

Skain's Domain

Episode 11 - June 8, 2020

0:00:00 Adam Meeks: All right, thanks everybody for joining us for another Monday on Skain's Domain. This one is especially important to all of us, at Jazz at Lincoln Center, because this conversation here is how we're keeping up our week-long Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Festival. This year is the 25th anniversary of our premiere jazz education event and for the first time ever, we're taking it fully online for the public to experience. Tonight, Wynton will be speaking with a number of alumni from the Essentially Ellington program and we have a feeling you might already know some of them. Our special guests this evening are Erica Von Kleist, Philip Norris, Bre DeNure, Tatum Greenblatt, Jumaane Smith, Brandon Lee, Patrick Bartley and Carlos Henriquez from the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. For a full schedule of events, including a student Q&A with Wynton Marsalis, a composition master class with Ted Nash, an exclusive EE alumni concert and performances by 23 of the best high school big bands in the world, please visit jazz.org/EE25. In a moment I'll put that link in the chat as well. With that said, I'm very much looking forward to tonight's conversation and I'll hand it over to Mr. Wynton Marsalis to kick things off. Go ahead, Wynton.

0:01:12 Wynton Marsalis: Okay, thank you very much, Adam. I wanna thank everybody for joining us tonight. This is a special one for me. This is a collection of people that I just love and respect. And there's such individuals, they have such fresh points of view, originality, great musicians, great people, thinkers, you're gonna be enlightened by the things that they talk about. We forgot Sarah Milligan, I think is another one of our alumni who's gonna be on with us, I just wanted them to be natural, like how they actually are, when we get in here, we're gonna start with the gentleman who never has a problem being himself. He was in the first Essentially Ellington, it's a high school Jazz Band Festival and Competition that we started in '95, '96. And I can't say really how much I love these young people. If you see me turn my camera off is because I get full of... I start to... When I see 'em because they're just so beautiful. You know the times we're having around the world, good exciting times, we need change out here, our younger people are on the forefront of this particular thing, but hey, some of us, older ones, are in there too, and we always say, you gotta follow your older leadership, you have to follow your younger leadership too.

0:02:24 WM: So without any further do from me, I like to introduce my brother in swing, I met him when he was just a 12, 13-year-old young kid and he's a great musician, scholar. Somebody with a great deal of integrity, great composer, he's a music director of our orchestra. We went to Cuba, he led that, he's also a fantastic teacher in Young People's Concerts, Mr. Carlos Henriquez. Carlos?

0:02:48 Carlos Henriquez: Hey, thank you, Wynton. Thank you. And you all, thank you for being here. I want to talk a little about my experience with Essentially Ellington. In 1996, if I can recall,

that was the first time entering the festival with the LaGuardia High School Jazz Band directed under Bob Stewart. You gotta understand, this festival, when it was first opened up, it was only tri-state. We need to just think about that right now because it's 25 years already that this festival has been on and working strong and teaching so many musicians, and you will hear about this 25-year length as we talk, but when it first started, it was only Tri-State. So, you gotta understand LaGuardia High School is a performing high school, and we felt... We were or we are the greatest.

[laughter]

0:03:46 CH: I Remember the three selections we played...it was Boys Meets Horn, Peridido and I think "Ko Ko". And at the time, I was, there's a gentleman that I can thank him much, he's a trumpet player who attended high school with me, Steven Oquendo. And I know Steven is out there watching. Steven was the person that introduced me to this whole world that I'm in right now. I was a musician in high school, the start of high school I was already working professionally with Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, I was traveling, so my understanding in that platform I was already learning and getting experience, but the platform of jazz was something new and Steven Oquendo invited me to one of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra rehearsals and that was it. It was like a touch on and off switch. Once I saw the band it was like, "This is what I want to do and be." And at the time, Rodney Whitaker was the bass player holding the chair down. And it was a very unbelievable experience to see a gentleman playing the instrument that I love, the way he was playing it.

0:05:03 CH: So, during the '96 Festival, I remember the interactions we had with the orchestra seeing Joe Temperley, who I dearly miss, working with Herlin Riley, Rodney Whitaker. I remember I sang with Stefon Harris and some of the members that are there now, Victor Goines, Walter Blanding. And the one the one thing I could stress to everybody is the pure connection that we had with the orchestra. It was a very impromptu type of get together and the teachings that they gave us was very valuable. Duke Ellington and his music was introduced to me in '96. I was learning jazz, I was learning so much other styles of music, but when I entered the Festival, there was this heavy notion of understanding what Duke was, what he stood for, his musicians, it was when I started learning about Jimmy Blanton, Juan Tizol, great trombone, valve trombone player. And understanding where they came from. I didn't know Juan Tizol was Puerto Rican and I was like, "Hey, if he could do it I could it."

[chuckle]

0:06:14 WM: Here you go... [chuckle]

0:06:17 CH: And also the symbol of a trombone, I didn't know that the trombone, and especially in Puerto Rican history, it has so much value, it goes back in [0:06:29] ____ historian, but it goes way back to James Reese Europe, when he had picked up a couple of Puerto Ricans to go to World War I, and be a part of the band, there was a gentleman by the name of Rafael Hernández, who was later to be one of the greatest composers of Latin American music, but he was a trombone player in the orchestra, and that leads to many other trombone players that we could talk about, Mon Rivera, Willie Colon, Jimmy Bosch, Juan Tizol, Papo Vázquez, Luis Bonilla, you name them, there's a lot,

Toñito Vázquez. But anyway.

0:07:02 CH: So, my learning of Duke Ellington, in '96, was unbelievable. Now, of course, I gotta tell you, the band... Bob Steward was the conductor and the director of the jazz program, he took over from Justin DiCioccio, and Bob was one one of the best directors in my life, at that time during high school, we had so much fun, and he gave a lot of respect to the music of Duke Ellington, and took all the information that Jazz at Lincoln Center was giving us. But we were high school kids, and we went up there thinking, "We got this. We're gonna come out of here, band home runs, and Grand Slams." And there was a moment, there were moments where we started understanding that this style of music was much more than just playing four notes on the bass, there was an understanding of its history, of why it's played.

0:07:56 CH: One thing that I remember, especially playing "Ko Ko", when I looked at the baseline, it was, I just looked at it and I was like, "Okay, that's fine, I got this." But there was something about the essence of the meaning of playing the music for Duke that I didn't understand in high school, and as we got with the program and the lessons and stuff like that, it got better and we started understanding what it was. But remember, it was Tri-State, so, there weren't that many bands at the time that was really playing at the level that we were playing, and we were able to win. I think we won, and it was great, I remember Steven got an award for playing Boy Meets Horn. I think I got an award, Casey Benjamin got an award at the time, I don't know who else, I think Stefan Robinson, who was then, from Houston, at the time that he moved to New York and played with us. Let me think, I'm trying to think all the funny stories, so that you guys could understand how great the Festival was.

0:09:00 CH: One thing, one story I wanna share with you, cats, is, on that same festival, I had a gig that night at the Catskills. At that time, it's not happening anymore, but there used to be a dance party called the Ralph Lou's Dance Party, up in the Catskills. Ralph Lou was a Jewish man who used to dance great Mambo, and he used to hold these Catskill parties, all the way up late at night, so I remember my mom waiting for me backstage, and me waiting to hear who was gonna win, and I remember waiting by the door, and when they announced the third and then the second price, once I knew we won, I had to jet right into the car and then we had to travel about two hours up north, so I could make a gig. So, all that is in my head.

