

Penn South Archive Project

Witness: David Glasser

Interviewers: Christiane Bird, John Harris

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David plays a jazzy tune

Christiane: Thanks, Dave. What a great introduction. Can you now introduce yourself in a different way by telling us your name and what building and apartment you live in, in Penn South?

David: Sure. My name is David Glasser. I live in Building 7B, Apartment 6F,

Christiane: And I know from our conversations earlier, that you moved into Penn South with your family. When . . . how old were you then, and what apartment and building did you initially move into?

David: Well, I was too young to actually know, so, you'd have to ask my parents to get the exact date. But from what I've heard . . . I can't remember if it was one-week-old or one-month-old, but I was somewhere around there and we lived in Building 10 in Apartment 21C, the big long terrace looking at the Empire State Building. Those were the days.

Christiane: And . . . yeah, sounds great. Were you . . . were you musical as a young child?

David: Well, I seemed to like music. There's a funny story which my parents told me. I also, didn't remember. I think when I was about, I don't know, five something I . . . maybe I was younger. We had a record of . . . I think it was . . . "It's a Small, Small World," and I was playing it over and over again and trying to sing along with it, and I was nowhere near it. And my mother said to my father, well, we know one thing's for sure. He's not going to be a musician. But then the story goes, one day I got it. And that's kind of like a microcosm of my . . . of . . . of how I became a musician, I found, because there were . . . always were people much more talented than me or who could pick up things more quickly. But I was always a very determined player and I kept practicing things and . . . until I figured them out. so . . . interesting.

Christiane: So, were you playing the piano back then or were you . . . ?

Christiane: No, we didn't have a piano. I was . . . once I got into music, I was begging my parents for a piano. But with six of us in a three-bedroom apartment, the answer was always no, we don't have enough room. So, I didn't ever . . . didn't even know where a C was on the piano until I got to Eastman School of Music much later, and there was a piano in every practice room. And that's when I started to mess around with piano.

Christiane: And where did you and your siblings go to school as young children?

David: Well, I started actually in the Hudson Guild, what we called nursery school, where my mother was a teacher in the Head Start program. And actually, my teacher was Emma Johnson, who is the mother of Whoopi Goldberg. And . . .

Christiane: Wow, that's great.

David: So, we knew them . . . well my brother knew Whoopi better. He was in acting classes with her. So, that was like my favorite nursery school teacher. And then we all went to PS 33 . . . so, PS 33 and then IS 70. And then we went to different high schools.

Christiane: And was it in PS 33 that you started to get interested in music or how . . . more interested?

Christiane: It was. We had a teacher there, Mr. Scott, who was an African-American trumpet-player, and when we were very young, we'd go to auditorium and assembly, I guess they called it. And . . . and one time he . . . he would play the William Tell Overture for us . . . [hums the William Tell Overture] which I think is like . . . we thought it was the Lone Ranger. So, we were all very impressed with that. And then he conducted an orchestra. So, in the fourth and fifth grade, you could play in the orchestra if you wanted. I guess you had to do orchestra, or chorus, or something. I don't quite remember, but I began on cello. I wanted to play the saxophone, but . . . I had seen somebody playing the saxophone, I think, as a younger student. And . . . but he said, we don't have any saxophones. So, I ended up playing cello. So, I played cello in the fourth and fifth grade, and that's where I began music. And then I went to IS 70. That's where I started saxophone.

Christiane: And what . . . what was it that drew you to the saxophone? It's interesting.

David: You know, I don't really know to this day, but I was very adamant about it. I think it was in PS 33 when I saw somebody playing it who I guess had his own saxophone. And I kind of was fixated on that. So, I asked very adamantly to play saxophone at IS 70, when I chose music there. And Mr. Sheek told me, well, why don't you start on clarinet? All the good saxophone players start on clarinet. And I said, I don't want to play clarinet. I want to play saxophone. I found out later other people said that, too. I don't know why he let me play saxophone, but he did, and the rest is history.

Christiane: So, it was there that you first became interested in jazz, also?

David: Yes. So, I began in concert band, and the program was an art-based curriculum where all of us had to . . . in like . . . in the sixth grade, we chose like four different things to choose . . . to try. And then in the seventh grade, we picked something. We had musical theater, we had drama, we had chorus, we had band, and we didn't have orchestra, just band. So, my first teacher was Meryl Sax, who still comes to some of my concerts, and she was a student-teacher then, I think, or in her first year under Jerry Sheek, who was . . . who ran the . . . ran the music program. And so, I played in the concert band. I started at about 12, I guess in the seventh grade. They gave me a saxophone and I began practicing. And, you know, that's where I basically learned. I didn't take any private lessons before then. And in the eighth grade, I auditioned for what was called The Stage Band, which was like a big band. And I got into the big band. It was very democratic. I had to go in and play with the guys in the band, and then they voted. Super seventies.

Christiane: Wow. Yeah.

David: And . . . and so, I got voted in. There was another student who was, you know, who had played saxophone before he got there. So, he was sort of, you know, a little bit more confident and, you know, and so, Sheek said, well, you're both very good, but, you know, the guys in the band felt like you were a little bit better and pointed to me. And I was very, very elated by that. And that's where we began playing jazz . . . jazz music. We played Buddy Rich songs, we played Tito Puente, and we did all kinds of things. And then I met a friend in that band named Pablo Carey, who lived on 29th Street, played trombone, and his father was a jazz musician named . . . a jazz pianist named Cecil Young, who I think at that time was living mostly in New Haven. I don't remember, but all of his records

were at Pablo's house. So, I used to go over there, and that's . . . he's the person that turned me on to Dexter Gordon, and Cannonball Adderley, and Duke Ellington and everything else. We used to listen to records and we both went to the same high school. So, then I was kind of on my way.

Christiane: Right. So, it was playing in that band and that experience, that drew you more towards jazz than classical music further?

David: Absolutely. I mean, we played class- so-called classical music in concert band and I did that too. But yeah, jazz was just what I . . . I gravitated to. It was more fun all the cool kids, we get to go . . . we were good, you know, we got to play and people would cheer for us and played Oye Como Va and all the people would scream and everything. [hums song and mimics crowd screaming] You know, seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade. So, it was a lot of fun. Gave me a lot of confidence. I was a, you know, I was . . . I was shy and sort of, you know, picked on a fair amount. And once I began getting good at saxophone, kind of gave me a little bit more confidence. And I was a . . . I was okay with the cool kids, you know. So, yeah.

Christiane: Yeah, definitely an attraction, yeah.

David: It definitely . . . It definitely . . . yeah, but that's . . . that's true. I mean, growing up in this neighborhood at that time and going to PS 33 at that time and IS 70 at that time with the arts-based curriculums, surely, you know, affected the direction I went in because . . . I think I mentioned it the other day that, you know, my parents were on the cusp of buying a brownstone in Park Slope and leaving Penn South. And if they had done that when I was about seven, then I would never have gone to IS 70, and I doubt very seriously whether I would have become a jazz musician. So, sometimes we think we're in control. Like I always would say, like, well, I was 14. I just decided I want to be a jazz musician. But in many ways, we are . . . I mean, I did, but if I had gone to a different school, I would've had different experiences and I would have done something else. So, it's kind of interesting.

