

Wednesdays with Wynton on Instagram Live

Episode 1 – April 1, 2020

00:11 Madelyn Gardner: Hi everyone. Hi everyone, my name is Madelyn Gardner. I'm the public relations manager at Jazz on Lincoln Center. In just a couple minutes, Wynton Marsalis will be joining us for Wednesdays with Wynton here on Instagram, so you guys can go ahead and start putting any questions you might have for Wynton in the comments. And also right now we're waiting for Wynton to join us. Go ahead in the comments tell me where you're from, where you're tuning in, your name, and maybe what tunes you've been listening to while you've been socially distancing at home. Hope you all are safe at home and healthy right now. So we're gonna get Wynton here in just a couple minutes, so go ahead and talk amongst yourself in there. Let me know if I'm missing any good music that's come out that we can all listen to together, maybe. Gonna get started in just a couple minutes. Wynton joining right now.

01:34 Wynton Marsalis: Yep. Can you see me?

01:35 MG: Hi, Wynton.

01:36 WM: Hey now. Can you hear me?

01:38 MG: Yes, we can.

01:39 WM: Am I too close?

01:40 MG: You're not too close. You wanna move over to your left a bit, so you can get... Oh, sorry, your right a bit, yeah, there we go. Just so the comments aren't in your face. Great, so we just...

01:50 WM: Is that good?

01:51 MG: That's perfect right there.

01:54 WM: Okay, so you're gonna read the comments, how are we gonna do it?

01:57 MG: Yeah, yeah. So we're just gonna wait a couple minutes while people start to trickle in. We have a bunch of people joining us already, so right now, we just have some people saying, "Hello, Wynton," "Wynton is my hero." So we're off to a great start, and once again, I wanna thank everyone for tuning in again. As you can see, we're obviously live with Wynton Marsalis here, and we're gonna be chatting for the next hour or so. So go ahead and put any questions you have for

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Wynton in the comments, and we'll be starting in just a couple minutes. Until then, Wynton, what have you been up to today so far?

02:28 WM: All right, I just been writing and working and practicing.

02:31 MG: Nice.

02:31 WM: Just same stuff I do. We had a meeting already this morning trying to figure out how to make things work out in this time.

02:39 MG: Yeah.

02:41 WM: What about you? Tell me, my Maddie.

02:42 MG: Just about the same. [laughter] I was getting ready for this, very exciting, I've been waiting all day. Think everyone is very excited, the comments and everyone right now, what's so great about this platform is they can just go ahead and ask us their questions and people saying... Okay, great, so we have a couple of questions to kick off, and it's what would be... Let's see, "What's your advice for being a spiritual leader and a musician?"

03:08 WM: Well, I think to be a spiritual leader, people have to follow you, so that's the first thing. And music is spiritual, it's a form of communication. If you think about it, you have music in your voice. When you're talking, you're communicating much more than just words. The song underneath is music, and I think it's just a level of seriousness and study and dedication, always have integrity and a love for people in what you're trying to communicate. I think that...

03:42 MG: That's beautiful.

03:43 WM: That's what I think.

03:47 MG: We're getting a lot of everyone saying, "Hello, Wynton, have you been practicing?" Which I'm sure you've had, you've maybe been playing...

03:54 WM: I want to say hello to everybody. I have not been practicing the way I should because we've been trying to stay afloat in this time, so I need to get to my Arban book out, I'm looking at it, and I've been working on a few tunes, stuff on my piano, but I'm gonna get in the woodshed. Believe me, we got a while in here, watch out in a couple of months. These chops are gonna be... I'm gonna take 20 years off of 'em.

04:33 MG: And I think also on that same note too, if you wanna give the Instagram Live people a little bit of a preview of what's gonna be coming out in Blue Engine Records, I know we'll be announcing soon an exciting album.

04:45 WM: We got a couple of records that are gonna come out. Chris Crenshaw's record called

"The Fifties: A Prism," fantastic piece that Chris wrote. Chris has perfect pitch, he's like a metronome. I never count songs off now I just say, "Chris." Even when we're rehearsing we just ask Chris, "What's the tempo, Chris? What's 128? What's 115? What's 165?" And he always counts it off, and if one of us say, "We don't think that's it," he say, "Check it. Get the metronome out and check it," and it's always on. And he wrote a fantastic piece, and then I have a piece that I've written it called, "The Ever Fonky Lowdown," and this really is appropriate for today. There's a lot of little themes in that. I'mma be sending around an "Ever Fonky Lowdown" icon, and whenever y'all get into political arguments with people, all you gotta do is send them this icon that say, "Here, this is what this is about."

05:32 MG: That's perfect.

05:33 WM: Yeah, you're right.

05:34 MG: Well, everyone in the comments is very excited to listen to all those tunes. Let's see what else we got here. Oh, people wanna know what's your daily routine? Especially right now, during all of this going on to maybe keep yourself sane and keep in communication with everybody.