0:09:48 CH: Essentially Ellington also... There's a lot of... My mom taking me to places. The whole thing about Jazz at Lincoln Center, and being a part of this whole structure that I'm in now, it's all based apart... About my growth with music and how I met Wynton, and the cats in the band, and it's a beautiful story, it's unbelievable how it's come to this point. You know what I mean? I'm 40 years old now, and I remember being a young 16-year-old, just thinking about, "Man, can I be like Christian McBride, can I be like Roy Hargrove, can I be like Nicolas Payton?" I was checking out all these, cats, and here I am, talking to them now and playing with them and working with them. So, so much love, and the program has grown to be stronger and stronger than what it is, and you're gonna get to hear how crazy it is now, with the amount of schools that are together now, and the level of playing, because we were here, and trust me, here was good enough when it was Tri-State, but right now, the level's like right here, so if we went back to '96, here, we would have been

nowhere near that, so, it's gone a long way.

0:11:02 CH: So, I'm gonna introduce to you, somebody very special, someone that I've played with, someone who was original, someone that can really play. She's a saxophonist, a flautist, she went to Hall High School, in West Hartford, Connecticut, then she studied at Juilliard, and graduated in 2004, she earned a bachelor's degree in jazz, which was the schools first in history, believe it or not. And she's travelled with so many bands, the Afro-Cuban Latin Jazz Orchestra, she travelled with us, with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Darcy James, Chris Potter, she's been honored with two ASCAP Jazz Composer Award, check that out, and she's been mentioned many times with DownBeat. She also has a killing, killing, killing theory book. It's called "A Cool Approach to Jazz Theory", and she's my sister, I love her, we love her so much, Erica von Kleist.

0:12:00 Erica Von Kleist: Thank you. Hey, Carlos. It's been a while. Thank you for that intro. [chuckle] It's an honor to be on this forum tonight, with all of these incredible musicians, alumnis, mentors, but also just to continue my EE experience. The EE experience is something that's lasted me my entire life ever since I was introduced to it. I went to Hall High School, from West Hartford, Connecticut, and we were actually in the festival, '97 through 2000, so all four years of high school, I had the privilege of being on stage at Avery Fisher, before the Jazz at Lincoln Center building existed, way back in the day, and...

[chuckle]

0:12:50 EK: I remember the backstage and the booths with all the little lights on 'em and everything. And I had the privilege of being there all four years of high school and not only meeting incredible young people, but also seeing the growth of EE. Like Carlos mentioned, it was for the Tri-State area for the first year or two, and then it expanded to the East Coast, I think, once we got there. And then I think by the end of my tenure in high school, it was open to the whole country, which was really exciting. So I got to meet so many incredible young people my age from all over the country. And the thing that stands out to me the most about EE is the relationships that have continued between me and colleagues who I met, who were also competitors in other bands, but also the relationships I have with mentors. And I think the reason for that is just the intensity of not only going to a competition and playing music, but also the intensity that you have to bring to your study and dedication of Duke Ellington's music, and to jazz in general. And when you study that intensely on something at such a young age, it just sticks like glue into your head, and when you share that experience with other young people, you end up having this common thread with these musicians who you'll know for the rest of your life.

0:14:18 EK: After EE, I ended up at Manhattan School of Music for a year, and I was there with Kurt Bacher from Foxborough High School, and Obed Calvaire from New World School of the Arts. [chuckle] And then I went on to Juilliard, and I was there with Brandon and Tatum and Jumaane, who are all on this call today, and a bunch of other amazing musicians. And not only that, just receiving that love from mentors like Ted Nash and Joe Temperley and everyone in the band. I remember those two came up to Hall High School one year and were our mentors, and they were just as excited about us participating in EE as any other gig that they would have had. So just

feeling that visceral connection through music and that love and that dedication towards education that we were receiving as young people was just... It's just profound. And I think it's sort of analogous to, the people that you meet during EE are people you're going to have to share that experience with. And other people in your life aren't really gonna understand how powerful that was, but when you have experienced that with other people, it's something that you carry through life. It's almost like, we all have a cousin who we haven't seen in a long time, maybe 10 or 20 years, and you're not very close to them, but the thing is, that that cousin knows what grandma's house used to smell like.

[laughter]

0:15:52 EK: And it doesn't... You might have a spouse right now, you might have best friends and colleagues that you're very, very close with, much closer than this cousin, but that cousin and you will always have that thread where you know what grandma's house used to smell like, and the reason you know that is because that house was full of love, and that house was full of learning, and that house was full of lessons. And that was EE for me. And yeah, I'm just really honored to be here with so many alumni and just to have shared that experience with so many people, and to be connected with them today on gigs and in education settings, and at Jazz at Lincoln Center, too. And one of those colleagues of mine is Brandon Lee who, we met during EE, I believe, but we also did the Young Arts Jazz Combo back in 2000 and 2001, and we ended up at Juilliard together. And Brandon just is an incredible, amazing trumpet player who has just played with everybody, you name it, he's played with them, and is a wonderful teacher and a great human being. So, Brandon Lee.

0:17:03 Brandon Lee: All right. Thank you, Erica. That was awesome. I definitely second all of the things you said about just the communication, or just the amounts of people that we were able to connect with before all of the hyper-connectivity happened through online resources. Yeah, so thank you, everyone, for being here. My experience with Essentially Ellington is interesting because I, at the time... Well, I'll say this for one, my high school that made it into the Essentially Ellington was the High School for Performing and Visual Arts in Houston, Texas, and we made it into the round in 1999, and our band ended up placing third, I believe, in the competition. And primary focus was in meeting Wynton Marsalis, my true, my...

[laughter]

0:18:24 BL: He was all through my life, all through growing up, I started playing trumpet at an early age, around nine. My dad, we used to go on road trips and my dad would play a rotation of records. It'll be Oscar Peterson, and there was an Oscar Peterson record called We Must Request, or something about something "request".

0:18:49 CH: We Get Requests.

0:18:50 BL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. We Get Requests, 1964. He had a tape of that, we had George Benson with the Count Basie Big Band. We listened to that all the time on rotation on these road

trips. Wynton Marsalis', like Wynton's Standard Time, Volume 2. He had that on tape. He was, my dad was a... Back then was a band director. And we basically grew up in a musical family. He started me and my other two siblings off on piano, we went to Arts Magnets and all that kind of stuff. So music was kind of like the link through our lives. But at a certain point, like when I took up the trumpet, I started to at least pay close attention to people who played that same instrument, and people who look like me. And that brought me to Wynton and just, that whole thing was very important to me. So this was... Yeah, so 1999, I was 16 years old. Our school went up to New York, there was a whole bunch of other things that happened too during this time. And I get reminded by Tatum, and a lot of other people that were there at the time, all of these things that were happening. And I think because I was so laser-focused on meeting Wynton and meeting all of these other people in Jazz at Lincoln Center that I really did not pay attention much to a lot of things.

[chuckle]

0:20:28 BL: Even probably like meeting Tatum actually. But that really was my main focus. And that was a different type of thing than wanting to meet somebody, so I can get a boost in my career, I wasn't thinking about that when I was 16. I was really wanting to meet the person who had inspired me through recordings, and motivated me to continue to play through, not even meeting him at that point. But after we'd... So one of the first stories of the Essentially Ellington Festival was when I first got the opportunity to actually get on stage in Lincoln Center Square, that was probably where what the fountain is. This is where the band was set up. They marched in or they paraded in, and then they went up on stage and played Blue Train and different things. And then they asked people to come up and sit in. Now, of course, this is all I wanna do, but then at the same time, I'm like, "No I can't. Look at all these people. Look at all these... This is just like so many kids from all the schools." And then I started hearing this chant from behind me like, "Brandon, Brandon, go up, go up." And almost kind of like it was a chant, then it became a shove. And then I was starting to get shoved on stage. And then at one point I kind of felt that I wasn't even walking anymore. They were like lifting me.