Christiane: You told me before your . . . your parents were pretty determined to have you go to PS 33, right, as opposed to some of the other schools that you might have chosen?

David: Yes. Well, my parents . . . yeah, my parents were definitely, you know, Penn South, you know, this is like a

middle-income, you know, affordable housing. And then on the other side of 9th Avenue, you have lower income housing. And the school, PS 33, is right in the middle. So, I think that was all by design. These were built in the early sixties, you know, when, you know, the civil rights movement and . . . and . . . and integration and these kinds of ideas. And so, that was the idea. And my father and mother were very . . . they believe very strongly, still do, in that idea. My mother worked at Head Start over at Hudson Guild and . . . and so, yeah, they . . . they believed in that and we all went there. My sister, you know, it was kind of sad because I think, well, what I remember happening is that, you know, as we got to third grade or fourth grade, a lot of the people here began pulling their kids out and sending them to PS 11 or PS 41, which they weren't really told to go to, so I don't know how they did that. But you know how people do. So, I think the whole experiment and the demographics were, you know, became tilted in the wrong direction and by the time my sister graduated from PS 33, I think seven years after me . . . so, that would have been, oh, I don't know, I don't remember now, but maybe . . . maybe 1980, you know, something like that, '79/'80. I think she was one of the few non-minorities in the school, but don't quote me, you have to talk to her about that. But so, yes, they were very, very adamant about that. And, you know, but the school has changed a lot. I mean, I was lucky because soon as the advent of computers came in and all of this, they began to . . . schools needed to . . . to fund all of these computers. And the music programs went out the window. I went back to . . . to visit Mr. Scott. I used to go back and see them, and even after he retired, he used to practice down in the basement, come there and practice down in the basement. I went down there one time and, by this time I was already out of college, and he was down there practicing and we got a chance to catch up and talk. It was really nice. He still remembered me. And against the brick wall in the basement of that school, were all of the string instruments just sitting there. And I said, don't they use those anymore? He goes, no, they don't use them anymore.

Christiane: Wow . . . wow.

David: You know, And I told Barry Harris, who I later spent a lot of time with about it and he goes, Man, we got to get those instruments out of there, man, and give them to people. You know, I don't . . . I don't . . . I don't remember if we ever did.

Christiane: So, they were there because nobody was playing?

David: Yeah, they were there from the remnants because there was just no music program anymore. There was no orchestra.

Christiane: Oh, wow.

David: And in IS 70, they completely got rid of all of that arts . . . arts-based curriculum. They needed the money for the computers or whatever. And there's . . . there's no, there's, I mean, there's technically . . . now it's the Lab School, there's technically a music teacher there, but it's nothing like it was. I mean, we put on productions every . . . Every year, they put on productions, Chorus Line.

Christiane: Wow, right.

David: Like, you know, the Wayans brothers went there, you know, there were a lot of . . . it was a really great scene. And . . . and, you know, most of the people that I was in the band with went to Stuyvesant. You know, I went to Music and Art, but it's like . . . it wasn't like doing all this music somehow interfered with their ability to get high scores somehow interfered with their ability to get high scores in academic, you know, endeavors. So, I mean, but, you know, that's . . .

Christiane: Right. And being at PS 33 must have really made you comfortable in all sorts of different kinds of environments, too. I imagine that helped later in your playing.

David: Yeah, well, I think there's . . . I always felt like there's a correlation between, you know, my experience in public school here in New York City at that time and my gravitation into the, you know, the world of Black-American music. So, you know, because I was around, I mean, from the time I was in nursery school, like I said, my . . . my nursery school teacher was an African-American woman, right, I was in the sandbox with people from all different cultures, the same thing at PS 33. Mr. Scott was an African-American man. So, I always was . . . I didn't ever think that that was weird or, you know, most prejudice, I think, comes from fear of the unknown. Most fear comes from the unknown. So, as you separate people into suburbs and all these kinds of things, which my parents were really adamantly against, anti-suburbia, you know, then you get, you know, you get these little . . . people gravitate to like kinds. So, I didn't have that kind of experience. I had a multicultural experience, multi-economic experience, and the same thing was true at IS 70, and the same thing was true at Music and Art. So,

as I began to get jobs later on, after I went to Eastman School of Music, which was a completely different experience and was not easy for me because I . . . it was . . . that's a whole other thing because that was not as multicultural at all, and, you know, but that's another story. You know, I began to . . . I came back and hung out at Jazz Cultural Theatre with . . . with Barry Harris and, you know, all these great, you know, creators of . . . of jazz music. And I, you know, had friends or, you know, they kind of, you know, they . . . they would feel . . . they would talk to me about feeling sort of a weird vibe of . . . racially, or this, that, or the other thing. I never really felt that.

Christiane: Right.

David: And . . . and I . . . when I joined the Count Basie Orchestra, I was one of two white people. I think maybe when I first joined, I was the only one for a minute, you know. And, you know, I . . . I never felt any vibe at all. I mean, you know, I just didn't. I've always felt welcomed. And I . . . I've thought about that a lot and wondered about it. And I think that maybe we could attribute that to the experiences that I had growing up here in Penn South and going to those schools, even though, you know, there were other experiences too. I mean, there were getting mugged and getting beat up and there were other things too. But again, like when you're in an environment like that, you realize that there are good people and bad people doing good and bad things and has nothing to do with . . . it can't be generalized into something like race or nationality or anything like that, you know? So, I think . . . I think that's what, you know, my father told me once recently, he said, well, you know, I always knew that if I sent you to another school like Wagner, you know, you would get maybe a better cognitive education. He said, but I felt like the things that you would learn in public school, you couldn't learn there, and they were more valuable to him.

Christiane: Yeah.

David: You know, it's interesting.

Christiane: It is interesting. It's also interesting because Penn South at that time was pretty much completely white . . .

David: Correct.

Christiane: As . . . from what I understand, and it was really

the schools that gave you that integrated experience.

David: Yeah . . . yeah. And you know, and . . . and like I said, for whatever reason, a lot of . . . I guess for the cognitive thing, but . . . but I mean most of the people that I went to . . . to IS 70 with, a lot of them were from here. So-

Christiane: Okay, so it was mixed.

