?

Hampton: Partially – mainly David Baker, and Freddie was in there. He was involved in this too. J. J. was already a guy that was – he was a professional musician already. There were a lot of people from the classical and jazz styles of music that were working together learning.

Brower: What was this circle? It sounds like an informal circle of players?

Hampton: Yeah it was. It was a circle – some guys that weren't known, but they had studied, for instance, classical music, and they were very much up on the . . .

Brower: Was this a racially mixed group?

Hampton: Yes, racially mixed.

Brower: Where did it meet? How did it come together?

Hampton: Anywhere we could.

Brower: Your house?

Hampton: Yeah, the house.

Brower: Somebody else's house.

Hampton: Somebody else, a jam session, whatever. Anywhere they said, "We're going to go here and read some music," "We're going to go here and play some music," we went.

Brower: Afternoon? Evening?

Hampton: Afternoon, evening, morning, every time.

Brower: That experience – hopefully we'll come back to that and talk about it in more particular – but that experience is what prepared you to be able to go on the bandstand, sit in the section, and read flyspecks.

Hampton: Yeah, because at that time, the auditions were never made with a rehearsal or something like that. Auditions were made on the job.

Brower: Who hired you? Hamp?

Hampton: Gladys [Hampton], very reluctantly.

Brower: Why do you say that?

Hampton: She was that way with everybody.

Brower: That was the management style.

Hampton: Yes it was.

Brower: How long did you stay with Lionel Hampton?

Hampton: About two years.

Brower: United States tour? Overseas tour? Both?

Hampton: We didn't do any of the tours for the government. We toured overseas, just normal tours: Australia, Europe, Canada, everywhere.

Brower: This was the mid-'50s, '56, '57?

Hampton: '56, '57.

Brower: Who were your bandmates at that time?

Hampton: Julian Priester was there – trombonist Julian Priester. Wilbur Hogan, the great drummer. Oscar Dennard, fantastic piano player from Memphis, with all the great piano players that come from Memphis. There were quite a few. Eddie Williams, a great

trumpet player, and Richard Williams, a fantastic trumpet player. He had a lot of good jazz players in the band. The band was really good.

Brower: What was the – were you – did you have an opportunity to write for that band?

Hampton: Yeah, I did write some, but it wasn't – my writing wasn't very good for the band. I wrote. We played a couple of my things. I remember I wrote an arrangement on *Chicago* for them, and one on a song that was written for his wife, Gladys. But I was finding out that the level of arrangers and orchestrators were very heavy. They wrote heavy. There's guys like Ernie Wilkins and all these guys that were – they were very, very in advance of me.

Brower: Did you have an opportunity to learn from them?

Hampton: Oh yeah.

Brower: Who else was arranging for the band, besides Wilkins, at that point?

Hampton: There was a man named Moon Mullens, a man named Quincy Jones, who wrote a lot for them.

Brower: Was he also in the trumpet section?

Hampton: No, he had been in the band before I joined it. We were playing a lot of his arrangements. We were playing arrangements probably by Ernie Wilkins, a fantastic arranger. That's all I can recall right now, but there were some other guys that were very good too.

Brower: At that point, was the learning once again hearing, or actually sitting with them, and them illustrating various musical ideas or various techniques?

Hampton: This one guy, Moon Mullens, would illustrate stuff for us. He was very good. Not well known, but he had a great knowledge of orchestration and arranging. So he would tell us different things that might work, different things that probably wouldn't work. He was very helpful in that way.

Brower: Just as kind of an aside question: it seems as if your training is kind of an autodidact. You teach yourself. You read. You study things. You figure things out. At any point, have you gone and studied with this or that orchestrator, or this or that composer, or, for that matter, this or that trombone player, as a way of developing and advancing?

Hampton: I haven't. I'm sorry that I didn't, because I did have some opportunities to study with some really fantastic people. My love for music sometimes overwhelmed my logic. I had the feeling that love for music would do it. But it doesn't do it. You have to do the work. Your love for music is probably the thing that gives you the energy to do the work, but you have to do the work. Now I'm realizing that more and more. So I'm thinking about studying with people. Because I'm at the place now where I want to be able to orchestrate and arrange on another level altogether. So I'm ready to study now, even with a trombone player.

Brower: When you say on another level, do you mean for larger instrumentation? Or – how do you mean?

Hampton: Quality. The quality of the result, because the more you learn, the more you realize how these other things can affect what you do, how someone that can give you some clues in a certain thing that will open things up to you. Those things not only will be things that you learn specifically, but they will do things that will open up your mind and make you understand more about what it is you're trying to achieve. Because these things are endless. Orchestration is an incredible thing that most people would never imagine, that you have to sit in front of a piece of paper with your – whatever ensemble you – and figure out all these millions of things that have to go together to make a musical result. It's a wonderful thing that happens to your mind when you're having to do this.

Brower: Do you hear it, or is it math?

Hampton: You actually hear it. You start to hear it. You're working on it, and you start to hear the melodies, counter-melodies, harmony. You start to hear this stuff. It's really incredible. It's such a joy, especially when you get into a thing, you're rested, and your mind is working. All of a sudden, all these ideas are coming. It's incredible. Things that theoretically you would never have thought about from your training, because theory has no comparison to inspiration. Inspiration is endless.

Brower: Let's go back to the Lionel Hampton band. Let's move beyond this parallel track of how you see it, and wanting all the facts, all the stories, all the anecdotes, and all the relationships. What was the spirit of that band? You spoke of the spirit of the Basie band versus the spirit of the Ellington band. What was the spirit of the Hampton band?

Hampton: It was a very strong spirit, very strong. We had – our trombone section was a section that really loved playing together. The trumpet section was incredible. We had a trumpet section that was just – they didn't have to use microphones. They'd play a big hall and filling the hall up with music. We really loved – because Lionel Hampton also had – he also had a strong feeling to become a jazz improviser. He wanted to do that too. He was too hung up in being a showman to do it, but he always wanted to play songs that

he could learn from. The last band before he died, he was playing *Giant Steps* and all that stuff, because he always wanted to learn. That was one really good thing about him. If you play something that was beautiful, he wanted to know what it was. "What was that? Show that to me." Sounds like [James] Moody. That's Moody. "What was that?" He was always – Moody's always – whatever you play, he's asking, "What is it? I want to learn that." Hamp had a lot of that in him. So he surrounded himself with musicians that were very inventive and very creative. He felt as though he could learn from that, and of course he probably did.

Brower: That kind of flies in the face of the impression I had that he kept his thumb on everything. He didn't want people to go out and record if he wasn't getting a piece of it. He sounds like a bundle of contradictions.

Hampton: He does. He's a selfish guy and an egomaniac, but a great, talented guy. What he wanted to do – actually, he kept his self from doing it by letting these character traits rule his thinking. Actually what he wanted to do is just like we do. He wanted to just get in the practice room and practice as much as he can and go out and play with guys that would help him to learn more, like we do. That's what he wanted to do. But he had this thing about wanting to be the showman and wanting to be the center of attraction and all of that.

Brower: Do you think that's because he was straddling an era? He came from an era when it was about showmen, and transitioned into an era where another kind of consciousness came into the music. He goes back to the '20s. He probably – excluding Louis Armstrong, he had probably one of the longest expanses stylistically and in time, in the music.

Hampton: That's true. He did come from an area where entertainment was very important. Louis Armstrong was one of the great examples. Of course a lot of people don't realize that, along with all of that entertainment, there was a hell of a lot of genius going on. That probably distracted people sometimes from seeing really what he was doing, because he was such a great entertainer. So Lionel Hampton probably was influenced by Louis Armstrong in this entertainment area of music. Louis Armstrong had a big success with this stuff. He probably – a lot of the guys that came not too long after that felt as though you had to do that. Even up to the bebop period, when Dizzy started his band, he was still being influenced by that thing with Louis Armstrong, entertaining.

Brower: And Cab Calloway. That's a band I didn't ask you about. Did that figure in your calculus at all?

Hampton: Of course, because Dizzy played with him, and a lot of other good guys played with him.

Brower: So that's a part of that time of the intersecting bands, and these guys jump from this band to that band.

Hampton: They were influenced by Cab, because Cab Calloway had some really good bands. What they didn't like is, they didn't really like all the showmanship that he was using all the time. But he did that. That was him. It was natural for him. But Dizzy and them didn't like it. So sometimes when they were in the band, they'd be doing things like – he'd be out there going, "Hi de hi de ho," and they'd be throwing things and hitting him on the back of the head. At the same token, they learned a lot about entertainment from that guy.

Brower: Even as they made fun of it.

Hampton: Even as they made – and then when they went into their bands, they used that experience.

Brower: Used some of the same things. It sounds like you liked playing in the Hampton band, but you might have found his leadership problematic.

Hampton: What I found was what he could have accomplished was somewhat hindered by his, "I want to be in the spotlight all the time." Distractions. Those are distractions that we all could have. Distractions are everywhere just waiting. Every corner you turn around, there's some distractions waiting for you, and if you don't keep going, they'll get you. He was distracted all the time by his ego. But he was the guy that was always trying to learn. He was always playing the vibes, and he was listening to the other guys, playing and say, "Come on, Gates. Play this with me." He was always trying to learn, but he had this other thing that was distracting him.

Brower: Why did you leave the band?

Hampton: I left because I had the opportunity to go with another band.

Brower: Was that Ferguson?

Hampton: Maynard Ferguson from there, yeah.

Brower: How did that situation develop? Who approached you? How did that come about?

Hampton: The guy that played first trombone with Stan Kenton was playing in the band, Bobby Burgess. He had played with Stan Kenton. Then he played with Louis Jordan's big band. Did you ever hear that band?

Brower: I can't say that I have, no.

Hampton: Louis Jordan big band was very good, because Louis Jordan had enough money to pay – get great musicians, because from his little group he was very successful. In fact, he had to take the big band, because he was making so much money. So this guy was in the band. Then from that band, he went to Maynard's band. He saw me with Lionel Hampton and told Maynard that he should try to get me in the band. Maynard did. Maynard was a very nice guy, a really great musician, and gave us the opportunity to try to develop our skills as arrangers and players.

Brower: You did a lot of writing for that band, and arranging. Was that your coming-out party?

Hampton: That was when I really . . .

Brower: Was the time right for you, or what?

Hampton: Actually, it was the fact that he was very encouraging. Maynard was encouraging. He gave us the chance to write. He said, "You write any time you want to, and we'll pay you for it." So that was such an inspiration, I was writing all night. Every day I was writing. I was writing so fast that I would start in the evening, and by morning the arrangement was finished. I wrote it with no score. I wrote the parts out. A lot of the things that are on the recordings are things that were written without a score. I just wrote the parts out, and I'd write them out in one evening. It was so inspiring. So he gave me a chance to really see how bad my arrangements were. I got to hear them a lot. I learned that they were bad.

Brower: Did you feel you grew in that period?

Hampton: Not really. I went back to Maynard later and told him, "I got to ask you. Forgive me for what I did in the band." Because I didn't know – I was so in love with having the opportunity, that I wasn't realizing that love alone just won't do it.

Brower: So you're not pleased with *The Fugue* or your early version of *Frame for the Blues.*

Hampton: There might have been a couple of them that came out okay.

Brower: *Three Little Foxes.*

Hampton: A couple of them came out. Some of them were superficial and jive. I go back and look at myself as a musician. I see the period where I was jive, and I don't like the look of myself in that way. But there are periods.

Brower: I looked in the *Grove Dictionary of Jazz* this morning, and they said, three important pieces by Slide Hampton with the Maynard Ferguson orchestra, and they named those three things, *Three Little Foxes*, *Frame for the Blues*, and *The Fugue.* Do you have any response about how you, looking back now at those arrangements of those pieces – *Frame for the Blues*, you revisited three or four times.

Hampton: Yeah, *Frame for the Blues* I think was the best one of them. It had a little bit more of what would help someone else that would listen to that to find essence of music and jazz – of music, not only jazz, just music in general. I think that when you write something or when you say something, you should try to say something that really doesn't mislead somebody. People can be misled by their selves easily enough. If you're going to say something, you're going to write something, you're going to play something, play something that has some sincerity connected to it, some self-expression connected to it, so it inspires someone else to do something that will also inspire someone else.

Brower: Are you saying – can I interpret this to mean that if you wrote a piece of music that you felt was derivative, that just replicated elements you heard somewhere else, and that didn't really offer either a new synthesis of those things or some personal idea that had meaning, it's not – it was just a worthless exercise, or it's something that you would cast aside?

Hampton: Yeah, something – I don't want to be putting that kind of thing out there. It's better for me to stay in the room and work on the piano, practice my horn, than to put some music out there that has no real meaning. I've done that already. I've put music out there that has no meaning, and it didn't have a good result.

Brower: Can you give me an example?

Hampton: A lot of the music that I wrote for Maynard. I was writing because I had the opportunity to do it. I should have taken more seriously that opportunity and not wrote so much, but tried to write the very best that I could. When you're writing the best that you can, you're usually not writing really fast, because if you're working on a composition and you . . .

Brower: Meaning staying up all night and getting out by the morning.

Hampton: Yeah, getting out by the morning. You don't really need to do that. What you need to do is let the composition develop. Let it open up like a flower. Let the inspiration of the thing lead you to what the next thing that you write is going to be.

Brower: Do you remember this recording?

Hampton: Is that Maynard?

Brower: Right.

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: You've got two things on here: *Kundalini Woman* and *Molecules.*

Hampton: Yeah, I was trying to write more modern on there.

Brower: The *Kundalini*'s kind of like funk.

Hampton: Yeah, it's based on funk, or some modern harmonies.

Brower: I'm wondering if this is a technique that comes out of so much experience that you had with like a Buddy Johnson and maybe a Lloyd Price and some other things, where you do relate – you either take a popular song and open it up harmonically, or you will take a rhythm that people will attach themselves to, and put modern things on top of it, or marry it to modern things, or have it animate modern things. When you do that, what's your aim? What's your thinking in approaching things that way?

Hampton: That's what we're doing now. We're going to have our concert in June, which is the Jobim music. One reason we're done that is because the rhythm of the Jobim music, people that listen to all kinds of different musics can relate to. That foundation, you can have all these beautiful melodies on top of that, and where people might not be able to really dig beauty in music in that way, they can dig it because of the rhythm. So we're going to have, later in the year, a big-band concert that's based mainly on funk rhythms, because there are more people that have heard that. We're going to put on top of that, really great arrangements. We think that we can shoot at broadening the audience with that.

Brower: You've been interested in Brazilian rhythms a long time, because in some of the things – I think even – I was listening to, maybe, the Vanguard orchestra recording. There it is. There's some bossa, or something up in there.

Hampton: It's true. I started listening when I was living in Paris, because a lot of Brazilian people came to Paris. They migrated there, through Portugal and France and Spain. It was incredible, the music that they made. And the people that were just general audience were also making music. They knew all of the songs, and they knew the harmony parts and everything. I was moved with this.

Brower: Like church, like Baptist church.

Hampton: Yeah. For them, it's very spiritual. They would get together, and you would think they had rehearsed. They never saw each other before.

Brower: Like church.

Hampton: Yeah. It was very impressive. I listened to it for a long time. I listened to it without trying to do anything with it. I just listened to it, because I loved listening to it. My mind got so far off into that, that I had to make myself start listening to something else. I was listening to Jobim. Finally, a couple of years ago, John Lee, the bassist, said, let's do an album of Jobim's music, and we did it. It was so inspiring to write the music – write the arrangements on that music. You just sat and listened to the song a couple of times, and all of a sudden ideas start coming from everywhere. You have too many ideas. I've been very impressed with that music, because the rhythm is a rhythm that people can relate to even from some other concepts of music, because the thing that they like about it is that it's very danceable. It moves you in that way. Jazz rhythm sections sometimes don't give you the feeling like they're really working together to try to have an accomplishment. They're individuals, playing great, but not working together. So we want to have at least a concert where anybody that comes there is going to get a groove, a stone groove, with some great music on top of it.

Brower: You're doing your tenure with the Ferguson band. What essentially were you – what was your performance life like? Where were you playing? What kinds of gigs were you doing?

Hampton: Maynard was playing everywhere, because he was very popular. He was playing concert halls, theaters, dances. He loved the fact that he was playing a dance. He loved that. And he loved the fact that he had an opportunity to play the blues. He loved that. Or something from the church. Because he's a smart enough guy to know that all of these things are a benefit to him. You have to be really smart to be able to accept the fact that there are a lot of things that you can do that are going to help you to become better. That's what an intelligent person does.

Brower: That's interesting, because I hear those flavors – in fact you wrote some things that have a church flavor or they have a funk flavor. But *Molecules* is something else altogether. That's kind of going in a different direction. So all this is coming from Maynard, that desire to be eclectic, in a sense.

Hampton: You had the opportunity to do that with him, because he wasn't afraid to play anything.

Brower: What's the difference between the Kenton world and the Ferguson world? Because I see them as both brass-driven and playing super high ranges, just brass music, big and high ranges and blaring and aggressive. But they're two different experiences,

but I think there's a crossover among the musicianship. Maynard kind of grows out of the Kenton thing, but with a different . . .

Hampton: They have things in common. They have some things that are in common. One thing that they have in common is Kenton was always playing the music of a lot of different arrangers. He never stayed with one person or with himself. He played music, and that was very smart, because you can never have all the ideas that ten other arrangers can have. You can't have it, no matter how good you are. So that was his thing. He always had other arrangers. He brought all kinds of music into the band, and it kept them so that they were playing some music that was interesting for people.

Brower: You've done that too. I see that in your programming. It's a Slide Hampton record, but there's going to be some other players there.

Hampton: Oh yeah. We're not going to limit ourselves to one person. We're not going to limit ourselves to one style. We're going to give everybody a chance. Somebody could – the least person that you expect – which happened with the octet. The guy that never wrote anything for us before, wrote one arrangement that was the best arrangement we had.

Brower: Who was that?

Hampton: His name was Billy . . .

Brower: The *Hi Fly* arrangement?

Hampton: *Hi Fly.* I go back and listen to that arrangement now, and I say, boy, I had to be dumb not to hear this, to see this. I was dumb then, and I know it, because I didn't see this, and now, when I hear it, it's obvious. This guy wrote an arrangement that was just worlds above our stuff.

Brower: The recording that we're talking about that that's on is *Sister Salvation,* which was the Atlantic recording. I'd never heard of that gentleman before or since.

Hampton: Or since. He never wrote anything for us after that. He might have written one, but it wasn't – that arrangement, when I first heard it, scared me. Almost had to leave the rehearsal. I have to get out of there.

Brower: Speaking of that, what – I looked up this word, assever . . .

Hampton: Asseveration?

Brower: I couldn't – I could find a word close to it, but I couldn't find a word that had the last v in it. Tell me about this word.

Hampton: That's actually George Coleman's composition. That's his.

Brower: His formulation.

Hampton: I don't know what – do you know what that word means?

Brower: To asseverate is basically an affirmation.

Hampton: Oh yeah?

Brower: But if you look this – I googled the word and looked through different dictionaries, there was never a last v. Oftentimes, people conflate words with some story behind it. I was wondering. Musicians are always inventing words. I was just wondering if there was . . .

Hampton: I think that might have been it. George – that arrangement of George was a wonderful arrangement. I was listening to this recently, this CD. George came to New York playing fantastic. He came to New York playing good. On all my CDs I have it. Every solo he plays is fantastic. It's all music. I think that he probably didn't – he wasn't really given the credit that he should have got. I didn't realize it, because he was playing over my head, but there are guys that should have realized it. I think that that was always something that stuck . . .

Brower: . . . in his craw.

Hampton: . . . in his craw. I think this was a kind of way of saying so. The arrangement is really fantastic, and his playing on it.

Brower: He's a monster player.

