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Re O.P.

Many people have written or called me to ask whether I know anything about the condition of Oscar Peterson.

As you may have heard, Oscar suffered a stroke a few months ago at the Blue Note in New York. He told me later that he felt his left hand going numb. Ray Brown said to him after a set, "You sound as if you can't feel the keys."

"I can't," Oscar said. He went home to Canada for medical treatment and approached the problem of recovering as he does everything: with will.

A few days before these three issues went to press, I spoke to Oscar on the telephone. The use of his left hand is returning, and he's playing. He can comp with that hand, and even the double octaves are coming back. An amazing man.

Jazz Black and White
Part II

It is a widespread belief among blacks that they understand white society, because they work in it, serve it, cook for it, wait on it, carry its bags, know its kitchens and parlors and porches; but white society does not understand them. The latter is true. White society does not know black society. But the former is not true: blacks do not understand white society either.

This becomes evident when you read the book *Notes and Tones*, a series of interviews compiled by drummer Arthur Taylor and published, apparently at his own expense, in 1977. The first significant thing one notices is that not one of the jazz musicians Taylor interviewed is white. He evidently was not interested in what white musicians think, perhaps does not even consider them jazz musicians. He repeatedly asks the subjects if they are more comfortable being interviewed by him, a black musician, as opposed, we must presume — although he never says so — to some journalist, probably white. Predictably, they all tell him what he wants to hear: yes.

A certain frustrated bafflement infuses these interviews. Musician after musician thinks the white business world is wicked, exploitative, corrupt. But many of them do not begin to grasp the scope of the evil, and the book reveals nothing so much as the width and depth of the chasm between white and black society in America.

Taylor asks Miles Davis, "Do you have any particular hobbies?"

Miles says, "Making fun of white folks on television."

Then Miles gets to the effect of ubiquitous imagery on the psyche. He says, "I can't stand those white movies about white problems. I'd like to see a movie dealing with Negroes as human beings, not just a black maid and a doctor. I'd like to see one in everyday life . . . like an executive, or the head of a company. One who falls in love and out of love; one who drives a sports car; and one who acts like me or like you; who has girls, white girls, colored girls, Chinese and Hawaiian and German and French, you know? They don't have that in the movies, so I don't go . . . . I have a funny feeling all day after I've seen a movie with the same white problems. You know, full of girls with long hair and where everybody's having a lot of fun, and we don't have any fun. You don't see any Negroes. It makes me feel funny . . . ."

When the book was published, Miles was at the peak of his power and talent and fame, one of the great artists of jazz, and he could have all the girls he wanted, including French: he had been through a love affair with Juliette Greco. But the movies still made him feel funny.

Randy Weston tells Taylor, who has just referred to jazz as "our music":

"We don't control anything. We should control our own press. We have to depend upon the white status quo to judge us and gauge us with everything from polls to popularity contests to decide who gets this, who gets five stars, who gets one star. I mean it's a combination of all these factors. And again, the reason behind it all is racism."

He is wrong of course. It is not racism. It is greed.

Weston too is proprietary about jazz. He says, "I look upon this music as our folk music, as the folk music of the Afro-American, this music we call jazz."

And then the paradox: he is proud of being an American, repeating the cliche that imperceptibly eroded our souls in Canada when we overheard it, the perpetual propaganda that the United States is the greatest country on earth. In an age of instant global electronic communications — on the Larry King show recently, there was a call from South Africa — Americans, including Bill Clinton, still do not understand how insulting that claim is to everyone else. Weston says, "Our music is so powerful, so domineering. It is the whole source of creativity of the greatest country in the world."

In 1961 in New York, when I had left Down Beat and was desperately short of money, I found out fast who my friends were: those who remained friendly when I could, apparently, no longer give them publicity. One of them was Philly Joe Jones, who urged me to come and live in his house until I got straight. I never forgot it. And so I am not surprised when he, first, describes the racism of white southerners in the Los Angeles Police Department, then says, "I meet beautiful people all over the world, and when I'm talking to them, I don't think about color."