[chuckle]

0:22:08 BL: Just put me on, planted me on the stage. But from that point forward, it was, I played... I did what I actually wanted to do. But it was almost the... Whatever, what might have been at that time, anxiety or fear of something. It almost kept me from doing it until the pressure from my classmates put me on the stage. And then, that was really it. It was me meeting Wynton, and Wynton having a chance to be able to hear me, in a very raw situation. There was nothing really attached to it. And so I really do think that I got... From there, it was that initial thing, and then it was a jam session, I played again. And then there was, of course, through the festival Wynton and everyone else got a chance to hear me. So, that was very, very important to me. Especially back in that period where there was not a lot of online and immediate sort of transfer of videos, and we can't see people all over the world. So that meant the most to me, to be able to do that.

0:23:32 BL: And from there, after the festival, there was... Wynton exchanged his information with me, which was crazy for me at the time, and then we started talking, we developed a relationship.

He would call, I would call him. Been that, which most people probably know ended up resulting in me getting a call to perform with Jazz at Lincoln Center for a Louis Armstrong tribute, 100 year Louis Armstrong tribute. And then Juilliard happened immediately after that. So it was very, very, it was very impactful for a... I mean that, it really impacted my life in a tremendous way. And so very thankful for Essentially Ellington for providing that initial contact, and that way for us to be able to see each other. At this time, I did mention one person, this is a... I'm gonna pass it on to this guy. He's a fantastic trumpet player, educator, long-time friend, former roomy, brother from another mother.

[chuckle]

0:25:03 BL: I guess well, and father, I guess.

[laughter]

0:25:11 BL: So, Tatum. Tatum and I first met through Essentially Ellington 1999, which I mentioned before. Of course, after that competition, we went back to our respective states and we didn't reconnect again until I moved to New York in 2001. We were seeing each other around the scene quite a bit, in different jam sessions. But we go to the new school to have sessions with Houston guys that were already there, Robert Glasper and Mike Moreno and things like that. And then we eventually ended up reconnecting when he came to Juilliard. But since then, you know, we were classmates, roommates, bandmates, even self-proclaimed best two trumpet section in New York City. [laughter] With Fat Cat Big Band and Uptwon Jazz Tentet... But this is one of my dearest friends in the whole wide world, man. Please, I'd like to pass it on to Tatum Greenblatt.

0:26:11 Tatum Greenblatt: Thanks Brandon. I'd like to add to that, Brandon was also a groomsman at my wedding.

0:26:15 BL: Yeah.

[laughter]

0:26:18 TG: Just to complete it all, And just to add on that story of 1999, I was also there with my High School, Erica was there, Jumaane Smith was there, a whole bunch of people... It was the first year that they opened up National, and I remember hearing Brandon play in the Plaza. And I had that feeling of really wanting to play and wanting to join up on the session and having that feeling of like, "Man, get going, get to play with the big band, I'm gonna get to sit in on the tune." And then Brandon played, and I sat right back down. [laughter] This was like, I'm not...

0:26:52 WM: You can play too man. You can play, baby.

0:26:54 TG: Thank you, but at the time, my confidence level went from...

0:26:56 WM: You can play. [laughter]

0:26:57 TG: You know, It was one of those... You know, actually, it's an interesting experience that Brandon's talking about, and it's good to hear from his perspective about it in all these years later. I grew up in Seattle and I went to Garfield High School, which I would just publicly, since Carlos made this claim about LaGuardia, would just like to publicly say you're wrong. Garfield is the better program, but that's cool, I'm like... [laughter]

0:27:23 CH: New York and us, baby, we made it...

0:27:27 TG: I mean... So I can argue with... I don't have to, you know.

0:27:30 BL: We were friends once. We were friends once... [laughter]

0:27:35 TG: But, you know one of the... And I'm also a lifer, like Eric and Brandon and Carlos and a lot of other people. The experience of getting to be involved with Essentially Ellington led to very much a continued adult livelihood of being involved with Jazz at Lincoln Center as an organization. As a student of Wynton's, as a member of the Juilliard program which was, at the time, very closely associated with Jazz at Lincoln Centre. And now, I teach at the program and I judge audition tapes for Essentially Ellington every other year. When I try to put a perspective on it from my own, it's just a crazy thing to be in that position after 20 years of having been involved with the organization on each one of these levels. Coming from Seattle in '99 was an amazing eye-opening experience because... As Brandon kinda alluded to, this was before the Internet was ubiquitous. You could go visit a website, but nobody did that. We didn't have social media, we interacted with each other on a different level.

0:28:37 WM: And our experience as high school students was a little bit more provincial than it might be for a normal high school kid now. We just didn't have that kind of connectivity to the world and it was much harder to go seek things out. So we knew who could play within kind of a local level, and... In Seattle at the time, there was a lot of incredible musicians. In high school, we had Anne Drummond and Carmen Staaf and Jumaane Smith, who you're gonna hear from presently. Kassa Overall and a whole bunch of people that people could... Cats that could play that nobody ended up getting to hear of. And we knew about those people and we kinda knew locally which bands were good, 'cause you go to a Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival and you'd see the other winning bands, and you go to the Mt. Hood Jazz Festival, blah, blah, blah. But to go to Ellington, all of a sudden, we saw the best of the best nationwide. And it was incredible because we had no idea what was going on in Houston or West Hartford, Connecticut, or... [laughter] Nobody in Seattle was sitting there going like, "Yeah, West Hartford's gonna have a saxophone section." And then there's Erica and Drew Sayers and all these cats just like hype, you know?

[laughter]

0:29:47 CH: That's all true.

0:29:50 TG: But it was an incredible experience because it gave us... It was inspirational to see so

many great young musicians that were so serious about the music. It was enlightening in a way, it was like self-affirming because it was like, "Oh wow man, we're not the only people that have this thing going on. Like, we've got people all over that are just as serious about this as we are." And they hate you on a personal level 'cause I was a junior in high school, I think Brandon was a sophomore that year. But here I was thinking I could play and then I hear somebody else that could play and I was like, "Damn, I can't play." [laughter] "I gotta practice." And I would... Had it not been for Ellington, I wouldn't have necessarily had that kind of motivation of knowing that Brandon Lee was out there in the world, so I gotta stay in the shed. And I remember reading Erica's name in DownBeat, in the student music winners every year, but then I got to hear her play and it was like, "Wow." It changes your perspective and then to have that lead on to having these relationships with the... I mean like Eric and I were sitting at the judges table this year, looking each other like, "Man, we're getting old." [laughter] You know...

0:31:00 WM: You're all still babies, just wait. [laughter]

0:31:03 TG: Wynton, I hate to break it to you, man, but Wynton, when... In '99, when we were in high school, you were our age now.

[laughter]

0:31:13 WM: So yeah, just wait.

0:31:16 CH: If it makes you feel good guys, come on.

[chuckle]

0:31:23 TG: As with everybody else on this call, being an EE was a life-changing and life-affirming experience on so many levels, I could co-sign on to what everybody else has said about how it's affected their lives. So I just wanted to share that little bit about just not so much being like a country boy that sees the big city so much, but just being from... Having EE be a moment in my life that just gave me a different perspective and helped me understand sort of where the bar was on another level, and helped me grow musically and as a person, and gave me a whole bunch of stuff that has shaped the course of my life. So I'm grateful to have had that experience. I'm very grateful to be here with all of you all, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to present our next speaker, someone that I've known since I was in middle school, someone that I've... A fellow Seattle-lite, although he went to the other high school, which is cool.