05:52 WM: I literally get up and I'm in meetings almost a whole day. We have a staff about 150 people and we've lost our entire ecosystem, so we've lost the ability to make any money and meet any of our bills for the next three months. And it's not only us, it's just everybody in the performing arts, all the clubs, all the musicians I know, everybody is really, really struggling. And the government CARES Act came out, you have to have a PhD just to read through that, and then when you get to the bottom of it, it doesn't really address our needs the way we need it to. So I'm trying to just meet with everybody, all the organizations I'm involved with, trying to figure out some type of plan and way for us to be more serious. And with Jazz at Lincoln Center, we are so serious about staying together and doing what we're doing. We have such a kind of absolute belief in our mission, and it's been so heartening for me just how our staff and our board, and of course, the musicians of the orchestra, everybody is so dedicated to keeping this alive, and this is a struggle in this time and we're finding out about each other.

07:01 WM: The band, the orchestra, we wrote a blues last week. We each took a chorus of a blues and we wrote and arranged it, each composer arranged it. I think we have 14 people involved in it, and we are recording it. The rhythm section recorded last night. All the leads are recording today, and then we're gonna fill in the parts, so we should have that by the end of the week. And then we're gonna do another one called, "Everybody Wear Your Mask." We're gonna put that one out next, and we're getting stuff up online, we have concerts, we're trying to make a lot of things available, a lot of education, trying to get swing dance classes up for people at home. And we have a lot on our plate, and we're meeting and a lot of great ideas came from our staff, we just opened it up and just... What can we do in this time? And we're trying to figure out how to be productive and be for real, and this is a situation.

07:54 MG: Everyone in the comments is agreeing and thanking you for coming on Instagram Live, and everyone who's tuning in right now, Wynton will be doing this every Wednesday, and then also

on Monday nights at 9:00 PM, he'll be going live with Skain's Domain, so that one, and oh also be on Zoom. So everyone make sure you put that on your calendar to tune in for that. People are also asking about what books are you reading, anything you're reading right now, or anything else that's been inspiring you?

08:21 WM: I was reading about Fredrick Douglass in the summertime, David Blight's. I mean in the fall, what month are we in? In the fall, because I was writing a piece on Fredrick Douglass, so I'm still working on it in. Kinda something like Lincoln's portrait that Aaron Copland did. I'm still working on it, but I literally have been around the clock trying to deal with the issues we have. You have no idea of how it takes a lot of time, and a lot of us are doing the same thing. I thought with all this time, 'cause I'm always rushing around and so tired, I felt like, man, what am I gonna do with all this time? I'm gonna get 50 symphonies written, I'm gonna get records, I'm gonna do... But I'm still editing albums. I'm listening to a Dave Brubeck recording that we're gonna put out, I use the word albums, but it's recording at this point. Dave Brubeck recording, we listen to it and edit, and still working on the "Ever Fonky" trying to get it in shape to get it out, me and Todd Whitlock. One good thing I have is many of my colleagues, we worked together for many years, and we have a better kind of trust and way of dealing with each other that's more familiar.

09:35 WM: And even those that I have not worked a long time with like Maddy who's on the line. I always love her, I haven't seen her and we don't see each other a lot, but whenever I see her she always has such an effervescent personality, so now that we're kinda separated from each other, it makes me happy just to see her and interact with her. And it's true, everything I'm telling you, I'm being absolutely for real. There's no reason not to be. And I don't have as much time as I thought I would have.

10:03 MG: Well, I see a lot of conversations online too, everyone's saying, "Don't be mad at yourself. Just because you think you're at home you should have all this time to create all these things, but as long as you're... As you always say, being for real and creating what you need to create and helping who you need to help."

10:18 WM: Well, yeah, I'm gonna get work. I always work on stuff. It's a hobby for me also, but I'm getting a lot of just messages from people who are... The one thing I loved about 'cause of course I was living a lot longer without all this technology, the one thing I loved about when you could start emailing and texting messages and stuff to people around the world is I would hear from people from all over. A trumpet player or somebody's birthday or somebody's grandmother. I love all that kind of stuff. That's why of the 40 or something years that I've been gigging, I always stay at the end the gigs and meet everybody, and talk to them and try to make them feel good about stuff and hear younger people play and meet couples and people of all ages. So the technology makes us able to communicate, and I'm grateful for that.

11:12 MG: Well, we're grateful for that too, and so is everyone here joining us in Instagram Live. This is such a great medium for you to be able to talk to everyone, just straight to them right now. And just to let you know, people are also asking, "What can people do right now to support jazz musicians and musicians that are having a tough time right now?"

11:35 WM: I think if you have money, if you have financial resources, and musicians are putting up performances on pages and they're reaching out in the many different creative ways that they are, to try to survive, donate to their pages, donate to the things they're doing because we literally have lost all... It makes us really understand how we rely on public gathering and how we rely on... And it goes back to when you're a little kid, and your parents would trot you out in front of guests and make you play something you never wanted to play. It goes back to that whole kind of impulse, "Well, we ate our meal, now let's trot little Johnny out and you play whatever you play." And okay, maybe you didn't play that good, but everybody starts clapping and, "Oh, that's beautiful."

