

Music at MIT Oral History Project

Herb Pomeroy

Interviewed

by

Forrest Larson

April 26, 2000

Interview no. 3

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Lewis Music Library**

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Transcript Proof Reader: Lois Beattie, Jennifer Peterson
Transcript Editor: Forrest Larson

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Note on timing notations:

Recording of this interview can be found either as one continuous file or as split up over two audio CDs. Timings are designated in chapter headings in both formats, with the timing on the full file preceding the timing on the CD version.

Contributors

Herb Pomeroy (1930-2007) was the founding director of MIT Concert and Festival Jazz Bands (1963-1985). He was a noted band leader, trumpeter, composer, arranger and music educator, teaching at the Berklee College of Music from 1955-1995. In his early career he played with the Lionel Hampton Band and Charlie Parker. The Herb Pomeroy Orchestra was an integral part of the New England jazz scene. His later years were devoted to solo and small ensemble performances. Three interviews: 12/14/1999, 4/5/2000, 4/26/2000

Forrest Larson, Library Assistant at the Lewis Music Library, has attended training workshops in oral history methodology and practice at Simmons College and by the Society of American Archivists, and is a member of the Oral History Association. He is also an active composer and violist.

Interview conducted by Forrest Larson on April 26, 2000, in the MIT Lewis Music Library. Duration of the audio recording is 2:05:48. Third of three interviews. First interview: December 14, 1999; second interview: April 5, 2000.

Music at MIT Oral History Project

The Lewis Music Library's *Music at MIT Oral History Project* was established in 1999 to document the history of music at MIT. For over 100 years, music has been a vibrant part of the culture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This history covers a wide variety of genres, including orchestral, chamber, and choral musical groups, as well as jazz, musical theater, popular and world music. Establishment of a formal music program in 1947 met the growing needs for professional leadership in many of the performing groups. Shortly thereafter, an academic course curriculum within the Division of Humanities was created. Over the years, the music faculty and alumni have included many distinguished performers, composers and scholars.

Through in-depth recorded audio interviews with current and retired MIT music faculty, staff, former students, and visiting artists, the Music at MIT Oral History Project is preserving this valuable legacy for the historical record. These individuals provide a wealth of information about MIT. Furthermore, their professional lives and activities are often historically important to the world at large. Audio recordings of all interviews are available in the MIT Lewis Music Library.

1. Prof. Klaus Liepmann and the establishment of jazz performance in the MIT Music Section (00:00–CD1 00:00)

FORREST LARSON: This is the third interview with Herb Pomeroy. It's April 26th, 2000, and Herb, I want to thank you very much for coming once again. I'm Forrest Larson, and we're in the MIT [Lewis] Music Library.

HERB POMEROY: My pleasure to be here again, Forrest.

FL: So picking up where we left off at the last interview, talking about jazz at MIT and your twenty-two years here, Klaus Liepmann, the Director of Music and the first Professor of Music at MIT [1948–1987], was very supportive of your work, and it seems like you had a good relationship with him. Can you just tell me your impressions of Klaus in general, and anything like that?

HP: Sure. Before I do that, I was not aware that he was the first music professor at MIT. That is enlightening to me. I had no idea. For some reason I just sort of assumed there had been a train there that preceded him. My memory is that we spoke about his calling me, did we not?

FL: That's right.

HP: So we don't need to go into that. He seemed like a fellow who was very strongly involved in the kind of music that he liked and was good at choral music and classical music. And yet, he seemed to have the flexibility—or the foresight or the breadth to his thinking—that he realized that that was not the only show in town, so to speak. Which impressed me, because my contact, which had not been very large, but to whatever degree I had contact with classically-oriented musicians in the past—at that point, because we're talking 1963—my adult professional years leading up to my age thirty-three—usually had been pretty narrow, somewhat defensive about the presence of jazz music in their—whether it be high school, college level, conservatory level—the presence of jazz music, or the possibility of jazz music, becoming involved in the department that someone like a Klaus Liepmann was the director of. We usually—we as jazz musicians usually had very little good fortune with these people. At best, it would be—we would be allowed in the door, so as not, maybe on their part, not to get some grief from people who thought jazz should be involved.

Klaus, in my dealings with him—and I cannot speak totally broadly because we did not have a lot of dealings—did not play that role, of the classical person who was trying to protect classical music from the infiltration of this evil nightclub dope scene music called jazz. He seemed to be honestly open to the idea that, well, this has a place in general—and a place here at MIT. So I was comfortable with him from the start. I believe I read him as being this very much, as far as his own direction—not to say that he was narrow, but just very focused on the direction of the music that he was in, but yet, as a director, the head of a department, willing to have new things come in.

I know that at major conservatories, major music schools—Eastman, Juilliard, Manhattan, New England Conservatory—anyone who came into one of those schools to teach jazz, or who was interested in jazz as a student, in the period of time we're

talking about—and we’re talking about the early sixties—ran into difficulties much more so than we did here. To have the support of the head of the department, and his actually allowing the band to have a budget and to see that we had facilities to rehearse in and that I was salaried, and then a second request for a second bandleader to be salaried, was very unlike the norm for that period. So this—we never spent much time socially together. So this professional contact, that was my reading of him as a professional.

He didn’t understand what we were doing, I don’t think, and I hope I’m not being unfair to him. I feel that he just, he had some basic understanding that we were doing it, the students and I were doing it at a quality level that deserved to be allowed to continue. Whether people such as a John Corley [conductor of MIT Concert Band] would have spoken to him on my behalf: “Yes, Herb is a valid educator and musician in that field”; whether he sought out others’ opinions, or he just could read the situation—but at no point did he put any kind of a roadblock in what we wanted to do. And when I say we, meaning the administrative body of students and myself. Whenever we asked for something—and we always did it in what we felt was reason and good taste—he always came through for us.

I did not come to know him as a person beyond what I’m saying here because I don’t believe we ever worked together socially. Not for any reason—“We’re not going to get together,” or anything like that; our lives were very diverse in the directions that they were going. But as I think I mentioned before in one my interviews, he did attend, I can’t say every concert we gave in Kresge, but I would say he attended the majority, certainly more than fifty percent of them. And did not just make a sort of obligatory appearance and leave at intermission, but at the end of the concert would come up on the stage and speak to some of the members of the band and myself about what he felt about what we were doing, always in a positive way. I never got anything negative from Klaus.

So, I find it unusual, a man as focused in his area of music. I don’t think that I, if I were the head of a department, a jazz department, and somebody came in who was a very valid educator/musician in the rock field, for instance, would have been, offered with open arms, the way he did to us in the jazz field. I think I would have been defensive. I don’t like rock music, and you can put that in the interview. It’s just not my cup of tea. And because I didn’t like it, I would not want it encroaching upon what I had set up in a jazz sense.

Whereas Klaus, I can’t say he didn’t like jazz, but I don’t know that he really looked fondly upon it, understood it very well—he did not—maybe he was sure enough in himself, in what he did, that he could allow something else that he didn’t know, and wasn’t that keen on, to come in and be a part of his department. But if I were riding herd on the department, and some of the contemporary areas of popular music wanted to—which, we were. Jazz, in the early sixties, we were contemporary popular music. Maybe now, at age seventy, I would, I am more locked into my ways than I would have been. Klaus certainly was not seventy. I would say Klaus must have been maybe in his early fifties or something like that when we first—and I’m not sure of that, but whatever. It really doesn’t matter. A decade or two apart does not make the spots on the leopard that we’re talking about here. [laughs]

So, he was open! I don't think anybody had a gun to his head and said, "Klaus Liepmann, it's about time you allowed jazz into this institute." I don't think that was the case at all. And I can't even think of who the person would be; there were no Jay Keyzers [Editor's note: Samuel Jay Keyser (b. 1935, trombonist; MIT Professor Emeritus of Linguistics) succeeded Roy Lamson (1908–1986, clarinetist; MIT Professor Emeritus of Literature) as leader of Roy's MIT jazz group] here at that point. And I don't think people like Roy [Lamson], or Warren [Rohsenow, 1921–2011; MIT Professor of Metallurgy, 1946–1985], or those people, you know, were that involved in it. To the best of my knowledge, it was something that came from the students wanting professional direction, and him not wanting them to exist, collectively, without professional direction, and he went for it.

FL: Wow! Wow.

HP: And I think this is unusual, Forrest, I really do!

FL: Mm-hm. It certainly strikes me as that way.

HP And I think it's a tribute to the Institute, how the Institute opens its arms to so many different areas of—I don't know about the technical expertise, scientifically. But when I was the director here, I was under the impression, and I had been told by students in the band, that MIT offered more variety of sports at the varsity level than any college in the country. They did not have a football team then, you know; they weren't going that route. But as far as lesser-known team sports, it had the largest number, which again, bespeaks this openness. And then I think I did mention before how the Dean, Richard Douglas [1922–2005, MIT Professor Emeritus of History and former Chair of the Dept. of Humanities], told me, when I started to see these fine young musicians coming in, how the Institute was looking for rounded people, not just straight-A, scientific types. So, I think that's all. Hopefully, it's just exactly like that or better now, but certainly back then it seemed to be that way. Boy, that took a lot of time, didn't it?

FL: [laughs]

HP: I get long; my wife says, "Shut up, will ya!"

FL: [laughs]

2. Mark Harvey (09:16–CD1 09:16)

FL: So I wanted to ask you about Mark Harvey [b. 1946], a trumpet player, composer, and he teaches jazz history and composition here at MIT [Lecturer in Music]. Tell me when you first met him and some of your professional work with him.

HP: Sure. I guess it would have been in the seventies when I first met Mark, and I believe he was very much involved in a group called the Jazz Coalition [Jazz Coalition, Inc., founded by Mark Harvey in 1970] here in Boston. Whether he had actually formed his own orchestra, Aardvark [Jazz Orchestra], at that point, I have a feeling he had. For whatever reasons, Mark's professional jazz career and mine were following separate paths, and we did not have a lot of contact. I can remember doing a couple

of concerts with my band, probably for the Jazz Coalition that he organized. I think we played a couple concerts with the MIT band in a couple of different churches here in town. These memories are vague. My initial knowing about Mark was word of mouth, of people telling me that here is a very valid person, putting a great deal of energy into producing jazz events and to working with his own orchestra and writing music. But we really have not—interestingly, have not spent much time at all. I've got to put my dates in order here.

Mark married my wife and me; he was the minister at our wedding: my choice and soon my wife, with my telling her who Mark was, and then meeting Mark for some of the meetings before, to talk over why we were getting married and things like that with Mark. [Ed. Note: Mark Harvey is an ordained United Methodist minister.]He did, in fact, marry—it'll be nine years this coming June, in Rockport. And we have been somewhat closer since then because there is the tie that here is the man that brought my wife and me together in marriage. But [sighs] seeing that we have done a lot of the same things: we've been Boston-based, we've taught at MIT, we are trumpet players, we have led bands in Boston over decades—our paths have crossed really very little. I have gone to probably no more than two or three of Mark's concerts when they were at the Emmanuel [Episcopal] Church, [Boston], but I've never been to one here at—I was going to say at Berklee—at MIT.

But the reason for this had nothing to do with, I choose not to go and hear this man's band or this man's music. It has to do that when you become an active professional in this city, you become one of the least supporting—in the sense of appearing at other people's venues. With my big band when it existed, we always used to moan and groan to each other within the band about how few of the Boston musicians of our kind of music and our general age we wouldn't see in the audience. And it was not, at least in most cases, anything to do with jealousy or anything like that. It had to do with, when we were playing, they were playing too.

FL: Yeah.

HP: And Mark would often work, after a Sunday night concert at Emmanuel Church, and I would be working somewhere. Or, I would be at MIT for twenty-two years, Sunday nights, from seven to ten! [laughs] We had a mutual—a dear friend, for both of us. I don't know if you know the name Al Kershaw, Alvin Kershaw [b. 1919, d. 2002; Rector of Emmanuel Church, 1962–1989]? He was the minister at the Emmanuel Episcopal Church. He was the—

FL: That's right.

HP: —the man—they didn't call him the Jazz Priest... The Jazz something.

FL: The Jazz Arts Ministry.

HP: Yes, right. And Mark and he were involved in that. This is the man who was, years ago—we're talking back in the late fifties, early sixties—there was a TV [game] show called *The \$64,000 Question*. And at this time, I think, Al Kershaw's parish was down in New Orleans or very close to New Orleans. And he came to know many of the New Orleans, the older New Orleans musicians. And he loved music. And I mean, I diverged from Mark Harvey, but this man, Al Kershaw, is a part of Mark's

and my relationship—maybe more than any one other person, a focal point between the two of us. And he was on this television program, as sort of the jazz minister, that sort of thing. I forget what they called him. And he got up to the point of having answered questions about jazz, to the point of \$32,000. “Do you want to take the thirty-two thousand and go home, or do you want to go for the sixty-four?” Do you remember the show, *The \$64,000 Question?*

FL: Yeah.