Ron Carter is a gusher of sunlit insights into the situation of jazz in white America, including this one: "All of a sudden, black studies programs have been getting hot . . . . Two things disturb me. Number one, in the black studies programs they're interested in art, drama, playwriting, poetry, and dance. No one mentions music, though music is the black man's only contribu-

tion to the United States besides slave labor. Right? The other thing is that when a college is besieged by so-called militant black students and liberal white students to get a black studies program going, they grab the first black cat they see, hoping he can do the job . . . . A lot of black cats are not qualified to fill that role. I only hope that they don't become so unqualified that they blow everything for everybody else."

The sense of alienation is most poignantly expressed by Johnny Griffin who by then had, like Taylor, moved to Europe. He tells Taylor, "I'm here in Europe because it's lighter on me than it is in America. You don't have 35 or 40 million black have-nots over here like you have in America. But you (do) have them here because I see them sweeping the streets of Paris and Holland. It's the black man's ass up in the air. He's stooping down picking up the dirt everywhere. The main thing is I'm here because I did something wrong on my planet and they sent me here to pay my dues. I figure pretty soon my dues should be paid, and they're going to call me back home, so I can rest in peace."

Taylor says, "You're not serious about that, are you?"

"I can't be from this place, Arthur," Griffin says. "There is no love and I love people. All I see is hate around me, except for a few of my friends. That's what's wrong with the earth today. Black and white on this planet, there is no love, there is only hate. I was thinking about reading some books on anarchy because all this government stuff is b.s. anyway. These governments drawing lines between men, tribes between tribes. Yellow people against brown people against black against Moslems against Christians against Hindus. What is all of that? I know I'm not from this planet; I can't be. I must be from some place else in the universe, because I'm a total misfit. I can't get with none of this."

Taylor asks, "What do you think of protest in music?"

Johnny says, "I learned how to play music for the beauty that I could derive from compositions and for the catharsis that it gives me when I am able to express myself. That's why I study my instrument so I can play it better and I am better able to express myself. For me to take my saxophone and make squawks like chickens or elephant sounds is the worst thing I could do. I would stop playing. I'm always talking about using my horn like a machine-gun but not to kill anybody. I want to shoot people with notes of love. I want them to laugh. I want to give them something positive. I'm not playing music for a negative purpose, 'cause that's like a cancer. I'm not studying music to give myself cancer. I'm playing my horn to bring out the positive things in people so they can enjoy what I'm doing. Actually, if I'm too negative I can't even play. I can play actually because as soon as I start playing, music takes me away from this b.s. around me. In fact music is the thing that saves me. It's my relief."

And of the United States, he says, "It's a shame because it's such a beautiful country. And there are some nice people there. But the people that control the business we're in are mean. They tell you, you can work and you can't work. They control the unions; they control the agencies; they own the joints; they own the magazines; they are the critics; they own the newspapers; they own all the mass communications; they own the whole thing. It's the same thing over here, the same ones. Same party. It's a hell of a conspiracy."

The Taylor book is fascinating. It offers insights to be found in no other book about jazz that I have encountered. If the reader is black, I would guess that he or she would find it consoling; if the reader is white and has any feeling for his fellow man, he will find it poignant, and even in places heart-breaking. He will realize that even Miles was frightened.

It is against this background of alienation that one must examine the claims and assertions of "the likes of" Herb Boyd and particularly Stanley Crouch and Wynton Marsalis. Crouch and Marsalis have formed an odd symbiotic relationship. Because of Marsalis' endless public utterances and his assumption that he speaks for all black musicians, some of the younger black jazz players in New York resent him. He is musical director of Jazz at Lincoln Center; Crouch is artistic adviser. (Marcus Roberts, a Marsalis friend, directs the jazz orchestra.)

The relationship is not proving salubrious for jazz. Given this curious accretion of power in two sets of hands, one should try to understand it.

When he was 21 years old (older than Stan Getz was when he recorded Early Autumn) and pushed into the forefront by Columbia records (later Sony) and its black jazz artists-and-repertoire director George Butler, Marsalis began an assault on his seniors, including some major artists. He told Hollie I. West, from JazzTimes magazine, in an interview published in Ju 1983:

"We gotta drop some bombs here. Indict some motherfuckers. Talk about the music. I don't want to cut Freddie (Hubbard) down. I'd rather cut Miles down than Freddie.

"He ain't doin' nothing. I think Freddie has taken enough heat. He's a great trumpet player. He's a great musician.