12:19 WM: It goes back to kind of a thing, and it goes up through the kind of performances of plays and the elementary school band. No matter how bad we sounded, we're having such a good time tooting and farting on horns. To the high school bands, to the high school talent shows, and the plays and all the performing arts, all the things that we've done, we kinda can take it for granted, we did it for so long. And regardless of the level you do it on, it could just be you playing a tune for your family or inflicting something on your friends, now we don't have the opportunity to do that and we in a crisis. We need resources, so I'm just saying, we have to make sure we're not too... Don't be afraid to be humble, if you have to ask for resources because this time will pass, and we can learn some things from being humble, from asking our friends to help us. And those who can help will help and those who can't, they can't help. And there's no shame in that. There's no shame in asking and providing a service and just asking people if they will help you to be able to survive.

13:25 MG: That's great advice. We also have a lot of people asking, "What was it like playing with Art Blakey?" If you would give us maybe a story or something, or some kind of...

[laughter]

13:36 WM: Well... I'll give you all the good story. When I first went on the road, I was 18. And I had never really been on the road. We went to Europe with the Art Blakey Big Band. And I grew up, I always worked, but I didn't recognize, or realize, how spoiled I was. I had never been... So first, I didn't take enough socks. So that's the first lesson, you go on the road, make sure you take socks and underwear. But we were traveling like 10 and 11 hours a day on a bus, and we would play a gig. I don't know if this tour was maybe six weeks, eight weeks. So man, I just, when I started to realize how hard it was, I started to complain about it. So we were on the road, my brother Branford and I, and Kevin and Robin Eubanks were also with us, so we were like two sets of brothers. So Kevin, Kevin started saying, Kevin started teasing me, he started saying, "What's wrong today, Skain?" They were even calling me Skain then, "What's wrong today?" So he starts singing this song, I didn't know the song was from Monty Python, "Always look on the bright side of life."

14:41 MG: Yeah.

14:42 WM: So that first time on the road, no, I had a hard time, but Art Blakey was so for real with us, and he didn't play, he had been out there for many years struggling and playing. He was about the music. And we would look at him, the age he was, I don't know, he was maybe in his mid to late

60s at that time, and we thought, "Man, this guy can do all of what he does in a day, play, be on this same bus, ride, and do everything, and is never tired." So in a way he would be shaming, at least me, I can't speak for the other fellows who were out there. And then when we got back to America, I think the main thing I learned from him, we traveled a lot. I mean, the first tour, we went from New York to Detroit, we went from Detroit to Seattle, we went from Seattle to Los Angeles, we went from Los Angeles back into the Midwest, I don't remember the exact place, then another long drive. And he was there, he was on top of it, he was swinging every night. And he just was a man with a lot of integrity about playing. Now he'd tell you the truth about how sad you were.

15:44 WM: One thing he liked to do was, he would ask you a question, like, "Who do you think you are, Clifford Brown?" So he would throw the name, sometimes if you made him really mad, he would call on Thelonious Monk. "Thelonious, come save me from these young"... Something you can't, you can say if you're making an album, but you can't say it now, in this form. He would also, another thing he would do, he would just name the people who had played with him, like your trumpet players, he would say, "Lee Morgan, Clifford Brown, Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw, Randy Brecker, and now you." So he would just put you in relief. But the overall experience, I mean, I loved him. He also was very familial. If you needed something, he got us in an apartment building, me and my brother, Branford and I. And we lived in the same building with him, and he had a lot of integrity about that music. He played with dynamics, he would tell you you weren't playing with dynamics or, "Don't play your solo too long, you don't know whether an audience is applauding because they like what you played, or because you stopped." You know, he had like funny little things he would say. You never see a armored car following a hearse. Just, yeah, it was a great experience. I'm always grateful, yeah, he gave me a chance to learn how to play.

17:12 MG: Sounds pretty magical.

17:13 WM: Yeah, yeah, he was something.

17:16 MG: We have a couple people asking, would you consider giving a trumpet master class online?

17:22 WM: Yeah, sure I'll do it, I'm a have to... You have to give me a week though, I have to get my...

17:26 MG: All right.

17:28 WM: I don't wanna embarrass myself, but sure, I'll be happy to do it, of course, I'll do it. I mean, I love the trumpet.

17:33 MG: Fantastic.

17:34 WM: That's such a blessing. Yeah, go ahead.

17:35 MG: And for everyone that's tuning in right now, we have Carlos Henriquez who is Jazz at

Lincoln Center Orchestra's own bassist is doing a master class today...

17:45 WM: Right.

17:46 MG: At 4:00 PM on Jazz Academy Facebook page. All right, do you think that one-on-one online lessons have the same influence as face-to-face from the educator's view?