Why'd you leave Maynard Ferguson?

Hampton: Because I had an opportunity to go with Dizzy, I think.

Brower: The first time?

Hampton: Yeah, with Dizzy's big band. That band was way over my head, but I had to go there anyway. Benny Golson was there, and Lee Morgan, Wynton Kelly. Melba Liston was the musical director. I had to go there. I had to go there and get kicked, kicked and beat-up on. I did it. They taught me a lot in there.

Brower: How long were you with Dizzy in its first incarnation?

Hampton: About over a year, almost two years, something like that.

Brower: What was the touring and performance life of that aggregation during the time you were there?

Hampton: Wonderful. Dizzy was very popular, and he was at a peak playing the trumpet. He paid more money than the other bands. He had a lot of respect for musicians and loved music dearly. He wrote wonderful arrangements himself. Then he had all the guys that could write on that level that he was writing on. I didn't write anything for them.

Brower: When you say paid better, what was pay during that time?

Hampton: It was bad, unbelievably bad. The guys that were making the most money in most cases were paying the least. Lionel Hampton. He was the most popular band out there. Paid the least.

Brower: When you were with Diz for that year, did you need to do any other work?

Hampton: We worked a lot.

Brower: You worked. So you could make a year's salary.

Hampton: Yeah. He paid a good price for the music. He paid the guys good. Some guys were making more than me, because they were doing things – more important things in the band than I was.

Brower: Who was in the trombone section with you?

Hampton: It was Melba, and Chuck Connors, who played with Duke's band, and another trombone player. I think his name was Willie. Something like that. Was from – I forget where he was from. They were good players. They were very good.

Brower: What was the practice regime like? What was the – you talk a lot about the need to work on your part, the need for the sections to work on their part, and how you get these building blocks that then build out the sound of the band. What was the life like that in the Dizzy band?

Hampton: He was one of the guys that mostly imposed audition that was, you play a concert. Your audition was in the concert. You're playing some hard music, music that

by the time you figure out what it was, it's past, fast. Dizzy was a great reader. Dizzy and Charlie Parker were great readers. In the time when Dizzy was working in New York as a freelance musician, you could call him for anything. He could come right on the radio show and sight-read it, whatever it was. Charlie Parker was the same way.

Brower: Did you know Bird?

Hampton: I met him. I didn't know him, but I met him.

Brower: Can you tell us?

Hampton: It was wonderful. I met him – I lived behind the Apollo Theater, right across from the Apollo Theater back door. One day I was walking – one night I was walking out towards Eighth Avenue, and Bird was coming up. He was with a guy, and this guy knew me. He introduced me to Charlie Parker. He treated me with such respect. It was just – it filled my heart up, because he didn't know anything about me, but he treated me, and said, "I sure want to hear some of your music, and I know you must be really fantastic, because I've heard about you in other places." It was just such a heartwarming experience. He was so kind.

Brower: How was he dressed?

Hampton: Dressed. He always was dressed.

Brower: I mean that time. Shirt and tie?

Hampton: Shirt and tie. The musicians at that time all wore – they wore shirt and ties to play golf. They were always dressed. What you see on the street now, these guys would be – they'd be out of place altogether, because at a rehearsal, they were dressed. They're wearing hats and ties at the rehearsal. On the stage it was always – they were in costume. It was a real show of respect for the music.

Brower: How was his manner of speech?

Hampton: Very intelligent.

Brower: I thought he was just a cold-blooded junky.

Hampton: Bird was extremely intelligent. He's so intelligent that he was going up – the guy was flying in a plane with a guy. The guy took him up to fly. Bird talked the guy into letting him take the plane over, and he couldn't fly, and the guy let him do it. He started going down. So he grabbed the wheel back from him. But he was so intelligent. He's around Dizzy. Dizzy was superbly educated.

Brower: At that time, you were living – this had to be in the early ’50s. Bird is still with us – what was the extent of the music community, musicians living in Harlem or uptown?

Hampton: There were a lot of musicians living in Harlem. There was a lot going on. There were rehearsals. There were jobs. There were concerts. There were theaters. There was a lot of music going on.

Brower: Were people living uptown and working downtown and midtown? Were they living uptown and working uptown, midtown, and downtown?

Hampton: They were working uptown. There was the work downtown too, but there was a lot of work uptown. Music was everywhere. That was what people did. Music was what people did. It was fantastic. It brought people together.

Brower: How many nights a week were you working?

Hampton: Sometimes we weren’t working at all, because we were new. So we were there living – Freddie Hubbard, myself, and two other guys in a room. We weren’t working at all. We practiced all the time.

Brower: This is the same room that you walked out of when you met Charlie Parker?

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: Where you lived with that group of musicians?

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: Give us that address, if you recall.

Hampton: I don’t remember the address, but it was just across from the back of the Apollo Theater. That building’s gone now. I had a one-room kitchenette. One bed. We slept all in the same bed.

Brower: Give us this quartet again.

Hampton: It was Freddie Hubbard. Another man. His name was Floyd Brady. He played trombone – played beautiful trombone. We were there in the room together all the time. I’m writing. He’s playing. I have to stop writing, the guy’s playing so beautiful. I got him a job with Buddy Johnson. Then there was a saxophone player, Rocky Boyd. We were all living together. We didn’t have any money. We didn’t have any food. We just practiced all the time.

Brower: What'd you eat?

Hampton: We ate some stuff that nobody should eat.

Brower: Spam?

Hampton: No. Wish we could have had some Spam. Spam would have been like lamb chops. A can of Spam – that would have been like a Thanksgiving dinner.

Brower: How long did this go on?

Hampton: We were there for a couple of months like that.

Brower: You didn't want to go back to Indianapolis?

Hampton: Oh no, no. I was . . .

Brower: Pride?

Hampton: No, no. I was in music. I didn't care. We were playing music. They didn't have to give no food, didn't have to be no food around. We were – whenever we had a chance to play music, we did it.

Brower: Was this prior to starting to work with the Lionel Hamptons and the Maynard Fergusons?

Hampton: That was prior to that, yeah.

Brower: Okay. So this is, say, between '52 and '56.

Hampton: It was after Buddy.

Brower: Things were hard for a minute.

Hampton: I didn't feel it was hard, but we didn't have anything to eat. There was water. Didn't have to pay for that. We could do that.

[recording interrupted; it resumes in mid-sentence]

Brower: . . . *Slide's Derangement,* with Maynard Ferguson. Were you deranged?

Hampton: I probably was. It was the first arrangement that I wrote for Maynard. I guess we didn't have any blues in the band at that time. So I was going to write a blues. But it didn't have a lot of a blues flavor in it. But I wrote it in one night, and they liked it. So we played it.

Brower: Let's go back to – you were next to Don Sebesky in that band.

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: Don Sebesky's had a big impact on modern music as an arranger, in particular, I think, spreading jazz flavors into other kinds of contexts for which he had an opportunity to write, and probably had a big influence on, I think, which led us somewhat, to a degree, to what we call as fusion, in a way. Talk about sitting next to Don Sebesky and what you might have exchanged with him, or he might have exchanged with you, as arrangers – young arrangers – in that band – what you guys were about.

Hampton: Like all the guys that were in the band, we all were learning from each other and being inspired by each other. Don, he was pretty much like the rest of us. He was finding a lot of inspiration in the band. Arranging was maybe not new for him, but he hadn't become very popular at that time. He had a chance to develop a lot of his skills in that band also.

He was a trombone player that played kind of in the style of Bill Harris – Bill Harris with the Woody Herman band, which was one of my favorite trombone players. We both had a real different style, and it was really good for the band.

Brower: Did the band use the juxtaposition of the styles?

Hampton: Just in improvisational things. Not in the ensemble, because in the ensemble we tried to play as much alike as possible.

Brower: So kind of the way it exists in the Basie band. You had a Hershel Evans. You had a Lester Young. You had those – that could be foils, in a sense, to each other.

Hampton: Yes. The thing was that we in fact – Don was a smart enough man to know that the best thing for us to do in there was try to make our styles match.

Brower: In the writing.

Hampton: No, in the playing, so that we could – I mean as far as the ensemble was concerned – so that we could have the best musical result possible. That's the difference in a person that's a very good musician that has a good attitude, and a person, very good musician, that has a bad attitude. One will make sure that whatever they do is enhancing

whatever you're trying to do, and the other will make sure that they always keep a little bit of friction in it. We never had anything like that in the band. When I first joined the band, it was Bobby Burgess. He had been the guy that worked with – the first trombone player with Stan Kenton. It was a fantastic experience, because in a year's time, Bobby maybe missed one note in a year. Everything was just really perfect. And Maynard was like – Maynard never missed. He never missed. No matter how high it was or fast, he never missed. Play all those hard things over and over during the night, *Maria* and that stuff, and still he never missed it. It was quite an experience.

Brower: What kind of physical toll does that take?

Hampton: You have to be in good physical shape to even think about doing what he was doing, but it wasn't a thing that you in most cases could develop on your own. He got – when he took – when he inhaled, he got a lot more air than most people do. He got about twice the amount of air that most humans get when he inhales.

Brower: Is that because of, I want to say, his structural capacity as a person? Or something he trained himself to do?

Hampton: I think it was his natural structural capacity. He had a larger lung than most people. The amount of air that he got in was just impossible. That's part of the reason he was able to keep the notes up.

Brower: To sustain . . .

Hampton: To sustain those notes.

Brower: And be true, in the center of the note, at . . .

Hampton: Yeah, because if you don't have air, you wouldn't be able to be real consistent. You could play high, but you couldn't be real consistent. But he was very consistent.

Brower: You were talking about the circumstances that led you to leave the Ferguson band and to go on to your assignment with Dizzy. We talked about that band. In that band, is that your first relationship with Melba Liston?

Hampton: Yes it was. I didn't know that she was as heavy musically as she was. I got in that band. I learned it real fast. Musically, she was heavy.

Brower: How significant was she to that band? What was her role in that?

Hampton: She was the musical director. Over all those guys that were there, she was the musical director.

Brower: Not just – not in name only, but in substance.

Hampton: She was the one that was the main arranger in the band. When we had the World of Trombones, the principal trombone player was a woman. She was automatically the musical director, because we all aspired to the things that she could do, Janice Robinson. Melba was the same way. She played really good, and she wrote music that weighs as much as this building. That's some of the heaviest music I ever heard. It was heavy. The men's arrangements would sound little peep, peep, peep, around her.

Brower: Were there politics around that? Was it resented? Was it accepted? How was she treated?

Hampton: Dizzy treated her with a hell of a lot of respect. So everybody else had to.

Brower: Had to follow suit.

Hampton: Yeah, they had to. Dizzy wasn't the guy that would put up with any kind of foolishness. It was all music for him. He was one of the few bandleaders that really was so deeply steeped in music. A lot of the bandleaders didn't really have much of a knowledge of what they were doing. They were doing what they did, but they didn't really know that much about it. But they didn't let the people know that.

Brower: '62 is the first Slide Hampton octet. What happens between '59 and '62?

Hampton: Art Blakey. I joined Art Blakey's band.

Brower: This is well before you made that *Killer Joe* record with him.

Hampton: Yeah. I joined the band. When I joined the band, McCoy Tyner was there. Joe Henderson, Bill Hardman, Junie Booth, and Art. They played music that would move you right off the stage if you didn't hold on. It was so strong that it was frightening. You can imagine, with McCoy and Art in the same band. And the bass player, Junie Booth, was as strong as they were, a real young guy, but just played fantastic.

Brower: Did that band record?

Hampton: I think somebody made a recording of something that we didn't know about. I think somebody did make a recording.

Brower: But you don't ever remember going into a studio, making a – because I don't remember a record. Do you remember a record on that?

Kimery: It wasn't the 17 Messengers? Was that the band?

Brower: The 17 Messengers was at the very beginning.

Hampton: The big band?

Kimery: Yeah.

Hampton: No, this was just the sextet.

Brower: So this is like 1960, '61?

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: In a very interesting article – I found it very interesting, probably the most informative of the interviews that I've read. I think it was in a magazine that I can't – it's like a trombone – a magazine that specializes in trombone – the gentleman was asking you, in talking about the octet, the sound that you got that was remarked on at the time. Going back and listening, I said, whoa, no piano. You credited your ability to get the big-band sound out of eight pieces to experience with Blakey.

Hampton: Yeah, because they were the ones that were writing three horns and accomplishing a big sound. They probably did it because they weren't that well trained in orchestration. So they just did what they thought would make a good sound. It ended up being that the trumpet was a long ways – a big interval away from the saxophone and the trombone. So, although he was up there, it still seemed like the overtone series filled those spaces up and made it sound really big. They got some things that sound really big. One thing that Walter Davis, Jr., wrote for them, sounds like an orchestra, and all of Freddie and them things, they always were sounding really like more instruments than there were there.

Brower: Did you realize it at the time, or do you see it from hindsight?

Hampton: At the time, I was trying to find out how they did it. I was listening, trying to find out, how do you do this? So some of the things that I wrote for the octet, of course that experience with them helped me find a way to utilize those instruments.

Brower: Why did you not include piano in the original octet?

Hampton: Couldn't afford it.

Brower: Do you think it helped open the sound even more? Or do you think the piano would have . . . ?

Hampton: No, I would like to have had the piano. I would like to have had it.

Brower: Were you relating at all – because, by this time, Ornette's hit, no piano. A little bit later, Sonny [Rollins] kind of replicates that, picks up on Ornette's rhythm, trumpet player, no piano. Was that – you're saying no money, but was it – to any extent, was it also something that you were hearing or that was also happening in music around you? Or was it simply, I just didn't have the money?

Hampton: I think it's not a good idea to play without the piano. I don't think it's a good idea, because when the people are listening to the form, and people are improvising, there's no piano, a lot of times they don't know where you are in the form. They can't feel where you are. They don't have the knowledge to be able to tell just from the bass line and the improvisation.

Brower: So at that point, the only harmonic reference is tuba or the bass, is what you're saying.

Hampton: The bass and the solos.

Brower: You define that with pedal point in your playing in those compositions?

Hampton: What I think is that, when you don't have a piano player, you have to also make it known in your solo where the progression's going.

Brower: So you've got to do something else besides play what you want to play.

Hampton: Yeah, that hinders you.

Brower: That bifurcates your mind.

Hampton: Sure it does. It hinders you. Sonny Rollins played without a piano, and it was really good, but it would have been better with a piano. The piano – like I was telling the little girl today . . .

Brower: I was going to ask you about that.

Hampton: When she said, bam, and hits that first chord, they know right where they are. So they play like that. They play like, we're right at the beginning of the phrase, and it's

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going to be a two-measure phrase. So I can do this. That will introduce the next phrase. But if they don't hear that, then they can't play like that.

Brower: You told her that she needed to announce, in effect, what the harmony was, by playing on [beat] 1. Is that where you were going with that?

Hampton: Yep. It really does hold the thing together. Just in certain places, if you'll give it. There are some piano players that, in those places where you need it, they won't do it. You start to become insecure. The rhythm starts to become shaky, because you still have to have something that you all are relating to. Even if you don't play it, there still has to be something there that you all can relate to, for these guys to play something that isn't coming on the first beat. That has to be for a reason. It can't be just, all of a sudden, I'm not going to put it on the first beat. 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4. Bap. Often that will throw the rhythm section off. You think that you know where it is, but the only thing is that everybody else is trying to feel where the thing started.

Brower: Besides Blakey in this period, when does your – does your work with Barry Harris fall before or after '62?

Hampton: The album? The album that we did?

Brower: Yeah.

Hampton: CD that we did. Let's see. Where is that CD? I've seen that CD recently. I'm trying to think of when we made it, though.

Brower: Was that – put it this way. Was that a date that Barry called you for, and you made the date, or was it the result of some ongoing musical association?

Hampton: I think it's something that Barry had. Barry has ideas that he will develop in his mind for a time before he tries to realize them. That was one that he had an idea for, because he wrote arrangements that were too good for you to just do on the spur of the moment. A whole lot of great arrangements on the spur of the moment like that, is very – almost impossible to do. He had been thinking about that for a while.

Brower: I'm trying to place this. When you think about the octet, it seems like you had ongoing music relations with the people that you pulled together for the octet. A Julian Priester, you've played with him before. A George Coleman, you'd had a relationship with. And so on. I'm wondering if the Barry Harris date was similar in that way, or it's like, Barry Harris had you in mind for something he was creating?

Hampton: I think he had me in mind for that. He had heard me on something. And he had Junie Booth in mind, and Pepper [Adams] – all these guys that he had heard in other

things. He wanted to get us all together and do something, and he really did do something that was of quality.

Brower: With McCoy and Junie, I had no idea that they had played with Blakey, but you see that Junie became – was a part of McCoy's musical life in an ongoing way. So what's interesting to me is these threads of musicians or groups that seem to move through sessions with each other, keep showing up for some periods of time, become a school of musicians, in a sense. If you were thinking about the late '50s going into the early '60s, what was your circle of musicians?

Hampton: I guess I was surrounded with the octet guys. Even before we made the octet, I was playing with these musicians. What I did was I felt that these guys would be able to play together well, because I had played with them in other experiences. So that's the reason that I chose them.

Brower: Purely musically, or personally, or both?

Hampton: Both, because you have to have – you have to be a good musician, but then you got to have attitude. You got to have attitude, because if you don't have attitude, like I was telling the kids today, it's going to be some unnecessary friction.

Brower: Good chemistry, bad chemistry?

Hampton: The chemistry is bad, but the thing is, the person will go ahead and do the job, but they won't do it as well as they could have done, because they want to bring a little vibe in where it puts a little pressure on the situation. I don't ever want that in something that I'm working on. When I do my next concert with the Brazilian group, I'm going to have a talk with the people in the first – because I'm paying these people – I'm going to have a talk with the people in the first row, to say, if you don't enthusiastically want to do this, you don't want to make these rehearsals, because making rehearsals is just what's going to make the music come off. If you don't want to do that, then just raise your hand now, and we'll get somebody else in your place, because this is going to be a project of love, first of music.

Brower: You're speaking about – you just did a recording. Talk about this latest project, so this ties in.

Hampton: This ties in with the recording, because we were talking about Jobim before. I felt that of all the things that we were doing right now, that the thing that had the chance of shooting at a larger audience, people that are maybe not big jazz fans, but they've heard some jazz, is this music, because everybody knows Jobim, and they love him.

Brower: Are you planning a concert based on the recording, or a tour?

Hampton: A concert, based on the music of Jobim. Mostly all of the music in it will be him. There will be some other Brazilian composers, but we're paying a tribute to him, because people that don't know Thelonious Monk know Jobim. They know the music. When they come to our concerts, they respond like this has been something really special that they've had a chance to participate in.

Brower: This is an idea that you said was driven by John Lee?

Hampton: The beginning of the recording was, but not the other idea, because I'm the only person that believes, when musicians play, that they should be respected. They should be paid as much as you can pay them. They should be given conditions that puts them in a situation where they're able to feel best about their performance. They shouldn't necessarily have to wait until the last minute to get their money. If they come in, and they're going to play the concert, pay them, so they don't feel like they've got to wait after and try to tackle you to get your money and stuff like that. This is the way that I want it to go. I want it to go that the musicians are given the utmost of respect. They're given the best situation to play in. We're going to do everything that makes it possible for them to have the most energy to make this concert possible. They don't have to play just before the concert or anything like that. We do all the rehearsals before, another day of the concert. We might do a little playing as far as sound check is concerned. I don't want them to be . . .

Brower: Taxed.

Hampton: . . . taxed with it, playing, eating dinner, and then playing the concert. I want them to have some time between all of that, so they can feel the very best. They can really get their teeth into this music.

Brower: What's the name of the project?

Hampton: It's called Slide Hampton Plays Jobim . . .

Brower: And it's on . . . ?