"(Miles) was never my idol. I resent what he's doing because it gives the whole scene such a let-down . . . . I think Bird would roll over in his grave of he knew what was going on . . . .

"There's that interview with Miles where he said he didn't hear me and he's not interested in hearing me because we're all imitating Fats Navarro. He imitated the shit out of Fats Navarro the first five years, and Clark Terry and Louis Armstrong and Monk and Dizzy. Then he sits up and talks about how he listens to Journey and Frank Sinatra. He's just co-signing white boys, just tomming."

The empowerment of Marsalis and Crouch brings about a serious and qualitative change in the social and economic situation in jazz.

The anti-white attitude about which Sonny Rollins spoke with

such casual candor was present in some musicians 30 and more years ago. I recall Clark Terry telling me, about 20 years ago, that he caught heat from "the brothers" because the drummer he liked to use on gigs in Los Angeles was white.

But it goes back before that. We must keep in mind the widely-disseminated over-simplification that Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and their associations invented bebop to keep "the white boys" off the bandstand at Minton's in Harlem.

The myth is silly on the face of it. That men of such genius would devote their energies and thought to so small and negative a purpose is a confession of ignorance. Parker was quoted as saying that he and his associates were not revolting against anything, they were only taking the music in the direction in which they thought it should go. The early jazz musicians, including Earl Hines and Louis Armstrong, thought they were in the entertainment business. It was writings about the music that gradually convinced them they were developing an art form, after which the music became in varying degrees self-conscious. The beboppers were aware of the scope of their skills. But the idea that bop was invented to exclude "white boys" is refutable on at least three counts besides the foregoing.

1. It was not in the great and glorious heart of Dizzy Gillespie to do something so mean.

2. If white exclusion was the purpose, why did Parker and Gillespie adopt young white disciples, such as Stan Levey, Red Rodney, Al Haig, Gerry Mulligan, Phil Woods, Dodo Marmarosa, George Wallington, and others and facilitate their growth in the evolving new style? Throughout his life, Dizzy was, like Miles, color-blind in his hiring practices, and so was Charlie Parker. Asked for his idea of the perfect pianist, Bud Powell said, "Al Haig."

3. The myth rests on an ignorance of the way musicians hear. I once was standing with David Raksin at a rehearsal by a symphony orchestra of Alfred Newman's music for the film Captain from Castille. At one point I said, "Dave, there's a chord change coming up here that I've always liked and I don't know what it is." The chord came and Dave told me what it was, spelled it all the way up through the orchestra, and told me what instruments were on the parts.

When he is conducting a symphony orchestra in rehearsal, Andre Previn never interrupts to make corrections. He will let the orchestra play an entire movement, then go over it with them in detail: he has caught every error and remembered it. I had heard this about him. When I asked him if it was true, he said, "Well, it's only a matter of being polite." It is, is it?

During World War II, Captain Robert Farnon would sit by a short-wave radio in England, listening to band broadcasts from the United States and writing down the new tunes. That's why his Canadian army orchestra had them even before Glenn Miller did.

Dizzy, who was a close friend of Farnon's, told me in jest that he was glad Bob had given up trumpet for score paper because he was just that good on the horn.

To suggest that men of the caliber of Raksin, Previn, and Farnon — and Eddie Sauter and Paul Weston and many more — could not sit down at a front table in Minton's and tell you exactly what the musicians were doing is ludicrous. To have the physical skill to execute the music, of course, was another matter. But there were many who did have the skill, and Parker and Gillespie abetted them, black and white musicians alike.

They didn't use altered and substitute chords to keep anybody off the bandstand; they used them because they were interesting. To be sure, they did not suffer fools gladly, and anyone who wanted to sit in with them and could not cut it was encouraged to leave. Dizzy used to remember with a chuckle a very bad tenor player — black — who was importunate enough to try to play with them. Dizzy called him Demon and said "He was the original freedom player. Freedom from melody, freedom from harmony, and freedom from time."

Composer Chico O'Farrill once remarked that if the record companies wanted to put enough publicity behind the campaign, they could put Stravinsky on the hit charts. Something like that happened to Richard Strauss when the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* made the theme of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* something of a hit. The film *Elvira Madigan* did it for Mozart.