David: Yeah, I think people kind of pulled their kids out of PS 33 a little bit. But then IS 70 was . . . so, you know, it was . . . it was . . . they had a mix . . . they had a mix. Even the parents that had pulled their kids out, I think, of PS 33 ended up getting a pretty good experience at . . . at IS 70. But I don't know. I love PS 33. I remember my fifth-grade teacher, Miss Bercovici, and I used to go back and see her, you know. And yeah, so, I sent my . . . well, I didn't send . . . my kids didn't go. I think that was your next question, right? My kids didn't go to P.S. 33 for elementary school, they . . . but they did go there for pre-K. And you know, they were . . . when . . . my wife worked full time and I was always busy. So, you know, when they were little, they went to daycare over at the V.A. where my . . . my wife worked. And then you know, we paid for that. And then . . . and I saw this sign outside, like pre-K starting at PS 33, you know. So, I said, let me go in here and ask about this, you know. So, I went in and the principal showed me the classes and it was like, great. It was like a mixed, you know, it was like this similar thing. So, I said, like, it's free, you know, like, let's put them there. So, we did. We put them there. And Coleman had the similar experience. It was only one year, but he had a similar experience. He was going back to see Mrs. Scott, his teacher, for years. But then they didn't go there. They went to Midtown West on 48th Street, which is where my mother had . . . began teaching. So, we knew about that school. And so, we . . . we applied for that school and . . . and they both went there and that school was closer, in many ways, it was more like . . . well, it was close to PS 33 in . . . in . . . in its . . . in its conception. It was, you know, very mixed. I mean, when they started, they had homeless kids in there. It was very economically diverse and, you know, racially diverse. Kids there, a lot of actors, a lot of kids of mixed, you know, ethnicities and . . . and it was very arts-based curriculum. Like they had this program, you know, Piano in the Brain where everybody learned piano from . . . so, again, you know, growing up here and going there and they did all of that and, you know, they didn't celebrate religious holidays there. They celebrated like Martin Luther King. I mean, it was a bit

hippie, but they . . . all the kids sang in chorus. So, my kids got, you know, a similar experience in a different way much more recently, although . . . because that wasn't available at those schools.

Christiane: And you mentioned now after you finished at IS 70, you went to Music and Art, which was somewhat similar I guess, in its atmosphere, would you say, or . . . ?

David: I would say . . . I would say in terms of economic diverse . . . economic and cultural diversity, yes. You know, it was . . . but it was much more, I mean, curricular . . . curriculum wise, it was . . . it was very music focused, you know, for me . . .

Christiane: And jazz focused as well, or . . . ?

David: Oh, yeah. I mean . . . well, I do both. You know, I do both, I can do . . . played in the concert band every year. And I played in . . . I auditioned for the jazz band. I played in a jazz band, I was still . . . Pablo was there, so, we were hanging out all the time and listening to records and just practicing. And then I began to study privately. I think I began to study privately even before I went there, because there were a couple of guys that . . . but I . . . I started studying with Lee Konitz, a pretty famous saxophone player. And the way that happened was interesting too, because I didn't even know who Lee was. I was listening to Dexter Gordon, things like this, and my father . . . my parents didn't know anything about jazz, so, they, you know . . . But . . . but my dad was, as you probably know, the Director of the American Civil Liberties Union. And so, on the board of directors was Nat Hentoff, who's a famous jazz writer. And so, I guess he was over at the house one time and he heard me practicing or whatever it was. And my dad asked him, you know, well, I don't know who would be . . . who would be a good teacher? So, he recommends Lee Konitz. And so, my dad says, I got you this teacher. Nat says he's really famous, you know. So, I'm like, I never heard of him, you know. And, you know, and so, then, of course, I found out who he was. I began studying with him intermittently and, you know, so, and I was doing that at that time. And then I was taking lessons with another . . . with Frank Perowsky, who's also . . . was . . . used to play on "The Wiz" and, you know, so, I took some lessons, but never like really saxophone lessons. I mean, we're getting into my real development. But it's interesting because I was sort of . . . when I look back on it, pretty self-taught because Lee and Frank, they never talked to me about saxophone.

They only talked to me about music.

Christiane: Music.

David: Lee had me playing with him. Frank played piano and we just . . . gave me tunes and improvised. He even told me later, goes, well, man, you know, you didn't need that. You already played the saxophone pretty good. And I was . . . like . . . like with the "Small, Small World" thing, I was always practicing my saxophone.

Christiane: And did you practice in Penn South? Did the neighbors complain, or . . . ?

David: I did. Not at first, I mean, I practiced for many, many years here. I had the . . . my parents had a terrace and it was enclosed. So, that was my room. So, I think that probably helped. I was outside of the, you know, and . . . and I practiced . . . yeah, I practiced at Penn South. I'd come home and practice and I started practicing more and more and more as I got into high school. You know, I started practicing more. I played with records. So, sometimes it was kind of loud. And then my brother was two years behind me. He went to Music and Art and he played drums and his room was like over probably the bedroom of the downstairs neighbors. So, when we both started practicing, we did have some problems with the neighbors. The upstairs neighbors, the Vogels, Stan was actually a bass player early on in his life, and he was a jazz lover, so, we never got any complaints from them. The downstairs neighbors, I don't know. I think they were under some stress and it was getting to be a lot, so I had to start practicing other places. I later found out that my dad was . . . they were trying to evict us or something . . .

Christiane: From Penn South?

David: I think so, but I don't know. You'd have to ask him the story. It got . . . never got to that point, but I guess he told me I couldn't practice after a certain time. And so, then I used to go to my dad's office, like I'd come home from school and I'd practiced for a couple of hours and then I'd go to his office after dinner and practice at his office, which was on 43rd Street where the ACLU was then, between Broadway and . . . and 6th, I think. And I practiced there. And then I used to get up really early and ride the train up to . . . to school, 135th Street. I'd get there early and I'd play my long tones, like in the stairway, as all these kids were walking out of the . . . up

the hill, you know, and so, I did what I had to do. You know, I was pretty determined. When I think back on it, I'm . . . I'm sort of confused as to how I ended up . . . how I was like that. But I was . . . it was good. I wouldn't . . . I wouldn't have been successful if I didn't have that kind of . . . that kind of . . . the talent to just practice.

Christiane: Right, the drive.

David: That was what my talent was, I think, was to practice and, you know, this sort of desire to get things right, you know.

Christiane: Right, interesting. Yeah, a lot of drive it sounds like.

David: Right, because some people can just do things immediately and they don't practice at all. They can't . . . they hate practicing. You know, it's weird.

Christiane: So, you mentioned the Eastman School of Music before. After you finished with Music and Art, you went there. From what you said, it was a pretty different experience from . . .

David: Yeah, it was different because all of those . . . it was much more . . . there were only maybe a handful of people of color there and probably just a handful of people from urban areas, both those people being pretty much the same people. And so, it was my first exposure to like, you know, sort of white America, if you will. Like . . . and you know, these people most of these . . . these singers and . . . they . . . most of them came from money and they came from other parts of the country that were probably pretty monochromatic in terms of racial diversity. And, you know, it was 1980 and those like . . . the young Republicans, and it was like Ronald Reagan then. So, it was kind of a culture shock for me because I grew up here with my parents and, you know, with all of their liberal ideas and civil-rights activism and things like these things. And, you know, I . . . I didn't really think that existed anymore, you know. So, it's funny, like, I remember in the dining hall, like there was a group of African-Americans and they would all sit at the same table together. And I started sitting with them. I mean, my roommate was African-American from Cincinnati, Patrick Gandy. We're still good friends. So, he was sitting over there. So, I'm sitting over there with them. And I realized that, I mean, I had much more in common with them because they were all

from urban areas.