18:03 WM: I think it can if you really organize with that hour. The thing about online is, it makes you be organized. And I think the relationship between an educator and a student, or group of students is so personal, that when those students really wanna learn, it doesn't matter. You can't keep them from knowledge, you cannot keep them. You can't make them learn, and you can't make them not learn. So I think you can be impactful, like it's impacting me. We're here online, the only person I see is Maddie, but the fact that the relationship we had before was, we didn't see each other every day, but it was always collegial and friendly. So now when we see each other it's familial. It's like kind of, "Yeah, okay." And I think that also, with your students, I know I was on a call with all of my students at Juilliard, and I loved seeing them. As for away as Australia and India, and every person whose name came up on the mass call we had, all the other students could see each other. Just a feeling of recognition in their voices and the way they talk to each other. Yeah, and I think that the online classes we're doing, when the teachers are really prepared. It's our job to be prepared, and impart the information. I think we might need to be a little more demonstrative and excited when we do it. But when you at home, it's easy to be more familial. And, yeah, I don't see why not.

19:33 MG: And on that same note, we have some people asking, "How are your Juilliard students doing during this time?" There's so many college kids who had their graduations cancelled, their schools closed. How are they doing and what do you think maybe some students can be doing right now that are feeling the urge to continue their learning, or...

19:54 WM: I think when we have online classes, and I think that those who will do great are doing great. And I always try to tell them, "This is a opportunity in space. Y'all are young, you're creative. Our ecosystem is for right now, is discontinued. Make something happen. Create something. Stay in touch with each other, and also organize your time 'cause this is gonna be long. It's gonna be a grind. Don't wear out." And also just be creative. Come up with stuff. Y'all know the technology, they know the technology much better than me. So sometimes I'm calling them, asking them, "How can I do this?" or "How can I do that?" I'm trying to learn from them and use them as resources. And they are a fantastic resource, and they're so creative and they have so many great ideas. I think, be productive, and sometimes the younger have to lead, and your graduation and I always teach them to look past school anyway. You're gonna be doing this your entire life.

20:52 WM: We talked about Art Blakey. Well, Art Blakey has passed on now. But I was a freshman in college when I met Art Blakey. But when I was 30 years old, did I not know Art Blakey? I still knew him. I still interacted with him, interfaced with him, I still had stuff to learn from him. He would ask me questions. So like I'm asking them questions. Experience is circular. We can teach and we can learn. So my encouragement to them is always participate because they have a lot to offer. And things they tell me, stuff they say to check out, not just technology, ways of looking at

the world. There is no way in the world I would see things that way. So I think I want them to be unleashed. I always tell them I want them to unleash yourself. Unleash yourself. Do your thing. So, now still work on your recitals. Still work on your stuff. Do the recital for your family if you're not doing it. They're gonna have their juries or recitals anyway online, but...

21:50 MG: Right.

21:52 WM: If you're at home entertaining people, if you're at home by yourself, call your friends and turn on, get the Zoom or get the... Put that on and start playing and doing your thing for people. Keep working.

22:03 MG: And as you mentioned, too, we will... Which I'm really excited about, we launched a newly formative jazz.org. Everyone can go visit, and we have a ton of online classes, educational, every level of experiences...

22:17 WM: That's right.

22:17 MG: Is invited to join.

22:19 WM: Look at our stuff, and then if my students, if y'all have ideas of something you wanna do, call us and we're gonna get you in there too. We have one of our students, Isaiah Thompson, a piano student, already put together something we're gonna put up online of all the great young piano players playing. So Isaiah is gonna be coming out there, he's gonna host it and he's gonna be talking about it and all that. So I want them to be a part of everything we're doing, and I want them to include us in what they're doing.

22:43 MG: Love that. You heard it here first. Let us know what you wanna see.

22:46 WM: That's right...

22:47 MG: We'll do our best to give it to you.

22:48 WM: That's right. Let's make it happen.

22:51 MG: Let's see. We have some more... We have a lot of students tuning in right now. Do you have any advice or tips for students who haven't been blessed with great musicianship skills but have a lot of passion for music?

23:02 WM: I think you can use your music skills in so many ways, and let's just think about what you learn when you play music. You learn how to work in an ensemble, you learn patience, you learn how your part fits into a larger whole, you learn how to organize time because a rehearsal, you have to be organized with time. You learn the discipline of practice. And ultimately, if you strive to be a musician on a certain level and you don't really have the talent level for it, but you know something is not right, you learn to accept what you cannot do and then you focus all the things that

you can do on what you can do, and there's no shame in that. We all have dreams and aspirations and things we... I never dunked a basketball in my life. I wore weights, I did everything, and I'mma be able to dunk, I... But you know what? At a certain point, I had to say, "I don't think I'm gonna do that." And I wanted to do it bad.