In the early 1980s, Columbia Records (now Sony) decided to put the weight of their promotional and publicity departments behind Wynton Marsalis. When the Lincoln Center jazz program began commissions of new compositions, Marsalis gave the first one to himself, and since then has passed them out to the tight circle of his friends. Not one commission has gone to a white musician; and not one of the artists celebrated by the program is white.

And for ten years Marsalis has used his power and prestige to issue a steady flow of pronunciamentos, in the form of letters to editors, magazine articles bearing his name, and interviews in which he seriously misrepresents jazz history in an unwavering attempt to exclude white musicians entirely from jazz. In an article for the December, 1984, issue of Keynote, the magazine of radio station WNCN, he said that "history is not about pushing the elements you don't like out of the picture," which of course is exactly what he does.

"Especially in America, our commitment is supposed to be to truth and accuracy. Being black, taking history in school was like a joke to me. Our perspective is never read or heard."

He says that "through much of America's history there has been such a negative racial climate that the contributions of black Americans have been overlooked . . . .

"Jazz was not a popular music — it was not evolved as dance music . . . . " This is nonsense; that's exactly how it began, and even its terminology — slow drag, for example — reflects its

origins in dance, not to mention the function of dance in African music.

Marsalis was known even in New Orleans to be a talker, and from the moment he achieved fame, he has issued a stream of fiats and jeremiads in newspaper articles and interviews. "Wynton's problem is his mouth," said an older — and, for the record, black — musician who likes him.

Some of what he has said has needed to be said. His criticism of the later music of Miles Davis, with its admixture of rock and other pop forms, is well taken. Because of the mystique, Miles got away with a lot of meretricious music. Needless to say, the Marsalis pronouncements did not escape the attention of Miles.

Miles said, after a speech Marsalis made at the Grammy Awards ceremony of 1984, "He sounded to me like he's supposed to be the savior of jazz. Sometimes people speak as though someone asked them a question. Well, nobody asked him a question."

Miles and Phil Woods were not the only ones to feel the sting of Marsalis' pontifications. Still only 23 at the time, he told a JazzTimes writer that Sonny Rollins and Ornette were "selling out," and that "Bird would roll over in his grave if he knew what was going on." This invocation of the name of a major innovator whom he never knew personally, this presumption of speaking for him, is the sort of thing that inspired some of the young black musicians in New York to call him, behind his back to be sure, Mr. Wisdom. And they stirred the impatience even of some of his friends, including Herbie Hancock, his record producer at the time. Hancock said, "Wynton's very much a thinker — things that come out of his mouth aren't just frivolities. But I've read some things in print that are a little harsh and opinionated — too narrow-minded. Up to a certain point, I'm glad he's saying a lot of things, but then he goes overboard."

Bassist Anthony Jackson, in an article titled *The New Dark Age*, published in the March-April 1991 issue of Bass Player, sailed into Marsalis for his hostility to some of the current experimentation in jazz and emphasis on The Tradition.

"The apologists, the insecure, and the take-that-jungle-music-off crowd," Jackson wrote, "could not destroy jazz. The innovators, upon whom the music has always depended for its incontrovertible strength, *would not* destroy it. Why, then, do we now find Mr. Marsalis and his congress of wanna-bes extolling the virtues of 'pure' jazz taking upon themselves the twin mantles of protector and rejuvenator? Inasmuch as the form has shown itself to be more than capable of withstanding the vicissitudes of neglect, corruption, revision, and outright attack, I maintain that this latest crop of 'redeemers' is more artistically bankrupt, morally hypocritical, and historically irrelevant than any that has come before. We are, in my opinion, witnessing no less than a modern cultural parallel to Germany in the 1930s, with a megalomaniacal 'arbiter of good taste' undertaking a redefinition and reclassification of a country's expressive potential, ostensibly to weed out contaminating influences. The underlying purpose is simply the muzzling and suppression of people whose expressive power, originality, and vitality are likely stronger than that of the leaders . . . ."

Whether by coincidence or not, the Anthony Jackson commentary appeared almost at the same time as the aforementioned Sonny Rollins New York Times interview recounting the pressures Rollins felt over hiring Jim Hall. It seems as if some of the black players, Jackson among them, are getting tired of the anti-white bias in jazz.