[laughter]

0:32:23 TG: Somebody that has just been... I'm grateful to know him, he's an incredible trumpet player, y'all probably know him from his 15 years playing with Michael Bubl , but you all should have heard him with Rashied Ali back in the day, 'cause that was awesome serious business. My dear friend Jumaane Smith, take it away.

0:32:47 Jumaane Smith: Okay, thank you so much, Tatum. Oh man, Essentially Ellington to me was so special. The main thing that I took from it was the sense of community and the pride that everybody had, just being there, all of the mentors, they were just tremendous and they gave you such a warmth and a sense of love and adoration, and it was just so beautiful and to be a part of that community and to have that camaraderie, many of the people that I met at Ellington I'm still in touch with now. It was such an incredible experience. It was my first time going to New York City, and that was life-changing. Like Tatum said, I'm from Seattle, Washington, and I went the best high school in Seattle. [laughter] Mostly about studies' program, and it was such a great experience I was there the same year as Tatum and Erica and Brandon, but I'm actually older than them, sad enough to say.

0:33:52 JS: So happy to still be here and making music and to still be a part of the Essentially Ellington family and the alumni. It's been a beautiful thing, and it really helped to catapult the start of my career as a jazz musician and helped to also teach me about Ellington's music, and to teach me how to play in large ensembles and to learn about playing lead trumpet, and playing in an ensemble rather than just trying to be a soloist.

0:34:30 JS: So it was quite an extraordinary experience, not to mention getting the opportunity to meet Gwen and everybody else in the orchestra as well. I vividly remember when we were there in New York, Marcus Printup was our mentor at the time, and during the lunch break, he took me for a sandwich at the deli up the street from AB Fischer and it was just so amazing that he would, I still to this day think about the fact that he went out of his way to take that time to just nurture me as a young man, and as an up-and-coming artist. I thought it was just such a beautiful thing, and it was so inspiring. It was so inspiring. I feel like everybody that gets to be a part the Essentially Ellington festival is a winner, even though it's a competition and competition is part of life, but if you're a part of the competition as a whole you are a part of the community, and that's a beautiful thing.

0:35:42 WM: Yeah.

0:35:43 JS: I would like to pass it off to the Vice President of Education at Jazz at Lincoln Center. Mr. Todd Stoll.

0:35:53 Todd Stoll: Hi, everybody.

0:35:54 CH: Oh, you're in EE?

[overlapping conversation]

0:36:02 WM: It kind of would have been. He counted the tempo of the song off too fast. He was there.

[overlapping conversation]

0:36:12 TS: I was a band director and got beat by Roosevelt, and I got beat by Garfield, I got beat

my...

[laughter]

0:36:19 TS: I was there in 2002 and 2004. So well... Wynton still likes to ask me about my tempo on "Rockin' in Rhythm" when I blame Aaron...

[laughter]

0:36:31 WM: Let him defend himself.

0:36:37 TS: We're gonna pass it off to the next generation here, and we're gonna start with a great young saxophonist and I remember coming to the festival and hearing him from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, amazing young musician who also is doing very innovative things online with different styles of music, we just love him. Patrick Bartley from Dillard Center For the Arts. Patrick, take it away.

0:37:04 Patrick Bartley: Hello, hello, thank you, yeah I think what's really interesting. I guess, first of all, hello everybody, it's amazing to see everybody here, it's really great to be here, especially since during the quarantine times being locked in the apartment for three months, you almost forget the privilege and the sensation of real-life human interaction. [chuckle] It's like, being able to talk with all of you all right here is actually really amazing, also getting to hear the stories, it also puts me in a really interesting perspective because especially talking about Essentially Ellington, talking about what it means to be a jazz musician in 2020.

0:37:38 PB: From different parts of the spectrum, I really am... When we were doing the sound check earlier, Todd, you mentioned like I'm in the middle of things. And I think that is probably the most interesting thing about my experience to me is the fact that right now at 27, I'm not old enough to say that I grew up a time before the internet, but I'm not young enough to say that I grew up in a generation that knew how to use it. So it's actually really... That's probably the most interesting thing to me right now, is that right now at 27, I shouldn't be looking at 18 years old and feeling like, "Man, I'm getting old man, this is crazy." I shouldn't really be feeling like that. But the thing is because the way technology and information is moving so fast, one year in the world of technology can feel like 10 outside of it. Because of the amount of information, the amount of innovations that are happening at light speed, and we just... You take a gigabyte, and multiply by two, it's two, you multiply that by two it's four, then eight, then 16. It just grows and grows and grows. It keeps getting bigger and that's what we're seeing in the information age. And as you can see by earphones, the mic, most of what I'm doing right now since the quarantine has started has been streaming. I do streaming like I have on my instruments over here, so I stream on my own channel, J-MUSIC Ensemble, have the shirt and everything.

0:38:47 PB: So I'm trying to bring the world, of course, of jazz and J-Pop together, that's the thing I normally do. But the reason why I was able to come to that, was actually because of experiences like Essentially Ellington. And I think the biggest thing... I actually have two things. It was kind of

like a vaulting point that went into two different directions for me, and the first one is kinda touching on what everybody else talked about, which is the whole getting to see that there are people outside of your immediate community and your immediate area that actually are just as passionate or sometimes more passionate about jazz than you. And I think to me, that is the craziest thing that I got to experience. And just for context, I did Essentially Ellington in 2010 and 2011. And so at the time, I was 17 and 18. And the first time I met Wynton actually was when I was 12 years old. And we had a mutual friend, I guess at the time, I can't say it was my friend 'cause she was my teacher but Edna Lucio which I should reach out to her 'cause it's been a very long time, she was my Social Studies teacher, and she had backstage tickets to go see, Wynton Marsalis and I think the Quintet at the time perform in what was it? Fort Myers or Fort Pierce, which city it was... Florida, which I am from. And it was about in 2005, and that was the first actual jazz concert that I really got to see.

0:40:03 PB: So I gotta say to be able to see for my first jazz concert with Wynton Marsalis it kind of probably messed me up for the rest of my life to see this is... Oh, this must be the impression, is the level... And to be honest I didn't really understand what was going on, I couldn't really comprehend everything, but I knew it had a real big impact on me. So from that point on, I knew that that level of just humanity in that way was the thing that I should be striving for at all times. And so when I got to go to Essentially Ellington for the first time, it was a real big triumph this time, not just for me, but everybody in the community that was trying to get to the level, and then our band director at Dillard High School, Christopher Dorsey, I kinda owe everything to him in that way, because he was the one that was passionate about saying, "Hey, we don't really have anything around like this going on, we're not blessed like the Roosevelt and Garfield."

[laughter]

0:40:52 PB: They would always say that, they'll always... They'll always bring up Roosevelt and Garfield. Always bring it up.

0:40:56 WM: Here we go, here we go.

[laughter]

0:40:58 PB: They would always bring it up, you say, "Man it's like a factory man," I'm like, "Well, I guess you're kind of right." But the funny thing about that is that we finally did get to go. I had no idea that ironically, I would actually end up forming a band with pretty much all Roosevelt and Garfield students. So, it's kind of because of Essentially Ellington, I got to meet people from completely different corner of the country that I otherwise would have never met because again, even though the internet was around during my time and it was still being developed, there was no Instagram on your phone still yet. There was not Facebook on your phone, we didn't really have smartphones like that at the time that Essentially Ellington was happening for me. I still had that experience, the same one that Tatum was talking about and Jumaane was talking about, about meeting people for the first time, and getting to see that there's another world aside. 'Cause before it was just like, okay, well, I got these CDs and I'm practicing, I get to... Me and Russell Hall, we just

get to go to each other house and play, and it was really only just like four or five of us that really, really wanted to play, and then even could really play. So getting to go to Essentially Ellington and see that so many other people were passionate, it almost made you forget about the competition or even festival aspect of it 'cause all you could think about was like, "Wow, I'm in New York."