23:58 WM: So I feel like for all of us, there's a certain reality that we begin to face and it doesn't have to be a harsh reality. We can accept that we're all a part of a mosaic. I don't know how many people we have, 8.5 billion people on earth, and all of us have specific talents and skills and things that we can do. Everyone has something they can do. We all have creativity, and if we look around, even in the room we happen to be in, we're gonna see examples of creativity all over the place. So I think if you have passion, and music is always... And just think about the joy of listening to music. And the more forms of music you learn to hear, man, just the Tango tradition, the Flamenco tradition the... You take your pick, there's been so much great music down through the ages, and then the ability to teach that to friends, or to say let's check this out. And then when you deal with music, you're developing your spatial intelligence. So anything in a realm of architecture, literature, things that require the vision of organized forms in space, music is one of the greatest educators of that thing.

25:04 WM: Putting together playlists for friends. There's so many ways to use your musicianship, and there's so many people to play for. Whenever we come out of isolation just... Some of my best times I ever had playing was playing in hospitals, playing at picnics, going to a home for elderly people. Playing for really little small kids in nursery schools, playing... Music doesn't have to just be you in a club or you're in a concert and you're playing and people pay to see you play and your name is the headliner. We use music in many ways. Come up with a cookbook with songs in it. Nursery rhymes and compiling songs for education and entertainment purposes. And musicians have a lot of skills too. Just the humor of most musicians, the curiosity, the interest, there's so many things that you're gonna think of, and that passion, follow it, and never give up on music. It doesn't matter what you end up doing or what you are, never give up.

26:08 WM: I know some of my friends I went to college, when I was at Juilliard, we of a certain age now, a lot of people have grandkids. And now, how many really made it into symphonic orchestras? It's hard to get those jobs, but I noticed there are a number of us that kept with the passion for the instrument and the trumpet and would write me and say, "Man, did you hear this? Did you read this book or check this out?" And that person could be a lawyer or a public advocate. There are many different jobs, but they still love this trumpet and they still love classical music and symphonic music, and I still love it. I've been listening to Haydn's music now, reading books on him. Why, I always loved Haydn. So now I have a chance to check Haydn out and read these big five volume books. The books are so big it's gonna take me a long time to go through them, and I put on a symphony a day. I listen to one, two, three, four, five, six, seven of them, I'mma just go. I hope I don't get to all hundred and something of them. But if we do, I picked somebody who has a lot of music.

27:07 MG: Beautiful, and on that, what would you say is the connection of spirituality and improvisation?

27:17 WM: Well, this is gonna be kind of abstract what I'm gonna say, but if you really think about it, you know how if you're lying about something and somebody keeps asking you questions and pressing you and the speed of the questions put you in a position where you can't get your lie together? It's just, speed, speed, speed, speed. Then you got to fall on the truth. That is what improvisation does to you because the time is moving so quickly, you don't have time to make up stuff that's not what you hear. It forces you in a position of always being on the ledge and the edge of truth. I call it, it's a speed of instinct. Is your instinct a lie? Yeah, see I felt something. You felt it. So that's what improvisation is with spirituality. It makes you be in the moment of your understanding, and it takes away from you a lot of artifice and making up stuff that's not real.

28:12 WM: Now, when you improvise it in jazz, not only do you have to live in that moment, you have to organize it, and you have to organize it with other people who are improvising. And once you're focusing intensely on yourself, but you have to focus just as intensely on them, and that in and out motion is a paradox, and it puts you in a spiritual state. And the spiritual state is always in between the right and the wrong, the understanding of a wave. And this is where it gets kinda abstract, but it's very basic. If you know the Yin and Yang symbol in the East and the whole relationship of things to good and bad, we have a tendency to wanna put people in a position of you're this or you're that. In real spiritual thinking, you're always trying to find balance and you're in a wave, and inside of that wave there's not as much judgement as there is outside of the wave. There's only awareness. John Coltrane in "A Love Supreme," if you read that prayer, that's a heavy prayer.

29:12 WM: I know years I listened to that, I never really read the prayer, I thought, "Okay, some prayer Coltrane played," but he has lines in there like, "It all has to do with it... All in one thoughts, vibrations." I'm trying to think, what's one that I really liked that he put in there? Maybe another time, I'll take the proud, and I'll go through it, but it's moments of that where he's talking about how interconnected all things are. And when you're improvising, if you allow yourself, you can get to that point where you really become one with other people, and even when you're not playing, if you're just listening. You can listen so hard because you'll be playing a big band, and most of the times we're not playing, we're listening, but listening is a very active activity. If you're in an ensemble and you're not listening when you're not playing, you're taking away from the ensemble. You can listen so hard that you make people play better. You can listen with such intensity that it affects the feeling in a room and that's advanced kind of level, and that's also an advanced spirituality because spirituality, many times, is about healing, and healing is about patience, listening, and being able to understand and being sympathetic in your vibration. And I know that's kinda a long answer, but...

30:34 MG: No, that's a beautiful answer.

30:36 WM: That's what I think. That's what I think.

30:38 MG: And speaking about spirituality, we obviously lost a really great member of the jazz family, Wallace Roney, and any thoughts about him in this moment, or...