Christiane: Right.

David: I mean, there was this woman, Soraya. She was from Newark. I don't know what happened to her. Laura Olivieri, she . . . she grew up in these buildings down by Delancey Street.

Christiane: Oh, okay.

David: Those are a little older, but it was the same idea, I think. They're private now. So, you know, I was from the city and it was a culture shock. It was . . . it was a little bit of an adjustment for sure. But I stayed there for six years, got my two degrees, made some great friends. You know, I could connect all the things that happened in my career afterwards to people I met there, so . . .

Christiane: And that's where you met Barry Harris, or you studied with him, is that right?

David: That's where I met him because he . . . he was one of the artists that was brought to the school for a week or so, to do a workshop and work with the band. There were many of them Dave Holland, Roland Hanna, Ron Carter. You know, they were . . . they were regularly, once . . . once every semester they would bring somebody to Eastman to do workshops and to work and play with us. So, that's where I met Barry in my sophomore year. And he came and . . . and gave workshops and I was very enamored with him. I was too shy to . . . to participate. That's an interesting story. Almost everybody else was super-fast, you know, and I was not super-fast, so, I didn't want to . . . I didn't want to get out my horn. So, I just sat by the wall in the back and listened to everything he said. And then I tried to practice whatever I could. And then when I got . . . when I graduated from Eastman with my grad degree, I . . . I came back home to live with my parents in Building 6 for . . . get my feet on the ground. And at that time, Barry Harris had a club, the Jazz Cultural Theatre, which was on 8th Avenue between 28th and 29th Street.

Christiane: Oh wow, okay.

David: So, I started just going there all the time, you know.

Christiane: Wow yeah.

David: And . . . and that's when I . . . that was about the last year it was open, but I was there all the time. And I went to his classes and that's when I really spent a lot of time with him, you know.

Christiane: And what was it like there? What was it . . .

David: Oh, it was . . . it was a great place. It was . . . I mean, Barry is a . . . it wasn't expensive. They didn't serve alcohol. It was all about music. And it was a hang where all the musicians used to come and hang out. And it was a teaching place. I mean, he . . . he gave . . . he would give classes every day. He would give classes like piano class and then . . . oh, no . . . yeah, piano class and then the singers and then the instrumentals. And he had a beginning, intermediate and advanced instrumental class. I went to the advanced class and we got out of there sometimes at 4:00 a.m., you know, and I learned that the air is actually fresh in New York City around 4:00 . . . 4:30 a.m. It's like a lot . . . It just . . . it's different, not as many cars and it's actually like a little bit clearer. So, you know, and . . . and, you know, The Baroness _____ was still around. That's . . . Barry lived in her place out in Weehawken. And I used to go out there sometimes and she used to drive her Bentley in and park it in front of the place and sit there with her cigarette holder and her cigarette . . . weren't supposed to be smoking, I don't think, but nobody would say anything. So, you know, but Barry was a real . . . he, you know, Barry was a saint in some ways. He was always trying to help people and he had many, many people there that, you know, sort of like I say, like a . . . like almost like a Saint of the Wayward Soul, you know. And people would come in there and maybe they didn't have any money or they didn't have a place to sleep or whatever it was. And, you know, he would do everything he could to help them out. Always. And there were some great musicians in there. I met Tommy Turrentine, got to hang out with him, that's the brother of Stanley Turrentine, who you may know, but I mean, all these great jazz musicians were hanging out in there and they had jam sessions at night. And then on the weekends, you know, Barry would play with his trio or Jaki Byard would play with his Apollo Stompers big band or Junior Cook and Bill Hardman would play. So, I mean, it was like . . . and all these people were . . . couldn't get any gigs in like the Village Vanguard and these places, and they were still around. So, he was a place again, you know, to . . . to . . . to get the real . . . the musicians that were still around, a place to play. And it was affordable. And so, it was a great scene. I mean, Harold Vick, Clifford Jordan, Billy Higgins, all these

people would come in, you know, and . . . and hang out. You know, you wouldn't see them in there every day, but they would come and say hello and hang out. So, it was a . . . it was a great scene. And so many of us, you know, so many of us learned, you know, as a result of that environment. And I met many people there that I ended up recording with and making bands with and getting gigs from people that I met there. So, you know, and Barry went on, you know, after he closed the place, he went on to, you know, I mean, he's . . . he's a legend now with the advent of, you know, YouTube and everything like that, because he . . . he, I mean, he . . . he's . . . he's really I mean, I'm a disciple of his approach, but there are so many all over the world, Italian Pasquale Grasso, and, you know, just lots of . . . lots of people That . . . the person I just did the thing with, Rossano Sportiello, he's . . . he's, you know, all these people come from his teaching, which incidentally, you know, it's interesting because he was really one of the people, even when he was in Detroit, that was always teaching. He kind of developed a methodology to teach the music of bebop outside of, you know, established Eurocentric academia. You know, and at a time where, you know, jazz had a reputation of drug addicts and this, and that, and the other thing. And they . . . and then they couldn't get any degrees because they didn't have any.

Christiane: Right.

David: You know, they didn't have a degree because they couldn't let them into the school. The whole catch-22 thing. And, you know, this was like a community underground thing where, like everybody went by his house, Coltrane went by his house, you know, in Detroit. So, you know, it's interesting because when they began to . . . when they began to accept into, you know, accept that jazz was legitimate music and, you know, put . . . and started teaching it in the conservatories, you know, they didn't . . . they didn't call up Barry Harris or Clark Terry or, you know, Dizzy Gillespie and say, hey . . . or Benny Golson or any of these people that were in their prime and say, hey, can you guys put together a curriculum for us? They just went and did their own thing. So, Barry, you know, was never asked, you know. But meanwhile, his methodology is directly connected to all of these people. Charles McPherson was over there when he was 12. I mean, you know, so, you know, it's . . . he . . . he did it his own way, you know. And now it's interesting because now there's like . . . there are, because of that and because of the Internet and all the videos that are out there, there's a . . . there's a . . . there's a big culture of people who . . . who believe in that. So, it's an interesting, you know, it's an

interesting . . . it's interesting . . . human beings. Very interesting,

Christiane: What a . . . a remarkable person he was.

David: Oh, yeah . . . yeah . . . yeah. He was, well, you can't even describe him. I mean, he was nothing but beauty. He was all about beauty and love and doing the right thing. He was really . . . I mean, it's, I'd say, almost like a religion. Very powerful, and in many people, you can even say cult on some levels, you know. But I think religion is the same way when you get into it, you kind of don't . . . can't get out of it or don't want to get out of it, you know,

Christiane: And was his group the first group you played with professionally or who was . . . what was the first group you started-?