[laughter]

0:42:09 PB: Like, "Oh, snap, I'm in New York City, there's so many other people from around the country." Sometimes around the world, I know some people who will be travelling internationally to come see it, so it was kind of like this big hub and one of the things that I love that Mr. Dorsey would say, if you wanted to explain Essentially Ellington 'cause I know we have some fans from, even from my J-MUSIC Discord that might be in here too, if you wanna describe Essentially Ellington, then it's kind of like the Super Bowl for high school jazz bands. And I think that's a really... It's a really good way of putting it. And the reason why is because it's such this big giant celebration where everyone in the country that is into jazz, into education is getting to see it. So you're getting to have this big conglomerate and celebration of music, and again, getting to learn about Duke Ellington, getting to learn about Benny Carter getting to learn about all these other different people that are part of the Essentially Ellington repertoire. It was really important for me because that was the first time that it seemed like this was possible for me, it wasn't just this little dream or something that was unreasonable, or like, it was not a 9:00 to 5:00. It's not like a real job, "Get a real job..." This was like, "Oh, wow, not only can you get some money for this, but look at these suits that they're wearing. You've gotta make some money to get these suits."

[laughter]

0:43:19 PB: This is real, this is real. So, obviously, this is something that you can go into from a enjoyment and a practical sense. There's something that is... This is a real thing that people are backing, that you can... Everybody, you as a child or a teenager, and your parents can have confidence that there are people out here like Wynton Marsalis, like Todd Stoll, like Jason that are looking out for all of us to make sure we have a good future, and I think that's probably the best thing you can really ask for. And related to that, the second thing I was talking about just to really quickly, just to make it personal in a way, it was also an opportunity for me to see what was a possible side of my neighborhood for me personally, not just in the school, but for me. Growing up in the hood is you know, some of you all might understand and might know. Music was the thing that got me out of the situation. Music was the thing that was able to show, I was able to show my family and everybody around me that I could make it. And my mom also likes to say she's getting to see the world through my eyes, and so I kind of take that responsibility for me to make sure that I'm honoring my family and giving them all the opportunities that they probably didn't get to have, and also kind of be an inspiration for other people to see that, "Hey, if you just follow your passion, work hard..."

0:44:29 PB: And go seek out the community, don't be afraid to ask questions and don't be afraid to talk about, don't be afraid to be yourselves. You can get out of any predetermined situation, because there are people out there that are looking to help you, as long as you show that promise, as long as

you... " That's that convergence, that I think that's important to me, convergence of ideals and convergence of passions. To me, that's one of the most influential things. And if it wasn't for the Essentially Ellington program, I would not have seen that that was even possible, because I got to go in my junior year of high school for the first time. And at the time, my grandmother had just passed about a year before that, and so we were in the process of relocating. And it was kind of like, my mind was in an interesting state, I didn't really know which direction I wanted to go in, I didn't know really what I wanted to do, and then when we finally did get to go, and I got to see all these other different people, I saw, so, "Okay, this thing is real, this thing is real. I can make it, I can really make more out of it and hopefully get to the point where no one would even know that I came from anything bad or unfortunate. It's just the music is the only thing that matters."

0:45:34 PB: We can think about all the legends that came from really terrible experiences like Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Benny Goodman, there are so many different people that had to go through slums, and they know that. But they knew that it didn't define them because the music and the artistry spoke volumes for that, and I think that is the most inspiring thing to me about Essentially Ellington. That you have the opportunity to get over there and see that, it gives you that inspiration if you want it, if you really do feel it in your heart that you can make things happen for yourself. And I think that was probably the biggest thing that I enjoyed and that I got out of Essentially Ellington.

0:46:09 TS: Nice.

0:46:10 CH: Amen. That was a good one, man.

0:46:12 PB: Thank you. Also go Dillard!

[laughter]

0:46:18 PB: I had to say it.

0:46:18 CH: Come on, man.

0:46:18 PB: Shut up.

0:46:19 CH: Come on.

0:46:20 TS: You can't do that.

0:46:26 WM: Okay.

0:46:26 CH: All right.

0:46:28 WM: We're gonna bring out a student now, who is... We'll get our last group of... In the last... This is a young lady that... By this point in the festival, I couldn't look up on the stage, I had

to make a choice. Either I'm looking down in my notes and taking them or I look up at the stage. Because if I can see the stage, I can't see my notes, I got my glasses on, or I don't. So I had chosen when they played but I gotta look down at my notes, so I didn't look at them. I was just writing notes, writing notes, writing notes, and finally I had to put glasses on and look up on the stage and the saxophone section was really killing, Beloit High School, and "Man, this is a great saxophone section." Then I looked up and this lady was leading the section, a section of ladies just absolutely swinging, so I wanna hear her perspective, Bre DeNure. Bre? You got it.

0:47:22 Bre DeNure: Hi, Wynton, thank you so much. And thank you, everyone, for being here. I'm so honored to be on the same level of this panel of musicians and educators and, you know, contributors to the jazz industry. Like Wynton said, I'm an alto saxophonist, I graduated from Beloit Memorial High School, and I was there from 2013 to 2016 and we were very lucky to be able to go to Essentially Ellington all four years I was in high school. It really put Wisconsin on the map as this mecca for jazz education, apparently.

0:48:01 BD: But recently, I graduated from UW Eau Claire, which is also in Wisconsin, and I currently reside in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and pursuing a career, or attempting to pursue in the age of corona, a career in arts administration. But again, like I said, I was able to be a part of Essentially Ellington as a freshman all the way through high school. And I wish I could echo the admiration of the program before experiencing it, but I was really thrown into it before knowing the amazing impact it would have on my life. I still remember Ted Nash was our first clinician when I was a freshman, I think Vincent Gardner came along with... And they were the sweetest. And I just had no idea who they were. I was just so excited to just be there and be a part of a community and something bigger than myself. But we stood, at the end of the clinic, the whole band stood for a photo. Mr. Barron's back with this camera, and I remember Ted stood next to me and he was like, "Hey, you wanna hold my saxophone?" And I just stared at him. I had no words and he was like, "All right, all right, I'll hold it." [chuckle]

0:49:14 BD: And it was just such an interesting story to reflect on to see where I am now. But I think my biggest takeaways from Essentially Ellington are two things. The first being elements of leadership, first that I experienced and second that I absorbed. And second of those being mentorship, I think the key to leadership in this day and age is authenticity, and jazz music preaches that, it cultivates that, and that's something I found within the walls and within the community of Essentially Ellington. I found that I had this excitement that was kind of unparalleled to anything else I've experienced in my life. I don't come from a family of musicians or a community that's full of jazz clubs and things, like that kind of influence. I just remember seeing a group of people, a group of young people, excited about creating something beautiful and something bigger than themselves, and I just wanted to be a part of it.

0:50:23 BD: So I just remember being so excited about the music and being fueled by that, and I think it truly influenced my leadership of my section, proudly being a part of a majority female saxophone section, which is something that was rare in my time and now is just as normal as anything else, which I think is incredible, and I think the key to that was that authenticity and passion for what you do. And I was so grateful for Essentially Ellington to give me a space as a

young musician, as a female, as a human to command and demand my space in this art form. And Wynton said one thing to me, maybe to the group, but I felt like he was speaking to me when I was younger. And he said, "You don't have to play a lot to say a lot." You don't have to play much to mean the world. That means so much to me because I remember there were comments on my performance of like, "Oh, she's kinda of quiet," or, "She's not playing super loud or a lot of big licks."