30:49 WM: Well, Wallace was such a great trumpet player. I remember in that time 1978, '79, it wasn't a lot of people really playing jazz. We're playing more like fusion and funk, it wasn't like... So I can remember when I first heard about Wallace, I was coming up to New York, and they said there's a guy in DC who can play, knows some vocabulary, meaning like the vocabulary of Clifford Brown or Miles or Bird. And I remember when I first met him, man, he knew so much music, and I stayed at his house in DC, but they had a dog. [chuckle] I don't never forget the name of the dog, but boy, I was so scared of that dog. But I was sleeping and the dog... The dog didn't like me, could sense I was a little afraid of him, so when he see me... But yeah, down through the years, Wallace's playing and his seriousness about music, and for me being like his same age, remembering it, is shocking, but this virus is for real. And when things start to cut you close to home, if you're not a person who's empathetic towards other people, and you have to have something happen to you for it to mean something to you, this is gonna mean something to a lot of us.

32:04 WM: And yeah, not only did it hit as a trumpet player and as someone who loves trumpet and respect for Wallace's playing and his hearing, it just seemed like just the other day we were 18, talking about people playing and arguing about who played better between Elvin and Tony and all kind of stuff we'd be talking about, and now he's gone. It's like... Okay. There is something very realistic about it, like the world is a certain way. We have a road that we all are on, and that road is gonna go to a certain way. And once you get to that point in the road, now it's easy to say. A good friend of mine Geoff Ward, we always talk about when people sign these "Do Not Resuscitate" when they get to the end of their life, they sign a thing that say, "Okay, if I get sick, don't resuscitate me. Just let me pass." And he was saying, and Jeff is in his late... Let me say he's in his late or mid 70s. So he always says, 'cause he was talking about his struggles with his father and with his mother. He said, "It's something, its interesting, when you sign these things you feel one way, but when it actually comes down to that point you feel another way entirely."

33:22 WM: So I think it also allows us to get in touch with real personal relationships with everyone in the spectrum of our lives. If you know people who are in their 80s and 90s, 70s, 60s, 50s, 40s, 30s, 20s. We are in America and not for the world, but in America we tend to be very segregated by age. If you know people in different ages, you're better able to deal with the stress of loss and the acceptance of the cycle of life. So yeah, it's for real, it's a loss with Wallace. Yeah, it hit close to all of us, we're on a group text with the band, with the orchestra. And when somebody put that up, we were all like, "Damn." And we know more of our brethren and sisters in the country who have it, and then the word is going out and this... We just pray for everybody 'cause we never know who's gonna be next.

34:20 MG: Well, there's been a lot of questions. Speaking of personal relationships, we've heard you say before that Jason is the most talented of your brothers, is that true?

34:30 WM: Yeah, in terms of just raw perfect pitch, time, and all the kind of things that you have that indicate a talent for music, ability to memorize stuff, and... definitely.

34:39 MG: Well, you've said it on the internet so now everyone knows.

34:42 WM: Well, you know it must be true, it must be true.

34:45 MG: If it's on the internet it must be true, right?

34:47 WM: It's on the internet, it must be true.

34:50 MG: Oh we have some others, as I mentioned before, a lot of students tuning in, people really throughout the whole world, people from obviously people from New York and from Mexico and from Italy, so we have everybody here. And so what is your advice on finding your next mentor after you graduate from school, how do we create strong mentorship that someone like Blakey was able to give you as a young musician?

35:14 WM: Well, I was looking for him. So I looked for him, and at that time a lot of people weren't looking for him. I think find people that have done really serious work. And that work is not recognized by a kind of mass culture. It always surprised me if I will go to Ralph Ellison's house, how few people knew who he was, or Albert Murray, or August Wilson. They won awards, but not even my friends didn't really, I would say, "Man, you know Ralph Ellison?" "No man, I don't." I think find people whose work you like, and then call them, write them, and you'll be shocked. When you run into a serious person who wants to know something, and they will keep looking at... Have specific things you wanna ask them, show them through the quality of your questions that you're serious about it. And then, be humble. I know I would call and write musicians, and go see them, and talk to them and show up at their gigs, and sometimes they would blow me off, but I would still come back and talk to them.

36:17 WM: I remember Max Roach, we had a kind of rocky thing because he was mad at something I said about Miles, but I love Max Roach. So it took me maybe till I was 30, it was a long time, then I was in a group of master classes with him. Man, the level of education that Max was giving, it's just his genius, and the things he taught in an hour was just timeless. And whereas if you would take somebody like Elvin, I would go to Elvin's apartment all the time, you know Elvin Jones. I had a chance to meet him, and see him, and talk to him and Sweets Edison. But I would seek these musicians out, and I will call them and get with them and let them know, "Hey, I'm here, I'm serious. I would love to learn with you, I wanna"... And show them what you did. "I worked on this, here's a bunch of transcriptions I did. Or, "Here's some books I read, or here's what I'm willing to do to study with you." And stay with it.