In the August 1993 issue of Down Beat, trumpeter Lester Bowie said of Marsalis, "Here's this cat, obviously, obviously — everybody *knows* this cat ain't got it. But they keep on pressing: 'He's got the technique, and any day he's gonna come up with this astounding new development.' Believe me, it ain't gonna happen. How long did it take Lee Morgan to play something of his own, or Clifford, or Booker Little? Wynton is a good musician, but he's been totally miscast. No way in the world is he the king of jazz, the king of trumpet . . . .

"You can't feel an emotional attachment because he's not playing *him*. But he can be the king of the *classical* trumpet players, because of his knowledge of jazz and harmony, because there's no way he can express hisself. He could completely revolutionize classical trumpet without a doubt. Get classical musicians to improvise, the way they used to. Then he'd be somebody I could respect."

A somewhat more compassionate view is that of John McNeil, one of that overlooked generation of jazz players conspicuous in his absence from the aforementioned Newsweek article. John is white. He is a far better jazz player than Wynton Marsalis, although for a time he was not playing because of an embouchure change.

"Wynton Marsalis," he says in a new book about trumpet-playing, "was and remains a triumph of marketing. Columbia Records took Wynton, a highly competent youngster who showed considerable promise, and marketed him as the greatest jazz player of this, and perhaps any other, generation. No organized promotion of such scope had ever been undertaken for a jazz artist. The hook, of course, was that Wynton also played classical music. This was a cross-promotional bonanza in Columbia's eyes, as indeed it turned out to be. The only drawback to all this advertising buildup and promotion was that the subject, Mr. Marsalis, didn't have time to mature as an artist before being thrust into the spotlight and informed that he was the greatest thing since the zipper.

"Billed as an icon, he could not be allowed to flail about and therefore needed to have coherent material and a ready-made style then and there. The need to be a creative voice before he was ready forced young Wynton to be highly derivative.

"This is not a new story. The late Sal Nistico once remarked

what a drag it was when a young cat got too much recognition too early. He felt that a lot of good players were hurt that way. Although a few trumpet players such as Clifford Brown and Booker Little developed personal sounds very early on in their careers, most players do not. Typically, finding that music which most completely expresses one's true self involves an arduous, sometimes long, journey. Miles said it more succinctly: 'It takes a long time to play like yourself.'

"The Marsalis phenomenon led to some rather curious results. Denied the chance to mature, Wynton was forced to acquire many of the trappings but not much of the substance of other jazz trumpeters, in particular 1960s Miles Davis. He put these forth as serious artistic musings or, worse, as innovation. In the 1980s, many young trumpeters either copied Wynton or began doing what Wynton had done — namely, re-creating the style of an earlier trumpet giant. As a result, we have a generation of players who have gotten the wrong message that mere imitation is enough and the ersatz will be rewarded. The whole point of being a jazz player — expressing yourself with your *own* voice — seems to have been missed. Time, as it so often does, will no doubt remedy this situation.

"Without a doubt, Wynton Marsalis has raised the standards of jazz trumpet playing, or rather, the standards of trumpet playing in a jazz context. Wynton possesses near-flawless technique and control, and has rightly become a model for trumpet-playing excellence among aspiring jazz trumpeters. Musically, he is showing signs of becoming less derivative. This is a good thing for the future of jazz since Wynton has become the jazz spokesman and arbiter of taste most familiar to the jazz public."

It took courage for McNeil and Bowie to say what they did. Marsalis now inspires fear. A gifted musician who had worked with him and found him wanting told me a year or so ago, "Wynton Marsalis ain't shit, and you can quote me." When I reminded him of this more recently, he said, "I'd prefer you didn't quote me. I might have to deal with him."

Marsalis would doubtless have escaped much criticism had the show-biz publicity machine not pushed him to such high visibility, and now to enormous power. I do not care for his playing. When he came to prominence with Art Blakey, I was initially impressed. But very soon I came to perceive him as a collection of undigested influences: four bars of Dizzy giving way to four bars of Clark Terry in turn passing into a passage of Miles Davis. There is nothing wrong with eclecticism, and all artists begin by — must begin by — imitating. Ten years ago, Miles Davis told the Los Angeles Times, "Wynton hasn't found his sound yet. He's got a lot of technique, but that's about it."