0:51:38 BD: But I just felt like Essentially Ellington in the stage at Rose Hall, I was able to be myself and able to play the music and... Of the profound nature of that Duke Ellington provides. In a way that I was heard and seen and celebrated in an unparalleled way that I've ever experienced. So those memories that I have are undoubtedly the reason I'm here today and have given me some incredible relationships and skills as I pursue a career in arts administration and being a part of the jazz community. So I'm so excited to pass the mic over to my peer and friend, saxophonist Sarah Milligan. She is a graduate from down in Texas and she is the founder of Jazz Girls Austin and an incredible musician and educator. So here's to you, Sarah.

0:52:34 Sarah Milligan: Hey, Bre, and hey, everyone else, thank you so much. I'm really happy to be here, and I also wanna say to Bre and, sort of reflecting of what Wynton said, seeing Beloit's female saxophone section on stage was just... It was such an inspiration to me because it was the first time I had ever seen any females my age playing the saxophone. I was always up on the stage dancing and feeling the music and all the boys are pretty stiff. [chuckle] I always felt super weird. But like...

0:53:06 BD: When you're young...

0:53:09 SM: Yes, but seeing Bre and all of the Beloit girls just really inspired me and made me feel a lot more comfortable with myself. So thank you for that. Okay, so I am a 2015 alumni with the Tucson Jazz Institute. I feel like I sort of had a unique experience coming from a conglomerate band. We drove an hour and a half to get to Tucson every single week to practice with the band. It was one of the first times that I really learned what Duke Ellington's music was and what swing was because I came from a high school band that was still really stuck in this aspect that a dotted 8th note 16th was swing. And that's doo da do, doo da do. It was totally fine. We had a great time, but I think being part of Tucson Jazz Institute and being part of the Essentially Ellington, just really opened my mind and my eyes to the fact that what's on the paper is not swing. That's not music. It's like a dictionary and we don't go reading the dictionary from the beginning to the end. We listen to words and how to articulate them and that's one of the things that I really gained from Essentially Ellington because we went and we actually played all of our tunes memorized... [chuckle] And for me, I was coming in and I was like, "Why are we doing this? It seems like so much extra work," but... [chuckle]

0:54:36 SM: I took so much more from them because I learned how to listen and I learned that the real answer isn't on the page. The real answer is in the recordings in the history books and hearing how maybe a Mary Lou Williams tune swings different than Duke Ellington, which swings different from Fletcher Henderson and you don't hear that if your eyes are stuck on the page. I also

think that having that opportunity to come and play really helped me live in the moment because living in the moment meant that I what... My eyes weren't stuck on the page, I could absorb the stage, I could absorb the people in the audience and most of all I could feel the synergy of the band. And that, to me, was one of my first eye-opening experience of "Oh, wow, this is what music is. This is what swing is. We are all on the same page. This feels so good. And we have practiced playing along with these tunes so much that they're just a part of our body and our soul." And that's really what jazz music is, it's a reflection of each of our bodies and souls, which is what makes it so unique.

0:55:43 SM: And the second thing that I really learned from it was there is no limit to what kids can do, no matter how young you are. You can do it and I feel like, as middle schoolers, high schoolers, we feel like adults put this barrier on us and they make us feel like, "Oh you're just a kid." But being a part of Essentially Ellington and hearing all of these amazing bands play and seeing what I could push myself to, on a personal level, really just disprove that statement at all. There's no limit to what you can do as kids and I think that's really helped me beyond Essentially Ellington, in that I've grown an appreciation for, as I've become an educator in the community, that when I'm teaching students, I'm not gonna tell them, "You're just a kid, we're not gonna learn about this yet." They can learn whatever they want and if they are interested in learning it, we're gonna do what we can to make that happen and to make them enjoy the music.

0:56:42 SM: So I really appreciate everything Essentially Ellington has done for me, and of course at the beginning and at the Festival, I was so just shocked by the moment in coming from a little 40,000 person town to coming to Manhattan was just a crazy experience. But I think the impact of Essentially Ellington has been lifelong and actually a greater impact each year that I grow as a musician. So up next I have the pleasure of introducing a fabulous bass player. He won the 2016 Ella Fitzgerald Award and is a recent grad of Juilliard and is going back into school to Juilliard for his grad degree. And that is Philip Norris.

0:57:28 Philip Norris: Hello everyone. Thank you, Sarah. Yeah. My name is Philip, I just graduated from Juilliard and I'm a bass player. Essentially Ellington is really special to me because hearing all the other alumnus talk about it, talking about Essentially Ellington in 1997 and all that, I was born in 1997, so it seems like a world away.

[chuckle]

0:57:56 PN: So that, growing up, Essentially Ellington was something that I knew of from a very young age. My mom was my band director and she actually did classes with... Through Jazz at Lincoln Center for the Band Directors Academy. So I always knew about it. I watched the movie Chops. And it was something me and my friends strived for. If you could make it there, you could make it anywhere. That kind of thing. And so just growing up and striving for that was something that was really impactful, and made me grow, and made my friends grow. And I remember being in band and we were going to do Duke Ellington's music and everyone liked it, and everyone seemed to be taking it seriously. But no one was really taking it as seriously as they could. And seeing movies like Chops and seeing people up on that stage, especially in Rose Hall and Jazz at Lincoln

Center, it showed me how serious that you needed to be to be able to play this music. And I'll always remember this one saxophone player in the band that I was in named Tucker Daniels. And I think Bre knows him.

0:59:00 BD: Hey. [chuckle]

0:59:03 PN: He really took on this role as a leader in the band when no one else was really taking it seriously. There was a few of us that could really play. And we enjoyed to do it, but it was just for fun. We auditioned for Essentially Ellington a few times. We didn't get in. We didn't really think we were gonna get in, just this small band from North Carolina. But he really showed us what it took, and how serious we had to be to do it. And ever since that, the band started getting better, everyone started taking it serious. Even the people that didn't wanna be a musician professionally, they were showing up early, taking it seriously, having everything memorized. And I was like, "Wow." I was like, "I need to start taking this serious or more serious than I am right now." And just having that image of everyone at Rose Hall and the bands, it was really something to strive for, and it was something that we all worked for. And luckily we got the opportunity to go.

0:59:57 PN: And growing up with my mom as my band director... I grew up as a French horn player, and I was mainly playing classical music. And then she had a jazz band at the time and she wanted a bass player. So she was like, "Here's a bass. I want you to learn how to play this." So I started...

[chuckle]

1:00:14 PN: And I just kept going and kept going. And where was I going with that? But basically, what I'm trying to say is that she really introduced me to a lot of the world of jazz. She took me to Jazz at Lincoln Center concerts from as young as eight years old. I used to fall asleep, I didn't know what was happening. And then I realized what it was. But from that and learning what it was at a young age, all these other... The older alumnus, they didn't know what it was. But they came and met other people there. But me in the world of social media, and technology, and the internet, I knew what it was from a young age. So I had something to strive for. And something like that for an organization of kids that are really trying to be better musicians and have growth and be a great band, and a competition like Essentially Ellington gives us something to strive for, and to grow and move towards. And I'll never forget everything that I learned getting there, and I'll definitely never forget all the experiences I had in New York at the festival, so...

1:01:23 WM: Okay. All right, thank you Phil. We heard from everybody. It's fantastic. I don't know what kind of time we have left, Adam, but normally we open it up. Let's open it up, and we can see what people wanna talk about or discuss?