David: Well, my first professional gig was when I was in high school and they were making the movie "Fame," and they came to the high school and they said, hey, we're making this movie and we want it to be really realistic . . . Alan Parker . . . and we want it to be really realistic and we want . . . so, we want . . . anybody who wants to audition, can audition. I was like, I don't want to audition for no movie, man. I want to play jazz. I don't want to make no movie, you know. But then what happened is there was . . . there was a recording session. They wanted us . . . they wanted the music in the movie to be recorded by people in high school. So, some of my friends, Chris . . . Chris Rogers, and Bob Franceschini, and these guys that I was in school with, were on this recording and I was up in Connecticut in the summer with my parents and somehow somebody found the number and called and said, hey, Dave, can you come in to New York and make this recording session? So, I was like, of course, I went in and I recorded . . . played my alto on this "hot lunch jam," and then we filmed the scene. And so, I'm in a very short scene standing on a table, you know, playing and things. So, that was like my first professional engagement that I can remember. And I made like 600 bucks or something as a . . . as an extra. And I bought my soprano saxophone with that back in the day, looked on bylines. You guys remember that, the newspaper, that was before all this online stuff you go by the bylines, had all the classified . . . it was great. And I found it in there and I bought it. So, after I got out of Eastman, I mean, I worked you know, I worked gigs at . . . while I was up in Rochester, little gigs and stuff. I began to work professionally. I began to stay there in the summers and, you

know, but once I came back to New York, you know, again, I began to work some gigs, weddings, things like this. But the first . . . yeah, that's . . . that's the . . . probably the first really named-person that I played with. And I don't have a poster here, but in Connecticut we have a poster . . . poster . . . maybe it's here somewhere. I don't have it up, of the tour that Barry brought me on with. It was Barry Harris, Jimmy Ponder on guitar, Chuck Israels on bass, Joe Hunt on drums, and me. And it was like a week of teaching in Spain and playing concerts. That was in 1987 and it was a very intimidating experience but also, filled with learning. So, it was great, you know, and . . . and then shortly after that, from people that I had met at the Jazz Cultural Theatre, we began to have jam sessions and things, and one of the bass players was a bassist who's still around named Pat O'Leary, and he was working at that time with a very famous saxophonist named Illinois Jacquet, who had a big band. So, as it turned out, somebody got sick in the saxophone section and I came home one day from doing nothing or whatever I was doing, and I had a message on my machine and I pressed the button and it said, [doing an impression] Dave Glasser, this is Illinois Jacquet. I want to know if you want to play in my band. So, I called him up and I said . . . when I tell this story now, people are like, who's Illinois . . . I mean students . . . jazz students at the school. Nobody knows who he is.

Christiane: They don't know who he is.

David: No, it's a sad state of affairs out there on some levels, but . . . So, yeah, I went out there and I started playing with him and I played with his band and we were playing at the Blue Note and we . . . we did this cruise ship and I met Dexter Gordon and all these different people that were on there and Clark Terry and all these people were on there. Get some good pictures from that back in the day. And that was in 1988, second half of that year. And then . . . then in January of 1989, another friend of mine, Byron Stripling, who . . . we had gone to Eastman together, he was at that time playing lead trumpet with the Count Basie Orchestra. So, they had an opening and he recommended me and Frank Foster called me and I . . . I . . . I went out with the Basie band for about two and a half years. And then I was . . . that band, as you said before, was working so much, like 41 to 45 weeks a year of one-nighters. I couldn't really do anything else. And I wasn't, at that point, so crazy about the road. So, I left the band and then I began to work again with Illinois for about four or five years. And then I left his band in '95, and then I got an opportunity to sub again for Jessie Davis, another great alto player who was in Clark

Terry's group. It was a big-band thing. And I went out there and Clark didn't know me, but I . . . and Jesse couldn't make the Vanguard, so, I got asked to do that. And . . . and then I played with Clark's quintet for about 11 years. So, that sorts of . . .

Christiane: One thing led to another, really.

David: Yeah. I mean, they never used my degrees for anything. Everything was always word of mouth. So . . .

Christiane: And you weren't living in Penn South at that time, is that right?

David: Okay. So, that's a good question. Well, I was living with my parents until . . . for a little while. And then I . . . then I was not. I got an apartment in Inwood and I . . . uptown and I lived up there for, yeah, for most of that time period. I think when I was with Jacquet and Basie, I lived in Inwood. My father, I think when I came home from school in 1986, put me on the list here, but it was about a ten-year wait.

Christiane: Okay.

David: Right. So . . . so, I . . . put me on the list for a studio. So, I was living up there and then right about the time that I joined Clark, like in '95 . . . I think in '96, I got an apartment here. So, while I was with Clark Terry, I was living here. So, from 1996, my first apartment was in Building 6 A where my parents live. I was in 10E and they were in 16F. Then I got married and, my . . . my wife and I got . . . so, I put in for an internal one-bedroom. And so, we got a one bedroom and that was in the other side of the building, 11B And then we had two children and then . . . so, I got married in 2002. So, that was around then when we got the one-bedroom apartment. And then maybe . . . it must have been before 2012 when we came into here, because I don't think Gil was ten, but I don't remember. I've got to look it up in there, but . . .

Christiane: Was it . . . was it easy in that . . . in that time for your father just to put your name on the list, or did you have to be in any sort of lottery? Do you know?

David: There was no lottery at that time and that was a problem because the list had gotten to be so big that there were like tens of thousands of names. And so, when the names came up, like . . . like you'd start coming up for apartments and you'd be

like nowhere near getting one. And . . . and I remember Carmen Santiago, who I met with, you know, she said that the, you know, the thing is, is that there were so many people that they . . . some of those people on that list, they couldn't find them.

Christiane: Right.

David: Like they . . . they . . . their addresses had changed and . . . so, they would have to call like a lot of people.

Christiane: Wow, right.

David: Like to see these apartments because they wouldn't get 100% response-rate because of the . . . the length of time. Now, it's still, I think, a long . . . a long wait. But now it's probably . . . they've got a better system and, you know, they . . . they went to that lottery system, I think, to keep the lists at a manageable . . . like when they get down to about 2000 or whatever their numbers are. I don't know. You'd have ask them, but that's the system that . . . so, they . . . and now, you know, somebody said to me, oh, you should put your sons on the list. I don't think you can do that anymore. I haven't asked, but . . .

Christiane: I don't think so.

David: I can't imagine that they would allow that, you know, so, they would have to be in the lottery. But, you know, back in the day, it was who you know, you know.

Christiane: Right.

David: I mean, my parents got into this place because my grandfather was in the glass business and he knew a lot of people in . . . He was also the head of the Glaziers union. So, these . . . this complex was built by the International Lady Garment Workers Union. So, there was . . . he had a . . . connections and he knew about it. I mean, I don't know if he had a, you know, hand in them getting in, but he just knew that they were these apartments. And he told my dad about it. And so, I don't know if they went through an application process or if they just said, hey, you want an apartment? We got one for you.

Christiane: Right.

David: I don't know. You know, but . . . yeah.

Christiane: When you moved back in after living in Inwood, did your life change in any way from being . . . living in a . . . Penn South?