37:09 WM: And when they tell you to do something, somebody gonna mentor you, you have to do at least some semblance of it. I remember John Lewis, the great piano player, and the music director of Modern Jazz Quartet gave me a piece to learn from Earl Hines' band, something like Ballroom Terrace junk. So he said, "Learn this trumpet solo." Then I was in my mid 30s, so I wasn't a kid. So I didn't learn the solo, but I'd still call him and go hang with him, come to his house. So maybe two years passed, he said "I know you didn't learn that solo I gave you." I said, "How do you know that?" He said, "Because your playing hasn't changed." [laughter]

37:44 WM: So I learned it, but it's beautiful kinda the relationship you can have, and you can have mentors your entire life. It's not you get to a certain age, like I'm 58, I still have Geoff Ward like a mentor of mine. I go see him all the time, I talk with him, I ask him questions and I love him. It's been years, but I still will say, "Well Geoff, what do you think about this?" And Albert Murray before he passed away, which was, I don't know, not that long ago. I was in my 50s, he was still my mentor. And I just think these relationships, you have to pursue them and humble yourself. But it's been a blessing for me all the many mentors I've had, it's been unbelievable, the journey. I've learned a lot, just that opportunity with people.

38:43 MG: And we have a couple people asking for someone, one person in particular, for someone who's recently started transcribing, what's the first solo you would recommend?

38:54 WM: Oh man, there's so many good, so many good solos to... Start with one in the instrument you play, and one that you really like. There are great solos everywhere. One blessing we have in jazz is the recorded library, the canon. It's full of so many great musicians. You'll never run out. I was doing a listening list yesterday for Brooks Brothers of the most elegant jazz pieces. Man, I got caught up in just pieces in the 1930s. Then I started listening to piano players, and Art Tatum and Fats Waller, then guitars, some people I never heard of, I mean just... Then the big bands, started with "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" with that sweet, sweet trombone that Tommy Dorsey played.

39:43 WM: And then I went into "Bolero" with Benny Goodman's orchestra playing, then I went into so-and-so, everything takes you into something else. So I think to just pick... There's been a lot of great solos. And there may be 11 or 12 that really just stand out. You can't go wrong with Louis Armstrong, I mean, 'cause his solos are so logical. I tend to go for the really kind of logical, superior construct. There's always Bird, there's always great construction. Monk, well, you know. You take that Monk "Sophisticated Lady" off of... "Thelonious Monk plays Duke Ellington". Ooh! That one will granulate your intellect. There's some that you listen to and you say, "Mmm, what were they thinking about?"

40:28 MG: And then we have, "We've heard that you were in a funk band with your brother Branford when you were young, what tunes did you play? And what did you learn from being in those kinds of bands?"

40:39 WM: Well, yeah, I joined a band when I had just turned 13, and I stayed in it till right before I was 17, so we played about four or five gigs a night, a week, so we played a lot of gigs. We played, first, just... And it's interesting when my mother was passing away, the band, we hadn't been in contact for years, cats in the band showed up for my mother's funeral. And it was interesting for us to see each other and just that bond that we had being on the road, we were very close. Me and my brother were the two youngest, probably the two youngest on the whole funk scene in New Orleans. We had a big scene, we'd play big dances at the top of Gaylord's department store. And we played everything from like night clubs, like [41:20] _____ and [41:20] _____ just kind of places that were a little bit above, just as like big, big dances.

41:30 WM: We played everybody's prom, wedding receptions, we played at the ILA Hall, we played police talent shows, we would play in the worst areas in the city. I'll tell y'all the good story about that. We used to rehearse in the Lower Ninth Ward, on [41:45] ____ Street. And everybody in the neighborhood would come around and hear our band. And we played all the funk songs, you take a... I mean I could just go through the whole litany of, Stevie Wonder like Sir Duke, and Earth, Wind, & Fire That's the Way of the World, Africano Power Medley, Reasons. See, that must be somebody in the band calling me right now. We did all that. We played all that kind of material, and we played a lot of Commodores, a lot of Ohio Players, anything that was funky, we played. Parliament-Funkadelic was probably how, Flashlight and all those kind of songs. And we sang our background vocals, we did dance steps, we had a night just rehearsing our dance steps... To put our equipment up, that's how much equipment we had.

42:33 MG: Wow.

42:34 WM: We had all kind of big speakers and monitors and oh, man. And we had a lot of fun playing gigs. I learned to be on time, to be a professional, to work... What it was like to work with different people. 'Cause I was kinda hot-tempered and be cussin, cussin at the band. We had one real big guy in our band, his name was Botchie. He passed away, he had a real deep voice, real deep voice down here, looked like Teddy Pendergrass. So one day I was just going off on how sad we sounded, and he said, "Man, you'd think you was the biggest dude in the band the way you talking." So that meant, okay... But we would play, we had a couple, we were from different kinda stratas of New Orleans. My grandma was still living in the projects, so, my Daddy, we were from Pigeon Town, so we had a certain... But it's different people, some people more middle-class, some people more...