More bluntly, he told Marsalis:

"Without me, you'd be all *Flight of the Bumble Bee*."

I have heard Marsalis in concerts twice recently. The first was the White House jazz evening in honor of George Wein and the founding of the Newport jazz festival.

Marsalis came out with his group, each member of whom was a better jazz player than he. He announced that they were going to play a "tone poem" he had composed. It turned out to be *Three Blind Mice*, but such is the sycophancy — and perhaps the political correctness of this decade — that the Washington Post's jazz critic referred to it as a "beautifully crafted tone poem."

Marsalis had the misfortune to be followed first by Jon Faddis, who at a technical level, erased him, and then by Clark Terry and Red Rodney, both playing fluegelhorn with superb lyricism, destroyed him at the artistic level. Shortly after that, I saw him with a band led by Faddis at the JVC Jazz Festival at Lincoln Center, playing a tribute to Rex Stewart, influenced by the exiled-from-history Bix Beiderbecke. John McNeil may say he hears the start of a personal voice; I don't. And not once, not even for two bars, did Marsalis swing. He doesn't seem to know where the pulse is. He is a very academic trumpet player, whose sources are all too evident, the living fulfillment of Sir Thomas Beecham's ironic but brilliantly insightful dictum, "Mediocre composers borrow. Great composers steal." What is stolen becomes your own; but what you merely borrow, and do not truly assimilate, always remains the monogrammed property of someone else. Marsalis always owes.

The file of newspaper and magazine articles on Marsalis at the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University, and it is by no means complete, is very thick. Probably no jazz musician has ever received as much publicity as he: interviews, reviews, and articles over his own byline, all with the same tone of superiority. Occasionally he tells us how humble he is, and then tells us how good he is, as in a New Yorker profile by Whitney Balliett in which he says of his early experience at Tanglewood, "You see, I knew they couldn't believe that a 17-year-old who could play the hell out of classical music also knew a lot about jazz."

That race is much on Marsalis' mind is seen in his repeated statements about why he played classical music. At one point he said he got into it because he wanted to prove one of "the brothers" could perform it, as if Paul Robesone, Marian Anderson, Andre Watts, William Grant Still, Leontyne Price, William Warfield, Grace Bumbry, and Ulysses Kay had never been born. "I got into it because I dug the music," he told one interviewer. "Plus, I had always hear that black people couldn't play classical. That's bullshit. Music is music."

Much of what Marsalis says, as Herbie Hancock noted, needs saying. For example, Marsalis said:

"The people who really love this country, and realize how great this country is and could really be, are the ones who are responsible for educating our youth correctly. But they seem to have no respect for culture, and that is something that I think will damage our society in the long run. We will end up with culture being replaced by decadence.

"We can see this in the popular music of today. Just turn on the Friday night videos on television . . . .

"I have been asked by interviewers, 'What do you think about the message in rap records?' Rap records have no message: What you have essentially (are) some rhymes in iambic pentameter that have been expressed since the 1950s. So there's rhythm. I'll give them credit for that. But as a contribution to the history of Western music? To hold up the lyrics for comparison with everything else that has been written about man, about the conditions of life in this country? After all the great polemics and poems and pieces of music that have been written? Are we really going to stoop to that level now?

"Standards have become a very unpopular thing to defend in this country. Cultural education is suspect, and brings accusations of elitism . . . .

"Our problem is that we have replaced reality with bullshit. Anything can pass for art."

But then he gets into trouble for, among other things, his recurrent statements that one of the functions of jazz is to improve supposedly inferior popular music, which carries the strong undertone that what makes it inferior is that it was made by whites. For example, in a Down Beat interview in 1984, he said, "Jazz is about elevation and improvement. Jazz music always improves pop music. What Louis Armstrong did, singing songs by Gershwin and Irving Berlin, was improve them. Bird improved *I'll Remember April*, just like Beethoven improved folk melodies."