HP: And he said, “No, I’ll go for it.” And the question was unbelievably simple question—we’re at the top of the game, here. It was, “What was the tenor player’s name who was known as ‘Prez’?” And in the moment of the heat of battle here, he said, “Lester Brown.” Immediately corrected himself to Lester Young and they accepted. But in that split second, he said he was so scared, he couldn’t have said own name! [laughs] And he said Lester Brown instead of Lester Young! And then, I came to know Al many ways: personally, religiously, musically. He was a dear man, and I know Mark felt this way.

The reason I’m talking about Al Kershaw—it relates to Mark Harvey and me somehow. When I would perform here at MIT, with the MIT Festival Jazz Band, after the first number, the first chance the audience had to applaud, I would hear this voice in the audience, standing out over all other voices in this depth of what a great preacher’s voice would be: “Ray!” [laughs] And I would know that Al Kershaw was in the house! And I know Mark Harvey has experienced the same thing. He has since retired. We played together, Mark and I. We were involved with playing at a sort of retirement musical concert at the Emmanuel Episcopal Church for Al.

So, I kind of got away from Mark. It’s amazing, as I’ve already said, that we’re—well, he’s younger than I am, but he’s, you know, we’re essentially that same—he’s probably a smaller generation younger than me—that our paths have been so parallel and yet we have not spent that much time together. And we always bemoan this when we see each other: “Why don’t we spend some time together? You know, there are so many common points in our lives!” So I haven’t helped you much there. I must say that for whatever area that he has been working here, I know his integrity as a man, and I know his integrity toward music. And he undoubtedly has made some very strong contributions. Anywhere he would go, he would do that. I admire anybody in this day and age who doesn’t own an automobile, for instance.

FL: Yeah.

HP: Maybe he does right now, but he didn’t.

FL: As far as I know—

HP: But when my wife and I asked him if he would be a minister for our wedding, he said, “Yeah, but—” And I said, “I’m asking you as a friend, but I’m asking you professionally, too.” He said, “All right, I understand that.” And he said, whatever the fee was, which was, I don’t know, unbelievably small. He said, “I will need to rent a car.” And I said, “I’ll take care of that!” [laughs] I loved it! I joke sometimes with my wife about that. He and his wife came to the wedding, and he performed the

service. So, not as informative, excuse me, Forrest, maybe as you're looking for, but the problem is we've not had that many times together.

FL: And Mark mentioned that you have a connection with the liturgical jazz scene. He mentioned it in that way.

HP: Yes. I want to say '67, and we did one of the concerts at Emmanuel Church. There was a fellow named Ed Summerlin [1928–2006], a tenor saxophone player, who wrote a jazz mass for four horns and bass and drums—a six piece group. And we performed it around New England. He performed this all over the country, but he and I had known each other. He was a student, I think, back in the fifties here in Boston somewhere, BU [Boston University], or someplace. So we knew each other. So he, when he came to the New England area, asked me if I would get the group together to play this. And so we did, and including a performance at the Emmanuel Church. I don't think we did this more than five or six times, actually. And then, I have conducted the Ellington Sacred Concerts a few times, in recent years. Since I had my own band—I disbanded my own band in '93, and the fellow who sort of, his band was the band that carried the torch that we carried for a long time, a fellow named Kenny Hadley [b. 1954, drummer], has a big band [Kenny Hadley's Big Band]. And we have, I guess three times? My memory is not clear. At least three times we have performed the Ellington Sacred Concerts [music composed by Duke Ellington: 1965, Concert of Sacred Music; 1968, Second Sacred Concert; 1973, Third Sacred Concert] with—

FL: Did you do those with a choir?

HP: Yes, with a choir, yeah.

FL: What was the choir?

HP: The first choir, first time we did it—two of the performances were at Emmanuel Church, as a matter of fact—the first time we did it, the choir was a combination of Newton High School North, high school age students, and then a professional—not professional—an adult black choir, smaller in numbers than the high school kids. We had two choirs on the stage, and Kenny Hadley's band, and singers, and a tap dancer, because there was a role for tap dancer. Then another time we did it, there was a choir from a church in Bedford, a very good choir. So every time we performed it, it was with the total thing: a choir, solo vocalists, tap dancer, and jazz band. To the best of my memory, those two things are the only two that I have been involved—I believe they are—this sixties thing that I did, and more recently the Ellington Sacred Concerts.

3. Jamshied Sharifi, MIT Jazz Ensemble's second director (0:18:55–CD1 0:18:55)

FL: Wow! Now, last time we talked a little bit about Jamshied Sharifi [MIT class of 1983; second director of MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble, 1985–1982], who was a student of yours—

HP: Yes.

FL: —when you were here at MIT, and the Festival Jazz Ensemble, and then he worked with you at the Berklee College of Music.

HP: Yes.

FL: Is there anything more you just want to say about him as a musician, composer?

HP: Yeah, I could talk a lot about Jamshied. One of the more special—in the sense of talented, had the energy, that certain little spark to project—not little spark, large spark—to project. To have energy is one thing, and to have talent is one thing, but to put those things together and then still have left the energy to—push is the wrong word; it suggests over-aggressiveness—to push forward with his projects and make something of them! Loads of people with talent, loads of people with energy, sometimes only one of the things, and then they still don't have the—even though they have energy, they don't have that spark to push what they have to offer to the world.

He had great talent, great energy, and was just—I'll use the word aggressive—just aggressive enough so that he did not offend anybody, to the best of my knowledge, in my contact with him, in saying, “Here I am. I have something to offer.” A lot of us—I'm almost saying myself included—have something to offer and don't have that thing, pass over that step that you need to get out to the world. My contact with him was two years as pianist to the band here at MIT, where he was a solo pianist and wrote a lot of music for us. Then, I don't know whether it took him two years, or just how long it took him to graduate from Berklee, where he played piano in my band, which was the best band, and wrote for that band. While he was writing for that band, he continued to write for the MIT band. And he was growing as a writer and knew most of the musicians. There's no better way to write for a band than to—well, you have to have talent, but to know the players.

And then, I don't know if I mentioned how he—we went to Notre [Dame]—well first, while he was still here, he wrote—he gave a concert in Kresge for his dissertation, or whatever we would call it. And he organized and rehearsed the whole thing, and it wasn't just a jazz—it was a jazz band and classical pieces and just a monumental piece of work! There was, included in that, a forty-five minute piece for members, some members of the jazz band and some string players. You might call it a small chamber orchestra, if my memory is right, with jazz, and some rock feeling to it, and some classical. It was a very nice bringing together of music—a glorious piece! I remember attending the concert.

FL: Do you remember what the piece was called? [Ed. note: “Suite, a Jazz Composition.” (B.S. thesis, MIT, 1983)]

HP: No, I don't.

FL: I'll have to look and see if we've got a recording of it here.

HP: He then, at my request, chopped it down to twenty-five minutes of music. And we did perform it, the chopped-down version, with just the jazz band, at a concert here, and that would have been in, oh, I guess early eighties. So there might be a program lying around of a concert where he was a band member—and he was only a band member for two years. This had to be his senior year, his second year with the band.

So he cut it down in length and expanded the jazz band scoring so it was pretty complete without the strings and whatever more classically-oriented instruments that were involved. And we played this piece at his—at our final concert, the spring concert of his senior year here, at our spring concert, in addition to his own concert where he did the whole forty-five minute piece.

But we played it as an entire piece at the Notre Dame [Collegiate] Jazz Festival, the twenty-five minute version, and I don't think there's been ever anything played at that collegiate—at least up to my being there, and I was there for nineteen out of twenty years with our band. It was so much more than your typical big band piece of music. And the judges in particular, and the leaders of the other bands and many of the musicians in the other bands just—they were very taken by this piece of music and wanted to talk to me about it and talk to Jamshied. And it was very unique for that sort of slam-bang, big band, Big Ten, Texas, big is good. It was a compositional twenty-five minute piece. It wasn't a tune that somebody wrote an arrangement of. It wasn't a jazz tune, you know, a twelve-bar blues, or something like that. It was a real composition.

And naturally, he won the award [Outstanding Jazz Pianist]. They gave an award each year for the best student composition played by a band there, and he won that hands down. Then when he went to Berklee he took the courses with me, and played in my best band at Berklee and contributed—the most creative writing that was presented to my band in the couple of years at Berklee that he was there was his writing. He had developed a voice, very clearly unique, distinctive voice. For all of these reasons, as I saw my time to leave here, after twenty years, coming, there seemed to be nobody under the sun who would be more appropriate to take over, who understood me and would continue my principles of just general musicianship, but bring the life of someone, whatever he was, twenty-five, or more. Let's see, I retired at fifty-five. He had to be—I don't think he was quite thirty—late twenties, who understood contemporary music much more than I did, who was a contemporary player, who understood, as much as I'm still not into it, the electronics of music, who understood jazz, who could play all these idioms! He just seemed to be the guy who would continue what I had been striving to do for twenty-two years, but also add his own layer on top of this.

Which he did! Because I can remember coming—I used to come to the, once he took over I came to any fall or spring concert that I wasn't tied up doing something else and would just be thrilled by what he was doing musically with the band. I was so disappointed when he left; however I knew, when I sort of said to him and the powers that be here, that this is the man I'd like to take my place, I figured it would be a five to eight year thing at best, and I don't think it did last any longer than that. I don't think it maybe got to eight years, that he did it. I just don't remember how many years. I turned it over to him in '85, and whether by '91 or '92 he was gone and Jim O'Dell took over—that, I don't remember which.

But there were a lot of people in Boston with more experience of leading a jazz band. Two or three of my cohorts at Berklee: John LaPorta [1920–2004, clarinetist, saxophonist], Greg Hopkins [b. 1946; trumpeter, composer, bandleader]—more established professional big band leaders, than Jamshied. They'd had more

experience. But as far as the whole picture, of him knowing the mechanics of how MIT worked, knowing the mechanics of the band—actually knowing a lot of members of the band—having studied with me at Berklee, arranging courses, he just seemed like—if he had said he didn't want to do it, I would have been very disappointed. I don't think I would have reconsidered my plan to retire, but I would have been very disappointed; he was so much the right man to do it.

And to the best of my knowledge he's been doing very well in New York. Somebody told me the other day they heard that he moved to L.A., but I know when he moved to New York he got very involved. He did a lot of recording with other people because he played the synthesizer, and he could play in a very contemporary way—much more a contemporary musician than I was. By the time left here in '85, I was still a mainstream—as I remain—jazz musician, coming out of the forties, fifties, and sixties. Whereas he was way—he was decades beyond that, and I imagine probably has continued to develop. And a brilliant guy, too! And a lovely man! A very, very special guy.

FL: Wow.

HP: A very funny thing, and you can leave it on the tape if you want, it doesn't bother me at all. He married a Japanese girl who was maybe a year or two behind him at Berklee, very sweet, very—as most of them. I've had more contact with Japanese people than any other nationality in my teaching at Berklee. They were the largest, in number, group of people, and very talented. His wife—

FL: What was her name?

HP: You know, I can't remember. [Ed. note: Miyuki Sakamoto, Berklee class of 1992, composer & orchestrator] But she took the courses with me that he took, probably two years behind him.

FL: What was her instrument?

HP: I don't even know that. [pause] No, I don't. And in the Duke Ellington course, I was talking about playing with a plunger, because I play with a plunger. And when Jamshied was in the class, it happened to be an all male class. So, one of my ways of describing it, the various changings of the size of it to inflect the different notes was like fondling a woman's breast. Now this was—politically, I would have been very out of order if there had been some women in this class. Probably I was politically out of order anyway. But I was comfortable saying it to these—mostly people who had been with me a while, and I knew them and they knew me. And Jamshied told his then girlfriend, later to become his wife, that that's the way I described it.

She then took this class a couple of years later. And in her glorious—nothing knew it was politically right or wrong—innocence, when I was talking about the plunger, “You know, Jamshied told me that you said—” [laughs] I said, “Woo, yes!” I remember that about them. I remember going to their wedding, which was in the chapel here at MIT. And then they had the reception—there's a lovely Indian restaurant, I believe it's just on the other side of the bridge, over in Back Bay. And it was lovely to see the combination of the Iranian family and the Japanese family dancing together and things like that. It was really wonderful to observe!

FL: Wow.

HP: Yeah, very nice, totally nice situation, since I've known him and worked with him, and he gave to me, and I gave to him, that sort of thing.

FL: Well, I hope to get him in for an interview sometime.

HP: That would be wonderful; it really would. He could paint a lot of different pictures. Especially—somebody told me—I don't know that he wore it on his sleeve—somebody told me that he was the first person who ever graduated from here who produced a concert of their own music for their—

FL: Their thesis.

HP: Yeah, their thesis, yeah.

4. Other MIT faculty jazz players and their associates (0:29:50— CD1 0:29:50)

FL: I think that's true. So, did you know Warren Rohsenow, a pianist and engineering professor?