Hampton: . . . a tribute to Antonio Carlos Jobim.

Brower: And on what label is it? This is John's label?

Hampton: That's our label. It's a production of John and I.

Brower: Together.

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: You did it in his studio?

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: Which is located where?

Hampton: In South Orange.

Brower: Is that your first – is it the first project with him?

Hampton: First one with him. It's not the first one that I've done. I've done another project where I produced the record too. I paid for it. I paid for both of these.

Brower: But it's the first project in John's studio that you are doing.

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: And it's a label that you have together?

Hampton: Yeah. It was just for this one CD.

Brower: Once again, looping back: Thad Jones–Mel Lewis Big Band. How did you become involved with that project and with the principals there?

Hampton: I used to go down and listen to them all the time, because, for all of us that are arrangers, Thad Jones is a phenomenon. The way he writes music is impossible. You don't even try to learn to write music like that. You try to learn to write music as many ways as you can, but you don't try to learn to write the way that he writes it, because Thad could talk to you right now and write music while he's doing this interview. When you finish the interview, he might have finished the whole arrangement. This is unbelievable. He writes so fast, and the way that he writes would sound like you would have to be at the piano for hours figuring this out, and he does that while he's listening to other music or talking to somebody or drinking a fifth or whatever. The rest of us can forget trying to match that.

Brower: What was your first encounter with Thad? In what circumstance?

Hampton: I guess it was probably in Count Basie's band, when he was in Count Basie's band. He was writing some music for them, but some of it was too far in advance. Count wouldn't play it. But some of the things were just fantastic.

Brower: So that's from an aural standpoint. You heard him. But when did you get to know him and start a relationship as colleagues?

Hampton: In the band I got to, because I used to go down to the Vanguard and hear them. He knew that I wrote also. So we got to know each other there and started talking about different things that we could do in orchestration.

Brower: That sounds like a collegial relationship, not one – he wasn't your mentor. You were two equals.

Hampton: No, we're not equal. No, we're not equal. A lot of guys are – a mentor. He was a mentor for a lot of guys. It was without saying so. Everybody knows. You don't have to say so. Everybody knows. This guy, the music that he wrote was on another level altogether. If you go down and hear some of it now that he wrote 50 years ago, if you go down and hear that now, it's unbelievable.

Brower: Did he invite you to write for the band?

Hampton: Yeah, I did write something for them, but I was writing for a vocalist that he had.

Brower: Which was?

Hampton: Her name was Bertie Green. But he pretty much kept control of all the writing, because there wasn't anything much that anybody could write for that band that would come up to the standards that they were dealing with when they dealt with his music.

Brower: How important was Mel Lewis to that band?

Hampton: He seemed to be very important, because he and Thad put the band together, and he had a style of drumming that Thad felt good writing for. He felt his arrangements matched Mel Lewis's style of drumming.

Brower: The reason I ask that is because I think of Mel Lewis as a prototypical big-band drummer, and I want to ask you how important the drummers are that play in your highly arranged scenarios, and what you want from them, what you ask of them, how you get what you need from them?

Hampton: If they're not qualified, you can't get what you need from them. It has to be somebody that's qualified, because the drummer's responsibility is great. That means that he has a lot of experience in playing different kinds of music, he's a sensitive person, and he wants to make the musical result whatever you want it to be. Often, drummers are not

people that you can get to participate in things like that that easily, because they have a lot of ego and they have a lot of insecurities and things. So I guess it was – when he found Mel, it was probably, for him – was a real plus.

Brower: In terms of your writing and when you can pick your drummers – I guess you can always pick your drummers – who is your Mel Lewis, or who have been your Mel Lewises?

Hampton: It's very difficult to find a drummer. It's very difficult. There are a lot of drummers out there, and they're good drummers, but still – very difficult to find one that will have the sensitivity, have the understanding of orchestration, because a drummer – I went to see a concert at Carnegie Hall. Carnegie Hall is very alive, sound-wise. This guy would hit a crash that would cover up four bars of music. He's a very good drummer, but the only thing is, he don't understand about orchestration. When you have the orchestra playing some harmony that is beautiful and important, you can't hit a crash, because the crash has overtones in it that will cancel a lot of that music out. That's like playing a B-flat diminished chord in the right hand and a B diminished chord. Cancels out all the music. There's no harmony going to come out of that. You probably can do the same thing with an augmented chord. A B-flat augmented and a B augmented probably will cancel out all the music. A cymbal can crash and just cover up bars of music. The drummer has to know that, because otherwise, half the concert, the people will never hear it. They never hear – the trumpet's playing in a mute, and the cat's hitting bam on the cymbal.

Brower: Do your write out the drum parts for your octet, when you're writing your octets, or say when did one of your favorites, the Dexter *Sophisticated Giants* session? Did you write out those drum parts?

Hampton: *Sophisticated Giants* I wrote the drum parts out, but not in the octet. I had drummers in the octet that were so – they loved music so much that you didn't have to write for them. They were always searching to play the thing that was going to make the music sound the best and swing. Pete La Roca and Vinnie Ruggiero. They were hopelessly in love with music, hopelessly.

Brower: How important is the bass drum in your writing, particularly for the big ensembles?

Hampton: For any ensemble it's important, because if you have a small ensemble and you play [Hampton sings a melody], the bass drums makes that all sound like it's a big orchestra, because the bass drum gives all the bottom that you need. That's when they used it in the symphony orchestra, when they use the bass drum, when they want something percussive that isn't maybe that loud, they use boom, the bass drum, because that . . .

Brower: So it becomes the foundation of the sound.

Hampton: The foundation of the sound – of the rhythm that you're playing at the time. Very important. Foundation. Man, you can't build no buildings without foundation. You can, but you'll be sorry.

Brower: I want to ask another – so you brought, in your octets, tubas, and, what's that, a baritone horn?

Hampton: Yeah, euphonium.

Brower: Euphonium. How do those choices fit into what you were doing in terms of orchestration in that period?

Hampton: The tuba fits into the foundation again. The tuba say, bawwww. You can write everything on top of that. It sounds wonderful, just from that one pedal point, because the tuba has always been – this has been the place of the tuba in all of music, the foundation. The euphonium is a small tuba. All these things – these things are in the tuba family. That means the big tuba, the small tuba, the euphonium, the baritone horn, the flugelhorn – they're all in the tuba family. That means big, warm sound. The tuba, in a group, you can have five pieces – I mean, just have a couple of pieces, with a tuba. That adds warmth.

Brower: So sometimes would you make a choice, here I need tuba, here I need acoustic bass? And what would lead you to make the choice as to which fundamental you wanted?

Hampton: See, because the acoustic bass has, like I told you, has – sounds an octave below, but in your ear, you're hearing the octave that it's written in – that's what humans are hearing, but it's sounding an octave below. So it gives you something that you don't necessarily hear, but it's there.

Brower: But you feel.

Hampton: You feel it. Then if you write the tuba and the bass together, you got something fantastic, because the tuba is not built to be played real loud, especially in the upper register. It's built to be played soft up there. Then it can be controlled and it can be beautiful. If you write up there with the bass, the tuba, you don't need anything else playing. You can take the drummer out. You can take the piano player out. You can fire everybody. Just let those two guys play. It's in *The Buzzard Song*, I think it is, with Miles, with *Porgy and Bess*? It's got this thing with Paul Chambers and the tuba. It's incredible. The way Paul Chambers plays it, you have to love that. You've got to love it.

They did this in the original *Porgy and Bess*, but they didn't do it like that. They didn't do that. Gil Evans.

Brower: Another bass point and question: choosing between – John Lee's an electric bass player. How does that change these relationships? Because it has a different overtone series, and it has a different – because it decays differently. How do you – do you compensate for that, or do you make a choice about that?

Hampton: When you use the electric bass, sometimes you don't have any choice. The electric bass – the thing that's good about the electric bass is that it's very audible. You can hear it. You can make it heard on every note if you want to. But it takes away from the warmth of the feeling of the rhythm section, because it's out there. It's alone. It doesn't really fit in with the rhythm section. It's above the rhythm section, and it's in front of the rhythm section. The other bass is a part of the rhythm section. It makes the whole rhythm section feel like one thing. The electric bass can be good on funk things. It can be good on that, and sometimes in the bossa nova music, it's good there. But the upright bass fits in everything. But you have to be a hell of a bass player to do that. That's the only thing. You got to do a lot of work.

Brower: Max Roach. Somewhere in the late '50s, early '60s, that's a part of your musical experience. Can you speak to that?

Hampton: Max was – I'm surprised that the other drummers didn't hear what Max was doing, because he started making the drums a real musical instrument, especially when you played a solo. That solo had to be musical. You couldn't just play the rudiments or play some fast rolls or something like that. You had to make some music. I was surprised that the drummers didn't more so – they weren't more so influenced by that. Because there are some other guys that had a better feeling with the cymbal than Max when he's playing swing, but in the solos, he was the man. Those solos made a hell of a lot of sense. They were like an instrument – like a wind instrument playing a melody.

Brower: What was your association with him? You played in his band?

Hampton: I played in his – I didn't really play in his band, but I always loved him, so I got him to do the recording with us.

Brower: Which recording was this?

Hampton: This was *The Drum Suite*, with . . .

Brower: I've got to get that. I don't have that. I haven't heard that.

Hampton: If you only get it just for what Max plays and what – saxophone player. He's a Muslim . . .

Brower: Sadi Hafti?

Hampton: No. He's an older guy. Muslim. Plays with a big sound.

Brower: Tenor player?

Hampton: Yusef.

Brower: Yusef

Hampton: Yusef Lateef plays some solos on there that are just, whew.

Brower: This was your music?

Hampton: *The Drum Suite.*

Brower: Who released this?

Hampton: Columbia.

Brower: Columbia. Do you know that recording?

Kimery: No, I don't, but I'm going to get that one.

Hampton: Yusef'll make you cry on there, because you hear all the great saxophone players that played before in his playing.

Brower: Channeled through him.

Hampton: Yeah, coming through him, playing his own stuff. Really fantastic. And George is playing great on there too, but Yusef. Hard to play after Yusef. He's like Don Byas. I heard Dexter [Gordon] try to play after Don Byas once. He couldn't find nothing after Don played. And he always played great. Dexter always played great, but Don Byas played some stuff that just left Dexter completely confused.

Kimery: It reminds me. I saw Charles McPherson play. He invited Richie Cole up. Charles played. Richie walked off the stage afterwards.

Brower: I could dig that.

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Lloyd Price band. When does that come about? What was the extent of your association? Let's talk about that experience.

Hampton: They were in Lloyd Price's band – he and the manager were looking for somebody to modernize the band. They had something good in mind, but they didn't know exactly what it was. That was the only thing. But they did have something good. They wanted the band to become more modern, so that whenever they played without Lloyd, they could be more into a jazz concept and at the same time still keep the commercial aspect of what they were doing. The song that I wrote for Lloyd – the arrangement that I wrote for him that became more popular than anything was the arrangement of *Misty*. This became really popular for him.

Brower: What was the extent of your association with that band?

Hampton: I was the musical conductor.

Brower: For a year? Two years?

Hampton: For two years.

Brower: Two years. This was 19. . .

Hampton: That must have been between – where was it? – between Dizzy and Art Blakey, or something like that.

Brower: So somewhere in the '60s, in the early '60s.

Hampton: Yeah, in the '60s.

Brower: Prior to the octet? Post-octet?

Hampton: After the octet.

Brower: Okay. So maybe '64, '65.

Hampton: Something like that.

Brower: How does this fit with your Motown experience?

Hampton: That was after all of this. Motown finally wanted to do – they wanted to have a jazz label. So they were going to let me . . .

Brower: So let me be clear. You weren't a part of the Motown in Detroit.

Hampton: Yeah, yes I was.

Brower: Okay.

Hampton: I lived in Detroit at this time. I moved to Detroit for this.

Brower: Specifically to do this?

Hampton: Conduct for them and all of that stuff.

Brower: Okay. All right. Let me back out then.

Hampton: Yeah, I was there with Motown. It was a fantastic experience, because they were very successful. So they paid me well. They put me up in a hotel before a month. I didn't have to do anything. They said, just have everything you want, all the steaks and lobster and everything. And they paid me besides that, and I wasn't working. More than I was getting anywhere with any of the bands that I worked with. Then finally they were going to start a jazz . . .

Brower: Is this before you went to Europe with Woody Herman?

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: So we're '65, '67.

Hampton: Somewhere around there.

Brower: Somewhere in there.

Hampton: They were going to start the label. So I was going to do that for them. It scared them to try to start a jazz label. That was frightening to them. So they finally didn't do it.

Brower: Later, when they went to California, they started a MoJazz label. That's why I started to interrupt you. But you're actually talking about when they were still in Detroit, still in the old house, and all of that.

Hampton: Detroit, yeah.

Brower: Did you do any writing for any of the pop things that were going on.

Hampton: Not really. I conducted everything. I was a conductor. Then I was finally working with the Four Tops, after. I had conducted Stevie Wonder, some big shows that they had, and things like that.

Brower: So, conducting touring or studio stuff?

Hampton: No, just touring. Never in the studio.

Brower: So Stevie – the Motown Review comes to the Apollo Theater, and they got a band, and you're conducting it.

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: In the back of this is this idea that you're doing this kind of stuff, but also decided they're going to start a label, and at some point the label idea went away, and then you went away.

Hampton: I felt I needed the experience as a conductor. I needed that experience. So for that reason it was good. Then this time . . .

Brower: Was H. P. Barnum around any of this during that time?

Hampton: Let's see. I think he probably was. They still had all the writers and everything there.

Brower: Were there a lot of jazz musicians working for Motown?

Hampton: Yeah. They were playing Motown's music.

Brower: There's a big thing out about the Motown rhythm section.

Hampton: Yeah, *The Funk Brothers.*

Brower: *The Funk Brothers.* Were they a part of that?

Hampton: They were there.

Brower: Pistol Allen. Was he around?

Hampton: Yeah. They were all there. This was the height of their success. They had money, unbelievable amount of money. But they weren't – like a lot of people, they weren't willing to take any chances on making a big change musically. I can understand it. You can't do it if you can't feel it. You shouldn't do it if you can't feel it. They were –

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they wanted to make their – they wanted to upgrade their quality. That's what they wanted. But they were afraid to do it.

Brower: While you were in Detroit, did you then participate in the Detroit jazz community as well?

Hampton: Not really. Might have played a couple of clubs or something, but not really. Marcus Belgrave was there. I had worked with Marcus with Lloyd's band. But he didn't ask me to do anything.

Brower: You hit on something. When you were in – running the Price band, who were some of the players? Because I imagine it was kind of like a Ray Charles band, kind of one foot in jazz, two feet in r-and-b or something. I don't know.

Hampton: It was more like Buddy Johnson's band, but with better musicians.

Brower: Oh really?

Hampton: It was more like that band.

Brower: It's interesting. Going back to Buddy Johnson. That band was really strong in the '40s.

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: By the time you got there, it was the mid-'50s. Was the band still a really strong band?

Hampton: Yeah, they were still good, and they were still popular.

Brower: Anyway, Lloyd Price. Talk about some of the personnel that was there besides Marcus Belgrave.

Hampton: We had – a lot of guys played with Lloyd. A lot of people don't know. Like Jimmy Heath, Curtis Fuller, Marcus Belgrave. A couple of really great piano players played with him. Of course nobody ever got to know about that. But they were trying to upgrade their music. They wanted to get into the new century of music that was coming on. I wish I could have helped them more.

Brower: What caused you to depart from Motown?

Hampton: Woody Herman.

Brower: It seems like opportunities just . . .

Hampton: They always came to me, yeah. They came to me. I often didn't make the best of them, I have to say. But I did have the opportunities. I had greater opportunities than that, but I didn't really make the best of them. I'm very sorry about that.

Brower: Do you care to acknowledge any missed opportunities? Calls you got that you didn't take?

Hampton: About a million. There were about a million of them. I had a chance to study with the Boulanger family when I was in Paris.

Brower: In the '60s?

Hampton: And I didn't. Because in Paris the classical musicians and the jazz musicians were quite close. If you were playing at a club in Paris, the guy that was the conductor of the symphony orchestra, or the first trombone player for it, would come there and listen to you, and would introduce himself to you and tell you how much he admired you and how much he respected jazz. I missed some opportunities there.

Brower: Exactly how were you approached for the Woody experience? How did that happen?

Hampton: I know a friend of mine – oh, a guy was playing with them. Joe – tenor saxophone player from Cleveland. This guy could play, too.

Brower: You're talking about – not the legendary – I want to think. This is the tenor player that's like the legend of Cleveland. I know exactly who you're talking about.

Hampton: Joe Alexander.

Brower: Joe Alexander.

Hampton: Joe Alexander. He was playing, too.

Brower: Once again, this is lore. But you talk to anybody from Cleveland from the '50s and '60s, and they're going to talk about Joe Alexander. Joe Lovano talks about – not that he's the be-all on anything, but if you talk about Cleveland, he's going to tell you about Joe Alexander.

Hampton: Yeah, because Joe could play. But you see, the great thing about Woody Herman's band was: the featured soloist was the piano player, Albert Dailey. For a piano

player to be a featured soloist in a big band like that is very unusual. You usually got to have a horn player. You got to have a saxophone player.

Brower: Especially it's the Woody – it's the Herd.

Hampton: Woody Herman. But Albert Dailey . . .

Brower: It's defined by reeds.

Hampton: Yeah, by the saxophones. Albert Dailey played so much piano that Woody was just – he was just beaming when Albert was playing. All of us were, because the guy just made you feel – he made you feel like Monty Alexander in our band. Monty picks that whole band up and takes us up to another level of energy. Just when he's playing by himself. When he plays, and the band is going to come in after him, he has set that up. He's set it up so that when the band comes in, they sound twice as good as they usually sound. It's heartwarming.

Brower: That band has to be an early – at this point, the Woody Herman band must not have been trying to sound – what was Herman's approach to music? Because he wasn't trying to perpetuate the Woody Herman sound, obviously. Unless he kept some of that stuff in the repertoire. But – what was his ? – you've talked a lot about people's attitude towards music, towards growing, and towards being either inclusive or not inclusive, or whatever. What was Woody Herman's approach?

Hampton: Woody was one of the best bandleaders I ever worked with. He paid the musicians a lot of respect. He paid them a lot of money, and still, at the same time, kept in mind what he had to do for the band to be popular. We played a lot of good music.

Brower: Do you think part of being a bandleader is being able to balance all of that? Maybe you're Woody Herman, or you're Count Basie. You're Duke Ellington. So people have a certain expectation when you come in the door, and many of them want the signature stuff. But yet you've got – probably, if you're Woody Herman, the musicians behind you aren't the ones who were there when you established your signature. They're probably a generation or two younger than you, and they probably want to do other things.

Hampton: Yeah, but you got to play *Blue Flame* in Woody's band. No matter how many other things you want to do, you got to play *Blue Flame*. When you play it, you realize why. This is what made those guys popular.

Brower: But it also sounds like he was letting other things happen.

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Hampton: He was. He was always very progressive. He had the *More Moon* band with Shadow Wilson and the tenor saxophone player that played so beautiful [Gene Ammons], and Ernie Wilkins. Yeah, Ernie Wilkins was there – no, Ernie Royal. He was always very progressive. He loved good music.

Brower: Sounds like he was not only musically progressive, but socially progressive.

Hampton: He was. When you think about being socially progressive and everything, you got to remember that, before anybody else would do it, Benny Goodman had an integrated band, and if you wouldn't take the band and let them go in the front door of the hotel, he wouldn't play the gig. That's in a time when everybody wasn't doing that.

Brower: That's 30 years before Woody Herman had this band.