David: Yeah, I mean, surely it was different. You know, I noticed right away that, well, it was . . . the overhead was lower, so, that was very good. But, you know, Inwood is like a neighborhood, you know. of like . . . it was like kind of multicultural and, you know, working class people. A lot of Dominican, some old Irish people . . . just, you know, things. And it was like kind of like a . . . whereas when I moved down here, I noticed immediately that it was just a different energy. Like if you went into the supermarket in Inwood, like everybody was really nice and relaxed, you know? And if you went into the supermarket here, everybody was like super stressed out, you know . . . [mimics angry grumbles] It's like . . . I was like, wow. You know, like . . . and so, I took it upon myself to try as hard as I could to diffuse some of that high anxiety. But, you know, other than that, it was great. I mean, I love my apartment. I love the E-apartment. You know, I fixed it up. I put a floor in. I loved being by myself there. So, you know, that was a good time, you know, and . . . and there's nothing like, you know, there's nothing like Penn South. I mean, you know, my wife and I both work jobs and, you know, we pay a surcharge now, but . . . but when we began, you know, when I got in, I . . . my income was pretty low. And so, it was great. And, you know, now that we've been working for 30 years, you know, like we, you know, we were able to, you know, we have a house, you know, so, we were able to do that because of the affordability of this place. So, it definitely, you know, they could . . . they could house everybody, you know, they could house everybody on the whole planet with this kind of system, but then nobody's really profiting from it. So, you know, socialism, I guess.

Christiane: Right.

David: But, you know, and there were a lot of like, you know, Russian socialists, like when we were kids, you know, wait, what was . . . "The Daily Worker" magazine and everything . . . handing the thing out. So, you know, I don't know. It's just what it is, you know.

Christiane: Times change.

David: Yeah. I mean, it's just what it is. I mean, every time they vote to go private, I mean, I can't bring myself to do

that. Because the vote came up before I got here, and if it had been . . . I would never have had this opportunity, so . . . even though it's not enough of these kinds of places and it's a lottery, I think it's still good.

Christiane: Right . . . right.

David: Of course, the expenses have gone up a lot because the buildings are aging, so . . . I mean, when I first got my E apartment in 1996, I think it cost \$7,000 or \$9,000 or something, and it was like \$183 or something was the maintenance. It shortly went up quite dramatically because of the windows and the . . . being replaced and all of the, you know, upgrades, and the elevators, and everything. So, it's . . . it's . . . but it's still, for living in this part of town, it's . . . and I don't think we could . . . I don't . . . my wife and I . . . I don't . . . we wouldn't have been able to live . . . none of my friends could live in Manhattan. It's ridiculous. Most of them can't even leave and . . . live in Brooklyn. You know . . . you know, most people, now . . . most musicians live in, you know, in Jersey. So . . .

Christiane: Right. And how did . . . how did you meet your wife?

David: So, I met my wife at . . . at a fund raiser for the Charlie Parker Festival. You can't see them, but I have a couple of posters up here. So, Charlie Parker Festival still happens. It's down in Tompkins Square Park and then it expanded also to Marcus Garvey Park. So, I was working with bass player named Earl May at the time, along with Larry Ham and a great singer named Catherine Russell, who's been knocking on the Grammy door lately. And we played that festival a couple of years in a row. And then the director at that time, Sam Cervi, asked me if I would put a band together to play up in Marcus Garvey Park, which I did. It was Clark Terry, and Norman Simmons, and Earl May, and Idris Muhammad, and me. And so, we played that and it was really fun. And so, because of that, I got invited to this . . . It wasn't really a fundraiser. It was really a cocktail hour for the board members, and the benefactors, and people who had made contributions. So, as it turned out, my wife, she loved jazz. She came from New Orleans and she . . . Kathy is her name, by the way. She . . . she has a good friend named Joan who . . . they always go to jazz festivals. They'd been to the Charlie Parker Festival many times. And . . . and . . . and . . . and so, Joan's father had passed away. So, Kathy . . . Joan said, why don't you just make a donation to the Charlie Parker Foundation, you know. So, she did in his name. So, because of

that, she got invited to this thing and that's where I met her. And so, we talked a little bit. And then . . . then she got asked by Sam to work hospitality backstage at Marcus Garvey, so, I saw her again. And so, yeah, there you go. The rest is history. She put on a nice skirt and that was it. Lassoed again.

Christiane: And you have two sons, is that correct?

David: We do. We have two sons, Gil and Coleman. They grew up here, of course, and Gil is now entering his third year at University of Buffalo studying aerospace engineering. And Coleman is entering his second year at the New School University, which is where I teach and I've taught for the last 27 years. And he now lives in an apartment in Astoria with some of his classmates. And so, yeah, that's . . . so, we're moving on.

Christiane: Do you think their experience growing up in Penn South differed from yours in any way or . . . ?

David: Not really, because I think we sent them to the right kind of schools because we sent them to PS 33 for pre-K, and then we sent them to Midtown West and then we sent them to MAT, which is a school down in Chinatown, like on Catherine Street. So, all of those schools were like multicultural, multi-economically diverse schools. And we did that. We . . . we still felt that that was important to us to have them have that kind of an experience. Of course, they chose their own high schools, Gil went to Brooklyn Tech, Coleman went to LaGuardia, so . . . You know, I think it was kind of similar, quite frankly, even though I think that the neighborhood has changed. But, you know, the school system is different now, so that . . . like a lot of the people going to those schools are coming from different places. So, it's like a different format where they create a school that has these kinds of values and then people who value that send their student . . . their kids there. It's not for everyone, that's for sure, clearly.

Christiane: You mentioned the New School. How did it come about that you started teaching there?

David: So, after I had just joined Clark, like in January of '96, I got a call from the then director of the New School Jazz Program, Martin Mueller, he asked me if I wanted to teach a course there on Barry Harris's approach to learning to improvise. So, this was 1996, and Barry just died like last year. So, I was like, why don't you ask Barry? Why are you

asking me, you know? So, he said, well, we did ask Barry and he didn't want to do it. He recommended you. So, I said, oh, okay. So, I started teaching that class in 1996. And then, you know, I just taught that one class for a while. And then I began to get some private students and one thing led to another. And now I've . . . you know, my wife makes the joke, you know, my husband's extension at . . . you don't know his phone number at the New School? 911DAVE. You know, because every time the . . . they would need somebody, they would call me and I was nearby. And so, I began to do more and more and more. And I've been quite involved there, still technically part-time faculty, but we have a union contract there. So, it's an interesting school and yeah, I've been teaching there for . . . I think I'm getting ready to enter my twenty . . . I guess it'll be 28 years in January.

Christiane: Does teaching there, influence how you play in any way, or . . . ?