HP: Only in my professional association with him, with Jay Keyser. I met him through playing with Jay, and when I did, he was not playing piano, he was just playing vibes [vibraphone], and I think it had to do possibly with—whether it was arthritis or just what. He wasn't able to play piano at that point. I think this. The reason I think it is I met him, oh, let's say three years ago in Portland, Maine. I was playing in a jazz club in Portland and Warren came. And at this point he was, I believe, if my memory is accurate, he was on a cane, or at least having difficulty getting around. And my memory is when we shook hands, his hand was kind of gnarled—that's a terrible word, but you know, as the hand closes up. So, we really, we had a couple very nice phone conversations over the years, but we really—it's interesting how you spend time professionally, on the gig, between the sets, the breaks between sets, I don't believe Warren and I ever spent any time together other than on Jay's gigs and this one time that he came into this club a few years ago in Portland.

FL: So you heard him play?

HP: Yes, yes, sort of an older style swing player. Maybe, to put a label on it, a [Kenneth] Red Norvo [1908–1999] or Lionel Hampton [1908–2002], that era of playing, which would make sense because that would have been the era he grew up musically. As sweet as a man, and always expressing how pleased he was to play with myself and some of the other musicians that Jay [Keyser] was hiring. But I don't know that I ever heard him play piano, and I don't believe that we had any contact other than this playing with Jay and this one time in Portland where we—I don't even think he was able to stay the whole evening there. Usually in this club I play three sets, and I think probably we talked during the first break, or something like that. But it was clear to see that he was having some degree of difficulty physically getting around and about. But his spirit—he was such a gentleman! Just a very classy man. What was he a professor of here?

FL: He was an engineering professor [Ed. Note: Warren Rohsenow, MIT Professor Emeritus of Metallurgy].

HP: Engineering professor, yeah.

FL: And he had a piano in his office, I was told.

HP: Oh, really?

FL: Yeah, yeah.

HP: That's, I'm not aware, yeah.

FL: So what did you know of Roy Lamson, a clarinetist, and a Professor of Literature here?

HP: Probably less than I what I knew of Warren, unfortunately. When I worked with Jay, there were a couple other clarinetists. First, a fellow named Steve Wright and more recently a fellow named Eddie Freedman, who has worked—when Jay has had sort of his Dixieland band, with trumpet, trombone, and clarinet in the front line. To the best of my memory, Roy never played with that. I came to know Roy while being the leader of the band, that he would come to the band concerts. I think we played some functions with the band, where the band would maybe play a half hour, and then Roy would have a trio or quartet that would play for dancing, sort of swing music. But I probably had less contact with him than I did with Warren, in that I did work some number of jobs with Warren, with Jay's group.

FL: What was Roy like as a clarinetist? What do you remember about his playing?

HP: I honestly don't remember. I don't think we ever played a gig together, to the best of my knowledge. I would think that, if it was something that would help in the broad interview here, that Jay could say something about that, you know. I may only have heard him play a couple of times, when we did these functions where the band would first play a concert for listening—short, half an hour at most. And then Roy's group would play, maybe a quartet or quintet would play, for dancing.

FL: He had a trio called the Intermission Trio.

HP: Yes, I kind of remember that, yeah. And did Warren play?

FL: Yeah.

HP: Yeah. See, I don't have any memory of Warren being the piano player with this trio, and maybe by then, Warren's hands were starting to give him a little difficulty, yeah. I wish I could have said more about both Roy and Warren. I was aware, even before I maybe met them, I was aware through musicians in the band—this goes, about mid-sixties—talking about them as faculty members who were interested in music or played music. But we really—my contact with the band, and with the MIT community, until the latter years of my being here, was really very much: twice a week I came here for rehearsals, and took part in going to festivals, and leading the band in concerts. But I don't know if I told you this, I found out after twenty years I had an office somewhere! I never even knew it. There was a room that was designated as my office.

FL: [laughs]

HP: I would get mail down at the back of Kresge, in a mailbox, same place that John Corley went in and picked his mail up, and somebody else, you know. But maybe in my twentieth year somebody in the band said, “Herb, you’re never in your office” or something. I said, “Office?” I was so much more involved in sheer hours of time, at that point in my life, of teaching full-time at Berklee, leading my band, playing a very active professional career, contracting music for the Boston Garden, contracting the Wilbur Theater, playing in the Colonial [Theater] pit, the pit at the Colonial a lot, being a father and a husband, and all the stuff that probably most of my endeavors, professional endeavors, I did not have that much contact other than right at the point of doing the gig, at the point of doing the rehearsal.

It isn’t like I was—for instance, I’m sure I would have known Roy and Warren a lot more if I were on the faculty here, not as a part-time music, band director, who comes in twice a week, but if I was here all week long, and associating with people. But my associations were more with the jazz musicians, the professionals in Boston, and my fellow faculty members at Berklee, which I had done for a longer period of time and more days and hours per week, you know. It was not a choice or, I wanted to get out of here as fast as I can, another rehearsal’s over. Just, when I’d finish rehearsal Sunday night at ten, I was either wiped out or I had to go home and write some music or pay some bills or think about tomorrow, that sort of thing, you know.

FL: Mm-hm. Now, there were some other musicians who played with Roy: George Poor [1918–2009], a trumpet player—

HP: Yes.

FL: —Tom Lindsey [d. 2002] also a trumpet player, and Perry Lipson, a guitarist, and Steve Pratt, a bass player [Ed. Note: Photographs located in the Roy Lamson Conference room in the Lewis Music Library at MIT prompted mention of these names. For more information about these men, reference Jay Keyser’s interview with the Music at MIT Oral History Project.]

HP: Yeah.

FL: Did you—

HP: I had some awareness—not awareness—I knew them, except for the name Steve Pratt. I did not know him. But George Poor and Tom Lindsey and who was the third?

FL: And Perry Lipson?

HP: Perry, yeah. I knew them. I’ll speak about Perry, and then George, and then Tom, in that order. I only knew Perry Lipson through occasionally in the Boston General Business playing scene. What in New York they call Casuals, they call General Business, meaning a dance, a party, a bar mitzvah. Perry was very active in the General Business scene. And when the Jazz Workshop closed in Boston, in 1962, where I had been playing regularly for seven years, I became somewhat involved in this General Business, not of choice, that I loved the music, but that it was another way to generate some part-time income for the family. And Perry was very much involved in that. I would say that Perry was twenty-five or thirty years older than I,

and when I was entering this GB scene in Boston, he was already an established, maybe sixty year old fellow.

Then I knew his son. He had a blind son named—what is his first name? [laughs] Terrible!—who played tenor, and a good General Business tenor player, who went to Berklee; I remember him with his dog at Berklee. So I knew him slightly. I did not know him well. Again, my only knowing of Perry Lipson was bumping into him on gigs and talking. George Poor I knew slightly because George is from the North Shore. He's from Marblehead, I believe, and had been playing cornet in Dixieland bands around the Boston area, even probably before I started. I think George is a little older than I am. So I knew of him; occasionally I'd fill in for him with the Dixieland band if he couldn't make a gig. And there's a certain clique of Dixieland musicians up on the North Shore who I—I really didn't run in that clique, but occasionally I would work with them because I knew a lot of the tunes. Because when I went to the enemy down the street, when I went to Harvard, I played in the Crimson Stompers, which is a Dixieland band. This is back in '49. So I knew George through that, knew him as somebody who was very interested and very active in playing Dixieland music. My memory, if it's correct, is he was a fellow who was very comfortable financially, so he was not doing this for, in any way to generate income for a living. He just liked to play for the pleasure of playing. And I think he's still doing it, to the best of my knowledge.

The other name here is something very special: Tom Lindsey. The first time he and I ever played together, Jay brought us together. He had been playing with Jay some, on Jay's gigs around MIT, and other gigs that Jay had. And I knew of Tom through reputation, and he knew of me, but we'd never met; we'd never played together. And we met first, I think, playing the reception after graduation that we'd play right outside the door here, with Jay's band. And I don't remember just how long ago—at least ten years, and maybe more like fifteen years ago—a superb jazz musician, older fellow, who had been a part of the thirties jazz scene.

As a matter of fact, he was a trumpet player on the very famous Coleman Hawkins [1904–1969, tenor saxophonist] recording of “Body and Soul” [1939]. That Coleman Hawkins solo on that recording sort of became *the* saxophone or *the* jazz solo, recorded jazz solo, up until maybe Charlie Parker made some recordings, again, in the forties. This was made in the late thirties. Everybody swore by it as sort of the bible of tenor saxophone jazz playing. Tom was on that record with Coleman Hawkins back in the late thirties. And he had played with many of the jazz bands. He was a Christian Scientist, and he moved to Boston and was working for the church, and lived in Church Park, which is right across from the Mother Church here down on Mass[achusetts] Ave. And we played a few times together with Jay, and then his health began to deteriorate, and his eyes, and his teeth, and eventually he moved back to Ohio to live with a daughter.

And as he would have to, started to give up more and more of his work, I sort of seemed to be the guy in line to do a lot of his work. For instance, Jay would use him all the time, and then occasionally put the two of us together if the budget allowed that. And when Tom couldn't play anymore, Jay sort of made me his regular trumpet player. And there were other people in town who Tom worked with on a

regular basis. By regular I mean he was their trumpet player if they played once a month or once every other week. And I inherited a lot of that work, and was honored to, because he played jazz music with a basic integrity of reacting to the instincts—not playing from the head, but playing from the heart and the feelings.

When he played jazz, it was what I thought jazz was all about: the sound that came out of the bell of his horn, the rhythmic concept, the melodic style. It was an older style. It wasn't old-old in the sense that it sounded corny or anything, it's just that it was pre-1945, sort of influenced by Louis Armstrong [1901–1971], influenced by Roy Eldridge [1911–1989], influenced by Buck Clayton [1911–1991]. And he probably influenced some of these people I'm mentioning himself, through his style, because he was old enough to have been right around when they were all active. Just a true jazz voice. And finally he had to just give up playing. Last I heard was that he was alive in Ohio, but that he was no longer working, I think both having gone blind. Because at his last gigs around Boston, people would tell me how at the end of his set, he would feel along the piano, and then feel for a table, and things like that. His eyes were gone. And then I heard that when he moved back to Ohio his teeth went, and he didn't play anymore. Very special man. I don't know of his association with MIT, other than working with Jay, and whoever else he did. But, very special.

FL: Well, he played with Roy Lamson—

HP: Did he? Great.

FL: —and some of those folks that played with him were staff members here. And I need to go and do some research to see which ones were actually officially with MIT. Moving on so we don't completely run out of time—

HP: I know, I get windy! I apologize.

5. Performing and taste in music (0:43:06 – CD1 0:43:06)

FL: Talking about you as a performer, I've got lots of questions. We probably won't get to all of them, but I'll try to get on some of the more salient ones.

HP: I'll try to be more concise.

FL: You also play flugelhorn. How do you decide between the two, and what are some of the choices that go into that?

HP: Well, for years I never played, never owned, a flugelhorn.

FL: The first time I heard you play, it was a flugelhorn!

HP: Yeah. I played until age forty, never owning one, never playing one. But the show *Hair* (Broadway rock musical, 1967) was at the Wilbur Theater for ten and a half months, and it was a double. I don't know if that term—?

FL: Yeah.

HP: Yeah, in other words I got twenty percent more over salary because I played a second instrument. So I went to Rayburn's [Musical Instruments, Co., Boston, MA] and bought a hundred and twenty-five dollar Couesnon flugelhorn. But it was

interesting—the more expensive the horns were—I started with the most expensive and I came down the ladder. This was in 1970. I got down to a hundred and twenty-five dollar, brand new flugelhorn, and it was a French Couesnon, which was marvelous. And all these four and five hundred dollar US-made horns were not good. But anyway, that's when I first bought one. My wife at that time, who has since died, had been saying to me, prior to that, "You should play flugelhorn." She said, "You get a very dark sound on trumpet." She was very musical; she was a singer. She said, "You really shouldn't—except for jobs where they ask for the trumpet, you should be playing flugelhorn, any small group jazz work."

And at that point, I still reveled in the joy of playing the trumpet. I've never been a strong instrumentalist. I think that my strengths have been the music itself, more than my ability to play the instrument. But I still, I had this feeling, within my physical limitations as a trumpet player, of the joy of playing the trumpet, the joy of the voice it gave to one. It was a brighter voice than the flugelhorn would give. I'd always felt somewhat that to play the flugelhorn was a bit of saying, "Okay, I'm getting a little older. The trumpet's getting harder. I can cheat a little on the flugelhorn," which you can cheat a little. Not a lot, or you'll sound bad. But now I own, at age forty, I own a flugelhorn.