Hampton: Yeah. So I know Benny's a very difficult guy and all that, but he sure in hell stood up for something that a lot of people don't. Maybe that's because he was an arrogant guy, but nevertheless, he stood up for it.

Brower: You're saying Woody Herman's cut from the same cloth?

Hampton: Yeah. Woody's the same way.

Brower: Woody Herman: did you join the band specifically to do the European tour?

Hampton: It was a tour in England. The story is that Woody had a different way of conducting, and I was new. So I didn't know. We were – no rehearsal. You're right on the stage, and you start playing, professionally. I had a lot of solos and things to play, too, and he was paying me more than paying anyone else in the band. Even Albert, who was the principal soloist. But often, when he would give his downbeat, I would play, but nobody else would play. They would play later. I didn't know what that was. I thought, maybe I'm not looking – maybe I'm not really clear what I'm seeing. So I'm looking real hard to see where whatever he called the downbeat should be followed with music. It went on like that for a week. He finally called me in and said, "Slide, I'm paying you more money than everybody else in the band. You're playing wrong all the time." I say, "I haven't found your downbeat yet. I'm looking for it. I don't know if it's here, here, here, here," wherever it was. Then later, after that, the guys showed me. They said, "We don't play when he conducts. We play together on our own." So they had made an agreement to play. If he [Hampton sings a phrase] after he gave the downbeat, they played a bar later or something. You can imagine. I say "Baaaaaaaaa." I was out there by myself. Then [he sings the phrase again]. But I finally got it, and then after that he asked me to stay with the band. But I couldn't, because I was in England, and my friends in Europe asked me, "While you're over here, come over here and play some concerts. We want you to see what it's like." They gave us conditions . . .

Brower: Your friends being?

Hampton: People in Paris.

Brower: Being? – specifically.

Hampton: No, just some people that were producing concerts and things. Not musicians. Producers. I went over to – they gave us such good conditions, and they had such a respect for the music and such a respect for us that I stayed there for eight years.

Brower: Give me a material sense of what was so different.

Hampton: Everything. It all was different. It was shocking. First-class transportation, first-class hotels, first-class money for your concert. You go to a town, and a guy would meet you at the train and give you your money. "Here's your money." Pay you before you even got into the hotel. We played for television. We played for radio. We played for – there was every kind of musical situation that we played for.

Brower: Who was the "we"? What circle did you walk into, of musicians?

Hampton: With Dexter and the guys. Don Byas, Dexter, Art Farmer, Benny Bailey, Johnny Griffin, Kenny Clarke. I worked a lot with Kenny. They treated Kenny so good that Kenny wouldn't – if you said anything about France, Kenny would really jump on you, because he lived in France for a long time, and without a green card. So he didn't have to pay taxes. When it came time for him to get his green card, all the money that he owed, the government wiped the slate clean, and gave him his green card. They loved him so much there.

Brower: Was that the only European circle? Was that your primary European circle? Was there – did you – were there people in Germany and Sweden and another group in Denmark?

Hampton: Oh yeah. They were all over. All the guys. I was – Ben Webster was there.

Brower: You're talking about the American musicians that were in Paris. Was that the base of the expatriate jazz community at that point? Or were there other pockets?

Hampton: There were other musicians in Europe.

Brower: But you principally were – Paris was your base.

Hampton: I lived in Paris, but we played all over.

Brower: You made a slew of big-band recordings. The name that keeps coming up is a man named Joe Haider. But I'm sure there were others. Talk about what became available to you as an arranger and a composer, and situations that – specific situations that you had opportunities to record or get your music heard or develop your music, and maybe some high points of some of those situations.

Hampton: One of the high points was that in every major city in Europe, there's a subsidy from the government of that country to record jazz, and that money can only be used on a jazz recording. So when they would allot money at the certain period of the year, there was a certain amount of money for classical music, folk music, commercial music – whatever it was – and jazz. These guys had to record all this music. Then they would play it over the radio. So they were constantly looking for arrangers, because they had to record a lot of music each week. So arrangers were in – we were in a very good level of respect there. That was for television and radio, other kinds of events, because they would have all kinds of events. because western Germany was so rich. It was so rich, I was working for the radio in Berlin, and the guy that organized the band for the radio, he walked around with an attaché case filled with money. I said, what's wrong with this guy? Filled with thousands of marks. So anything that they wanted, he had the money right there to do it. They would have productions that were so big that they almost couldn't control them.

He gave me – this guy – he told me, "We want you to play with the radio band." That's Leo Wright, Carmell Jones, Åke Persson, all these guys. Leo Wright and them were fantastic musicians. People don't – they became fantastic after they got over there, because the respect for them was so high. He was good over here, but over there he was great. He just developed to a level that – he could play anything. Country-western, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker. This guy was unbelievable. He could read everything at sight, play all of his instruments: the clarinets, flute, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone. He could play everything. And Carmell Jones was like that too, a great trumpet player. Could write everything. Could read everything.

So the guy said, "I want you to play in the radio band in Berlin." They have two bands: SFB, and the band for East Germany, which was the part behind the wall. He said, "And I also want you to play in my jazz club at the same time." So he said, "How much you want for that?" I'm thinking, what can I ask for? He offered me – he said, "I'll give you" this. He offered me – he gave me twice as much as I was thinking about asking for, and said, "I'll get you an apartment. You'll have an apartment in a week." He went and got me an apartment in a beautiful building. I didn't have to sign any papers or anything.

[recording interrupted]

Brower: It is Friday, April 21, the year 2006. My name is William A. Brower. I am at the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, conducting an interview with Slide Hampton for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program. This is tape 4.

Yesterday you did – I saw you do a workshop with a couple of high school bands. You talked about what's involved with preparation, the things that people don't see, the daily regime of a musician that's trying to reach the highest level. Will you talk about what your regime is, please?

Hampton: Yes. I try to talk about something that's helpful to everyone, even the people that are not that long in their search of musicianship and the people that are professionals, because even a professional can have overlooked the fact that there is one thing that for all of us is in common, that helps us to have a better performance or a better practice. The one thing that I found is very helpful, because I did a lot of deadline writing when I was younger. That means that they would call me up at 6 o'clock in the evening and say the next day we've got to have five arrangements. So that means you've got to write all night, you think. I did it many times. I always had trouble staying awake. I didn't have anything that would – coffee wouldn't affect me. Nothing would keep me awake. I tried everything: Coca Cola with aspirins, coffee, everything. It seems like the more I tried something like that, the faster I fell asleep. So it really affected my work, of course, because maybe right in the middle of an arrangement I'd fall asleep. When I would wake up, I wouldn't really be sure what I had written before, because you just – when you wake up like that, of course you're not clear. Then I found out in recent years that if I had – I've got the command to do the writing. If I had just gone and got some rest first, I would have written much faster, I would have had a better musical result, and I would have had a better time doing it. Of course it was always painful the way I was doing it, because I was struggling all night to stay awake. I would get it done, but it wasn't the best work that I could have done. It was because I hadn't rested. When you're tired, and you have to work on music, the best thing to do is go to bed. Get some rest. Even if you're going to practice in the morning, get some rest before you do it. If you're going to play early in the morning, the best shape that you can possibly be in will depend on how much rest you had before. Because all your practice over the years is going to come into you, playing maybe at a time when you don't usually play. That's going to come into the thing, as long as you're in good shape yourself, because you feel like every time you have to do something that's at an unusual hour or something, you have to find some way to prepare yourself again. You don't really. You just have to make sure you're rested, and you'll find that you'll be able to deal with most situations that you find yourself in.

Brower: Let me say that resonates with me this morning. But I want you to focus on sound and what you still do, because even 20 years ago, when I – 25 years ago now – 26 years ago now, when I interviewed you for a *Jazz Times* article, you were talking about, "I'm still working on my sound." I got the impression yesterday that you're still working on your sound.

Hampton: That's right.

Brower: Talk about what that is. What discipline? What are the things that you do? I know we're not going to hear you do them, but I want you to talk about what you do.

Hampton: It's very simple. That's what I found out recently. It's not complicated. In the morning, when you wake up, you usually have some stiffness in your whole body, your lips also. That means that there's some skin on your lips that has to, by some kind of moisture or something, disappear. When you have that stiffness and dryness in your lips, of course you can't control the air that's coming out. The air might come out in several different places when you play. You have to find some way to make your lips supple, so that they are more in their natural state. It's the same old story for all of us. J. J. [Johnson] told me. He said he wakes up every morning. He says, "I'm tired of playing long tones." But all brass players have to wake up in the morning, after they get themselves physically in shape, which is usually with a shower and some kind of a – what I do is I take a hot shower – I do my exercises first, take a hot shower and a cold shower. That makes my blood circulate. So that means that my lips are going to soon be in a natural state. The dry skin is going to be gone, and they're going to be like they are now. They're going to feel smooth. It's going to be the kind of skin that you want on your lips to play with. So you try to have the first note that comes out when you play, with a good attack and a good sound, a good center of the sound, and a good duration. So the whole thing that we all have to do, besides preparing ourselves physically, just our body, which is very important. Without that, we won't be playing any instruments at all or doing anything. So I try to impress on the kids that I work with how important it is that – first, that we've been given the gift of life. That's a very important gift. So the body that we've been given to live that life in is very important. If we respect that body, it will give us a lot of advantages. If we disrespect it, it will kick us in the behind, and it has kicked a lot of us in the behind. I've had mine kicked.

But this is very important, to know that these things are things that you have to use to have the best result of whatever you're going to do, practice or performance. Get up. You do your long tones first. You do your flexibility studies. That means – long tone is so that you can find the center of the sound and get used to looking for the center of the sound and being able to control it. Then you do the lip slurs, because . . .

Brower: This speaks to intonation issues.

Hampton: Yes it does. In order to – because what happened before, a lot of times guys were using vibrato a lot to make sure that they were wavering somewhere across the note that was being played. Somewhere in that vibrato, that note is there. But I feel it's best for you to try to develop the sound so you don't use vibrato and still play right where that pitch should be. That takes practice. You've got to sit at the piano or some other

instrument and practice all those notes with that instrument that doesn't change its pitch. Every time you hit the piano, if the piano's in tune, that's the note that you're going to try to achieve.

Brower: It's not going to waver.

Hampton: It's not going to waver. It's not going to go sharp or flat. You get used to that by working on that. That's what long tones do for you. It's a good thing when you practice your long tones. If your first note is going to be a B-flat, play that B-flat on the piano first. Then you hold that note. Then you go play the B-flat. The next note you're going to play, probably an A. [Hampton sings the two notes.] You'll play that. You hit the A on – and you do that. Play all the notes that way. It takes time, but it develops your ear.

Brower: Is this similar – I wouldn't call myself a drummer. I own some drums. What every teacher's told me, is, practice things painfully slowly, and be able to go from so slow it hurts to almost as fast as you can, and back again, with the same control. Be able to do it softly, loudly, across a range of things. Similar practice?

Hampton: That pertains definitely to the trombone. Anything that you play, you should play very slow, so that you can be very exact in measuring the distance between one note and the other, the distance in time between one note and the other, and then thinking about the difference of sound.

Brower: Time meaning the ability to move the slide.

Hampton: Yes, because you have to move directly to the note. If you don't move directly to the note, if you're between two notes, or course you can easily not play the note. It's possible that you can get through it, but it will be a – the initiation won't be clear, and you also have a chance of missing a note, because between those notes are notes that we don't hear ordinarily in these scales that we play. They're notes between – that are in some of the other scales. So if you don't hear the note, and you're moving from one note to the other, and you don't move fast enough, then you can miss the next note that you're going to. So you have to go from B-flat to A. [Hampton sings the two notes]. You've got to move immediately, even if it's a whole note. [Hampton sings the notes, holding each one.] The fastness in that particular phrase would be between the notes, from the B-flat to the A. So you have to make sure that you're at the next note before you have to play it.

It's the same thing about learning melodies on the trombone. You have to learn them very slowly. You have to make each melody almost like it's a ballad of some kind, even if it's a thing that has eighth notes in it, so that you have the exact feeling of how you move from one note to the other. This is what a lot of people don't have the patience to do on

the trombone, is spend the time playing the things as slow as possible, because it can get to be – not boring, but it really does call for a certain amount of patience, to be able to accomplish it.

Brower: Yesterday, with the second group, you went straight to the drummer. Or, you made a comment to the band, you went to the drummer, and you talked about your own drum practice. First of all, you gave him some suggestions about stick control which harken back to things that I've seen in videos, where – particularly, Herlin Riley was talking about his grandfather, who played as if he was – he called him like butter knife style, but everything was in the fingers. Why are you involved with drums and the discipline of practicing drums?

Hampton: Because it's so important in my life. Drummers are in your life, whether you want them there or not. A lot of times, you'd rather not have them there, but you need them, and they can be very helpful. The success or failure of a concert can depend on a drummer. Not matter what music you are playing, he can make it either a success or a failure. That's a very important responsibility to have. So like anything else, you need the fundamentals to show you how you can always have control of that level of responsibility. So it makes all the sense in the world that – two ways you can play: with the stick tight in your hand, or the stick loose. You need to practice both of those ways, because they both will be important to you, because you can't play a long time with the sticks tight. After a while, your muscles will get tired, you'll stiffen up, and you'll lose speed and everything.

A lot of the times, when you're playing long periods of time, you want to have some way to be able to relax. Relaxing is for every instrument, especially the brass instruments. To play difficult things, and long things, you have to relax, because if you stay tense the whole time, then you can lose control completely. This is a thing that you work at over a period of years, to get to the place that, mentally, you're able to stay relaxed in situations that you need to be relaxed. Actually, being relaxed all the time is a good thing to do.

Brower: What about – you talked about time, and you sort of explained what you told the drummer, and we can get a general application from it. But you were also talking about the study of time, and that had something to do with your interest in drums. Can you elaborate on that?

Hampton: The thing is, you see, usually you have two different styles of drumming. One, the drummer will play – just play the time, no matter what the band is playing. This happened sometimes in Count Basie's band. You didn't have to make all the accents. You just had to be swinging. So the rhythm section was swinging. That made it easy for them to make the accents, and they didn't have to have the drummer with them to make them.

Now if you're going to make the accents with the band, still the time is very important, because often, when a drummer will make a certain kind of phrase, he will rush it, because he feels, in order to have the energy in the phrase, he automatically rushes, and it shouldn't be. Some people tell the drummers not to practice with a metronome, but you should practice with a metronome, because you want to have a natural feeling of how time passes when you're making a rhythm accent or something like that, because you're not having downbeats in your mind. You're having downbeats and upbeats in your mind, and maybe others. So you want to . . .

Brower: Do you mean a natural sense that is so ingrained that you don't think about it?

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: Not – it's not inherent. It's something that you – by repetition, it ceases to be something conscious.

Hampton: Something that you have to think of. You don't have to think of it. After you've repeated it enough, you don't have to think of it. It happens naturally, and you feel it naturally. The truth is that most drummers, before, were dancers. They dance, so . . .

Brower: You mean tap dancers?.

Hampton: Tap dance.

Brower: Or other kinds of dance?

Hampton: Yeah, and other dancers, but mainly tap, because the tap dancers were very far in advance, as far as rhythm was concerned, before the drum changed from swing to bebop. Probably some of the ideas in bebop came from the tap dancers. They were dancing very, very interesting patterns before drummers started playing them.

Brower: For example?

Hampton: All the things that we were doing in the swing period is based on maybe something that starts on the downbeat, and it stays in eighth notes, or something like that. [Hampton sings a string of swinging eighth-notes.] That's what they were doing. They weren't doing things that were [Hampton sings a more distinctive, syncopated phrase] on the upbeat. The dancers were doing that, though.

The dancers were very organized people, if you're not aware of it. They had their whole routine organized from the beginning of the song to the end, exactly how many choruses

it was and everything. They were very organized in that way. I used to listen to them, and I used to work with them. Rhythmically, it was always very interesting.

Brower: Was that a significant part of what you saw, experienced, absorbed, during the Hampton family band days?

Hampton: Yes. We played with dancers. We played for dancers, behind dancers. They were always modern. They were always in advance of the normal rhythms that were being played. So I really saw the connection between them when I found out that some of the drummers were dancers. It helped to develop their sense of time. See, that's the drummer's main thing. He has to develop a great sense of time. The great drummers were like that, your Sid Catlett and those people, Jo Jones. They weren't actually always playing the beat, the time that was going on, but they were – whatever they were playing was perfectly in time where that pattern should fit. That's what a drummer – that's a part of his responsibility, is to develop a great sense for the feeling of time.

Brower: When you were in the Hampton family band days, in articles you mentioned the Pettiford family, and I just made a joke the other day about the Marsalis thing – how aware were you of other family bands, and of the tradition of family bands? Or did you just take it for granted, because that's what your family did?

Hampton: No, actually I became more aware of it later. When we were in the family band, we didn't – we were in Indianapolis. So we didn't have a lot of the news that was available to us. I learned later, after meeting Jimmy, and also, I didn't meet him, but I heard Oscar Pettiford and several of the family bands, the older families.

Brower: Like the Youngs, or whatever.

Hampton: Yeah. Oscar Pettiford was one of the very important people himself that must have either come from an influence of his family, or he influenced them, because he's the guy that really started showing the bass players that there was a new literature going to start developing for the bass. It started with Oscar Pettiford and Jimmy Blanton, a new literature, which – by this time, the bass has developed a literature that's incredible, but that started with Oscar Pettiford, and the classical players, because all the good bass players studied classically. The bass, of course, was in existence long before this country was even in existence, I mean, as America. The bass was in existence in Europe for a long time before that.

Brower: I looked up some ages last night, because I want to talk a bit, and I want almost shamelessly anecdotally, about Indianapolis. The oldest Montgomery, it's Buddy?

Hampton: No, Buddy's the youngest.

Brower: Buddy is . . .

Hampton: He's the youngest.

Brower: Okay. We have Monk [Montgomery] in 1921. We have Wes in 1923, when they came to life. And Buddy, 1930. Hubbard is 1938. [Larry] Ridley's 1937, and David Baker's 1931. So you and David must have been like this.

Hampton: We were pretty close.

Brower: Was there competition between – did the Montgomerys have a family band situation? Was there any sense of a competition between the two families, friendly, it would seem, but was there competition?

Hampton: No competition. The Montgomerys were very, very in advance musically. They didn't study any music, but what they were hearing, what they listened to, what they got out of the music that they heard, was – we were into the swing era, and they were into an era far beyond that. They – everything that they did, they did with their family. They'd add one person to it to play drums. That was the thing that they always played with, was that quartet. Sometimes it was a quintet. Alonzo Johnson, who died recently, working with them became a very fine tenor saxophonist.

Our family band was into a variety of styles of music. We were playing swing. We were playing bebop. We were playing the modern Stan Kenton stuff. We were playing a lot of different things. It was more so because my sisters probably felt that we would have more of an audience with a variety of things.

Brower: Talk a bit about your relationship with David Baker, some of the things that you shared, situations that you were involved with that helped develop both of you as musicians, maybe places that you worked in. Give us some more texture to life in Indianapolis involving most closely David, but also this swirl of musicians that I've named. There may be some others that I haven't – we don't know about.

Hampton: Dave and I were very close, because he was born one year before me, and we both played trombone. So we were very close. We were practicing together a lot. We had this competition in Indianapolis where we liked to see who could read the fastest, who could transpose the fastest. This is a thing that we did. We also did a lot of work on composition and arranging, composing and arranging. So we were constantly, every day, getting together and working on those things. I had my other brother, next older than myself, was another one that was every day working on music all day long, working on learning to write, working on learning to read to transpose. That was our whole lives. That's what our lives were about, rather.

Brower: Who guided this?

Hampton: The music. The music. Our excitement about the music made us do it. It was natural.

Brower: No teachers? No downloadable scores? No DVDs? No VHSs?