1:01:44 AM: Yeah. Let's do it. We can take about 10 or 15 minutes worth. So let's get started. For anybody who hasn't joined us previously, if you would like... If you have a question you'd like to ask just click on participants tab and then click the raise hand button, and we'll try and get to as many of you as we can. This first question actually is coming from this year's winner of the

Composition and Arranging Contest, he's here, Leo Steinriede. I'll go ahead and unmute you Leo, and go ahead whenever you're ready.

1:02:14 Leo Steinriede: Hi. So my experience with Essentially Ellington actually started last week when I had my lesson with Ted Nash which was really great. And I was here before, a couple weeks ago, Mr. Marsalis, when I asked you about the meaning of the word jazz, and you told me to listen to the Jelly Roll recordings. So I did a [1:02:38] ____ composition. And so I'm hearing, he's putting in these passing chords, and I was just thinking like, "Man, it really could be possible that he did invent jazz." Like, did he do it? And that's my question is...

1:03:14 CH: He was a personal guy. He was like... Yeah. [chuckle]

1:03:15 LS: Yeah. Did he do it?

1:03:23 CH: Everybody... He liked Latin music.

[laughter]

1:03:24 WM: Everybody creates their own narrative, everybody... We always say you have to tend to your own legend. He's a fantastic musician. He did many great things. But jazz is such a broad art form, it's not created by any one person. He's the first great intellectual and composer, but I applaud him saying he created it. That's how we invented storytelling. People came back from hunts a long time ago when they went back to the cave, and, "I killed 50 of them." It's just...

[laughter]

1:03:56 WM: I don't know if somebody else wants to comment on it, but I don't know. And I don't... It's good, you gotta separate fact from fiction, but don't let that stand in the way of learning all the piano he's played...

1:04:10 LS: It's really incredible to hear how, you told me about the Maple Leaf Rag and how he does it different, so...

1:04:16 WM: You noticed that? Those three versions, yeah.

1:04:19 LS: It was really great, so thank you for telling me about that. That's my US History final.

1:04:25 WM: There you go. Don't forget about what Sarah said when she was talking about learning music from memory and how she understood about music not being on a page. Learning that stuff off the record. Get those three versions together and you'll be... You're gonna know a lot of harmony when you finish that.

1:04:40 LS: Alright, thank you.

1:04:42 WM: Alright, look, thanks man. Great composition.

1:04:45 JS: Yes, yes.

1:04:46 WM: You're serious. You understand something, son.

1:04:50 AM: Alright, next question's coming from Sean McDonald. Sean, go ahead.

1:04:54 Sean McDonald: Where you at, professor?

1:04:57 WM: What are you talking about? I hear you.

[laughter]

1:05:00 SM: I've been following y'all, and thankful to join these conversations for the last couple of months or so. Great topics, everything from quantum mechanics to listening to how you're making sure this stuff still breathes through the next couple of generations. And, first thing I'd ask you is, do they call you Uncle Wynton?

1:05:22 WM: [laughter] Man, don't start them with that. Don't give them any... They'll get so disrespectful.

1:05:27 CH: I do.

[laughter]

1:05:31 CH: I call him Papa Wynton. Papa Wynton.

1:05:35 WM: Don't give them ammunition, they're so disrespectful already. Don't start that. Tatum is imitating me all the time, people coming to me, "Man you oughta see Tatum's imitation of you."

1:05:48 SM: You gave me pointers, man, what am I supposed to do?

1:05:51 WM: [laughter] No, man, no, I love them. You don't have to do all that to me.

1:05:55 BL: It's out of love, it's out of love.

1:06:00 SM: So the second thing I wanted to share with you is that, I spent my twenties in New Orleans, I used to go over on Muhalley in my red high tops and listen to your dad play that cello all the time. And you were talking about the things that New Orleans taught you and how hard it was, and I just wanted to send a little different message about New Orleans. That Mark Twain said, "The cure for bigotry and ignorance is to travel." And one of the things that New Orleans granted me, because I spent most of my time tending bar on Bourbon Street, is that there are a couple of ways...

Skain's Domain - Episode 11

1:06:34 WM: Oh, wait a second, you're identifying yourself now, now I'm understanding you, okay.

[laughter]

1:06:42 WM: I got a much better understanding, let me get centered so I can hear you.

1:06:46 SM: Yeah, you're right, partner. [laughter]

1:06:50 WM: Okay.

1:06:51 SM: And there are a couple of ways to see the world. The first way is to just get your ass up out of the chair and go lap the planet a couple of times. Another way you can see the world is to stand still some place where the entire world is coming to catch their breath and get a couple of days off, and I was thankful enough to be able to have at least a passing conversation with, as near as I can figure, quarter million people, maybe half a million people from all over the world. And they definitely took a crowbar to my narrow New Jersey mind and sent me back home enlightened.

1:07:23 WM: Right, that's... There ain't nothing to say but to co-sign that.

1:07:28 SM: Yeah, and then...

1:07:28 WM: And I think that's part of what everybody was saying tonight, they come from Seattle or they come from different places, they come to New York and they see people... But yeah, the way you twisted it, you showed us both ways of it. I'm with you.

1:07:40 SM: And there's one one thing I wanted to make sure that you knew. We called it off this year because of COVID. I'm in Morris County, in New Jersey, about 20 miles from you. For the last 30 years, we've been doing a crawfish boil, a turkey fry, an eight-piece funk band, a mess of beans and some gumbo in my buddies backyard out by the lake. I'll reach out to you when we put it back on the calendar, looking forward to seeing you and yours for a plate, man.

1:08:05 WM: Hey, me and Carlos are gonna come out there. Carlos, you here?

1:08:07 CH: What's up?

1:08:10 SM: If y'all are local, drive on out, we'd love to have you.

1:08:13 WM: Hey I'm in West Park, I'm near you baby, I'm near you. Okay, now we're not joking, we're coming out there.

1:08:17 SM: Looking forward to it.

1:08:18 WM: I can't drive, I've gotta come with Carlos.

1:08:21 CH: I'll drive.

1:08:22 SM: And if y'all have too much fun I'll drive you back.

[laughter]

1:08:29 WM: Thanks for calling, man, thank you.

1:08:32 SM: I'll hand the mic back to you, just wanted to say thank you and a pleasure talking with you, sir.

1:08:36 WM: Hey, love, Ba.

1:08:42 AM: Alright, thanks Sean. Let's take another one. This next question is coming from Sonalii Wardlaw. Sonalii, go ahead.

1:08:51 Sonalii Wardlaw: Just wanted to say this was a really... Another great one. Listening to all the experiences, it takes me back to when I was in high school, and we didn't have anything remotely close to Essentially Ellington. If you wanted to play jazz, we had solo ensembles where we would go to... We were in San Francisco at the time, go to a college and we would play in front of music professors, and a lot of them were really into classical music. So, for me, it was difficult when my teacher told me, "Oh, the person that's gonna judge you..." I was gonna play Naima on the flute. My music teacher told me, "Well, I don't want you to get disappointed because the professor that's gonna judge you, he hates jazz."

1:09:44 SW: So it was... Going into that knowing, okay, well I knew I wasn't gonna medal or anything, but it was something that I knew that I had to do, I just had to play it anyway, and I remember after playing that last note, the room was silent, and he stood up and he clapped. And he said, "You know, I gotta tell you, I don't like jazz. But that was one of the best solos that I've heard today." And that was really encouraging, but at the same time, it was disappointing because not being able to have a forum for students like myself that really liked jazz, so what you guys are doing is excellent. What are you gonna do as far as furthering this in the future, for those students that say... That don't get the opportunity to come to the Essential Ellington or be exposed to that?