And I started to play, by degree, more flugelhorn than I had been playing, because it had been zero, but nowhere near fifty percent. Because I was still very active in the theaters. If a show at the Colonial called for a flugelhorn doubling, or a C trumpet doubling or a piccolo trumpet, I would rent a C or a piccolo for the length of the show. But I owned the flugelhorn. On certain tunes at that point—maybe a ballad or a certain delicate tune, on a jazz gig I might start—at that point I probably started to fool with the flugelhorn. Fool with it's wrong—I started to play the flugelhorn some. So let's say that at some point now, I don't know, 1980, when I was about fifty, if I had the choice of gig—it wasn't a theater that said "trumpet here" or something like that, or somebody did want me playing trumpet on a GB gig where they wanted to have a Dixieland band, and the flugelhorn was too quiet and dark to play lead in a Dixieland band. By that point, maybe fifty percent of the time I would choose to play my flugelhorn, and fifty percent play the trumpet.

And so at that point I'm fifty, and the trumpet is not an older man's instrument, as I'm finding out now. [laughs] I find out worse every year! It became more and more difficult to play the trumpet. It became relatively difficult for me. Other people don't seem to have this problem—stronger, physically stronger trumpet players, but I was finding that my flugelhorn playing was getting in the way a little bit, interfering with my ability to play the trumpet. So I gradually sort of phased the trumpet out unless the gig called for the trumpet. When this was, I can't say—maybe 1980, maybe 1985, somewhere in there. Unless the gig called for the trumpet, I only played flugelhorn. About seven or eight years ago—I think I'm being accurate; certainly not ten years ago. I know ten years ago when my wife and I first started to be together, I was just playing flugelhorn because she—not because she liked it, but she always said, "I like your vibrato on flugelhorn" or something like that.

So at some point about seven or eight years ago I said, "Hey, of these two instruments, the one that professionally you really get called upon more to play is the

trumpet. I will be a better trumpet player if I put this flugelhorn in the case and don't play it unless the gig demands it of me." And a lot of people that I worked with, people that I recorded with, singers that I played behind, were not pleased by my doing this. They liked what I did with the flugelhorn—the darker sound, how it sort of mellowed the general approach to playing. But somehow, I was reverting to that thing I was having as a younger adult—I joke about it, that the trumpet is God's voice, you know. I tell some of my students, "Play the trumpet like it's God's voice," this sort of thing. But there is a certain thing that we trumpet players get, this feeling about the nobility, and the brilliance, and we are playing the lead of the ensemble. And I don't deny that. I mean, I was attracted to the trumpet by watching an ROTC high school band in Gloucester and watched the trumpet players playing the lead part. Then I was attracted by hearing Louis Armstrong play, who was a really, you know, an outgoing trumpet player.

So now, in my sixties, this past decade, I put the flugelhorn in the case, carry it with me to every gig I go to, primarily so that if my trumpet collapses in my hand, I at least have an instrument to complete the gig on, but never take it out of the case! Now it carries sandwiches and folders of music with this trio, this quartet, you know. I don't have it with me today because see, Magali [Souriau, 1961; composer, Berklee class of 1994] wrote this piece for me to play with a lot of flugelhorn in it. [Ed. note: Piece titled, *The Tale of the Sky Swimmer*, dedicated to Herb Pomeroy, in celebration of his 70th birthday; performed 04/29/2000; MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble.] I don't even want to show up—it's in the trunk of my car, but I don't want to show up at the rehearsal today because she's going to be very mad at me; I know this. So I've put it in the case, and I don't think I've played it professionally for two or three years at all now, and essentially, for seven or eight, whenever this decision was made on my part. I think—I know that I am able to produce the production of sound, which is the hardest on the trumpet of all aspects of playing the trumpet: the chops, the air, into the horn. As you get older, it gets harder. That act of producing a sound on the trumpet, I am able to produce it better now for not touching the flugelhorn at all. And I said I was going to be concise!

FL: [laughs] Here's a real impossible question, but let's go at it, and if we need to I can cue up a track on the CD. I want you to talk about your individual approach to improvisation—things that go through your head when you're taking a solo. Do you ever plan anything out in advance and things like that?

HP: It's a great question. And I have made a real switch over the years in my approach to this. I was originally as a jazz player much more involved with my head, and knowledge, and improvising based on intellectual awareness of harmony, to the point of a fault. It goes way back to when I was six years old. Did I talk about this, my mother, on any of our previous interviews? My mother teaching me harmony when I was six? Okay. And then it goes to when I was fifteen, when I left the older style of jazz playing and wanted to be a bebopper, and bebop at that point was more technically complex—I won't say it was any better than—the harmonies of the thirties and early forties in jazz. It became more complex, and at age fifteen I did not have the ability to hear this, purely ear-wise. I needed to draw upon this knowledge that I had. Which I did that. I learned the chord changes, rather than hearing them.

The timing was unfortunate for me because this music required—this bebop music that I wanted to be a part of—required that you play on some rather complex chordal progressions.

As I became a young adult, in my twenties, and I was locked into being a bebop trumpet player, I had some roots and I won't say I was discarding them, but in any surface, right off the top of my brain, obvious reverting to melodic phrases and chord changes of the swing period. I had put that to one side, and I was trying to play like Dizzy Gillespie [1917–1993] and Miles Davis [1926–1991] and these people in what was my late teens and early twenties, the late forties and early fifties. What you learn at that point is awfully hard to discard! Which is wonderful! In so many things, we learn things as a young adult, whether it be in college or through practical experience, and we do remember it well. Well, that remembering things you learn when you're young was actually a thing that I wish hadn't happened to me as much as it did because for a long time—and I don't know when I was able to really get over it, and work hard at getting over it—I was a player, a jazz player. I didn't plan what I was going to play in advance, but my head was thinking of the key I was in, it was thinking about the chord of the moment, the scale for that chord. I was doing a lot of conscious thinking about that. Much more of my brain was involved with that than should have been in purely melodic creating.

In the last—and I don't know how many years—it certainly is longer than the five years since I've retired—let's say the last fifteen years, just to take a round number, but especially the last five—and I'll tell you in a moment why—I have been consciously, when playing, trying to be unconscious of these musical facts that I learned as a teenager, and an in my twenties person. Succeeding at this point pretty well, as long as the tempo doesn't get too fast. But when I find the tempo getting: one, two, one-two-three-four, I find myself reverting to the bebop licks I learned when I was twenty because it's so difficult to create at a very fast tempo in jazz.

So up to a certain tempo, I feel at this point, the tunes that I know, the tunes that are inside of me, not through knowledge, but the tunes that the harmonic sound of the tune is a part of my person, as much as how to finger the trumpet, as much as how to talk with a language, as I'm talking with you, I have sloughed off this knowledge like dead skin off of my body. So that when I'm playing, there is no conscious calling upon, mentally thinking of the notes in a chord, the notes in a scale, how one chord progresses from one to the other. Now, I can't say to you I never do this because if I'm playing a tune that's new to me, and it's complex, I do have this intellectual strut I can lean on and give a competent professional performance. But I don't like what I do because I know in my head I'm more like a spelling machine, tonally, up and down these chords and scales, than I am as a melodic creator.

I used to feel that you had to play all the time. You had to play a lot of notes, and you never should stop except to breathe. Now, I like to think that one of the aspects of my playing that is a strong aspect is the space that I leave between phrases. The confidence that I have in myself as an improviser, and the confidence that I have in myself in relation to my fellow musicians and my audience, that if I stop playing for four bars, somebody doesn't think I'm lost. Like when I was twenty-five, if I stopped for four bars—oh, there's another good jazz player. He'll say, "Herb doesn't

know where's one? Where was one of the eight bar phrase?" Now I've gotten over that, totally.

And I love the drama of space. Where I first became aware of this was with the Miles Davis recordings of the late fifties and early sixties, before Miles sort of became more rock-oriented and more electronically oriented, where he would leave these glorious spaces in his improvising. And the tension that would build inside! When's he going to come in? What is he going to do when he comes in? It was glorious! And I really must tip my cap to, that was a strong influence on my sense of space. I know my last years of teaching at Berklee that's all I would holler, "Stop playing so many notes! Leave some space. Let the phrase breathe as you're breathing on your instrument." I'd tell the piano players, "Jazz is a breathing instrument." Especially the Japanese kids, all this technique, all like machine guns at the piano! "Leave some space. Imagine you're playing an instrument you have to breathe on." You know, because you don't have to breathe on piano. I'd say, "This is a breathing music."

So I consciously have been sloughing off active phrases, I've been consciously sloughing off the clichéd licks that I learned as a bebop trumpet player. And I hear myself playing them in fast tempos, because I can't do anything else. Or I could just stand there and wave to the crowd, maybe. But as far as—and I almost consider speed having nothing to do with jazz, anyway. When I'm improvising, I don't preset what I'm going to do. Sometimes I will react to the last phrase of the player who plays before me. Sometimes I'll be at the beginning, so to react to something—I like, when I'm playing after, if I'm not the first soloist, to have the total mood of that soloist sort of crank down to neutral, and let the rhythm section play maybe for four to eight bars without me, serving as an interlude, to end the mood and feeling of that player and let me start from my own point A, rather than picking up from where the last person left off. I never would have done that as a young improviser.

I would have thought, the moment that person stops, I'll leap in and play. And now, it shows respect, it allows the applause for the previous soloist—these are just bandstand etiquette things. But I believe in allowing—if the tune doesn't have a built-in eight bar interlude between each soloist, it allows—I use part of the eight bars of the tune, twelve bars of the tune, for the rhythm section to calm down, let the time relax a little, so that I don't have to pick it up at this level, as somebody leaves it, then have no place to go but down, you know. So, I try not to think. I try to react to what's going on around me, and react to my instincts.

FL: Does your, this intervallic notion of harmony that you talked about, as opposed to functional—?

HP: Yes.

FL: Is that an influence on what you're doing there, because you feel less tied to chord function, and so it can be more intuitive?

HP: That's a great question. I don't know that it does, Forrest, because my approach, that particular course, and that part of me that is a writer, that thinks that way, only really has to do with up and down vertical structures. It has to do with creating a voicing, or

a vertical structure, by choosing notes not because they're the one, three, five, seven, and so forth, the chord, but because of how they relate intervallically to other notes in the scale. So we might choose, if you've got a C chord, instead of using C-E-G, because we know it's one-three-five, of using C-D-G, which will take away the obviousness of C, but will give us a second here, between C and D, and a fourth between D and G, rather than the tertial harmony of the thirds.

FL: Right.

HP: So I don't know that that had any effect on my melodic improvising. It certainly is presented as a writing tool. I didn't conceive the idea, but in drawing from influences of other writers and then putting this together in course material, I was influenced by up and down sound that contained intervals that do not give the obviousness of the thirds and the sixths, the consonances. But I've never thought, until you asked the question. Two-thirds of the way into the question, I could see where you were going with the question, and I'm thinking: Ah! I don't think it had an effect. I don't like to hear an improviser—I find it very cold—play a series of consecutives: [sings tones].

FL: Yeah! [laughs]

HP: To me, that is pre-thought, worked out, oh, let's play some fourths now. I find it cold. That's a very good thought. I don't know that I—I'm pretty sure that I did not. I strive, in my playing, to play wider intervals. When I was younger, it was a conscious striving to play a major seventh interval and ninth interval in my improvising, because so much of jazz melodic improvising is based on scale-wise and tertial-type interval playing. So, that was certainly preplanned. Not a phrase preplanned, but my concept: I want to play some wide intervals in my playing because I didn't think enough jazz players were.

And now, that's a part of my playing without it being conscious. When I hear a playback of something I've recorded, I will hear this approach to playing wider intervals in my playing, which is dastardly in the trumpet! Because, you know, an instrument built on the overtone series, it isn't like [sings] on the piano, you can play sixths or something. [sings] Oh! I've had fellow trumpet players hear recordings I've made and comment on, "Gee, you are making the wide intervals, and they're pretty much in tune," which pleases me that they're reacting to that. So I don't think that intervallic approach to vertical structures has had much to do, unless it did subconsciously, and I'm not aware of it.

FL: So it's more with you as a writer, and as an arranger?

HP: Yes.

FL: Wow. Oh, we've got a lot to go through. In your CD liner notes, you're talking about the tune "How Deep is the Ocean" ["(How High Is the Sky?)," music and lyrics by Irving Berlin, 1932], you talk about being interested in the darkness of the tune. Can you talk about that? And does that also translate into a preference for the blues? Are they related?

HP: Yeah, I think they probably are. Because in a tune like "How Deep is the Ocean," which is in a minor key, and I like to play it—the recording you're referring to, that Trio CD, we're doing it in C-minor, but I like to play it, in my own way. The

Gloucester Trio that works in that restaurant is not my primary band. My primary band is my quartet, and I have a piano player that can play anything in any key. I play it with him in B-flat minor because I like—I've always liked to play deep in the flats. I like to play in A-flat, and in D-flat. Because to me, the way our unevenly-tempered system goes, those flat-y keys are darker keys, not just because they're the black notes on the piano.