David: Oh yeah, I think . . . I think it does. It's a good program for me because it's . . . it's not really, you know, so many of the . . . even the good jazz programs now you know they're . . . they're pretty structured along the same kinds of lines as sort of the classical programs, you know, where you study all the history and this and that. It's not that we don't study history, it's not that we don't think that's important, but it's really . . . the music was always really handed down orally and, you know, individuality and sort of the process of discovery in learning the music I think was really essential . . . there was all the different unique people that . . . that . . . that came up as artists out of the music. So, we kind of try to emphasize that at the New School. Always have. The New School began by . . . by hiring people who were not teachers, who did not have degrees to kind of . . . along the lines of the Barry Harris thing. So, you know, Reggie Workman and . . . so many of them . . . Charlie Persip, and . . . and Jimmy Owens, and Jane Ira Bloom, and there were just so many . . . Chico Hamilton, you know. I'm forgetting a lot of people that are gone now. And so, you know, that was a . . . and it was a, you know, it was a great thing. So, we try to keep with that, you know, as much as we can and still kind of have a value and a structure. So, it's a very student driven, individual, creative kind of environment. And I think it helps me because, I mean, I play a lot down there with the . . . I like to play with the students that are . . . that are able to, once they start getting some stuff together. So, I do a lot of playing down there with them. And I'm actually going to be playing, you know, at Smalls with a group of . . . I've done this before. I made a record with some students from

there. So, we're still trying to keep this sort of old-style-mentorship philosophy alive. And, you know, with freedom comes responsibility. So, when you ask a bunch of 18 to 22-year-olds to make their own choices, the self-motivated ones can really benefit from that. But . . . so, you have to kind of recognize who's who with that and give people a structure when they need it and guidance when they need it. But they kind of have to ask for it because it's different in that regard. So, it's design-your -own-dish, you know. If you want to have the freedom to take what you want, and do what you want, then you have to take responsibility for your success on that. Now we're there to help. And of course, we have many, many classes that you can take. So, that's . . . that's the kind of . . . and it works for me because I was kind of a self-driven person. I would have really liked that, you know, I would have liked that, you know, I had a lot of, you know, I had a lot of ideas that I didn't agree with what was going on at Eastman School of Music. So, I think that's a good place for me, even though I certainly could teach some . . . in some places, I think it would be, you know, my . . . my value is in . . . is in historical . . . I don't know much about today's music, so, you know, I could clearly benefit from teaching and so could students in an environment like that. But that's what I teach, you know, and the students gravitate to me. They take my classes by choice for the most part. And I've also . . . I had . . . had an opportunity to work with the dean and kind of revamped the core curriculum, which is what's required for everybody. And I've incorporated a lot of Barry Harris's approaches into that core curriculum as well. So, I think we're making some headway, you know, and . . . and, you know, so, we'll see where it goes.

Christiane: Yeah. And have some of your students gone on to have successful careers?

David: Oh, sure. I mean . . . I mean, a lot of, you know, really famous people have taken my class. I mean, you know, Robert Glasper, you know, there's lots of people, Keyon Harrold, I mean, there's lots of graduates from the New School Jazz Program that have done really, really well and, you know, ones that you don't know are also, successful. I mean, I don't, you know, music and jazz is not really visualized as a, you know . . . you know, a monetarily-beneficial career choice. But, you know, what I've come to realize is that I think music is really good for human health and development. And, you know, I think it's . . . lots of people . . . I mean, there's lots of people that have graduated and they're in music. There's lots of people making money in the music industry. I mean, I'm one of them, that

aren't necessarily household names. And I tell people that all the time, you know. You don't know who they are, but they have houses and they send their kids to college playing music or being . . . working in the music industry. So, let's just get off of that, this is a dead-end idea, you know? Now, if you want to be . . . if you just want to be the next John Coltrane, then yeah, okay, that's pretty narrow. But you know, there are those that pursue it that way and they end up, you know, finding . . . finding their way. And sometimes they become photographers, sometimes they become lawyers, but they still play music, sometimes they become psychologists, whatever, you know. But . . . but I mean, the economy is what it is. You know, we have to navigate that and . . .

Christiane: Right.

David: You know, that's always been like that, right? I mean, even in the . . . many . . . in the aristocracy, you know what I'm saying, it wasn't like . . . So, you know, but I think . . . I think what's great is that even if people go on to other careers economically, like the more people we have that recognize the benefits of art and recognize also what it takes to be an artist, the better chance we have of . . . of creating a system. And we've done it at times, but it's not very good right now, that supports and values art as an important part of holistic health for human beings. Art has always been on the planet. We know that. So, you know, because it doesn't generate profit or, you know, in a capitalistic system, you know, does that mean that it has no value? I think that's dangerous thinking. But I think that's kind of where we're at. So, you know, when you're . . . when you're an artist . . . that's what I tell my students, you're in the service industry, like . . . and, you know, we were just . . . I was just out in Phenix with the Count Basie Orchestra. And, you know, we're playing music that is about joy and love and healing and soothing. That's what the blues is. That's what . . . that's why the music is here. That's why the music evolved. And so, it's still the same. We had two sold out concerts and everybody afterwards is grinning ear to ear. They're elated. That's the power of jazz. That's what jazz does to people. So, you know, that's what we . . . that's what I'm trying to teach people to do, because I think that, you know, if we get to a point where people realize, hey, we need this, if we . . . if there's nobody left who can do it, it's over. So, that's what I tell my students. Like, even there's, you know, I mean, there's a value in this. There's a value in it for you. It's therapeutic. Even if you don't ever play outside, there's a value in it for . . . but there's a

value in it for others. It's really about that. It's about sharing. It's about the emotional transference. I guess I can end with my . . . my . . . my definition of music. That music is the . . . Music is the expression and exchange of emotions through the organization of sound in time and space. So, that's what I tell my students, to just get them off of, you know, this kind of music and that kind of music and all these categories and all these presumptions and all these generalizations that are the . . . that are the problems in society. So, let's just get away from all of that and let's just think of this as this and then any kind of music that you're in . . . you're dealing with or you're involved with, you have to think about how to achieve these outcomes within this framework. So, you know, I think the New School is a good place for that, and I don't think I would have probably come up with that if I hadn't been teaching at the New School and had to be exposed to all these different ways of doing things and have to interact with them and accept them; you know, that my way is not the only way, you know. I think a lot of the schools, that's not the case. Their way is the way you're learning. And there's advantages to that. You know, I mean, there's a reason curriculums are put together by people in my age group because, like I said, like these people all know what they're doing, you know? So . . . but it's a really interesting experiment, you know,

Christiane: That's a really beautiful description of music and the power of music and the power of art.

David: Yeah, any kind of art, you know, whether it's . . . literature or, you know, drama or singing, it's . . . it's, you know, it's all . . . but it's different. Like if you go to _____, you see . . . you know, if you go to a symphony concert and you go to a jazz concert, jazz concert can be so many things because they use jazz to try many things. So, that could be like anything from, you know, the Count Basie Orchestra to completely free improvisation. Again . . . but, you know, it's organized in a different way, but same idea. Should move you, should touch you, should heal you, should affect you in deeper ways that regular activities in life don't. Yeah.

Christiane: So, you're still playing with the Count Basie Orchestra then?

David: I am. I joined the band in 1989 and worked for about two-and-a-half years. And then, as I mentioned, I left and did those other things and then I guess about six or seven years ago, I started subbing again and then, oh, it was an opening.