1:10:42 WM: Well, I leave it to them because at a certain point, I'm not gonna be doing it and they'll be... Sarah will be doing it, and Bre, and Tatum and Erica, and Brandon. And they'll be doing it. I love them, they have a lot of leadership skills, they're gonna take it in directions I could never imagine and make it be more than it is. So the best thing for me to do is figure out how to start to get out of the way of it and let their ideas start to dominate, let them have a good transition to become more than what I could ever think that it could be. And Todd Stoll, we know we're getting up there.

[chuckle]

1:11:20 WM: Believe me, and I'm so proud and happy with them when they're in positions of leadership, you can't tell cause they're just talking, but they're always fantastic, in so many different ways so, they're gonna determine that.

1:11:36 SW: Yeah, 'cause it's nice just to continue to hear that enthusiasm, from their very first time there, and to now, it's almost like it's due for them every year, and it's just really encouraging to hear that because jazz has always been such an important part of my life, but, I'm grateful that I had parents that exposed me to that and I wanna see more young people being exposed to that as well.

1:12:06 WM: Well I'll let... Sarah is teaching all the time, maybe she could just add a little something about just the young people she teaches.

1:12:16 SM: Sure, Yeah, hi, Sonalii.

1:12:19 SW: Hi Sarah.

1:12:20 SM: I definitely agree that having opportunities for people who can't make it out to New York is really important, and something that I've seen from, I think when I was probably a senior in high school, which has grown exponentially, is the amount of regional festivals that organizations are doing, local jazz non-profits, are doing around the country, and by giving them a chance to sort of like recreate a mini Essentially Ellington, I actually had the pleasure to help out with two of them last year, the one in Vegas with jazz outreach initiative, and just Houston's down in Houston, and being a part of both of those was really echoing what my experience was at the festival, and it was really special to have that opportunity for jazz bands that maybe can't afford going out to it, or maybe haven't made it into the top yet, so I think right now, that's one of the things that we're seeing coming across in the nation a lot.

1:13:17 SW: Excellent, that's good to hear, but just really, I wanna just thank you guys because it's a wonderful festival, and to be able to see it, and hear it, and listen to the great musicians that are up and coming on the horizon and continuing on is a wonderful thing.

1:13:37 WM: Thank you very much.

1:13:42 AM: Thanks Sonalii. Alright, this last question tonight is coming from Steven Oquendo.

[laughter]

1:13:46 AM: Steven, can you hear us?

[chuckle]

1:13:55 AM: Let's see if... Yeah, Steven you there?

1:13:58 Steven Oquendo: Yes, can you hear me now.

1:14:00 CH: Yeah. [chuckle]

1:14:00 SO: What's up y'all?

1:14:02 WM: What's up Steve?

[laughter]

1:14:04 SO: Love you guys. So my question is, first of all, I gotta thank you guys for everything you've done for me, Wynton, you know, you were my inspiration, Carlos my boy, you know I'm...

1:14:14 CH: Yeah man it's what we do.

[laughter]

1:14:15 SO: Yeah I know, you keep mentioning that, but...

1:14:20 CH: It was you bro.

1:14:21 WM: It was Echoes of Harlem that he played too...

1:14:24 SO: Echoes of Harlem.

[laughter]

1:14:25 CH: You just confirmed it yeah.

1:14:28 SO: But I wanted to ask, when are we gonna start seeing some Afro-Cuban music in the repertoire of Essentially Ellington, because there's so much cross pollination. So much influence within the Latin movement and the jazz movement, we had Doc Cheatham play with Machito's orchestra, you had Duke Ellington playing Afro-Cuban songs by Juan Tizol, so when are we gonna start seeing some of that?

1:14:52 WM: We need it, we have a band from Cuba this year actually they played, what did they play, Yo Soy Guajira, what was it?

1:15:00 CH: Yo Soy Guajiro, that's a Benny Moré song.

1:15:01 SO: Okay.

1:15:02 WM: Yo Soy Guajiro.

1:15:03 CH: Yeah.

1:15:03 WM: They played so well on that tape, we said it must have been some professionals playing.

[chuckle]

1:15:07 CH: Yeah. That's scary. Yeah.

1:15:08 WM: So I said that to Carlos, I said, "I'm not qualified to judge it." And yeah, it's important for us to start to round the repertoire, and get so many great, great caboose, we wanna do it, I'm trying to tell Carlos, take over something and make something happen, because we need to round out the Americanness of our program and...

1:15:30 CH: Yeah, man.

1:15:30 WM: Next year we're gonna see some of it, we could do what we wanna do. And you're hearing it right now.

1:15:36 CH: You know we've got some good connections with Ray Santos, and all of them, José Marrero, let's get some of these charts, man.

1:15:42 WM: Yeah but, I love Ray Santos' music, and José, and Chico O'Farrill, I mean all, there's so many great musicians, we're gonna do it.

1:15:49 SO: Alright, good. Thank you.

1:15:50 WM: We're gonna do it. Hey, tell Carlos that's his job. Make it happen Carlito, come on man.

[laughter]

1:15:57 WM: Come on.

1:15:58 CH: It's coming, it's out there.

1:16:00 WM: Let's...

1:16:01 CH: Yeah, it's coming.

1:16:02 WM: Yeah, we need to do it.

1:16:03 CH: Yeah, we've been talking about that for a while guys, Wynton and I talk about this frequently, so it's just a matter of setting it up but, we've been talking about it.

1:16:11 WM: Yeah, we need to do it. It's better for our students, it's better for us to know, cause a lot of times we look at charts and it just says Latin, and we don't know what groove we're playing, we're not understanding the music. For years Carlos and I will be arguing, I'd be telling him something, he'd be saying, "Man, you just saying this 'cause you don't know nothing about the music." So you know, over the years, I've had a good education, just being around him, even though he's younger than me and my little brother, but he was always... And he... We're gonna do what we need to do 'cause this is a very important part of our tradition. And Jelly Roll talked about that. It's coming.

1:16:47 SO: Yeah I will.

1:16:49 AM: Alright, thanks everybody. Thanks for spending this time with us tonight, we gotta end it there. Now more than ever, arts education is truly essential, and we couldn't be more proud to be following in the footsteps of Duke Ellington and the excellence, integrity, integration, and artistic genius that he represented. Please join us throughout the week for an unprecedented series of events, celebrating the next generation of jazz musicians as they take on the music of Duke Ellington, these students have worked incredibly hard to be a part of it, and what they've achieved already is incredible. Head over to jazz.org/EE25 for the full schedule. To highlight a couple of things for the week, tomorrow at 2:00 PM, Eastern, we're premiering a video called 25 years, 25 solos that will showcase the exceptional soloists who have earned the outstanding soloist award of the past 25 years. Then at 9:00 PM, Eastern, tomorrow, we're broadcasting newly recorded performances from the homes of EE alumni, modeled after Jazz at Lincoln Center's 2020 virtual gala. So a huge thanks to Erica von Kleist, Philip Norris, Bre DeNure, Tatum Greenblatt, Jumaane Smith, Brandon Lee, Patrick Bartley, Sarah Milligan, and Carlos Henriquez, and, Wynton, I'll pass it back to you for any closing remarks.

1:18:08 WM: I just wanna thank you all for tuning in, I wanna thank all of my guests, I just love them so much and they are so fantastic, as people and as musicians, I hope that you enjoy what they were talking about tonight and you got a feeling for the depth of our young people in the continuation of the ideas that are so basic to us being ourselves, their level of achievement, accomplishment, the acuity of their observations speak for themselves. Till we meet again, thank you so much.