I know a lot of the older jazz bands used to love to play in D-flat and A-flat: Basie, Ellington, Hampton, those bands. So, I like darkness. I don't think it has anything to do with my personality, wanting to be a dark person—I don't think. But I like playing in the darker keys. They lead me to bluesyness, and I feel that even when you're playing a major tune, let alone a minor tune, that if you play a major tune, and you never play any notes other than notes that are diatonic to the major key you're in, or to, if you go to the key built on the fourth, or whatever keys you go to—if you just play diatonic in those keys, no matter how brilliant your improvising, if there isn't some bluesyness, melodically, it almost doesn't sound like jazz. I've heard some very, very Caucasian, white note—whatever you want to call them—jazz improvisers, who play beautifully in all respects, but their playing sounds non-blues influenced.

So I am strongly influenced melodically by the blues. I am just more comfortable playing a minor tune. And some of the things I've said probably are the reasons why, but—anything else to say about that? I've had people say to me, not in recent years, but a while ago, that they'd hear a couple sets by me—not my big band, you have less control; you just have certain, thirty, thirty-five arrangements the band has rehearsed long enough to play—but with my small groups, saying, “Don't you ever play in a major key?” I've played two sets. It actually made me think, “Aha, I didn't,” which is not good programming. Nowadays, I'm very conscious of the keys. You can put people right to sleep in an audience playing three tunes in a row in the same key, you know. So I'm very conscious of having different keys and combinations of minor and major tunes. But I was at a fault, maybe in my mid-thirties and forties, people coming up to my quintet, saying, “Don't you ever play in a major key?” You know, something like that. And consciously, I was not thinking about it and had to say they were right. They put some good thoughts in my head.

[1:04:00–CD1 1:04:00—END OF CD1]

6. Musical Repertoire (1:04:00–CD2 00:00)

FL: What musical repertoire appeals to you most as a performer, and is that different when you're a bandleader?

HP: Well, you try to have it overlap from your performer—if my preferred performance situation is a quartet or a trio, you try to have that repertoire overlap to a band, when I did have a band. But you just don't have the flexibility to do that because you can ask the writers to write things in a certain way, but I find you get most out of writers when you just let them write what they feel and don't dictate: I'd like this, this, this,

can you modulate here? Change the tempo here? If you just say, “This tune appeals to me. I’d like you to do something with the tune,” then you have some degree of control with a band because you can ask for tunes to be arranged. But a lot of times someone will write, would write for my band, and I wouldn’t even have asked somebody. They’d come to me and say, “I’ve got something that I wrote. I had your band in mind. Would you like to try it?” And certainly you have no control over the tune there.

And rarely do you have more than thirty-five, forty tunes rehearsed at any one point. I mean, a good professional band, you might think, oh, they should be able to play anything at any time. No, the intricacies of some of our arrangements, if we went six months without playing a piece, that would be then out of the cycle until I had a chance to rehearse it again, and even if it were the same bodies. So, you have much more choice with a small group and don’t have that flexibility with a band, as far as repertoire goes. How did you ask the question? Maybe I didn’t—

FL: I was asking about the musical repertoire that appeals to you as a performer, and was it different as a bandleader? But basically, how would you describe the music that really grabs you as a musician?

HP: Yeah. I guess I’m thinking about what I’m presently playing. A lot of minor tunes. [laughs] A lot of Ellington and [Billy] Strayhorn. Tunes that have different shapes, other than the typical thirty-two bar, A-A-B-A tune. What are some of the tunes that I play? There’s a Kurt Weill [1900–1950] waltz called “Liebeslied” that is a thirty-two bar tune, but it is an A-B-C-D tune; every eight is different. There’s a waltz by a piano composer named Bill Mays [b. 1944] called “Play Song.” And that’s a forty bar waltz, and it’s an A-B-C-D-E; every eight bar phrase is different. Now I realize that for listeners, this doesn’t help them so well—a lay listener. I think a musician listener will be intrigued and want to know—and they are. They’ll, “Where did you get that tune? Wow! What form was that? I never did get the form. I didn’t know where one of a chorus was because of the form.” And you’ve got to try to play for the audience to some point, but those tunes intrigue me. Tunes that have built-in interludes within the tunes themselves. Tunes that—Dave Brubeck [b. 1920] wrote a tune called “In Your Own Sweet Way,” which is a thirty-two bar, A-B-A tune, followed by an eight bar interlude, which you really can’t call it C. There’s no melody to it. And it’s just like, from B flat, it’s a pedal A flat, with an E flat minor chord, and repedal A flat. I love to have a tune that has little built-in signposts. There was a Miles Davis arrangement from way back in the fifties of a Swedish folk tune called “Dear Old Stockholm” that had a marvelous form! It was essentially an A-A-B-A tune, but the eight bar A section would be followed by an interlude. Then you’d repeat the A and the interlude again. Then there would be a four bar B section. Then there would be a six bar—instead of an eight bar—A statement, followed by a nine bar different interlude. And this had such a great different shape to it, in the sense of keeping you on your toes about the form! And this sort of form would lead us to play different things.

I like to play tunes sometimes that have a lot of space harmonically, that are very simple harmonically. And other times I choose to play tunes that are quite complex. The minor thing, we talked about, Ellington. As I, sort of a set to play, I

try now not to play the bebop repertoire that I played forty years ago, forty-five, fifty years ago, all the time—the Charlie Parker heads, those sort of things, which were my, you know, they were staples, are what I would call, if I was leading a gig, tunes like: “Confirmation, “Scrapple from the Apple,” these classic Charlie Parker bebop tunes. Because I have come to feel that bebop is a very limited point in the development of jazz. We’re locked in by the harmonic progressions, and there were certain melodic clichés that occur pretty much in every tune. So I have come to push away—consciously trying to get rid of the bebop-ism in myself, so better not—I think rarely will I, of my own choice, call a bebop tune on a gig, where I’m in charge of the gig. If someone requests it, and we know it, I’ll play it.

The great songwriters, next to blues, probably the next greatest source are those—well, there are tens upon tens—but those five or six glorious composers of the twenties, thirties, and forties, like Gershwin and Cole Porter and Harold Arlen and Jerome Kern, and those people. They’re just—marvelous material. You never tire of playing their best tunes, you know. The music from *Porgy and Bess*—I do a *Porgy and Bess* medley. Maybe it’s on that CD? Yeah, those things.

FL: What about some contemporary writers? Are there any tunes being done today that are part of your repertoire now?

HP: I’m embarrassed to say I have pretty much shut myself off. One reason being, I don’t want to get oversaturated. I can’t listen to too much music now. I don’t listen to much music at home because I’ve spent so many thousands and thousands of hours listening. That principle, in my day to day living now, shuts me off, closes me off. And then, I hate to be snooty, but when I do, through my wife plays something or a friend plays something on the radio, I don’t hear much that I like! I’m sure there’s stuff that’s good out there; I’m sure there is. But certainly contemporary pop music just leaves me cold altogether. I just can’t get into that at all, for my own narrowness, or whatever.

Contemporary jazz tunes that I hear, I don’t hear many that I like. The tune “Play Song” that I mentioned was probably written in the mid-eighties. That may be one of the most up-to-date things that I’m playing. Certainly, I don’t feel we have the quality of music coming out of our today songwriters that we did in that twenties, thirties, forties: some of the tunes in the Broadway shows, the writers that I just mentioned. And Cole Porter, both the lyrics and the music—intriguing man. And Gershwin, naturally, was glorious. So I don’t listen much, and hence people would not find much, or anything, in what I would be performing now that we’d call contemporary.

FL: Outside of jazz, is there other non-jazz music that you’ve listened to over the years? Maybe not so much recently, but classical music or other non-jazz?

HP: Yeah, I love classical music, don’t get a chance to listen enough. When I do, I find a great peace in certain pieces of it. When I got to a concert with a symphony orchestra, I’m just thrilled. I’m able to sit back and turn my head off and just bask in the emotion of it. I like certain ethnic music. My wife has Irish heritage, and she will play some Irish CD’s at home that are just glorious! And I don’t mean just the real active things like they do for *Riverdance* [a theatrical Irish stepdancing show, notable

for its rapid leg movements while body and arms are kept largely stationary], or something like that, the dances, but just some of the ballads and things.

When I was in Malaysia many years ago—and again, I don’t know if I mentioned this on the tape. If I did, tell me—I was working with a radio studio orchestra there, some fine musicians. And they asked me to come to their gigs, where maybe a quartet of them were playing in a somewhat westernized hotel. And they were playing American pop music of the early sixties, you know, even pre-Beatles. They were like the Kingston Trio and Peter, Paul and Mary, and all of that sort of stuff. And they weren’t playing it well. And then I would go to hear them play somewhere, maybe at a party, a private party of their own Malaysian people, and they’d play their own folk music. And it was magnificent! And there they are trying to play this crappy western music, playing it poorly, when, when they played their own music, it was just! And I said to them, “Why do you fool with it?” “We don’t want to play our own stuff! We want to play something different.” I think, “Ah!” [laughs] So I do thoroughly enjoy some different ethnic musics that I hear.

And going to Europe a lot, I will sometimes hear—there’s a marvelous piano player in Slovenia, in—well, he was from, yeah, Slovenia, where I’m going next week, as a matter of fact—named Renato Chicco [b. 1962]. And he recorded a CD of a jazz treatment of these folk tunes from Slovenia, and I think from Croatia, from probably most of the Yugoslavian provinces. And the music is just superb!

So I do—and Gary Burton [b. 1946, vibraphonist, bandleader], the *Reunion* there, the Argentine guys. He and I happened to be on the same bill in Europe two summers ago, and he was sitting with my wife Jody and myself while I was setting up. We played during the first half, and then his group was going to play the second. And while they were setting him up onstage, he sat with us. And his last words were, “You’re going to hear some different shit now that you ain’t heard before!” And it was marvelous! But Gary hardly improvised at all. He just got involved with their music, and the violin player, and the band, or whatever you call the guy there—oh! So those things, truthfully, I am reacting more to native music like that, and classical music, than the jazz music of today.

7. Role as a bandleader (1:14:38 – CD2 0:10:38)

FL: Mm-hm. What were some of the formative experiences that made you a good bandleader?

HP: [laughs] That’s a great question! Most of them were negative experiences, that told me: don’t be this way if you ever become a bandleader. Whether it be in Lionel Hampton [1908–2002], when I was on the road with Lionel Hampton’s band, the way he treated the men, I feel. God bless him, he’s old and sick. There were parts of him that were nice, but I felt he was a very selfish bandleader. He did not in any way think about the comfort of the men in the band.

An example being that we would often play very small towns, especially in the South, and you’d get through at one o’clock in the morning. And he’d say, “Okay

boys, we'll leave at two—leave on the bus, leave at two.” And you'd be in a town that was small to the point that there'd be nothing open in the sense of a little restaurant or something. So you'd get on the bus, or if it's warm you'd hang around outside the bus. At six or seven o'clock in the morning, he would show up after being partying. Because he'd been on the road so long with Benny Goodman and his own band, he had friends in almost every town, or people, if he didn't have friends, come up, “Come on to our house, Lionel, and have something to eat.” And there'd be sixteen, seventeen on the bus, hungry, if it was up in the north in the winter, cold. You know, smelling, we hadn't even had a shower for three days, and he's out partying.

And he'd get on the bus at six or seven in the morning, which meant that we would now hit and run. We wouldn't arrive in the next town at noon or one, check in, and get four or five hours sleep. We would now not check in, and we would arrive at five or six, go to the ballroom, where probably there's no running water, and so much dust because they hadn't been open for six months, and try to find some greasy food, and then get back on the bus again. So, here we are, losing our night's sleep, losing checking in, because he's out partying. And the mood, the morale of the band, was just foul because of that.

I played with Stan Kenton [1911-1979], and Stan was much better about those things. He was nice to us as a man. But he would demand that we play with no vibrato, which to me is a very cold, unmusical experience. He would demand in 1954, long before the influence of Latin and rock music into jazz, and the positive influences that let us in many jazz tunes to play straight or even eighth notes. Whereas in jazz, in '54, to swing in a jazz feel, you need to play jazz eighths. He demanded straight eighths with no vibrato! And talk about feeling cold rhythmically, and feeling cold in expressiveness of sound. So I learned from Hamp how to treat people, through learning to see how he didn't treat them. Not that I didn't know before I played with Stan, but it was just a good example of demanding what you want of players when they feel it another way, how it doesn't create terribly warm music.

From playing in the pits of orchestras, in theaters, I've watched the different conductors, and I watched how they would either pull more out of the orchestra than the orchestra was capable of, or they would put the orchestra into some sort of mood, or boredom, that they would not play up to their potential. I remember playing *Porgy and Bess* [by George Gershwin] for three weeks at the Colonial and thinking that we were all having the time of our lives, because for me, it was the first time I had ever played *Porgy*, and for others of the orchestra, too. It was a Houston company. This is going back into the, probably the seventies, late seventies—glorious company! And the conductor seemed satisfied with the band. And the week was set up so that Saturday we would play a matinee and an evening show.