Hampton: We didn't have any of that. We did have some –what we did have was the possibility of scores, some scores. And there were two men. One was named Mr. Franzman. The other was Mr. Brown. They were always helping the young musicians, encouraging them, telling them things that would be criticisms, but criticisms that would help them to become better at what they were doing. They, from time to time, must have touched all of our lives in some way, because I know I would go – I remember once we were – there was a concert band playing in the park. My brother, the one I told you about, the next older than me, this guy with this genius mind – they had rehearsed one piece that was a trumpet solo. I can't remember the name. One of the classical pieces. He had never actually played this piece, but he had heard it. Their trumpet soloist didn't show up. So they asked him to come up. He came up and played it, at sight, of course, and played it without having played it before. He was the kind of guy who could just – he could do that. He was very much – things that he heard, he remembered. He knew what key they were in. He heard them in the key they were in. Perfect pitch. And he remembered all the notes that he heard. For me, it was fascinating to see him go up and play with this ensemble that he hadn't played with, hadn't rehearsed with, and play this composition. It was beautiful.

Brower: These gentleman that were involved in touching young musicians, were they themselves working musicians? Were they schoolteachers? Who were they in the community?

Hampton: They were schoolteachers, but they were also working musicians, because they played – I remember Mr. Brown played many different instruments, and I think Mr. Franzman was a saxophone player and a theory teacher. Somehow we had one class with him. I don't know how I got into it. But he taught us the whole process of determining why certain chords are called what they're called. In one day he taught us that, one class. After that I knew exactly, whenever I was going to construct a chord, how it was constructed and why it was called what it was, what it's purpose was. I learned that in one day from him. I think the school – the people that were head of the educational system, I think they fired him after that, for giving all that information in one class like that.

Brower: When you're interacting with the Montgomery family, would it be all of the brothers, or just Buddy?

Hampton: They were all together.

Brower: They were all together.

Hampton: Yeah, they were all together.

Brower: Even though they're like 10 years apart.

Hampton: Well, in social life, then they weren't.

Brower: But musically . . .

Hampton: Musically, every day they were together. Social life, my brother and I were hanging out with Buddy. The other guys, the older guys, of course were somewhere else. Wes was hanging out with one group of people, and Monk was hanging out somewhere else.

Brower: Can you think of other activities that were going on in your community that so involved a group of young people that became the center of their lives, the way music had become for you, for the Montgomerys, and for others in that circle?

Hampton: Yes. Sports, of course, like it always is. A lot of people were into sports.

Brower: This seems to be an involvement beyond sports. What I've experienced, unless somebody's really out there.

Hampton: Yeah. Most of our lives – my life, anyway – was all based around something musical. I wasn't – I didn't have any interests in anything else. And my younger brother next to me, his whole life was all music. Of course our family was in music a lot, but the girls in the family were into other things that females will be into. But I didn't even try to find out about anything else.

Brower: How did Freddie Hubbard and Larry Ridley, two other names I'm at least aware of – how did they factor into this circle?

Hampton: Finally I met Freddie after I went to live in New York. I actually met him there. That's when he came to New York, and he didn't have any place to stay. So we stayed together in my place. Larry, I played several times, but Larry was into education. He was already into teaching at different schools. He was doing more of that than he was playing.

Brower: But not during the young days in Indianapolis.

Hampton: No, but he probably was into educating himself so he could do that.

Brower: Okay. So he wasn't a factor in your life in Indianapolis

Hampton: No, no, he wasn't. We didn't get to play together that much. We might have gotten to play together a few times, but not very much.

Brower: What were the – were there certain particular clubs or theaters that were prominent in your musical life in Indianapolis?

Hampton: Yeah, there was one called the Red Keg. That was right on the corner of a street that I lived on, which ran right across Indianapolis – it ran right across Indiana Avenue, where all of the music happened. Everything that happened, mostly, musically, in the African-American part of town, was on Indiana Avenue. They had a lot of other places where Glenn Miller played. All of the other bands, like Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman, that was downtown somewhere, Claypool Hotel.

But the Red Keg was a place that a lot of jam sessions went on. There was a guy that was the head of the band there. He was a very influential musician, taught us all a lot, and played really great. His name was Jimmy Cole. Saxophone player. He's – I think he was a little older than J. J. [Johnson], though J. J. probably played with him too. I remember one day I was there. I couldn't go in, because I was too young. But it was all glass. The whole front of the place was glass. So you could see the band. The band was right on the – it was kind of like that place in New York, where the band is on the – behind the bar. You could stand there and hear it perfectly. So I was standing there and listening. J. J. happened to come up. He went in, and they wanted him to play. He said, "I don't have my instrument with me." I said I had mine. So I let him use my instrument. He played – just took my mouthpiece and everything, and played so beautifully with it. I couldn't understand how my instrument – never sounded like that before.

Brower: Did you spend time shedding with him?

Hampton: No, no. He was already a professional musician when I really started to get to the level where I could have played with somebody like him. He was traveling already. Illinois Jacquet, Count Basie. There's some recordings of Count Basie and also Illinois Jacquet with him already playing as a soloist. He played with Benny Carter. He played with a lot of bands already before I was . . .

Brower: So he's someone you sort of stood back in awe of.

Hampton: Oh, we all were.

Brower: He was the man for Indianapolis?

Hampton: He was the man everywhere. J. J. won the polls for 30 years, maybe – 25, 30 years.

Brower: Sometimes it's just a figure in the community that – I'm putting the polls aside. I know as a child coming up in my particular church, Stanley Cowell went there. I didn't know anything about the poll. I just knew that he was a fabulously talented pianist, and anybody interested in music in Toledo, in my community, idolized this guy. We didn't know about Art Tatum. We didn't know that Art Tatum had been at Stanley Cowell's house as a child. We knew about – he was that – so I'm saying, was J. J. that person for Indianapolis?

Hampton: Yes he was. The thing is that the proof for J. J. was in the fact that – of course we all were very much in awe of him, and a lot of musicians were, but the thing was that he was starting to go from swing into bebop. A lot of musicians were intimidated by that. So that turned him off, as far as he was concerned. That change that went on from swing to bebop was a thing that caused a lot of musicians to have a lot of dissension with musicians, because a lot of musicians were intimidated with the fact that these guys were playing this music calls for such a knowledge of theory and everything, and the virtuosity of the level of playing. So a lot of guys were turned off by that. But it wasn't the music that turned them off. It was the fact that they didn't know for sure whether or not they could participate in that level of improvisation.

Brower: If there would be a future for them.

Hampton: Yeah

Brower: Do you see a similar issue at play in subsequent changes in jazz?

Hampton: Whenever it changes. Whenever jazz changes, there's a lot of insecurities about it, fears about "Can I make the change?" The people that make the change are the people that admit that something new is going on that they don't know, but they want to learn about it. Miles Davis, for instance. Miles was a guy that changed. Every time something came along, he found some way to fit what he did into it, but he accepted the fact that change had come.

Brower: What did you think about when the avant garde came?

Hampton: I heard Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry, and I liked it. I liked what they were playing. The thing that I found might have been somewhat a problem with them: it seemed as though they didn't feel as though they needed to keep working on the basic things of playing to keep progression in what they were playing. See, when Dizzy and them made the change, they were still working on the basics. They were still learning

scales. They were still working on chords and all that kind of thing. So that gave them something to go on. I think that Ornette and them, when they made their change, they didn't relate to those things that came before. There was no part of what they did that you could hear any of that in. I could hear it in what they were playing, because I thought that they – they reminded me a lot of Dizzy and Bird when they came along, and I was thrilled with what they were doing. I could tell that it was a new phase of the music, but it was raw, and it needed to be developed. Because whenever you have a new phase of music, you got to develop it. You didn't just start playing something new. If you can start playing something new, you're really not sincere about what you're doing. If you got something new, you got to work on it, because you've got a lot of standards that were set before, that you have to be compared to. So you can't come up with a new concept in music just out of the blue. You can come up with a new concept, but you still have a lot of work to do. The newer it is, the more work you have to do.

Brower: Go back to a couple of trombone questions. You're left-handed.

Hampton: I'm right-handed.

Brower: You play left-handed.

Hampton: I play left-handed.

Brower: Talk about that please.

Hampton: When I was born – when I was old enough to play the trombone, they didn't have a trombone player in the family band. So they gave me the trombone. Say, "Here. You're going to play trombone." They gave it to me on the left side. So me, not knowing any better, I played it on that side. They said, "Your name's going to be Slide, and you're going to have to learn to live with it." So I did. I learned to play it on the left side. I can play on the right side, too.

Brower: Does that pose any particular problems? Why is it even an issue?

Hampton: Because in the classical ensembles, you can't play on the left side. There are no left-handed trombone players. I mean, there are left-handed trombone players, but they play it right handed. Nobody's allowed to play with the left hand in classical ensembles.

Brower: Is there a musical reason for that?

Hampton: Yeah. It looks better up front. All of the trombones are on the same side.

Brower: So there's a cosmetic reason, but there's no difference in what it takes to produce the sound, execute whatever you want to play, left or right. It's just you have to learn it an opposite way.

Hampton: There could be some difference. It could be a difference, if you have the instrument on one side of the head or the other. It could make some difference, because the musical side of your brain is in one place, and the part that's more technical is on the other side. So you could maybe hear better on one side or the other. I don't know for sure about that, though, but it's possible.

Brower: I know when I had Bell's Palsy, it was always the nerve canal on the opposite side that affected the control that I lost. So I have no sense of what any of these things mean. I'm just curious, because it comes up when you're interviewed, like I'm asking the question. People are a little fascinated.

Hampton: There's a lot of information that could be obtained on that subject. I haven't found that – I'm so involved in – see, my thing is that, in my composing or even in my playing, often I'm spending more time playing things just because I like to hear them than I should be doing it to accomplish whatever I'm trying to accomplish technically with them or musically. I spend more time listening to the stuff that I'm playing than I have to. So, as far as those kinds of things are concerned, a lot of the time I don't get involved in a technical level beyond what I need. But I do know that those things exist, and I know there's a lot of things that I don't know about it. If it's something that I find that I really need in order to further myself in what I'm trying to achieve, then I'll go into that.

Brower: When you gave J. J. that – loaned him that trombone, what kind of trombone was it?

Hampton: It was an old instrument that you use in the schools. I don't even remember what the name of it was. It wasn't a very good instrument. That's for sure.

Brower: What are you playing now?

Hampton: This one is called a Worischek. This one was given to me by Jay Ashby – Jay, who played with Astrud Gilberto for many years. Jay had a wonderful sound on the horn, too. But he's working with Yamaha. So they made an instrument for him that's sort of like this, and he let me play this one. It was the closest thing that I found to what I had been looking for, for a trombone. Up to this point, I haven't been able to find something that works better for me than this one.

Brower: What qualities does it have?

Hampton: It has that quality that I used to all the time recognize whenever we were having a rehearsal with our World of Trombones. The bass trombone player, Douglas Purviance, his first note every day would be beautiful. The attack was very clear, and the sound was clear. The other trombone players had to warm up. The first notes usually sounded like there was some stress and strain in them. The bass trombone player never had that. He came in right away with a clear note that had a wonderful duration and an end. That was what I – every time I went to rehearsal, I noticed that, but it didn't dawn on me until later, that why is it that he's always sounding like this right away? He's not warming up. He's not sounding like, in any particular area of the register of the instrument, it's stressful for him. I figured it's because he's playing a larger bore. The air is not hesitating as much going through when you're first playing the instrument. The air goes immediately through. So you get the sound that you would have later in the day. You get that sound right away.

Brower: Is it the fact that you can change the bells on this trombone?

Hampton: You can take it off. Why they did that was: the bell is so big that there weren't a lot of trombone cases that this bell would fit in. They made it another way, so you could take the bell off and put it in a flat case. The whole trombone went in a flat case. This is a special case that they made later, that I can put in the luggage, because a lot of flights are not going to let me take that trombone on there, and I'm not going to argue with them about it. I like the non-problematic style of life. So I found an answer before I got there and had to try to figure something out. Because I saw – once we were in England, Jimmy Heath, Jon Faddis, and myself, and they wanted to make Jimmy put his instrument in the luggage, and Jon to put his in the luggage, in a soft case. They wouldn't do it. They wouldn't let us on that plane. They had a big, big argument about that. It was really very disrespectful to Jimmy and them. But my instrument, I could put in the luggage. So I didn't have to go through that with them.

Brower: We ended yesterday talking about your time in Europe. I know I'd asked you about – is it Joe Haider? How do you say it?

Hampton: Haider.

Brower: That's just a name that popped out in going through discographies and other things. Would you touch on some of the bands that you – some of the large bands that you played there, and some of the composing or maybe commissions that you executed that you particularly would want in the record?

Hampton: That band, Joe Haider, we were co-leaders. Joe was the one that organized it as far as the music was – I mean, as far as the money was concerned, because in Germany and those places, they had a lot of people that supported projects, especially of new music. If you say you're going to do a new music project, they would – people were

coming out giving money. They'd give money – all the money you need for it. You could play in a club, and they would pay to have the thing recorded. That was the band that we had, Joe Haider. Dexter was in that band, and Benny Bailey was in that band, Johnny Griffin, the trombone player that got me the job in Maynard Ferguson's band. I can't think of his name. He's a dear friend of mine.

That band was a co-production, where we wrote – I wrote one half of the CD. He wrote the other half. We played in a club. We played that music for some days before we recorded it. Called *Give Me a Double.* Joe's a crazy guy. He had – on one side he had one white woman's breast, with my fingers on it, and on the other side, a black woman's breast, with his fingers on it. That's the kind of guy he was. *Give Me a Double* was the name of it.

It was really wonderful playing with Dexter. That's where I learned what I told the kids yesterday, about Dexter's love to play in the ensemble, and his love to play his parts perfectly. He'd take his parts home every night to the hotel, and he'd come back the next night. He'd almost have them all memorized.

Brower: That's unusual?

Hampton: Yes. Most musicians that are improvisers are not a lot into playing in the ensemble. Some of them have played in ensembles before, because that's where Dizzy and them got a lot of their training, in the big bands. The really great players, Charlie Shavers, Roy Eldridge, Dizzy, Louis Armstrong, they all did a lot of playing in large ensembles. That's where they got a lot of their training. Dexter and all of those guys were first playing in big bands. There wasn't any small groups. There were no small groups until later. They got their – Billy Eckstine's band, and Fletcher Henderson, and Count Basie – that's where they got their training. Then they formed the small groups later. But what they had done in the big bands was what gave them the experience to organize a small group and make it five pieces and make a lot of music with it. That was very important.

In Europe, we always – I had – one of the bands that I had for a special festival, they'd say, "Get an all-star band together, and we'll pay you whatever it's going to cost." I got Dexter, Johnny Griffin, Benny Bailey, Art Farmer. The whole band was like that, of these kind of guys. I wrote the music for the band. Then I went to the promoter. I charged him so much money for the band, he never hired me again. But for those guys – what a lot of people don't understand is, for those guys, you have to pay those guys. You got to respect them. If you respect them, you respect them by paying them. That's what I did.

Brower: How significant do you think the presence of that many elite jazz musicians in Europe, particularly in France, Germany – what impact did that have on the development of the music in Europe? What impact do you think it had on the American scene, the fact

that so many of these great players worked in the States [*sic*: Europe] during a 10-, 15-year period, at the height of their musical powers?

Hampton: The impact that it had overseas in Europe was, a lot of the times the European musicians felt it was unfair for them to have to try to compare to an ensemble like the one I was telling you about. But by the same token, they were going to the club every night, listening to these guys and learning from them. Some of them became really great musicians, some European musicians. It influenced in Europe the whole – all music was influenced by the fact that those guys were over there. It was a very – even for the classical musicians, they were very excited about jazz. They were often – the ones of us that had the ability to write for the classical ensembles and to play solos with classical ensembles also.

Brower: Did you get involved in some of that work?

Hampton: Yeah. I wrote some things for some of the orchestras.

Brower: Which in particular?

Hampton: Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra. I wrote a big piece for them. I wrote something for one of the classical orchestras in Holland, and I wrote a radio production for one of the string ensembles in Germany, I remember. That was very interesting, because my inexperience there made me write things that they weren't used to, but they were very excited about trying to do these things that was unusual for them. They did – a good violinist can play anything. That's one thing I learned. Their attitude is that they're going to try to make the most out of whatever it is, whatever music you write. They're going to work really hard.

I learned a lot about – just about rehearsal from those guys. They rehearse for hours with the whole orchestra. They rehearse from ten o'clock in the morning until five o'clock every day. They get every beat. They know exactly what every beat is doing, what every chord is, and everything. It was really wonderful being a part of that and seeing them like that, going into a place and the string ensemble, the guys say, "This is unusual for us, but we're going to find a way to do it." And they would. No matter what you wrote, they'd find a way to play it. It was really wonderful to see that.

Brower: Are there recordings of those instances?

Hampton: Those things are all recorded, but the only thing is that nobody's going to hear them outside of Europe, probably, because that's for the radio, and those musics are exclusively to be played for that radio station. Only the people that are – was in wherever that station actually can be heard at.

Brower: I wish we could do something about that.

Hampton: They have a lot of music like that, by a lot of composers. They have rooms of music.

Brower: How many – do you know how many pieces that you have written?

Hampton: No.

Brower: Would you venture a guess?

Hampton: I would say that I've written too many, because when you write too many of them, a lot of them are not good.

Brower: Is there music that hasn't been performed that you think is good, or that you believe should be heard, that for whatever reason hasn't been heard or hasn't been recorded?

Hampton: There must have been a couple of pieces. I know one piece I wrote for Chick Corea, and it just – with a large ensemble. It was a big band with two french horns and a tuba, and I guess there was maybe a four or five rhythm section. Now somebody – I just sent it to someone last week. They're going to copy it and play it in a concert that they're doing with Chick Corea, either this week or next week. I have a few pieces like that, but not a lot.

[recording interrupted; the recording resumes in mid-sentence]

. . . recently is that haste makes waste, and very much in the area of trying to learn an instrument, or trying to learn anything. If you really take your time and work on the fundamentals of what you're doing, you'll learn much faster.

Brower: I think you said in maybe a brief phone conversation that two of your favorite recording projects were with Dexter. Why is *A Day in Copenhagen* one of your favorite recordings?

Hampton: It was the first chance I had to work with Dexter. I had seen him in some concerts, or maybe played on the same concert he was playing on. But I didn't play with him. He heard something I had written somewhere, and he asked me to write the music for this album for him. Not having worked with him before, I didn't really know what to expect. But he got Kenny Drew, pianist; Niels Ørsted Pedersen, bass; Arthur Taylor, drums; Dizzy Reece, trumpet; and Dexter and myself. We didn't have a rehearsal before the record date. We went right in the studio. I was surprised at how serious he was about playing the ensembles. Not only the ensembles. He was seriously thinking about how to

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make the solos become a part of what the composition was about. He loved playing in the ensemble, and when it wasn't perfect, he said, "We got to play it again. Got to go over it again." He never tired of going over it until we got it to the highest level of quality possible. He was really fantastic to work with, because, although most of the time he was sort of out of it, musically he was very aware and was very serious about [it].

Brower: I'll ask you the same question about this *Sophisticated Giant* project.

Hampton: I like the *Copenhagen* better, because it was my input into *Sophisticated Giant* that took some of the gloss off of it for me. I didn't like what I wrote in it. I almost got to where I wanted to go, but I didn't. Maybe it was that I was writing too fast or something. These arrangements in *Day in Copenhagen,* I like. That was the first time that I wrote for three horns. Three horns is a special style of writing, completely different than writing for four or five or something. I did – I enjoyed what I had written in that, but in *A Day in Copenhagen* [*sic*: *Sophisticated Giant*], it could have been much better.

Brower: What – develop the point, it's a special style of writing.