43:23 WM: So we had this contract to play police talent shows. It was in all the worst neighborhoods. It was always outside of projects. It was always, so, a couple of cats in the band didn't wanna play those kind of, "Man, we're gonna get shot at the gig and they so wild." And so we were like, "No, no, we need to play these gigs, man." And there was a police officer named Bertrand Turner. It was something the police used to do to get a community like police relations. And Bertrand, boy, Bertrand could talk a million miles a minute. "Man, I'mma get you all a contract, y'all gonna be stars, baby! We gonna get you all [43:53] ____." And all of this started right here outside the Saint Thomas projects." So he was just always hustling, and telling you, pumping you up like you gonna make it.

44:03 WM: So we started playing these talent shows. Oh, man, some of the most colorful people in the world would come out of the audience and sing, stuff like "Everybody was kung-fu fighting" and "Always and forever", these kind of songs. So they would give us the song list before and we would learn it. Boy, we played every of the wildest places, all kind of, even one, Ivan Neville came up. He had just had an altercation, he had a cut under his eye, I'll never forget it. It was outside the Magnolia projects, and he came up and sang and won the talent show, probably 'cause of that cut. Everybody, but the one section of the city, everybody was saying, "Oh, when we get here, it's gonna be safe" it's called Pontchartrain Park. When we played at Pontchartrain Park, so we played the entire summer, we didn't have one altercation. And we played in Pontchartrain Park, two people got

shot. So I always remember that.

44:51 MG: Oh goodness.

44:53 WM: But it was a lot of fun, the dancing, the playing, and we have a lot of good stories of stuff there. And our band was relatively popular. We used to have great battles of the bands. Street bands set up in one, at the top of a department store that was like the size of a city block, packed with people, and we would play off against each other. And then the audience would decide who had won. And we won some, we got our heads cut too. If you lost, they'd call it getting your head cut. We got a couple of bands, we didn't wanna see. Old Enterprise, we didn't wanna see them. They had the funkier rhythm section in New Orleans. They had a bass player named Snap and a drummer named Barry Thomas. Extremely funky. Flashback was another great band, and they had a great horn section. Four piece horn section. Fantastic. David Decuir, it's good to think back when it was a good time.

45:42 MG: Somebody's... Well, on that note too, we have another 10 minutes before Instagram Live will kick us off. But not to fear, because I believe Wynton will be doing this every Wednesday at 12:30 EDT. And I just wanna remind everyone before we take one last question that we have a great lineup of amazing Instagram Lives, Facebook Lives, Zoom Lives coming up, and you can check out everything at jazz.org. We have everything coming up there. We're releasing concerts that we've been doing every Wednesday as well. So there's a lot of online content. And today, our next live session will be at 4:00 PM EDT, and that will be via Zoom, or the Jazz Academy Facebook. And that will be a master class with Carlos Henriquez.

46:27 WM: That's right, get on there and mess with him, 'cause Carlos is one of the funniest people on earth, make sure you get on this and talk with him about the clave.

46:36 MG: We're gonna close out with this last question here. And how do you develop your own sound?

46:43 WM: That's very interesting. It's a question I asked Miles Davis once, and I said "What about sound?" He says, "Sound? Don't nobody know nothing about sound. It's too deep inside." So with the sound comes from so deep inside. I think your sound is different from your approach. It's much easier to develop an approach than a sound. So I'm gonna say something that I came to an understanding of, is that you have your own sound already, you may not have your own approach. So with your own sound, identify things that only you do and not... 'Cause the things you do are approaches, your sound is deeper than your approach. Your sound is your attitude about living. So your attitude about living will determine what you decide to do.

47:35 WM: So if you think about it in those terms, how do I feel about being alive? And when you do long tones or whenever you play, put that attitude in your playing, and then over time, it's like you're reaching in the darkness for something, but it's there. You're gonna find that thing and project that. And also have respect for yourself, and what you can play. We have a tendency to always look out and look at what everybody else, "Oh, so and so was great, this was great. I need to study this. I

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need to learn this." And you do. You need to learn those things. But remember what I was saying earlier about a paradox. While you study those things, also study yourself, go in and go out, go in, and go out. It's just as important to go inside, 'cause your own imagination is unbelievably fertile, your own sound has a beauty to it. You have to identify what that is and just concentrate on pouring more of that into your instrument. I hope that helps.

48:30 MG: Helps me, I'm ready to go find my sound after this, I'm gonna go discover it.

48:35 WM: Let's see, we gotta hear you play...

[chuckle]

48:38 MG: Oh my goodness. Well, we wanna thank everyone for tuning in, and we wanna remind you that next Wednesday Wynton will be hosting these "Wednesdays with Wynton" on Instagram Live. So same time, same place. Wynton, what do you think?

48:51 WM: Yeah, we got a lot of stuff going. Why don't y'all get online, find us. We gonna get some of our students up here, we gonna open everything up as this time passes. So if you have good suggestions for us, which you would like to see, people I could call, let me know. People wanna be a part of everything. Thank you, thank you for joining us. Maddie, thank you.

49:06 MG: Of course, thank you guys so much, and we'll see you soon.

49:09 WM: Right.