Well, we played our matinee on the final Saturday. We played—this was, we played twenty-three shows; we had one show to go. You know, you play eight a week, three weeks. And we came back to the band room after having the three-hour period between the matinee and the evening show, when we all went out to dinner, and like wallpaper, plastered from one corner of the room around to that corner again,

like wallpaper, were legal-pad, yellow legal-sized, with things about what he didn't like about the orchestra for the three weeks, things that we didn't play right, things that we didn't do this, we did this. After playing twenty-three shows for this man! Now, in the last show, I've never seen an orchestra take a dive like that, a professional group! Because you first play to your inside integrity. I play music because I love it. I took up my horn, I devoted my life to music. We couldn't get past that. We disliked this man so much, we could not draw on that personal integrity. It was about as far down as I've ever been, a part of a professional orchestra playing an important performance, you know.

I mean, I'd been a bandleader long before I saw this, but this kind of thing: the conductor in the pit, or when a name artist, like a Frank Sinatra [1915–1998, vocalist] or Tony Bennett [b. 1926, vocalist], comes to town and you put together a—sometimes I would contract this sort of thing, and other times I'd just be a trumpet player. You'd put together anywhere from a sixteen to a thirty-two piece orchestra to play behind a major—I don't want to call them pop artists; they're more than that—you know the level of player I mean.

FL: Mm-hm.

HP: And the conductor—you'd have maybe two three-hour rehearsals, and then we'd play two or three concerts. And never once would a conductor make any effort to know any of the musicians on a first name basis. It was always, "Third trumpet! Second trombone!" So I learned early, whenever I go someplace with people that are new to me, I have my sheet of paper that lists the name of everybody, where they sit, what instrument they play. And people sometimes have said, "I'm amazed how you know!" I said, "Don't be amazed. It's the only way that it should be." I learned through seeing it done the right way; I learned from seeing it done the wrong way, how much more you get out of people if you respect them for the fact that they are a person and have a name. So I had mostly negative influences to teach me what not to do, as far as being a bandleader.

FL: So when you were a bandleader, you often didn't play lead trumpet, but yet you were the bandleader. Can you talk about your role, how you saw yourself as a leader, and what you did with rehearsals, and things like that?

HP: Sure. As far as playing lead trumpet, I didn't do that because I wasn't capable of it. I don't have the chops, the upper register chops, to play lead trumpet. To play lead trumpet in a big band, you need to be able to pretty consistently play up to about a high E flat concert, high up in the horn. That's what the writers have been demanding ever since, oh, the forties, I guess. And I just did not have the chops to do that. So, I would not play lead, the first trumpet in the section.

And as far as I would get lots of, not criticism, but complaints from people, about that I never soloed very much with my big band. And I had any number of excuses, one of which was: I don't think I ever had a band that there was any fewer than—amongst the four trumpet players in the section, I don't think I've had a band that there weren't at least two jazz soloists who played at the same level that I could play, or maybe better! And I felt that—draw out of them. Don't just have them have a section role; allow them to solo. People'd come, "How come you don't play with

the band?” because they would know me as a player in small groups. And I would say, “Well, I get to play four nights a week at the Jazz Workshop in a small group. They don’t, so I’m going to give them a chance to play jazz.”

Another large part of not playing much with the band is that if you’re leading a band for four or five tunes, or a whole set, then you pick up your horn, the horn is literally physically cold. Your chops are not warmed up, and your head is totally out of sync for playing jazz. You have been band leading. You have been reading every moment, and, where are we strong? Where are we weak? How’s the crowd reacting? Have I got a problem here with this part of the band out of tune? Whose wife beat him up on the way to the gig, and stay away from his soloing tonight; he doesn’t feel good. Who’s stoned? You know, all these bandleader things! So you pick up your horn, and you’ve got a couple of guys that play good in the back row of the trumpet section, who’ve been warm from playing—not that I’m worried about comparison, but you’re going to sound pretty crappy in relation to the level that your band is attaining.

So in 1983, when I formed the last big band that I formed, we cut our sixteen piece band down to twelve pieces. I decided, for economic reasons and for me to be soloing more with the band, that I was now going to play in the trumpet section. We had three trumpets, and I would play third trumpet, and lead the band. And one of the fellows, Greg Hopkins, said to me—Greg was playing second trumpet—“Herb, I give you two years to do this dual role.” Well, I didn’t even get there. I think after about a year and a half, I hired Paul Fontaine [b. circa. 1938] to come and play third trumpet because I was doing nothing as well as I was capable. I wasn’t playing the third trumpet part as well as I could if I was in somebody else’s band. I wasn’t soloing as well because all that stuff was going in my head. And, I did not lead the band as well because I was playing trumpet. So I got out of that role, that dual role there. Now, did I answer what you asked me? [laughs] Were there any other aspects of the question, Forrest, that I didn’t touch upon?

FL: I was talking about your leadership role. Tell me about what rehearsals were like with your big band. These were really top players.

HP: Yes.

FL: And when you throw a chart on them, it’s not that they can’t read what’s there. But what kinds of things did you work on with them? I’ve got some other questions to follow up on that, but go ahead.

HP: Okay, I was of the philosophy, with a top level professional band, to let them fix as many of the problems themselves before I started to act like a bandleader in rehearsals. Couldn’t do this with a student band. But we would play a tune down, the first time, and having done this for so many thousands of hours, I would notice that here, there, there, here, there, there were things that were wrong. Generally, I would not do any fixing. After the first reading down, I would say, “Are there any real conceptual problems before we play it again. Has anybody got eight bars missing that the copyist missed,” something like that. I would not direct any specific attention to anything. Then, we would play it again and, for the sake of rough numbers, I mean easy numbers, fifty percent of the problems that I heard would disappear because the

player would be aware that the player made that mistake the first time. Or maybe even that the part was wrong, but the player was able to look at the next part and add the eighth rest, or something like that, that the copiers left out. Not only did I save minutes of rehearsal time, for not after the first reading zapping everybody with what was wrong, and they would say to me, “Herb, I know I played that as an F-harp instead of F-natural!”

Instead of going through this routine, I saved rehearsal minutes, but much more importantly than that, psychologically, nobody likes to be told, “Hey, you played that note wrong.” You know it more than anybody else, you the trumpet player, the saxophone player, so you don’t need some guy on Sunday morning, after you got up at eight o’clock to get to a nine o’clock rehearsal, after you got, two o’clock the previous night you got home, and you’re playing free rehearsals to be part of a jazz band—you don’t need some guy trying to make brownie points telling you, you played the wrong accidental! So the psychology of letting the musicians fix, at this level of player, I think is very important. And I learned this through playing in other bands. I didn’t need somebody to tell me when I made a mistake. I knew it before they did or at the same time. So that would be the psychology I would approach the thing with.

Then, after we would run the thing a second time, and about fifty percent of the things would be fixed—I never stopped to tune the band up. At that level, the guys hear. You get this sort of collective A in your ear. You don’t have to say, “Let me hear the A at the piano.” You don’t do that! You just—you don’t; there’s no need to. I see people start rehearsals where they tune the band up first. The horns aren’t even warm!

FL: Yeah.

HP: Lionel Hampton—if he got thirty seconds. If we had a real bad gig, with Lionel Hampton’s band, punishment—and I want to think it wasn’t racially oriented; I know it wasn’t—he’d call a rehearsal at two o’clock the next day, show up about four, which made us very happy. “Pomeroy, come down here and tune the band up.” Because he knew I knew how to write. He knew I’d led a band. He knew I had some years. And myself and everybody else around me would go, “Ooh!” Talk about taking the wind out of a band. We’d just hung out for two hours while he was having lunch, or whatever he was doing. He would turn the vibes on. [sings, wavering] No center to the pitch!

FL: Yeah! [laughs]

HP: No center! The pitch was about the size of a basketball, you know! [laughs] Now, he had some players, especially in the sax section, that didn’t have very centered sounds. They had a lot of big outside, but there was no core pitch! And I was supposed to try and tune each one of these guys up to this [sings, wavering]. Plus, a lot of the guys in the band, they were physically strong and they had feeling for jazz, but their own personal chromatic scale wasn’t very well in tune! And if I got us close to an A, as soon as we left the A, it would be relatively still out of tune. And that was punishment. Oh, boy, did I learn from that! Let the guys tune themselves up. So I would give as much free rein as I possibly could.

I had one lead trumpet player who was stubborn. Name was Wes Hensel [1919–1982]. He'd been part of the four-part trumpet section that in Hollywood, through the fifties and sixties, all the big musicals: Manny Klein [1908–1994], Conrad Gozzo [1922–1964], this fellow, Wes Hensel, and one other fellow, I forget his name. They were the top call Hollywood trumpet section. He played lead trumpet with Les Brown [1912–2001] for twelve years and all the Bob Hope tours of the world. He then went to Vegas and played lead in all the big shows. At the point he came to Boston he was about fifty-five. He had lost a little off, physically, what he had when he was this big-time Hollywood, big-time Les Brown, big-time Las Vegas lead trumpet player. But he still was excellent, and by far the best lead trumpet player in my band. So he was designated to play lead on three-quarters of the music.

He froze his tuning slide to where he thought he wanted to play. I mean literally, his tuning slide would not move, okay? Now some people might have just said, "Hey, I've had enough of your bullshit; I'm going to get a different lead trumpet player." But he put a top on the band that nobody else in the city of Boston could do, this bell-like singing. Thirty years of big time experience. I mean, he was a big time lead trumpet player! Off the bandstand, he was a pushy cat; on the bandstand, he was an out and out prick! He just, he drove other trumpet players off my band by things he would do to them. But he still played his tail off. We would play places where the piano, the acoustic piano, you know, was a little down. But the piano player knew enough not to play most of the time. But the poor bass player! "Shall I get with the horns, or shall I get with the piano," you know? Because Wes had frozen his thing.

I would hire—I hired him to play lead at the Boston Garden for an ice show I was contracting. The other people in the orchestra, "What is this nut you allow to come here? We've got to tune to him." So, he also was stubborn in that the first time you'd read a piece through, and there was a rhythmic phrase that you could interpret two or three different ways, most of us, the writer and me, the leader, would interpret it a certain way. Let's say all of us, to make my point, except Wes. He interpreted it—he would have played this short and this long and played this legato. The rest of us would have done just the opposite. And I'd say, "Wes, you know, the writer's marks show—" "Yeah, yeah, okay," he'd say, and the next time he'd play it just the way he did the first time. I would then say—as I learned the situation, by then, a minute or two into it I'd say, "Okay guys, change the markings there." And he wouldn't act like, well, thank you, guys. He just like, it was expected that we would fix it for him. You learn to handle people like that, psychologically, you know.

FL: Wow!

HP: Matter of fact, when you asked me about rehearsing the band, I think that it is much more a psychology thing than it is a musical thing. Much more. I mean, you have to know your music, but then, your approach to it is the psychology of dealing with the people, and learning about them, and learning what you can pull out of them. And that goes all the way right down to college level, really. If you're going to work with the same personnel two, three times a week, with performances and rehearsals, and some of these people are with you for three, four, five, seventeen years, you get to know them, and you know what they can do and what they can't do.

How you can make them do it, how you make them happy, how you—there was one guy used to play baritone with me for years, and he used to—he never led a band on his own. Jimmy Derba [1935–1981], his name was—marvelous musician! And I could tell he was frustrated at never having led a band. And we’d be at a rehearsal and he’d say, “How about we do it this way?” And the first however many times, eight or ten times, I’d say, “Yeah, we’ll try it.” And then it got so I would say, “Jimmy, if you want to do it that way, form your own band.” And then it would get so he would start to ask a question, and before he’d even finished, he’d say, “I know—form my own band!” [laughs] So you learn to know the people. And that’s the joy of it, really, to stand in front of a band and see this thing start to come together. I know when I formed my last band—this still has to do with rehearsal—I had been using Fred Buda. Do you know of Fred? He’s the percussionist for the [Boston] Pops?

FL: Oh, yeah.

HP: You ever watch them play? The bald—now he’s got a rug—the bald guy who was always up there trying to swing the Pops? Well, he was my drummer from ’76 to ’83. And then I formed a new band at the end of ’83, and he was so busy, he contracts the Wang, and he’s with the Pops, and all that. So I had to make a change, and I chose someone who I played with for years, twenty years, in a small group setting, who’s now still with me, Artie Cabral [b. 1940 (unverified)], who plays marvelously within a very contemporary, small group approach to jazz drumming. And when we formed this band, I said to Artie, I said, “I want you to play with this new band the way that you play in a quartet.” He said, “Oh, Herb, I can’t do that. It won’t work. It’ll be too complex rhythmically, and the concept of twelve people trying to figure that out? It’s hard enough with a quartet to follow what I’m up to here.” Which he was quite right.