Hampton: It's more difficult to write for three, because you've got to choose the notes more carefully. Which notes out of the chord are you going to use? If you write for two, it's automatic. If you've got a C7 chord, and you have – a C9th, and you write the 9th and the 7th, then that's automatic; or the 7th and the 5th, and that's automatic; 7th and the flatted 5th, it's automatic; the 9th and the 11th, automatic. But with the three horns, where you have the trumpet, which is in a different register than the other instruments, then that's where you really have to think things out and make sure that it's going to make musical sense.

Brower: Does this go back to the Blakey – what you got out of the Blakey scenario?

Hampton: That's where I learned to write, from those guys.

Brower: So you're applying those lessons to this project.

Hampton: Yeah, applying that system of arranging to this project. The things of course I heard – I heard that three horns can sound a certain way, with those guys. So that was a big help to me.

Brower: That's the same system that you developed in the octet scenario.

Hampton: It was some things that were similar in that system. Of course we had six instruments. So you could use them in a lot of ways. You could use them in a close harmony situation, or else you could use them in open harmony. If you wanted to sound

really big, you used them in open harmony. You wanted to sound lush, you used them in close harmony.

Brower: You came back – you returned to the States in ’97 [*sic*: ’77]. Why did you come back in ’97 [’77]?

Hampton: I came back because Dexter asked me to come back. He asked me to come back to do this album.

Brower: Was it your intention to stay at that time?

Hampton: I hadn’t decided, because I had come back before. Like Benny Bailey, when I came back after living in Europe, it was frightening being over here, because they don’t have all the crime and everything over there. If you do some crime over there, you have to pay. Over here, you can do crime and get out of jail if you’ve got a good enough lawyer. So there’s a lot of crime, especially in New York. I was – it was a different feeling for me altogether. So, when I first came back, I was glad to get back over there, where there was some kind of an effort to really show a great consideration for the people that were living in a country. The government showed a lot of consideration for the people that lived in the country. Somebody can’t do something to you over there without paying for it. In Paris, it’s known, don’t hit somebody on the street, because if you hit somebody, you’re going in jail, and it’s not going to be, who was wrong and who was right? If you hit somebody, you’re going in jail, and you’re not going to get out just because you know somebody. That means that crime is a thing they’re actually trying to have control over. Over here a person can do a lot of things and get away if they have the right people on their side.

Brower: Do you think that Europe is still that same, I would call it, idyllic place?

Hampton: No.

Brower: Or is it following the American way, so to speak?

Hampton: Some of it’s changing, because when the wall came down, a lot of people that came from the East are not used to having that same kind of civilized situation to live in. But you got to realize that some cities in Europe are as much as 2,000 years old. They’ve been living there a long time. So that means that there’s a lot of learning that’s been going on for a long time. That’s what you’re living in. You’re living in people that have come from whatever we were before, a couple thousand years into the future. The education and everything is very, very, very important there. When they’re educating people, they’re telling people exactly what was going on in the history that they kept talking about. And the whole idea of crime actually being used as a part of the system of where you live. You don’t have that over there.

Brower: I asked you what impact you thought the fact that so many elite musicians were in Europe from the ’40s on, so many elite musicians. What impact – you said what you thought the impact was in Europe. What do you think the impact was on the American scene? And did you – when you decided to come back, did you notice anything that you thought could be attributed to the fact that so many elite musicians were – either had been in Europe or were kind of bicontinental, transcontinental, however you want to say it?

Hampton: Sure. One of the things that was very apparent was, when I came back in ’77, I would go to a school to work with one of the jazz ensembles, and they had one trombone and seven trumpets, seven saxophones. There wasn’t any trombone players, because in the commercial music that had dominated the scene for many years, they didn’t use any trombones. Motown didn’t use any trombones, in recording. They used them when they did the shows, but those shows weren’t recorded, the big shows in the theater. So you go to a place where they say they have a jazz ensemble, and the trombone players were very, very weak, if they were there. There were very few. In fact, you got the feeling that there were almost no trombone players around. It started to change later, especially after we started organizing the World of Trombones and all of those groups.

But, in general, music of course suffered from those guys being over there, because when they were over here, and the music was played by – you go to a place – if you go to a place and Dizzy was playing there, no matter what kind of trumpet player went there, he felt he had to go home and practice. That affected all of music. When J. J. played, all the trombone players from the symphony orchestra were there listening. They were already guys that were big into practicing, but this inspired them to practice even more. So it affected all of music, when all those great musicians were here. Not only did it effect music. It affected society in general, because people were coming together that never had any other reason to come together, except to hear that music, and they would come to places that they usually never went to, and they wanted to hear the music so bad that they didn’t give a kitty who was there. They said, “I’m going to be there listening today.” I don’t care if it’s a doctor or a lawyer or a pimp. “I’m going to be there listening.”

Brower: I think that . . .

[recording interrupted]

Brower: It is Friday, April the 21st, in the year 2006. My name is William A. Brower. I’m at the National Museum of American History, about to begin tape 5 of an oral history interview with Slide Hampton.

When you came back in ’77, is that when you established yourself in Brooklyn?

Hampton: When I stayed.

Brower: One interesting anecdotal part, I think, of your life, would be to talk about the 13-room house that you had, how long you had it, who occupied it, and maybe what music came out of it.

Hampton: That house, which was 245 Carlton Avenue was – we obtained that house before I left to go to Europe, but my wife and I were no longer living together. So she kept the house. When I came – actually, most of the activity with the musicians was before I came back in that house. Eric Dolphy lived there.

Brower: What years are we talking about?

Hampton: That was maybe the ’60s. Eric Dolphy lived there, and Freddie Hubbard, and Wayne Shorter. Wes [Montgomery] even stayed there for a while, and Joe Zawinul. Trane [John Coltrane] used to come to my house often, because his cousin Mary, that he wrote the song for, lived there. She was married to a trombone player.

Brower: Which was . . . ?

Hampton: The trombone player’s name was Charles Greenlee. I think he changed to a Muslim name later. We had a lot of jam sessions there. We had a piano there. So there was a lot of working on compositions and arrangements. All that stuff was going on all the time. It was a very musical house. Around the corner from me lived Bill Lee, the composer. He used to come by there a lot. So a lot of musicians came there.

Brower: That would be Spike Lee’s father?

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: Were musicians prevalent in this neighborhood, or just those two residences?

Hampton: No, there were a lot of musicians in the neighborhood in general, because at one time Brooklyn had a lot of musical activity. It had clubs, some concerts, and things like that. There was a lot of music that went on in Brooklyn.

Brower: Did you – I know, I guess, toward the end of Joe Henderson’s life, you did a big-band record with him.

Hampton: Yeah.

Brower: But wasn’t there a Freddie Hubbard – Joe Henderson big band that was kind of a rehearsal band?

Hampton: That was the music that actually was recorded in that session.

Brower: But that band existed some years before.

Hampton: Yeah, that was about – what? – maybe 40 years ago or something like that, in the ’50s.

Brower: When that band existed.

Hampton: Yeah, when they started.

Brower: Was it coincident with the time you had the house, or more or less?

Hampton: Around the same time. It was around the same years. He had – I remember – in fact, that might have been in the early ’60s. It might have been in the early ’60s, because I went to a rehearsal. They were rehearsing at the Five Spot. I didn’t know anything about Joe’s ability as an arranger or orchestrator. I know about him as a composer. I went to that rehearsal, and it was one of the most exciting things that I ever heard. The arrangements that he wrote were so far in advance of everything that everybody was writing and were so wonderful. A guy that really didn’t spend a lot of time in the area of orchestration and arranging, that could write like that, was always – to me, was always incredible.

Brower: Do you remember the musicians who were involved in that project during the Five Spot years, or during the time that he was rehearsing.

Hampton: I’m trying to think of who the musicians were, because I think they weren’t rehearsing to play any job or anything. They were rehearsing just to hear that music. I think it must have been Kenny Dorham. I can’t remember who all the guys were. But it was the guys from that circle: Kenny Dorham and Freddie Hubbard and all of them. They were in that. Donald Byrd and those people were in that band, because they were also writing music too, because Donald Byrd, Herbie Hancock, and Quincy Jones had spent time in Paris before that, studying with that great theory teacher over there, Nadia Boulanger. So they all came back, and they were all writing things, and wrote some really beautiful arrangements. Joe – Joe just did that on his own. I don’t know where his training – where he got his training as an orchestrator.

Brower: When – 40 years later, when they did the music, what was your role in the project?

Hampton: They decided to do the music. They had only enough compositions that they needed three more to complete the CD. So they asked me to write two of the songs, *Inner*

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Urge and *Serenity*. Then Bob Belden wrote the other song. I forget the name of it. Did a beautiful arrangement on Joe's waltz. Then they used all of Joe's other arrangements.

Brower: So these were arrangements that you did of Joe's stuff.

Hampton: Joe's music. In fact, I got the music not too long before they were going to do the recording. The songs were really very, very modern. *Inner Urge* is one of the most modern compositions of all times. It's a beautiful composition, but very complicated.

Brower: When you say "modern" . . . ?

Hampton: Modern harmonies. The whole approach to the melody is based on scales on modern harmony. When I heard that from the beginning, I thought, man, I don't know. I don't think I can write anything on this. This is different than things that I've written.

Brower: Talk about the craft of the composer, arranger, orchestrator. Define those things for me. And talk about – I guess one question I would ask is, when you – let's come back to that question, but when you were working on that project, did you attempt to do it as Joe Henderson would do it? Or you did – you just took the music and did what Slide Hampton would do?

Hampton: I tried to do something that would be a little different than Joe, but I still had some of Joe in there too, because I knew that in the writing of Joe, one thing that was often used was major 7th with flatted 5ths. He often used that chord. Some places I used that, because he used it, because often in my compositions, I didn't really use it except in places where I wanted to have an extreme effect from that particular harmony. But he used it a lot in his writing. Then, other than that, I tried to write something – because this compositions that I was arranging, he had composed that later than the other music. So it was more advanced. *Inner Urge* was really a very advanced composition. So I thought, I better write something that comparable of that composition. So that's where I started thinking some. But at first I was very intimidated by the composition, because it's such a great melody and has such great harmony in it, that I'm thinking, I don't know whether I can write something that's really worthy of this. But it finally worked out. I listened to it for two weeks without writing, and played it on the piano – played the melody and the harmony and just – didn't try to think of an introduction or anything. I just listened to the composition. Finally, the ideas started to come. I woke up one day, and I started getting these ideas, and I started hearing something that sounds like it really relates to this level of composition. Then I started to write.

Brower: Now, back to the question. When we finished yesterday, we were riding in the cab back to your hotel, you started talking about – I think you've used the phrase, the music inside the music. Talk about arranging, and talk about orchestration, just what they are, how you approach them, and how that relates to composition.

Hampton: Okay. See, the thing is, in the first of those three things, the first thing would actually be composition, because when you do a composition, you don't have to have an arrangement. You don't have to have an ensemble. Composition could be for one instrument. It could be for piano. So the composition is first.

Then, in many cases, if the composition is written for a keyboard, that would be extracted by an arranger. He will do an orchestration. The orchestration won't necessarily have any different ideas than what's in that piano lead sheet or that piano composition, but he will orchestrate it. That means that where the piano played [Hampton sings four notes], I'll used the tuba and the bass clarinet here. When he played [Hampton sings a fast phrase], I'm going to use the flutes or the oboes. He decides on what instruments should be used to play the different lines and harmonies. That's orchestration. There doesn't have to be any ideas from the person that's doing it. You just have to know the best instruments to use to get the best effects and chords and everything out of that composition.

An arrangement on the same thing would be that you would take that lead sheet, probably learn it in its original form, and maybe embellish the harmonies. Maybe add some grace notes to the melody, just change a little bit the whole interpretation of the melody. Change the harmony. Maybe use the original harmony, then, the next chorus, change it. And also to add counter-melodies to it. You add a lot when you're arranging. Orchestration, you just take the notes that you have in the original composition, and choose the instruments that you want to play them.

Brower: How does this relate to the repertory movement in jazz? First of all, it seems to me that what you do – and I'm not – let me back up. Music inside the music. The indication to me in that "ism" is that there's – every original idea probably can lead to several other very rich ideas. That's what, I think – why the jazz world has valued you so much, because you've done so much of that. Obvious examples with Dizzy's music, but with other music as well. You're doing it now with Jobim. Do you – in your mind, is there a hierarchy in this? Or is it just one proceeds the other, and they can be of equal importance?

Hampton: I think the thing that's important about it is that, in my case, I feel I'm not a composer. I'm an orchestrator and an arranger. These are the things that really come natural for me. Now, Jimmy Heath, Joe Henderson, and Wayne Shorter are composers. They also can orchestrate, but their orchestration probably would not be quite on the same level as mine, because that's a thing that I do naturally, the thing that I do because I love it. I love to orchestrate a beautiful composition by someone else. So that's where my strength is. Their strength is that they have the natural ability to compose. You usually have to be a natural to be a composer. That's a spiritual – it's very spiritual, to compose, because that energy comes from somewhere else in the case of the really great composers, like Wayne Shorter. He's one of the really great composers, like Thelonious

Monk. That comes from somewhere else. They don't spend a lot of hours working on the composition. Those things come to them. They hear them from the energy that's in the universe. That's the only way you can really be a great composer. You have to be – actually, you have to be chosen to be a composer. You can't make yourself a great composer. That's a gift. You're not choosing, I'm going to be a great composer. You're not choosing. You can be a composer. That you choose. But it won't be in that level with those guys.

Brower: How many different treatments have you given *Lament*?

Hampton: Many. I'm still – I just did one last – this year, earlier.

Brower: J. J. Johnson's *Lament* album.

Hampton: Yeah. I wrote an arrangement of *Lament* for J. J. I've written several of them for groups that I played with, and other people. I guess I've written about five arrangements – different arrangements of *Lament.*

Brower: They're all new music inside that music.

Hampton: Yeah. That music inspired something different every time.

Brower: What is it about – is it that it's something that's so strongly identified with J. J., and you want to lift him up? Or is it the stuff of that piece that has brought you back to it so many times?

Hampton: It's one of the most beautiful compositions that was ever written. One place that you can really hear it too is on *Miles Davis + 19.* The thing that makes it really – even that much more accents the beauty of it, is that they play *The Meaning of the Blues* before, and it goes into *Lament.* It's like Heaven.

Brower: What did you do? You did *Lament*, and it went into – *Basin Street Blues*? Or something?

Hampton: Yeah. It was actually a separate arrangement. But recently I've done *Enigma* going into *Lament. Enigma* is a J. J. composition that was written years ago and recorded with Jimmy Heath and Clifford Brown, I think, and J. J. Nobody – not many people have played *Enigma.* It's a very beautiful composition. I did that, and then I segued into *Lament. Lament* is really made even more beautiful when you do something else that actually, it's like an introduction to it. Then you hear *Lament.* You say, oh man, this tune is even more beautiful than I thought. It's one of the most beautiful compositions that I've heard.

Brower: Did you think that was a – was I missing it yesterday? Every time I listened to it, I kept hearing *How Deep is the Ocean.*

Hampton: It has some similarities in that melody, very, very close to the [Hampton sings a phrase]. It's the exact same rhythm pattern. I never thought of that until you told me yesterday.

Brower: Because I would actually be – I would hear – I'd be listening, especially if I was working, like multi-tasking. I'm listening to your music. I'm doing e-mail. And I would just start singing, "How deep is the . . ." Then I looked back, and I say, that's not on this CD.

Hampton: That's true. It is very – it seems to be very closely related.

Brower: Tadd Dameron. The Continuum group. Whose idea was that? What was the life of that project? Was it just a recording? How did that – talk about how that came about.

Hampton: We played together for a while, beside the recording. I'm trying to think who was the one that got the idea of that together, because we had – it was Ron Carter, and – Arthur Taylor?

Brower: I think. I know, Kenny Barron.

Hampton: Kenny Barron.

Brower: Jimmy Heath.

Hampton: Jimmy Heath.

Brower: I'm forgetting the drummer. The drummer's escaping me.

Hampton: Yeah, I think it might have been Arthur Taylor. The idea – let's see. I'm trying to think of where the idea came from. I think it maybe came from the record company, the company that recorded that.

Brower: To do *Mad about Tadd.*

Hampton: Yeah. It might have come from them. I always loved Tadd's music. But the guys don't play Tadd's music. It's funny. *Good Bait, Our Delight, Ugly Beauty,* or something like that. A lot of great compositions. The thing about the jazz musicians, is that they don't play the jazz musician's compositions. They play the compositions of the standard composers. But Tadd had a lot of beautiful music that we all should be and should have been playing. He was a very romantic writer. Everything he wrote was

romantic. It's a kind of an approach to it that would set a mood for some kind of a romantic scene.

Brower: Were you satisfied with that project?

Hampton: I liked that, what we did on that, yeah. I must not have written all the music. I guess Jimmy did some, or something?

Brower: I'm not sure.

Hampton: I think maybe we did a co-writers thing on that.

Brower: Did that group perform other material?

Hampton: No, we only performed with Tadd's material.

Brower: That was your idea.

Hampton: Yeah, that was the purpose of the group. I think that was a good idea.

Brower: Was that at all related to what Philly Joe Jones ultimately did [Dameronia]?

Hampton: No, because he – see, Philly worked with Tadd. So he loved Tadd, and that's the reason he played that music. I didn't work with Tadd, but I got to know Tadd. He was a very – he was like his music sounds. That's the kind of person he was. He was very beautiful.

Brower: Under what circumstances did you know him?

Hampton: I got to know him. I was conducting the Lloyd Price band, and Tadd came to our performances. He and Miles came. We were playing at a club in the 80s. Miles would come in, and he wouldn't go to the bar, and he wouldn't go to a table. He'd go and sit in a corner, in a dark corner in the club and listen to the band. Then, when we'd come out, he'd say [Hampton imitates Davis's voice], "The band sounds good," and leave. That's all he would – but he would come often to hear it. And Tadd came. Tadd came to me after one of the performances and said, "I would like to write something for the band." I said, "We would be honored to have something that you would write." Then he died after that, before he wrote anything.

Brower: You had an association with Mingus.

Hampton: [laughs] Yeah.

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Brower: Does that mean we should go on to another subject?

Hampton: No, it's all right. I don't mind talking about it. It wasn't very much of an association, but I did – being he was a composer and I was a composer, we had some time that we got to meet. He was always – Mingus was always a strange guy. He came to our performance with the World of Trombones. We weren't playing *Frame for the Blues*, but he was speaking in reference to *Frame for the Blues.* He's in the audience, in the back of the [Village] Vanguard, talking about *Frame for the Blues.* He said, "Yeah, I know that *Frame for the Blues.* You got it from 'Ole rockin' chair got me.' That's where you got that. 'Ole rockin' chair got me'." It's the same phrase, actually, but I never thought about "ole rockin' chair got me" when I wrote that thing. But he come in the club, and all the way from the back of the club, he'd be talking stuff like that.

So I went to him one day, and I said, "Man, why are you such a difficult person?" I said, "You're a great bass player, a great composer, but you're constantly wanting to get on people's nerves." We never had – I never played – finally I did play with him later, but by that time he was in a wheelchair. So he couldn't be that much of a problem. We played – we made a recording for somebody, and we played. The ensemble was three trombones, six trumpets, seven saxophones, two bass violins, two drummers, and a piano, all sitting a long way from each other. So they couldn't really – it was already – it was always kind of confused. That was about the most that I had with Charlie, that last thing. The music was nice music, but hard to play with a rhythm section that's sitting apart like that.

But you learn a lot when you see a guy like Mingus, and you see that he's a very talented guy, has an exceptional talent on the instrument, and as far as his composing is concerned, and arranging, but the attitude of the person affects everything that you are going to do.