So, yes, I am . . . I think maybe the eighth lead-alto-player in that band. I don't . . . I have to count them all again. I think Buster Smith, Earle Warren, Marshal Royal, Bobby Plater, Danny Turner, Manny Boyd, yeah . . . oh, John Kelson. Marshall McDonald, I'm the ninth. Okay, so . . . so, you know, but the band's been going for 80 years or something like that. So, started in 1930-something, I don't know . . . you'd have to ask Scotty Barnhart, our leader, but, yeah, I'm playing with them again. I tour with them. We don't work constantly like we used to, but, you know, we just got back from Phoenix and Denver. We have a gig in Vermont tomorrow . . . not tomorrow, Sunday. We're going to be in Japan over . . . around Thanksgiving . . . beginning . . . end of . . . November, beginning of December, you know. So, yeah, it's nice. It's great. I love the music. It's such an honor to try to play that chair. There's such a rich history there. And it's really . . . I'm really humbled to be having that opportunity. And it's . . . it's enough, you know, it allows me to stay engaged with it while I'm mostly teaching and getting into my sixties here and kind of like trying to find the right balance. And I also play gigs of my own. You know, it takes a lot of effort to . . . to put out your own works, that's a lot of effort. And I'm pretty busy with the teaching and the touring. But like I said, I play . . . play at Smalls, like once in, you know, a couple times a year now. And, you know, I'm not actively really pushing to try to put tours together, but you never know. And, you know, I went to Germany, did a thing over there, a duet of like poetry and improvised saxophone with a famous German actor, Dominic Raacke, so, you know, I do some different things. Stay busy, still play my instruments, and it's what I do.

Christiane: And you also have some recordings, right?

David: Sure, I have . . . oh, yeah, I mean, I'm on a fair amount of recordings. I've got about six or seven of them out of my own name that, you know, they're on Spotify and all that kind of stuff. And then, you know, I've . . . I'm on a couple of records with Count Basie Orchestra from back in the day and then one recent . . . couple recently, and I'm on a few records with Clark Terry and a couple of other things. So, sure . . .

Christiane: Is there one of your albums that you feel is . . . is one of your favorites?

David: I think, well, I . . . I like one that's called "Dreams Askew, Dreams Anew" which is maybe kind of hard to find. That's the one I did with Barry Harris and Lewis Nash and Peter

Washington. I'm fond of that one. And then I'd say the other two most recent ones, "Crossover" and my last one was "Hypocrisy Democracy," which is a bit more of . . . sort of . . . I forget what the word they use now in classical music, but it's . . . it's more . . . more connected directly to what was happening, you know, a few years ago. So, all the compositions have names that are connected to observations of society. If music is, you know, a reflection or commentary on society, then that one is . . . is more indicative of that, so . . .

Christiane: So, these are your own compositions on some of the albums.

David: Yes. Yeah. All my albums have some of my own compositions, or most, and standards that people know. I mean, the first two I mentioned, "Dreams Askew" and . . . and "Crossover," those are more, you know, classic sounding, straight-ahead jazz quartet and quintet. And then "Hypocrisy Democracy" is the same instrumentation. It's a jazz quartet, but it's just probably not . . . wouldn't be classified probably as . . . I don't like classifications, as I mentioned, but it's bebop or straight-ahead or whatever, you know. I don't like to . . . I don't like to focus on differences. I like to focus on commonalities with people. And I think maybe that's a result of my experience growing up here. You know, I think when we start focusing on differences and putting each other in categories and . . . it just separates us, you know, it's like Dizzy Gillespie never wanted to call the music bebop. If you read his book, "To Be, or Not . . . to Bop," he said that was, you know . . . some journalist or something, you know, he said, like, you know, why don't we . . . why can't we just say, ladies and gentlemen, this is our music? And I prefer that kind of an approach because people associate things with words and . . . and they associate things with words and experiences like, you know, like I've had many times, people come up to me and say, you know . . . you know, I don't like jazz, but I like this. And I forget my friend Eddie Locke, somebody came up to him and said . . . said that to us, and he goes, well, I don't know what you've been listening to, but this is jazz, you know? So, I mean, you know, and then people ask me all the time, well, what kind of music . . . they see us with our instruments on the airplane, what kind of music do you play? I say good music, you know.

Christiane: Right.

David: It kind of messes them up, you know. You know, why don't you just go check it out and see if you like it instead of

deciding, you know, because people don't do that, they . . . And that's what the "Hypocrisy Democracy" record is kind of about, like independent thought and really researching things and making your own decisions from an informed place. Not easy to do. Takes a lot of time and a lot of strength. But I think it's . . . I think it's important. I think that the . . . well, I'm not here to tell you what I think, but I think the profit . . . profiteering and the, you know, the powers that are, you know, dependent on us, really don't want us thinking independently because it's much easier to market to people who, you know what they think, or you can control what they think, so . . . anyways, now you know what kind of crazy people are living in Penn South.

Christiane: Yes, well, that was a great explanation.

David: I'm one of them.

Christiane: Great explanations.

David: Don't . . . now don't start saying all people in Penn South are like me because they're definitely not.

Christiane: It sounds like you feel you've been interest . . . you've been influenced by a wide variety of jazz masters who've come before you. Are there any that really stand out aside, I know Barry Harris, but others?

David: Well, yeah, I mean, I come from the tradition of the music. I mean, I spend a lot of time . . . most of the music I listen to now is what I . . . what people would probably refer to as the creators of the music, you know, from Louis Armstrong to Dinah Washington, to, you know, and my main influences when I was young were like, you know, Johnny Hodges, and Charlie Parker, and Dexter Gordon, and Cannonball Adderley, and John Coltrane. You know, and later on I got into the depths of, you know, a wider variety. But you know . . . you know, I think . . . I think all the music that's being made today comes from . . . those were the creators of the music. So, it's really about learning and connecting and it's not so much about learning this person's style and that person's style, but it's about, what is the common thread between all those musicians? What's the common thread from Jelly Roll Morton all the way through . . . everybody . . . all the way through Ornette Coleman. What is the common thread? When you find out what that is, then you can play whatever you want in whatever context you want; I think. And that just comes from immersion, you know, and time, you know,

you get a lot of students that are like, how do I like . . . well, I mean, you can practice as much as you want and you can learn certain things. You can accumulate a high quantity of information; you can become a master on your instrument at an early age. But one thing that you can't rush is life experience. And that's what I think really fuels great music and great art. So, you got to wait for that. You've got to go out and live. It's a great idea. Learn as much as you can, you know, practice as much as you can. And because once . . . once you get into life, you might not have that much time to do that so, you know, then you can start to just live life and see how your . . . how it unfolds. Yeah.

Christiane: Yeah.

David: That's kind of what I did.

Christiane: Yeah. Well, that's . . . that's all so interesting and inspiring to hear you talk.

David: Oh, thank you.

Christiane: But that's pretty much all that I had on my list of . . . to ask you if there's anything else you want to add.

David: I think I've talked enough. I can play a couple of notes, I'll add . . . I'll add . . . I'll just add something musical.

David plays a jazzy melody

Christiane: Thank you. That was a wonderful ending.

David: That's all