But I wanted to have the concept of a big band that felt like a small group, so it wasn’t a small big band, it was a big small group. So I said, “No, I want you to do it.” For three years, this band scuffled rhythmically. And he’d keep coming to me. “You still want me to do this?” When it finally happened, and I stood in front of it, and I saw the concept that we had all hung in there with, of having this twelve piece band—not like a quartet, or a trio, or a quintet—have this loose rhythmic feeling that you get with three or four people, we’ve got twelve people doing it—it was something very glorious and majestic, to stand in front of and witness. And yet, we stuck with this thing, so again, it was the psychology. Or maybe not—just believing in something and sticking with it, and going through some hard times, musically, with it.

FL: Wow! When you’re working with good big band arrangements, the leader still has a lot of creative control over the outcome.

HP: Yes, yes.

FL: What are some of the choices that you made, and what kind of choices did you leave to the band?

HP: I would try to leave it to the band, as long as my own integrity could stand it. Often times, I would have to step in. I feel the responsibility of a bandleader is to be a musical surgeon with the music that you get: your ability to chop this out, repeat this,

ask for this to be transposed to another key, take the backgrounds out behind the soloists, so not to inhibit the soloists as much.

I know Woody Herman, I know two or three different fellows who were sort of Woody's musical directors, piano players, who were sort of in charge of the band. And I said, "Well, how does Woody rehearse his band?" He said, "He's a terrible rehearser. He just lets the band run it down enough times so everybody works out the kinks. If the arranger is there, he lets the arranger work out the kinks. But," they said, "he is a marvelous editor. He knows what his band can do. He knows what he wants the band to do, and he knows what the audiences expect of him, from having been leading a band since the 1930s." So after you get the kinks worked out, he comes in and says this thing I just talked about: "We're going to leave this out. We're going to add this, put a repeat here, put a *dal segno* back to this. I don't want this. Take this out." And they say, invariably, when he got done with his editing, it was a better piece of music than how the arranger had conceived it.

So in my dealing with the material, I knew that the arranger or I had really no control. Once we got on the bandstand and started to play, it was up to the players. It's the same thing you hear the baseball or football coaches say: "I'm not the guy out there missing the three point shots," you know. It's the same with a band. You've got to make them comfortable to do their thing, and yet, you have an idea inside. Also, you realize that if they're playing—I think it was good that I was a player so much, because from being a player, inside the thing, you know that you don't hear the whole picture. You strive to have your ears wide open, to hear everything that's going on around you, but you can't. Your mind is involved with playing your part. Your mind is involved in blending with your section, listening to vibratos, playing rhythmically together. You want to hear the drummer. A third trumpet player isn't going to be aware of what a second alto player is doing, very often, even though they may be playing the same line, in unison!

FL: Yeah.

HP: So you need to guide here and there. Your ability to not lay down laws, to always be flexible with the top level players, will build up such psychological points that it's easier for you then when you need to lay the law down. You need to have the people believe in you, that you know what you're doing, without making a big show that you know what you're doing, without, you know, wearing on your sleeve your ability to hear everything that's going on, or most that's going on. I rarely would ever say to anybody, "You're out of tune," you know. Sometimes I would say, if I knew there was an individual that was out of tune, I'd say to the saxes—for instance, the sax, I'd say, "I hear a little problem. Play the second bar of letter A, play the first note. You've got nice fat half note. Just let me listen to that half note." And I would notice that there would be a person who was out of tune; more often than not, that person would fix it after hearing it nakedly, just the saxophones alone.

If the person didn't fix it, I would say, "Let me hear this as a pyramid: voice one, voice two, voice three, voice four, voice five, from the top down." And before the person could almost fix it, at that point I'd say, "I want to hear the pyramid the same way, from the bottom voice up." I would tune them intervallic-ly, or since I

was trying to make this person aware of the intonation problem, without singling them out, and doing it through interval, rather than saying, “Okay, let’s everybody play their A.” Because I think it’s easier to hear the truth of an interval than it is to hear the perfection of everybody playing the same note. I can hear a perfect fourth, a major third, a perfect fifth, in a voicing, easier than I can hear everybody playing their A. So, try not to say, “Okay, you’re out of tune, push it in.” Let them find it themselves.

FL: Wow. So you’re not really looking to develop a particular sound that’s the Herb Pomeroy Band, but you’re letting the individuals—?

HP: Right. That’s one aspect of Ellington that I’ve always tried to follow, without being really an imitator of Ellington. I like to think that my band was never imitating Duke Ellington. But in principles of jazz ensemble playing, I like to feel that we were influenced by his approach, and his band, more than anybody else. And that was to let everybody be themselves, sound-wise. Don’t demand that the second alto saxophone play with the same vibrato as the first one. I find that in the saxophone section, the desirability that I’m looking for, what I’m looking for, is all five voices playing with their own vibrato, so that the sum total of that is the sum total of five people playing with an individual vibrato, rather than everybody just trying to match the vibrato of the lead voice.

And Ellington is the perfect example of that, and not just in the saxes, in any section. He did not—he looked—whether he was conscious of this, and I bet he was, he looked for people with distinctively different styles, sounds, and style of vibrato, and then blended them in his writing. I mean, he was so much into how the people sounded on their horns that if he liked the way a certain person played a certain note, an E natural, he would write this person a very angular line to get them to that E natural so he could hear the sound of them on that note!

FL: Wow!

HP: Yeah, which I think is delightful. But I did not have the Herb Pomeroy sound in mind. It may be that because of the people that I chose to have in my band, and the writers that I chose to write for the band, there came to be, to some point, a style that was our style. But I think that it was not something you could say, “Okay, that’s the Duke Ellington, Count Basie, or Woody Herman style.”

FL: Here’s another impossible question. If we can touch on it briefly, because there’s some other things I want to get onto?

HP: Sure.

8. Arranging and recording (1:44:40 – CD2 0:36:40)

FL: When you take a jazz standard and you’re arranging it for your band, what’s the process like for you? Is there a way you can kind of talk about some of that?

HP: Yeah. First thing, you live with a tune, melodically and harmonically, for a few days. Most arrangers play at least what we call arranger’s piano. Maybe they’re not pianists, but they can sit down and play the chords and the voicings. They don’t have

much technique, but they can get a sound out of the piano. You sort of explore the tune harmonically, looking for substitute chords, and things of that nature. You sing the melody of the tune to yourself a lot. When you're walking down the street, when you're in the john [laughs] sitting down, you're singing. You get the various melodic phrases, the intervals within the phrases, the space between the phrases. You get the harmonic style of the tune, really ingrained. I would say, if you can do this for three or four days before you start to write a note of music, it's good. Maybe you can't; maybe you don't have that luxury. Maybe you get an assignment, and that night you should start writing, really. But if you have—if time is on your side, this approach to absorbing the tune, melodically.

I don't recommend going out and listening to lots of records by other people. I'm not looking for the influence of external sources here to suggest things. Then, before you start to put any notes, any pitches, any rhythms, on a score pad, I strongly recommend that a writer plans the arrangement, the shape of the arrangement, and what instruments will play the melody, whether it'll be unison or harmonized. If it's going to be harmonized, will it be relatively consonant harmonization, or will it be rich harmonization? Will there be a counter line behind this? If so, will it be unison, because this is thick harmony? Where are we going to change color? Are we going to at the second A, change color? Or are we going to maybe have the color of the saxophones, who are playing the melody, stay the same in the second statement of A, but bring in a couple of percussive brass punctuations? I plan the entire arrangement. Who has the melody? Is it going to be voiced? Is it going to be close voicing, open voicing?

I plan where the primary climax of the arrangement is going to be. There's going to be one point where we have built to, and from that point on, it is tapering off. Then I plan where the secondary climaxes will be, and you can have anywhere from two or three. Usually there's at least one secondary climax leading to the primary climax, and usually at least one secondary as you're tapering down, but that is not locked in. And I sort of mark these off as the point, to make sure that the scoring, that you don't start out with these heavy, thick voicings in the beginning of letter A, and when you get to your climax halfway through B, you've got a flute playing a note all by itself, something like that. But that's an absurd point to even make.

But I plan the shape of the arrangement. I plan—and in doing so, I'm planning what instruments will play, and what the color will be, what the registers will be, the rhythmic character—whether it will be very smooth rhythmically, whether it will be rather jagged or rather angular. All of this I plan before I ever put a note down! So I've really delved into the tune harmonically and melodically, and I have a road map plan here.

FL: Does that change much as you're actually working it out?

HP: Yes, exactly!

FL: Okay. It's like me, yeah, yeah.

HP: Exactly! You've got the plan.

FL: Yeah! [laughs]

HP: I write, and recommend that people stay away from the piano—strongly, stay away from the piano! Don't sit at—I learned this in my early twenties. My arranging teacher said, "This sounds like you sat at the piano for this whole—every eighth note is time capsule material," he is saying to me! [laughs] If I am writing, and I write something that I can't hear in my head, that I don't know how this sounds when I finish the arrangement, I will go to the piano, to make sure I have not written some obnoxious noise. But don't sit at the piano. It just slows—it bogs you down. Also, I believe in responding to first impulses or instincts so much. And I've found this from—I have a week to write an arrangement. For five nights I've sat at home after dinner and written and fooled around and all my funny little techniques! And all of a sudden it's Friday night, and I'd've go to give it to the copyist Saturday morning at eight o'clock, and I'm halfway through. And now, I write as fast as the hand will write. Invariably, the second half was better than the first half!

FL: Wow!

HP: I feel the same thing as a jazz player. Just yesterday I recorded behind a singer. And I said, "You'll get the most out of me if you let me do just one take." Have everything else be right. You know, the singer's got it, the engineer's got it. And then the take you think is going to be it, let me play behind you, because as soon as I play a tune the second or third time, I start reexamining what I did the first time and say, "Oh, I did that close, so this is different." And lick B is never as good as lick A was.

FL: Wow. Did you ever do—or, there was one question back here, earlier. Some jazz arrangers take classical pieces and kind of do jazz arrangements of them. Did you ever do anything like that?

HP: I never have. I've been a part of people doing that. A quintet recording with Charlie Mariano [1923-2009, alto saxophonist] and Jaki Byard [1922-1999] that I did way back in 1953. Jaki took one of the Chopin preludes and scored it for jazz quintet. I don't even remember which one it was now. It was beautiful. I just, myself, have never gotten into that. I have heard some lovely classical themes that have been put into jazz playing.

The guitar player on the trio of the new CD, Anthony Weller [b. 1957], who is a classical guitarist, much more than he is a jazz guitarist—he's a fine classical guitarist. We were rehearsing with that trio yesterday, and he wrote a waltz that sounded very much like classical guitar music. And it's just glorious! And we transcribed it into the jazz setting. So I have not done it. I have heard it done poorly, but I have heard it done very beautifully, too, so it is a source of material—great melodic, glorious melodies that have come through all the years of classical music that jazz players don't seem to draw upon.

FL: Did you ever take chord changes from a classical piece, but jazz melodies?

HP: I never have done that, no. It has been done, some.

FL: I heard Don Byron [b. 1958, clarinetist, leader] do that with a Puccini aria [Giacomo Puccini, 1858-1924].

HP: Oh, really? Yeah. Don is a very creative man.

FL: Yeah.

HP: He's a very fine musician. We've only worked together once, but he impressed me, yeah.

FL: What about arrangements with strings? For a while that was a real big thing with jazz musicians, and it's always puzzled me.

HP: I've never done it. My teaching—I've never taught writing for strings in any teaching class. Funny you should ask this because I've never had strings in my own band. The only time I was really part of a regular group that had jazz instrumentation and strings was in 1962, 3 and 4, I played with John Lewis's Orchestra USA in New York that Gunther Schuller [b. 1925] conducted. It was a superb orchestra. It was a double string quartet, all members of the New York Philharmonic and the best of New York jazz players and the best of New York's woodwind players, oboes and bassoons. It never swung; it never got off the ground. The quality of musicianship was superb. But the reason it's interesting you asked me is I literally have never conducted a symphony orchestra. But next week I'm going to Europe, and a job that I had that started out with me conducting a jazz band, now they've decided to bring in strings and woodwinds, and the whole thing. So I can come back and tell you in a couple months how I did!

FL: [laughs]

HP: But I've never been involved. I've been, to the point of, I feel, very remiss about it. I've just worked with the basic jazz instrumentation. I know I've missed something by doing that.

FL: Some of those arrangements from the forties and fifties, where you have these kind of lush strings, kind of background. I've just wondered—to me it often seems like it's taking away from what's going on. What's behind that?

HP: Why people do that?

FL: Yeah.

HP: [sighs] It's a great question. I don't know what's behind it. My favorite all-time singer of jazz music is Billie Holiday [1915–1959], and to me Billie Holiday, with a piano, bass, drums, maybe one horn playing some little obligatos, is the ideal setting for her. And she's done some recordings where—there was one called *Lady in Satin*, an arranger named Ray Ellis had strings and things. And it so watered down the truth of what that woman was all about! I don't know whether they think they're giving it a dignity, that they're ashamed the jazz world doesn't get into some of the aspects of other parts of the music.