Brower: Did his approach to composition affect you at all?

Hampton: One of the first compositions that I heard that I really liked – it was the Lionel Hampton band – was *Mingus Fingers.* It was very modern. I was thrilled with that arrangement. I hoped that I would hear more stuff from him like that. But I didn't hear anything else like that.

Brower: Talk about the – you've been involved in a lot of projects that feature trombones. There's lots of recordings – you did stuff with Curtis Fuller, you did stuff with Melba Liston – that foreshadow – announce the coming of the World of Trombones. Give us the – how that idea was born, what you were thinking about in terms of the choices of the musicians that you got involved in that, and what it was like to maintain that.

Hampton: The trombone choir had been something that's existed for many years before we were even born, within the churches and in the classical ensembles. The choir has always been something that's been important in music. So, usually, trombone players have a real camaraderie about them – among them. They usually like to get together. They like to play together. They like to work on ensembles and see how well they can develop the ensemble. Even sometimes we had trombone ensembles together, but we weren't – we didn't have any idea to work anywhere with them. We were just getting together playing trombone music and writing for the trombone choir, because it always so much fun to write for it, because it was the one group in the band that sounded complete without the rest of the instruments. That's something that's been in existence for a long time. So every time we had – it seems like every trombone player, one time or the other, for recordings, had written something for a trombone ensemble. It started with J. J. and those guys with just two trombones. Then it usually went up to four and five and six trombones, like that. Melba, being the arranger that she was, she definitely was going to write something for a trombone choir. Then J. J. and them wrote for the eight trombones, which was really wonderful. Then they had 21 trombones, with Urbie Green. There's always been something like that. A lot of those groups were never recorded, but those groups were recorded, with J. J. and Urbie Green.

Then, when I went overseas, and I came back in the '70s – I didn't do any trombone choir things when I was overseas, though. But I came back in the '70s. The trombone was almost completely off the scene. You didn't see any trombones anywhere. So we say, we've got to do something to bring the sound of the trombones to the general public again. So we started to organize these trombone ensembles. Started with four. Then we added a couple more. Then we added, until we got up to the nine with the World of Trombones. Then we recorded. We brought it out. Whenever people heard the trombone sound, they realized that they like it, because in a lot of cases, they'd never thought of the trombone being outside of an ensemble of some kind. They didn't think of it as a solo instrument.

But the thing is that there were a lot of great trombone soloists in the '40s and '50s, people that were very popular. One of the most effective trombone soloists of all times was Al Grey. Al Grey was more popular as a trombone player than any other trombone player, because he could play in any kind of a show and stop a show by playing one chorus of a song. It could be with dancers, singers, magicians, everything, and he would play in the middle of the show and stop the show, playing *Bewitched.* He played with such expression. A lot of people don't know this about Al Grey. Al Grey was a soloist in every band that he played in, no matter what style the band played, all the way back from the bands like Fletcher Henderson and all of those bands that came up to Count Basie and Billy Eckstine and then Dizzy's band, who was really playing – the bebop style was very important as a part of their – as what their repertoire was based on. But Al Grey was a featured soloist in Dizzy's band, too, and played the same way he played in all the other bands. Exact same style in all the bands. Nobody's ever done that. It's very unusual.

The people realized, from the fact that we were organizing the trombone ensembles, what the sound of the trombone was. Then more young people started to become interested in the trombone again. Although when I came back there were no trombone players in the schools, now you can find ten trombone players in a school, or 20 trombone players, and a lot of them are females, and they're playing good. Thanks to J. J., because J. J. was the guy that really – he's the guy that won the poll for the whole period of time that we – I mean, '50s and the '60s, J. J. won the poll, because he played so well.

Brower: What lead player do you admire the most?

Hampton: Trombone players? It was Bobby Burgess. Bobby Burgess was with Stan Kenton, and then he was with Maynard. I played with him with Maynard. He was very consistent. There are guys that play higher than him, but there are not guys that are more consistent than he was.

Brower: Bill – let's maybe segue to the most recent – there have been only two World of Trombone projects?

Hampton: Only two.

Brower: Recently you recorded one, Manchester Craftsman's Guild, with Bill Watrous as your guest. Does anybody play higher than Bill Watrous?

Hampton: [laughs] I don't know. But I think his objective is not to play high. Bill's objective is to play beautiful. He plays melodies really beautifully. That's his thing. There's a guy in Canada that plays so high on trombone, but when he plays high, he's very accurate.

Brower: It's true.

Hampton: Very accurate: control, pitch. Whatever you write there, he can play it. There was another guy with one of the Army bands also that had that, that played in that register that we only go to once in a while. He could play there a long time and play very accurate. So that wouldn't be Bill's forte, to do that. I know that Bill can play up. He can play up at least to maybe a high F# over the bass clef, the second high F#, which is high. That's high enough, actually. But the guys that really play up there – there are a few guys that have that natural ability – natural embouchure to be able to play there, and they worked on it. They knew they could play high, but they worked on it, so they could be consistent, and they could be exact. They're the guys that really can control that.

Brower: How would you compare the two World of Trombones ensembles – this most recent one's larger by I guess four or so – both in terms of repertoire and in the groups?

Hampton: I think we had a better repertoire with the first group. We did *Donna Lee, Lament, Impressions.* We had some really great music with that group. It was a good group, but our problem was, when we recorded, we didn't have enough time. The group doesn't sound as good as it was, because we were rushing. We had maybe two sessions to record all of the music. So we didn't sound – but the music on the tape is really good, though: some good solos and good ensemble playing. But I wish that we could do that CD again, because there's some great music there. Actually, rather than record it in that space of time – that length of time that we did, we should have not made the recording. Should have waited until we could record it properly. The other one we had more time, more money, with the second group thing, but it's not the – it doesn't compare to the first one, though.

Brower: We talked about your siblings, but we haven't talked about your offspring. You've got some sons, and on one project that I have, *Inclusion,* they work with you in two different ways, one of the business side and one on the music side. Would you talk about that project, what you had in mind in doing that project, and your relationship with your sons as it relates to your business and your art?

Hampton: This was my breakaway project. This was my breakaway from the mainstream, business-wise, where the records are controlled by the record companies. They tell you how long you're going to have to record. They give you whatever amount of money you agree on. Then, whether the record sells or not, is also up to them. The music you put on the record is up to them. So I decided, I'm going to produce my own CD, because I was making a lot of money at the time, and I said, I'm going to put my money where my mouth is. I say I love music. Then let me put some money into it. So I put money into this. I paid the guys really well to do this. We wanted to have also some way of relating to the modern audience, try to have something that they could relate to on the CD, so we could start to have more of an audience for our music. So we decided to do a rap thing on there. My son did a very good thing on there. My music on the rap thing wasn't that good, but what he did was really good. This was the first time he went into the studio. He got in front of the mic, just like this, and did it just like that. A lot of stuff to remember. He made sure he kept it clean, because I wouldn't have any other thing on the CD. We thought about doing more things together, but we haven't had the opportunity.

My other son was older than this one.

Brower: Can you give us names please?

Hampton: Yeah. The one that did the rap was Antoine Hampton. He's my son with a friend of mine. My other son is with my ex-wife, who passed recently, I'm very sorry to say. He's the one that helped me with the business. He also plays conga drums, and he

plays trumpet, too: Lamont Hampton. I wish I could interest him more in taking seriously the playing aspect of his own talents, because he could do well. He played really good congas, and he could play trumpet well, too, but he just didn't want to deal with all the practicing and everything that goes along with it. Today everybody's trying to get into something that's going to make some fast money. Most people are affected by that. I was never affected by that. I was always thinking that, if you do what you do really well, that will take care of itself financially, in time.

Brower: One association that I've neglected to ask you about, that I wanted to ask you about, is the Collective Black Artists, that organization – what your role was in that, what they were about.

Hampton: When I finally came back to America, one of the things that encouraged me to stay was things like the Collective Black Artists, which was subsidized by the government. Jimmy Owens was one of the people that was organizing that. He asked me to join it as musical director, where I would be conducting things, and writing – composing things and writing arrangements for other people's compositions. I wrote – I did some things for Jackie McLean, when I first worked with that organization. I'm very sorry to say that Jackie's passed now. He had some wonderful compositions that I did the arrangements on. I was the musical director of that organization.

Brower: What was its duration? How long – what was the life of that organization?

Hampton: They went on for several years, because I was only there for about two years myself, but it had been in existence long before I joined the organization. It was a very good organization, because they were giving musicians a chance to have an outlet for their compositions. They didn't have to be an arranger. The compositions were the main thing, and the concerts, where they were usually playing their compositions, which were arranged by someone else. We'd have some kind of an ensemble that we decided on to do the arrangements for their compositions, and that was what it was mainly all about.

Brower: Besides, Jimmy, who were some of the other persons that you recall in that circle? Reggie Workman?

Hampton: Reggie Workman was there. Some of the guys that Jimmy – I guess he still works with these guys, maybe in the school he teaches in. I think the piano player that you mentioned before.

Brower: Stanley?

Hampton: No, he played with – I'm looking right at him in my mind, and I can't think of his name. I will think of it, though. See if I can remember some of the trombone players. It might have been Benny Powell, because he was in that circle, too. It was guys that

usually are in the circle, but they don't – didn't have some kind of consistent way of having some effect on what was going on musically. This group gave them that.

Brower: It became a vehicle for that.

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: You talked about what you admired about the European system, and it would seem, in your recent comment, that the idea of support for the arts, as manifested in the CBA, was something that attracted you. I've got this picture that I got out of Charles Fishman's files, that shows you have some level of involvement with the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest project. What was your involvement in that? And what's your general appraisal about what's going on in terms of the National Endowment for the Arts and various kinds of federal or state levels of activities to fund, to seed jazz, to help the form?

Hampton: Today I guess a lot of people might not be aware of the fact of how important – see, when you say "jazz," that gives one impression. But when you say what the word – what the music that they've used that word to describe, is improvisation. Improvisation is very important in our lives in general. The guys that dedicated their lives to developing the concept of improvisation that has been called "jazz," which is – the word "jazz" doesn't really have anything to do with it – they spent their lives to show people that improvisation is something that's going to affect your life – it does definitely affect your life in a positive way.

Everybody improvises, in and out of music. Improvisation is that, when you're going to cross a street, and although the light is green, there's a car coming. Looks like it's not going to stop. You're not going to go. That's improvisation. That's making a decision in a situation to have the best outcome possible, no matter what the situation is. Musically, it's what happens. You're making decisions about things to play that you didn't even think about before you started playing the piece, because of what's going on at the time, maybe what the rhythm section is doing, what the drummer is doing. The kind of effect that he's having on the music inspires you to do something. All the things that you do are by inspiration.

So improvisation is a very important thing. If the governments understood how important it is, they would put more money into it, because we couldn't get through the day without improvisation. People may not see it. A lot of people don't know that improvisation started long [ago] in Europe, hundreds of years of ago. All those guys that were really great composers were improvisers. They weren't writing the music down and then playing it, because they were readers. They played the music and then wrote it down. They were all improvisers, Mozart and Bach and Brahms and all of these guys were all improvisers, because improvisation is where the idea for that big orchestration comes from. That orchestration would never exist. Nobody's going to write an orchestration

without an idea. See, you don't just think just because you can orchestrate and write an orchestration. That's never happened. That's only because there was an idea for a composition first. No music was written unless there was an idea for a composition first. You don't write music just because you can write it. You don't do things just because you can do it. You do it because of a reason. That affects our whole lives. Improvisation affects our whole lives. It also does make us more aware of the fact that individual opinion is extremely important. It's extremely important. Without individual opinion, we probably would have destroyed ourselves by now.

Improvisation and individual opinion is a thing that should be encouraged, because if you go – say your son is out with somebody, and the person that you're out with decides to do something that's wrong. The fact that he had an individual opinion is the thing that might stop it from happening. If he doesn't have an individual opinion, maybe he'll go along with the person and do something that causes them both to have – maybe get killed. Individual opinion. Improvisation. Without those things, we couldn't get through the day. The more that we realize that they're important, and that it's good that our minds have developed in these areas of our mind, then we realize that in music, it's here for a reason. It's much more important that people just to like, or decide that I like it, or dance to it. Dancing's wonderful, but music's much more important than that. Music is here to tell us some things that we can't see in other ways, we can't get the answers to in other ways. The answers are there in music. They're very spiritual. They're very intellectual. They're all the good things that we aspire to. Music is – a lot of the answers to those things are right in music.

Brower: Let me see if I can bring this back. To what extent have you participated, either through the National Endowment for the Arts, or things like the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest jazz initiative, to put in place or to think through some new structures, some new vehicles, can be created to do just what you said?: make improvisation, make some clarity about American music and what that is. Yeah, I agree about the term "jazz." I personally prefer to think of musicians more like I would think when I approach literature. There's the work of Slide Hampton. There's the work of Duke Ellington. There's the work of John Coltrane. And not to try to fit it into a box. I think putting labels on it is a way of diminishing the achievements of these bodies of works that exist.

But I'll get off my soap box and repeat the question. To what extent have you participated, intellectually, through force of personality, through using your influence and your stature in music, either in things like the Endowment, or in projects like Lila Wallace, to bring some structural, some new forms, some new structures, that could facilitate what you think is important in culture?

Hampton: I've been in a few of the things. I haven't been in a lot of them, but I have been on a couple of the panels and things like that. But my ideas are so radical, to them, that it's always more of a – it makes them feel insecure when I'm bringing up these

things that usually are avoided in these kind of organizations. These things are avoided that I'm talking about, because they don't realize how much good it would do. Or maybe they do realize how much good it would do. But when you bring up ideas that are based on really thinking about what can we achieve working together and really paying the kind of respect to each other's abilities and things that we should, what can we achieve? Everything. That's the reason my ideas on something like this is, "Hold it." Why do I say something like that? Because when you talk about things like this, it's often frightening to people, because I say what I feel when I am asked a question. I give the answer to what I feel. I don't give the answer to what I think anybody wants to hear, because everybody does that. So there's no need for me to do that. If you ask me a question and say, "What do you think about it?", then I'm going to tell you what I really feel.

What I feel is that we need to learn to respect each other as individuals, whatever our ability is, and see if there's something that we can get out of working together with all these different ideas and abilities and opinions. We need to stop trying to do it the other way, because the other way doesn't work. We can't control every situation in music. You can't have control over everything. You can have a certain amount of control, so that you can organize a rehearsal, organize some kind of a thing that you're getting something together. But there still has to be enough openness that if somebody gives an opinion, and it will help the thing to become better – because you can always be better. This is where the problem is with me and these kind of – working in these kind of things. I'm definitely going to say what I feel might help the thing. Often that's in the opposite of what the – whatever the organization is, what they're promoting. They're promoting something. I'm promoting, what can we do together to have the best result? That's my promotion. A lot of times they don't want to hear that.

Brower: Three – I think time is starting to become an issue. There's at least three projects I'd like you to speak to. Two of them have to do with what has – at least, I would say, in the public's eye – come to be the most prominent part of your career over the last 15 years, which is – or more, even – which is all the work you've been doing in association with Dizzy Gillespie, both as his career and life was coming to an end, and to perpetuate the legacy. Can you tell me about the discussions, the forces, the personalities that brought together the United Nations Orchestra and what your role was in that?

Hampton: The United Nations Orchestra was a good example of the kind of love that Dizzy has for the Latin rhythms when they're in conjunction with jazz – with improvisation. That's what that's based. That's based on Latin rhythms and compositions coming from people that are improvising composers. A lot of people get the wrong idea, because they think – I don't know whether they think that Dizzy wanted it or not, but they think that in order to perpetuate what – the value of what Dizzy did, was that you keep playing his music. That's not what he was about. Dizzy was about you learning something what he did and writing some music yourself, coming up with something yourself, because he showed us how important rhythms are, by making us aware of the

Latin rhythms, because we're close to Cuba and those places, but we still try to avoid facing up to the fact that those guys have about 10,000 years of rhythm experience. When you play with them, you'll find out. They know more about rhythm than we ever want to know about it. I've played with that groups that have a Cuban, a Puerto Rican, a Brazilian, a Panamanian. Man, they had so much rhythm going on between the four of those guys, that when you're used to ding ding-a-ding ding-a-ding ding-a-ding, you're lost all the time, because they never have to play 1 to know where it is. It's a part of their culture. They're dancing right now. Wherever – in all of these places that I'm talking about, the people are dancing. All the people are dancing, play guitar. Then they know the music and everything. This is what their cultures are based on. So, rhythm. That's what Dizzy brought to us. He made us realize how important these rhythms are, because rhythm – like we say, rhythm and time is everything. It doesn't matter what you do. If you do it at the wrong time, it has no value.

Brower: How did you come to your understanding of those rhythms?

Hampton: When I came to – I came to the whole idea of – Sonny Stitt helped me, like I told you. He said, "Time. Time is everything. You got to do it at the right time." In whatever you do, if you do it at the right time, it's valuable. If you do it at the wrong time, something that really taken a lot of work to construct it and all that, it's not valuable. Time is everything. In music, in order for people to really appreciate it, the rhythm that it's based on is one of the things that can make people from another – that are used to listening to another style of music – can make them enjoy something that they haven't heard before, if the rhythm is right, because the heartbeat – if the heart stops, you don't have – there's no answers. There's no – you can't really have any kind of a reaction to anything, if the heart stops. You can't think about the value of anything. The rhythm of the heart is like the rhythm of nature. That rhythm is the most important thing. Everything that happens is based on the fact that that rhythm is in existence. Music is based on the fact that rhythm is in existence. In music that's based on more of a rubato feeling, that music is only so that can finally come to a result of somebody composing some music that will be based on rhythm. So rhythm is everything. That's what Dizzy was showing us.

He was excellent with it, because he'd have all these guys playing at the same time. He could be all the way out on the front stage, a long way from them, never get lost. He's playing everything, never get lost. Often we would have to be counting to stay in time with these guys. But Dizzy had a natural understanding of that.

Brower: In developing that band, was there a kind of a growth phase, so that the persons who were more indoctrinated into 4 could catch up with all the complexities that were going on? We're not just talking about Cuban rhythms, but you pointed out, we're talking about Puerto Rican tradition, Colombian tradition, Panamanian tradition, and while there are similarities, there are also profound differences.

Hampton: Very different, very different. It was a – you were put in a situation where you had a chance to learn. You had to make your individual choice, if you wanted to even admit that you had something that you needed to learn. But you had the choice to learn from people that had a tradition, a background of rhythm that was far beyond what we ever dreamed of. So you had a chance. You could go to the guys and talk to them about what they were doing. I remember Giovanni Hidalgo would do for us. He would show us different rhythms. He'd play in one rhythm with this hand, and in a complete different rhythm with this hand. It was unbelievable, for us, because what he was playing with one hand was already complicated enough, and then this rhythm would be completely disconnected from the one he was playing over here. That was our opportunity to learn, being around people like that.

Brower: How busy was that band?

Hampton: Working-wise?

Brower: Right.

Hampton: They worked a lot. Dizzy – whenever Dizzy's name was attached to it, then everybody always wanted it.

Brower: During that period, was that pretty much exclusively what you were doing? Did you have space to do other things?

Hampton: We did other things too. Dizzy did other things too. He had other bands. He had several different bands at the same time. Small band. He had the big band. He had the United Nations Band.

Brower: Were you doing 100 dates a year? 50 dates a year?

Hampton: We were doing 50 dates in a few – a much shorter period than a year. We'd stay out for three months, and we'd do 50 dates. We were making a lot of money. It was an incredible amount of money. And it was just one of the things that he did. After we'd finish that, he'd go right – from Europe right to Japan and do something. I don't know how he did all the traveling.

Brower: What was the impact – because you were in a lot of international situations, and we've talked a lot about the impact of American music . . .