I don't know what drives—a record company producer thinks he's got a great idea: "Let's put Billie with strings." Bird [Charlie Parker] with strings was—Mitch Miller [b. 1911] and his oboe, and oh! It was atrocious! I mean, it's a joke when you hear it now, the strings are so awful! Yeah, shame. See, I don't believe you can bring the things together. John Lewis and Gunther—and Gunther still feels this way—they had the "Third Stream" thing and all that. I just don't think you can bring it together. Maybe sometime, but right now—and I haven't believed it since the

fifties, when I first became involved with some of those people. This Orchestra USA was very Third Stream-oriented. I drove, I got up at five o'clock every Saturday morning to drive to New York for a ten o'clock rehearsal, and I'd be back here in time for an eight o'clock gig Saturday just to take part in something, with the lovely musicianship, these great string players. And I made new acquaintances among the jazz part of the instrumentation of the band. But at no time did I believe that this was either good classical music or good jazz music.

FL: In the remaining time that we have, I wanted to ask you about your experiences in the recording studio. You're very much a spontaneous musician. Talk about the, with some jazz musicians, this editing and splicing takes together, and—

HP: I can't stand it! I believe every time you play a tune, it's a particular time, moment in time, and it should live as such, and that mistakes are human. And if overall the thing has a wonderful feeling, leave it as this one little moment in time. I do not believe in splicing. I do not believe in—

FL: Multi-tracking?

HP: Any of that stuff! [laughs] I'm really a dinosaur, Forrest, and I'm comfortable saying it this way. The first contact I had with this, do you know the name Arif Mardin [1932–2006]? He wrote for my band, and now he's been a Vice President in Atlantic Records, with Nesuhi Ertegun [1917–1989], and Ahmet [Ertegun, 1923–2006]—the Turkish fellows that own Atlantic Records. And he's done a lot of writing for Atlantic Records. And in 1968 he invited Charlie Mariano and myself to come to New York to be a part of a big band album he was doing. And we walked into the studio, and all of a sudden I noticed there's no rhythm section there. There were just four trumpets, four trombones, and five saxes. And I said, "Where's the rhythm section?" He said, "Oh, that's already been tracked." It was—what's her name—Franklin, singer? The black singer?

FL: Aretha Franklin [b. 1946]?

HP: "Aretha Franklin's rhythm section recorded all their parts in Mussel Shoals, Alabama, last week. [Ed. note: FAME (Florence Alabama Music Enterprises) Studios, Mussel Shoals, AL] It's all done." So we put the earphones on. Now to me, once the rhythm section has tracked it, it is dead! It is cold; it is like concrete. There's no human reaction going on. So that's step one, that I didn't like. Then, Arif said, "Let's play the introduction." We rehearsed the introduction; we recorded the introduction. "Let's play letter A." We recorded, rehearsed letter A. We took each piece, eight bars by eight bars—ran it down, it was good, recorded it while we're listening to this rhythm section that's already played. And I said to Arif, who is very close to me, personally and musically—this is '68, this happened—I said, "Is this the way it's going?" He said, "This is the way they're doing it here in New York now. It's the quickest way to get it done precisely and accurately and save money." Never once did you play this piece through from beginning to end as a piece of music.

FL: Yeah.

HP: So, I'm dinosaur-like about so many of these things, you know. I don't believe in going into a studio, and—. Some of my better solo work, unfortunately, belies what

I'm saying. I have gone in where something's already been recorded and played with earphones on, and come up with a result that others, and myself, I'm comfortable with it; I played very well. So that sort of contradicts what I'm saying. But really, the feeling! I mean, I can't stand to hear a record where a piano player is comping without me playing, and will play something, and it totally doesn't fit with what I'm playing, or I don't fit with what he's playing. Or if I try to fit with where he leaves space and how he comps rhythmically, then my mind just boggles! I'm having certain melodic ideas that are conflicting with this.

So I just—I think that I've never heard a recording—never's an awful strong word—but I never can recall one that was as glorious as a live performance, a good live performance. I don't believe music was intended—I don't believe in recording music. I don't know if I said this in either of the previous interviews. I don't believe in the act of recording music. I think music is so precious that it should only be heard by the musicians who have given their life to play it, and the listeners that would drive two hundred miles through snow to listen to it, like it used to be, maybe pre-radio days and early radio days, where people would drive all over the place to hear a symphony concert. Oh, there was a marvelous article in the *Atlantic Monthly* just recently.

FL: Yeah, I read that!

HP: Oh, did he hit the nail on the head for me in a number of areas, you know! We've become so comfortable, you know. You sit at home and you listen to a CD, with a fire going and your drink beside you. And that's not what music, as far as the listener and the player, the partakers of the whole act. But I know, I would have kids at Berklee who would study with me for two years, and then the last week of the last class I would lay this on them. And they'd say, "Wow, are you weird!" you know. [laughs] Because they grew up in this period, and I've grown up—I mean, recordings were being made long before I was born in 1930. But the live performance, the spontaneity, the reaction to each other—the act of being human beings with each other!

I think the social act of being a human being is the most important thing, to me, why we're on this earth. To get along with each other, to react to each other, to love each other. And I don't see that a part of music when it's a track in your head. I want to—the love I feel next to my wife and my children and grandchildren—the next love I feel is the musician I get on the bandstand with to make music. That's a very embracing thing that happens, and it doesn't happen in a recording studio. The red light goes on, and twenty, thirty percent of your spontaneous creativity becomes tense. I've got to be safe with this lick. Here's a great lick, woo! No, I'm not going to play it, because I may make a mistake.

FL: Mm-hm.

HP: I'm really—I'm fortunate that I made my living and put my Berklee lump sum in a retirement thing, and my wife and I can be comfortable because if I lived with these principles, I couldn't make a living today. [laughs]

FL: Wow. Well, one last question. And some of the others that I had maybe to ask you—

HP: Next time! There has to be another time, Forrest! [laughs]

FL: And also, the tape is going to run out in about five or six minutes. But talk about some of the artists that you've worked with that have been particularly influential to you. Duke Ellington seems to have left a huge legacy with you. The way you can kind of sum up some of those influences.

9. Influence of notable musicians (1:44:40 – CD2 0:36:40)

HP: Sure. Well, he left the influence that he has on me because of his ability to see a person's musical personality, maybe more broadly see his whole person, and write music that allowed that person to be themselves. There were many people who came to be stars in his band, people like Johnny Hodges [1907–1970, trumpet], Cootie Williams [1911–1985, trumpet], and many others, who would leave the Ellington band, for whatever their reasons. Well, let's say they left for professional reasons. They wanted to be a bandleader. Let's say there were no animosities and none of that stuff, why you might leave a band. These people would go out and lead bands. The bands would never be very good, and they would never play as well as bandleaders as they did with Ellington when they were just a sideman. They would go back to Ellington, again, they would sound like their glorious self. He was an artist at creating a situation for people to be more than they maybe even knew they were. And I think that's what he has left with me, more than many of his scoring techniques, which I've studied and emulated at times.

I worked with Charlie Parker. Much more than the music that I learned from him was to visually see, right up close, stand beside on the bandstand, a brilliantly talented man, very intelligent man, very witty man, killing himself with narcotics. How much of that came about because of genes, upbringing in Kansas City, the non-acceptance of jazz music. The combination of all of things that were a part of his life were doing it. I don't think we can say it was just heroin. I mean, why did he get into heroin? That lifestyle that the black jazz musician led back then wasn't a terribly good lifestyle, and especially a genius within the field, whose genius was not accepted by much of the world. I watched that. And not that I think, at the point that I worked with him, I hadn't formed enough as a person that I don't think I ever would have followed that path. I know I wouldn't have; it just isn't me. But to stand there and watch this major figure in music, and jazz particularly, dying. I mean, when I worked with him in the early fifties, he was only three or four years away from death, and his body—he was a young man, in his early thirties, at his point. He was probably thirty-three. And he was puffy! He wasn't just fat. His fingers were so fat, I often wondered how he could be so accurate in playing because his fingers were just all puffed up with fluid, I'm sure. I learned something that I already knew from playing with him, about that thing. People that I played with that I learned about music from—[Richard] Dick Twardzik. Have I mentioned that name at any point?

FL: No.

HP: Very close, very close, maybe best friend. Lived in Danvers, one year younger than me. Committed suicide in 1955 at age twenty-four. He was brilliant, marvelous jazz

piano player, with a heroin problem. I learned so much musically from him. I was afraid. I was in awe—I was a year older, but I was in awe. I almost was afraid of him, almost like when a little kid is afraid of walking down the street going to school, and a kid four years older is going to come up and beat the devil out of him. He was so inspiring and so brilliant, I kind of, when I wasn't with him, there was something about it that frightened me! Probably I knew he was a junkie, and that had to do with frightening me. But as an eighteen, nineteen year old, being in the presence of this guy who was essentially my age, who just—he was a brilliant classical pianist, technique-wise. He understood jazz; he understood jazz harmony. He knew the classical composers. He could swing! Charlie Parker loved to play with him! And he made two or three recordings, just in the two or three years before he died, that still to this day sound totally contemporary now. Just a glorious player! I learned a great deal from him about the integrity of the music.

It's too bad some of these people couldn't have brought this to their own personal existence, or they didn't. And maybe they did. Maybe they couldn't stand—The people that I have known and been closely associated with who were really brilliant, in almost every case something not good happened to them, as a person. [laughs] I mean, I played with Stan Getz quite a bit. Stan had terrible problems. He was a melodic genius. Ellington lived a pretty long life, lived to his mid-seventies. More in the solo jazz player there's something maybe. I don't know what it is, whether this world we live in was not for them because of what they were good at and couldn't be entrusted with. So few people understood and accepted the difficulty of the black musician living, because racially it was so difficult. Not that it's a lot better now, but it's somewhat better.

I'm trying to think of any other persons that really influenced me, musically. I consciously stopped listening to trumpet players when I was probably about twenty-five or twenty-six because I was very impressionable. If I listened to a record by a trumpet player during the day, I'd find myself that night at work playing the licks. I think I've been more influenced melodically by listening to piano players and saxophone players than I have by listening to trumpet players. Harmonically, influenced somewhat by Bill Evan's approach to jazz harmonically, certainly in my writing. Often my writing students would say, "You know, the results I'm getting from my band arranging—they sound like Bill Evans' piano voicings." I'd say, "That's very true." I was influenced by his harmonic vocabulary.

Certainly, I have to owe a lot to Louis. I listened carefully as a little kid, oh, twelve, thirteen. When I became a bebopper, I dismissed him—he's old! He must be forty now, forty-five! And then, in my mid-twenties I realized I'd done a terrible thing to myself. I was trying to build this second floor to my musical house with Dizzy and Miles and everything, and the beboppers, not really understanding Louis. So I went back and listened carefully, and he's a giant—the sound that came out of the horn—there's this green animal in the middle of his tone that just takes your gut and does it!

FL: [laughs]

HP: And when he plays, his time in playing—he played with those musicians who, except for Earl Hynes, back in the twenties—the rest of them were playing like they were playing marches or polkas. And he had this swing to his playing. So he influenced me, as far as taking up the trumpet. He influenced me as far as understanding swing. He influenced me as far as what I heard in his tone, that I then heard in Roy Eldridge’s tone, and I heard in many other wonderful black jazz trumpet players’ tones. It was something, nothing to do with the classical, the beautiful classical bell-like sound. I call it the green animal. It was something in the way of the air going through the horn. Which of course wasn’t, but that’s what it makes me—I hear, Roy Eldridge maybe more than anybody, I hear a guttural buzz in the center of the tone, this burr—whatever you want to call it—that to me is warmth. It’s a lovely sound. So I was influenced by Louis, sound-wise, time-wise, inspired to play the trumpet.

FL: Well, we’re about ready to run out of tape here.

HP: Yeah, those were strong influences.

FL: Well, some of this we can hopefully get to in the panel discussion tomorrow night.

HP: Yeah.

FL: So there should be a good question [unclear], yeah.

HP: You can really—you can draw some things out of me that, Blumenthal would say, “Where’d that come from?” “Well, Forrest and I have been working on this!”

FL: I want to thank you so much for your beautiful generosity.

HP: Well, it feels good to me. It helps me find some of the things that I maybe don’t know at a conscious enough level about myself, or my past, to have somebody really take the interest and the time to ask these questions. And let me talk. You know, sometimes people, if they see a pause, they’ll leap in. Whereas, we had some very pregnant pauses here! [laughs] It was great, Forrest; I enjoyed it.

FL: Well, thank you very much.

HP: If there—it’s not necessary. If it occurred that you wanted to do another one, I have no problem at all. I mean, I would enjoy it. I wouldn’t put it in a negative sense. I would enjoy it.

[End of Interview]