[recording interrupted]

It is April the 21st in the year 2006. My name is William A. Brower. I'm at the National Museum of American History along with Mr. Slide Hampton, about to begin tape 6 of an oral history. Taping the session is Ken Kimery.

At the end of the – I was going towards a question that was: you've talked about what it meant to you, and certainly other American musicians, to have that interaction with the Latin musicians. What do you think it meant to them? And to the extent that you were in specific places like Cuba for any period of time, to have – what your presence – what was the other side of that exchange, your perception of that?

Hampton: They had a great admiration for the American improvisers. For American music in general, they had a great admiration. But the improvising aspect of music was what was the most interesting to them, because they were great technically. They were developed technically to a very high level. Brass players, and all of the players, especially in Cuba. They were people that had a great classical foundation in their training. So they all played the instruments very well. But improvisation was something that, in a lot of countries, was always – even where there's great music, improvisation was a thing that people had the impression that, "I can't improvise." Of course they probably had the same thing. "I can't improvise." But when you hear people that do improvise, it creates such an excitement in there, you probably want to try to start seeing whether you can improvise or not. So those musicians were very impressed with the great musicians up here, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Dizzy, Bird. So they started to want to learn to improvise more also, and they found out that they could improvise. So a lot of them are really good improvisers. One of the guys that came recently to America, Paquito D'Rivera, is a guy that was trained classically. He had a very great formal training in classical music. He's a really great improviser also. But they were very impressed with the American musicians and what we had developed here, because they knew about classical music, because the traditions of a lot of the people that those countries were founded on, were coming from Europe. So they had a real good understanding of classical music. They all were guys that had done a lot of studying. They played classical concerts, and they understood classical music. But they weren't aware of what was happening in what we call jazz. That was new to them.

Brower: You and Paquito shared musical directorship of United Nations Orchestra?

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: What was that – what was the nature of that working relationship?

Hampton: When I wasn't available, Paquito would do it, or vice versa: when he wasn't available, I would do it. That's fine with me. We also do some of the same things now with the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band. If I can't go, Paquito will be the musical director, or Jimmy Heath. Because there are a lot of guys in the band that are very good

musicians, know the music, but they don't want to stand out front there and do that, because it takes a certain amount of not being afraid to stand up front and conduct. Some people haven't had much experience in conducting, so that there's only a few people in the band that really can do that job. But whenever one of us are not there, the other one can jump in and do it.

Brower: How do you characterize your style of conducting?

Hampton: I like to have fun up there, because I saw Dizzy when he conducted the band, and he just had a great time conducting, and gave some things that the guys needed. But most of the time, the guys have most of the stuff worked out. They know what they have to do. But you can give them some downbeats in places that can be very helpful to them. Out of the whole piece, it might be only a few places where you give the downbeat to them. That can be very helpful to them. The rest of the time, you're just giving them some ideas about volume – more volume, less volume, intensity, things like that. I like to be there to give them that, because bands usually play different when they have someone there giving them that. Count Basie's band was the only band that played really fantastic without a conductor. All other bands had a conductor.

Brower: But didn't he conduct? He gave gestures that – it was just so Count.

Hampton: It was the epitome of, like, ESP. He could just look at the guys, and they know what he wanted. It was such a fan[tastic] – it was like – their ensemble was so well prepared – they weren't guessing about anything – that they had decided that these couple of measures is going to be pianissimo, and then all of a sudden we're going to have a triple fortissimo, bam. That was already decided with them. They didn't go on the stage guessing. They went on prepared. So the bandleader didn't have to get up and give them a lot of things. He would give them something once in a while. Whenever he gave it, it was magnificent. But most of the time he didn't have to do anything. Just make his – play his part. The band was always prepared to make all of the accents, and the intensity, when they needed it, and pianissimos, and the relaxed feeling. They had all that worked out already.

Brower: From the perspective of being able to – of having had the experience of interacting with musicians in Europe, and musicians in the Latin context, and probably musicians in Japan to some degree – I'm not so much aware of that – where do you think the ideas are coming from in this millennium? Because now we are talking about, even more than – when we used to say it was the language of the world, now it really is. Because that used to mean it was the language of the United States and Europe. Now it really is becoming a language of the world. We have a South African phenomenon, and we have all across Latin America, producing great musicians. Where are you seeing – or where are you hearing a new development, or maybe the best ideas, or interesting ideas, or things that really excite you? Or you're hearing them everywhere?

Hampton: America is still the leader of all of that. It's the thing that I've always been surprised at, because when I – I've been to Japan several times in the recent years. In their tradition, they have some fantastic scales to build melodies on. I'm surprised that when the Japanese write music that's based on improvisation, they don't use any of that material. They don't use any of the tradition of scales. It's not a lot of harmony, because most places don't have harmony as a part of their folk music. They have melodies. Europe has harmony. India doesn't have harmony. Everything's in unison, but they have wonderful scales. Out of those scales, there could be harmony, but they would have to develop it. Out of the scales of the Europeans, they developed the harmony, because the diatonic scale is – at one time, in fact, they were only using five notes [Hampton sings a major scale, 1-2-3-4-5]. That was it. So all the melodies had to be written in there. Then when they developed the whole scale, the eight notes, then they started to find the harmony, that if a melody – a melody would indicate a harmony, because maybe the melody would be [Hampton sings the first four notes of *When the Saints Go Marching In*, 1-3-4-5]. So you got the – out of that melody, you got the harmony. If you play those notes that that melody plays, less the fourth degree of course, you got the harmony.

A lot of the scales, they don't – the countries that have a great tradition in scales, they don't finally work out a harmonic complementary to those scales. A lot of those scales are fantastic, much more interesting than our scale. The Indian scales – those are really fantastic scales, but they don't work any harmony out, and if they write something that has to do with what we call jazz, they don't use any tradition of those scales in the music. I don't understand it.

Brower: I don't know if this is accurate, but it would seem that that is not so true of Cuba, that they are using their resources, their melodic, their harmonic resources there, because they have a European tradition, but they have some other traditions that make their spin on Europe different, in particular rhythmically. So there's a lot of use of, say, things like Yoruba rhythmic patterns, sacred music that has basically found its way, through various players, into these other things. I guess I'm betraying a prejudice. I think the most interesting ideas that I hear, that are coming from overseas, are coming from Cuba and are coming from Panama and are coming from Colombia, composers, improvisers, etc. Yes or no?

Hampton: What you say to some extent is true, but, see, all of those cultures that you're talking about are in the Western hemisphere. They are all based on the same thing that we're talking about. They're based on the European classical music. That's where their – they have some – maybe some rhythmic differences. Not a lot of difference in the scales. They're all using the same scale, the major diatonic scale. They're using that, because in their churches, that's what the music's based on, is on that major scale. Most of them don't have a different – not one different note in the scale. So the harmony's still a triad, a C, E, and G, or a 7th, but it's still based on the same thing.

Rhythmically, they have some differences. But like in Brazil, all this beautiful music, you can really hear the classical influence in. It's based on the classical harmony, but they've developed even more into the modern harmony where you're using major 7ths and 9ths and 11ths and 13ths. They're using that more. The classical guys use this too, but they usually use it in a way – see, they couldn't just come out and play a 13th chord, because if they came out and played a 13th chord with a raised 11th, people would start fighting in the concert hall. If you play the flatted 5th in a concert hall, you could – then somebody might holler and scream. They weren't allowed to do that. But when it got to Brazil, they were allowed to extend it. They started using these notes that they – that was actually developed in the classical music. They started using them more consistently, and they would play them over and over, like just almost demanding that somebody would have a way of showing that you shouldn't be doing this. It didn't matter how it sounded. You shouldn't do this, because in the church, they wouldn't do this. That was a part of the reason that they were like that. But they're still based on the classical harmony. But still, the most interesting improvisation is still coming from America.

Brower: I found – let's switch gears and talk about the Jazz Masters – the arrangement that Danilo [Pérez] did, it's off the hook.

Hampton: It's fantastic. It's true.

Brower: I think that's some of the freshest music that I'm hearing that I see connected with tradition. You were talking about free music, I think, when I was out of the room. You were talking about how it didn't seem to be grounded in anything, or seemed to have sort of cast aside . . .

Kimery: No, actually, we were talking about a comparison between the European artists and the American artists, where the American artists . . .

Brower: That's precisely what I'm talking about

Kimery: They're grounded in the tradition of the music.

Brower: Who are?

Kimery: Cecil Taylor.

Brower: Okay. That's precisely what I'm saying. I guess if I was saying, show me – I listened to some music from here to there. I'm saying, what gets me? I see a frontier being pushed with Danilo and some of those guys. I see a frontier maybe being scouted out somewhere else, but I don't see it – it's not resonating the same way. That's just my ear. So I'm asking – you are traveling the planet. You're interacting with groups of

musicians all over the place. You're getting things from them, but you're also seeding them. I'm not going to say it. You've already answered the question. So I won't ask it again. But it's the whole business of where are you seeing the freshest, the most, the flowers that smell – whose bouquet is grabbing you the most?

Hampton: I see what you're asking. But see, the thing that you've got to remember, though, that Danilo is educated in the United States. Most of his education, probably all of it, was here. So he's able to take things from his tradition and still bring them into this style of music. But the reason that he does it is because this style of music allows you to try anything you want to with it. They're ready to try anything. And if you actually make it work, then they'll follow it and take – become a part of it, using that as a part of their way of approaching music also. But that's in America, see. There are some other guys that probably will come here, but not enough. We haven't seen enough of them. Bring some of their tradition here, and give our music a boost, because you got to go a long way to get past McCoy Tyner. I love Danilo, and I love his writing and his playing, but on piano, you got to go a long way to get past McCoy Tyner. In fact, there is no way that you're going to be able to go that far. He's the pinnacle of great piano playing. Most people don't say so, but the reason they don't say so is because, who wants to deal with that level of playing? This guys playing a hundred years before everyone else.

Brower: You made a recording with him. How did that – *The Thirteenth House.* Since a lot of people don't know that you played with him in the Art Blakey band, it's sort of like it drops out of the sky. Slide Hampton with McCoy Tyner. Where's that coming from?

Hampton: Yeah, that kind of feels like that, too. Yeah, I made the recording with him, but I wasn't – just was out of place there.

Brower: Did you feel out of place when you worked with James Newton?

Hampton: No. We were playing a lot of written music. It was – the direction was clear. See, with McCoy, you just – you got to be able to improvise on a level that's just not even real. And a lot of people – nobody says anything about McCoy. They talk about everybody else, but they don't say anything about McCoy. They don't give him no – kind of like he doesn't even exist.

Brower: How is the concept behind the Jazz Masters and the Dizzy Gillespie – because I view the Jazz Masters and the Dizzy Gillespie tribute bands as kind of in the same line of what they're doing. Just talk about what's different, what's the different idea for that than the United Nations Orchestra.

Hampton: The whole thing with the Jazz Masters is that they have created an environment. That's what the Jazz Masters are, an environment of musicians that are aspiring to some higher level of music. So, to be in that environment of course is a

healthy thing for anybody that has those kind of aspirations. The other thing was more suited to a certain style of music, not really looking for anything to change that. The Jazz Masters are talking about change and learning and growing. That's what the Jazz Masters are about when they're together, because your whole thing is, "Would you teach me that? What was that that you played? Would you show me something about this." Their whole thing is learning. They're looking to have an effect on music, to help become more interesting, more beautiful. That's what their whole thing is about. The other thing was about really paying respect to that style of music that we were playing, which is good too.

Brower: Maybe I didn't quite understand that. Are you contrasting the Jazz Masters to the Dizzy Gillespie ensembles?

Hampton: Which one? Which ensemble?

Brower: We have the Jazz Masters, which largely plays Dizzy repertoire.

Hampton: Oh yeah. That group with the All-Star Dizzy Gillespie?

Brower: Yeah, that one. That's not the same as the Jazz Masters, although the Jazz Masters did a tribute.

Hampton: The Jazz Masters are the group that we had some years ago. It's different, because the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band, playing usually up to recently the music of Dizzy's repertoire. Now we started to play some new music. The Jazz Masters was all music written on Dizzy's compositions, but new arrangements, different arrangements.

Brower: So the All-Stars played as Dizzy played it.

Hampton: That we were. We've started to change some now, but that's what we did for years, yeah.

Brower: Okay, originally. And this was more of your music inside the music.

Hampton: Yeah, this was more of arrangements that were inspired by the compositions.

Brower: How much – do you believe it would be possible to focus on Tadd's music and Dizzy's music? How much more music is there in . . . ? People will say things like, people haven't caught up to Bird yet. People haven't figured out, haven't really fully explored Dizzy yet. Does that mean, in your mind, that there's, within that body of composition – I'll throw Tadd and there and some others, with Dizzy, Bird things, things that Monk did – that there's a whole world of music there yet to be explored?

Hampton: Yes, there is, because the music of Monk and Tadd Dameron and Dizzy, they developed all that music together. The influence that they each had on each other is what inspired them to compose the music that they composed. When the people think of Dizzy, they should also think of Monk, because Monk and Dizzy did a lot of that developing together. A lot of the things that Monk composed inspired Dizzy to do what he did, and vice versa, and Tadd Dameron, and several guys. It was a whole group of people that were working together in that whole development process of that music. So it all has a big relation. It's all related in a very important way.

Brower: You think there are a lot of musical ideas there that are still to be mined.

Hampton: Yes.

Brower: What do you think that the repertory movement in jazz should be doing?

Hampton: They should be playing Thelonious Monk. That's for sure. They should be playing Tadd Dameron. There's Kenny Dorham. There's a lot of music there that's really fantastic that nobody's playing.

Brower: Should they be playing it – should they be replicating what has been done, or should they be finding the music inside the music?

Hampton: Once in a while, during a concert, you should play something that the composer himself actually did as far as the arrangement is concerned. You should play one of Tadd Dameron's arrangements during a concert, so you can see where the whole thing is coming from. What you will see is that, of course, some things that he has will sound like they were written today. But you don't need to play all of the arrangements from Tadd, because Tadd only wrote that music because he wanted people to be inspired to do other arrangements on his music or other music. That's what the whole idea of all of the composers was, to inspire you to do something yourself, either on something of their music, or do something – compose something yourself, but giving you the inspiration to just want to compose, want to write something. But it's good to pay the respects to those guys that have inspired you, by doing some of their music, as far as the compositions are concerned. You don't really have to do the arrangements. They already did those and played them, and it was wonderful then. But now, we should be going on to something that that's inspired us to do.

Brower: You talked yesterday, as we walked from the Sylvan Theater here, about some commissions that you're working on now. Would you talk about some of that work and how that comports, or doesn't comport, with what we've just spoken about in terms of not just aping things, but creating new things, even if they're based on ideas that have been around for a while.

Hampton: No, this was all original music I did. Last year I did a suite to Africa for the Chicago Jazz Ensemble. They asked me to do some music based on the African energy. It didn't have to be like the music that goes on in Africa, but it had to be about what I feel about Africa.

Brower: Is that Jon Faddis behind that?

Hampton: Jon Faddis was conducting it. I wrote a four-movement suite. There were melodies in it that – because there's a lot of melodies in the African music that's really fantastic, and we don't hear enough of it. But I wrote something that I just felt related to the African experience, what happened when the Europeans went there, what the Africans were doing their selves about music, this whole thing. I wrote something to all of those different things that happened in Africa. That was – then I wrote the second suite, the one that I told you about, that I had to do in two weeks. That was to my favorite composers – four of my favorite composers, Bach, Benny Golson, Monk. I wanted to do Stravinsky, but I didn't have time. I had to write something else that I didn't – wouldn't take the time that I needed to develop Stravinsky, because his stuff is so heavy that you got to take some time with that, just carrying it from the piano to the desk that you're writing on. I enjoyed what I wrote, anyway. I enjoyed what I wrote, but I had – did much too fast. But the other one, I had time to write it. We had four french horns, a tuba, four trombones, four trumpets, five saxophones, and a big rhythm section for that African piece. It was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun to hear and for them to play it.

Brower: When you've worked with Dizzy's work, you've reworked a lot of his themes and strains and kind of – I don't know – it sounds like [you] exploded some stuff and inverted some stuff.

Hampton: That's true.

Brower: How do you . . . ? – harmonically it would seem that Diz was the – really pushed the envelope at that period. Talk about what you're – in approaching Dizzy's music, what are you bringing out? Or what are you trying to do on a harmonic level?

Hampton: Mainly just writing by inspiration, letting his music direct me wherever I'm going to go with my interpretation of his compositions. Because he was such a great theorist himself, he was so well-trained in harmony and all of that, and he developed such a knowledge of harmony and orchestration, and wrote great arrangements, and only stopped because it just got to the place that he didn't have time to take to write the arrangements. But the ones that he wrote from before are all very impressive. So, to write an arrangement on his things, first you can just listen to his music several times, and it will start to create ideas in your mind of things that you might want to do with those compositions. Some of his compositions I've written over many times. Like Trane's music, I've written over many times, some of the compositions. Diz is the same.

Brower: The last project I wanted to ask you about is the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, *The Way,* which does focus on you as a composer. Talk about how that project – what its genesis was, what the relationships were that made that a natural thing for you to do.

Hampton: Well, it wasn't that natural, actually. It was – I listened to them a lot, and I liked them. It's a great band. But I didn't do a very good job with that CD.

Brower: You don't relate it to the That Jones – Mel Lewis, as an extension of that?

Hampton: I relate it to Thad, because he's the one that we admired so much, all of us that are interested in orchestration and arranging. He was the exception, an exceptional phenomenon. But I just didn't do very good with that. Some times you miss the mark. I missed it with that.

Brower: Do you care to say how you thought you missed it?

Hampton: It just wasn't that good. It wasn't what it should have been, or it wasn't what it could have been.

Brower: One of the reasons that we're doing this interview is because the NEA Jazz Masters program wants to make sure that all of the Jazz Masters are captured – are represented within the Smithsonian's Jazz Oral History Project collection. What did it mean to you to be named a Jazz Master?

Hampton: That's a big pair of shoes to fill. I'll tell you that. And I would never say it to myself. I appreciate the fact that they feel as though I have done something in my musical career that makes me comparable of that award and that title, but we've very much in the kind of way of thinking that we're not ever boasting about whatever we've done or whatever our accomplishments have been. We don't do that. Because music keeps us real humble. So being a Jazz Master is something that someone paid us a tribute, and we appreciate that, but we never think of ourselves like that. I never think of myself as a master of anything. The one thing that I've learned in my pursuit of music is that I'm not the master of anything, that whatever I know is just a very little in comparison to what I need to know and what there is to know. So I never think of things like that. My whole thing is that I find that I'm more effective when I regard myself as a student of the music, always a student. I find that I'm more effective. I'm learning more, and I'm producing better music. If I start to think myself as some kind of hierarchy of music, I'll just be leading myself down a dead end road. Actually, there isn't any end to it. The learning of music goes on forever. So we never get so good that we feel as though we're better than someone else in music. What we know is definitely that we're not better than someone else. The humility that music brings to us is the thing that's important, because the great musicians, like John Coltrane, Charlie Parker – these guys were humble people. John

Coltrane especially, because that's when he practiced so hard, because he was so humble. He always thought that what he did was never good enough. For us it was wonderful, but for him it wasn't good enough. So he kept trying to make it better. Every day he's trying to make it better. That's a wonderful thing, and that's the whole idea of what being a musician is about. Make you realize that it's not important to be better than someone. It's important to realize that you're not better than anyone. That's important.

Brower: Locksley Wellington Hampton, on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum of American History, that institution's Jazz Oral History Program, and the National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters Program, we want to thank you for sharing your history and your views and your philosophy with us. And we want you to know that we think you're wonderful.

Hampton: Thank you.

(transcribed and edited by Barry Kernfeld)