It is abject nonsense. In his whole career, Wynton Marsalis has never produced anything as melodic as any eight bars of Jerome Kern — or George Gershwin or Harold Arlen. As for that Don Raye-Gene De Paul song *I'll Remember April*, it is one of the most gorgeous that I know, and Parker undoubtedly played it because he loved it. McCoy Tyner said:

"There are certain buildings you pass that seem to stand forever because they were built so structurally sound. It's the same with certain songs. They just lend themselves as improvisational vehicles. And they're good learning tools. Monk, Ellington, Cole Porter. I put these people in the category of composers whose music just lives on and on. It's the structure of their compositions that will forever stand the test of time."

I remember Donald Byrd saying, "After all my years of playing, I've come to the conclusion that the hardest thing in jazz to do is to play straight melody and get some feeling into it." It is something Wynton Marsalis has never learned to do, and it is the secret of his weakness on ballads.

It is not coincidence that jazz evolved in tandem with the creation in the United States, between roughly 1915 and 1955, of an unprecedented body of popular music that was also high art. This accretion of magnificent songs provided jazz players with an extraordinary pool of familiar material to play on. Had that repertoire not been developed, jazz would not be the art form that it is. Marsalis has it exactly backwards, and because of what seems all too clearly an ethnic agenda. When he talks of tradition, he mentions Stravinsky, Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach, Armstrong, Ellington, and Parker — but never Kern and Youmans and Porter, and even more obviously never Bill Evans or Scott LaFaro. He assuredly does not mention the influence of Frank Trumbauer on Lester Young, whose influence in turn leads to Charlie Parker. Nor does he mention Bix. And he certainly doesn't mention Harry James, one of the trumpeters Miles admired, who for all his lugubrious ballads was capable of fiery and brilliant jazz. The omissions of names in Marsalis' invocations of the gods speaks thunderously loud, and when you put them together with the writings of his apparent friend and mentor Stanley Crouch, a pattern is evident. "Wynton," one New York musician said, "is Charlie McCarthy to Stanley's Edgar Bergen." The pattern is being noticed.

A few weeks ago, on August 15, 1993, Howard Reich, the perceptive and always interesting arts critic of the Chicago Tribune, wrote a piece on the start of the third season of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Reich cited the successes of the program, including a performance of Duke Ellington's *Deep South Suite*, which had not been played in 47 years.

"Though most of what has been written about us, has been positive," Rob Gibson told Reich, "there's one criticism that hurts me. That's when people say we've been racist, that we've honored music by blacks over music by whites.

"Now, I realize I'm a white guy speaking about a music that's played by a lot of African Americans, but I believe that the criticism is not fair.

"I've simply never looked at this music in terms of color. Jazz is an American creation, the most important and most sophisticated American music of this century. And the whole point is that it was made by Americans. It's not about black and white."

Reich wrote that "in these race-conscious times, some critics complain that Jazz at Lincoln Center has not paid homage to such major white artists as Gil Evans and Dave Brubeck.

"From this listener's point of view, the accusation of racism is flimsy at best, disingenuous at worst."

But Reich has apparently not examined the programs of Lincoln Center while reading the writings of Crouch and Marsalis. Nowhere, in ten years of interminable interviews and articles and pronouncements, does Marsalis make a single mention of a white jazz musician. Not one that I have been able to find, in any event. Bix Beiderbecke, Frank Trumbauer, Eddie Sauter, Bill Challis, Bill Evans, Gil Evans, Gerry Mulligan, Scott LaFaro, Jim Hall, Jimmy Raney, Jack Teagarden, Benny Goodman (who, as clarinetist Walt Levinsky recently noted, revolutionized clarinet playing), Artie Shaw, Woody Herman, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang, each in his way a major contributor to jazz,

simply never existed. And the self-revelation of Stanley Crouch in his inability to reconcile Miles Davis' admiration and indeed love for Bill Evans and Gil Evans must be added to the alloy. This is conspicuous in his *Sketches of Pain* article.

Writer Gene Santoro, in the March 1, 1993 issue of The Nation, wrote that "I've complained that Marsalis' attitudes, and to a large extent his music, have been stunted by an overly high-toned moral seriousness based on the politics of exclusion. From my perspective, that stance denied jazz's history of expansion, accretion and appropriation."

Other criticisms have arisen, including a furor over, as Gary Giddins wrote in the Village Voice, "the debut of Marsalis's *In This House / On This Morning*, an underrehearsed and apparently unfinished suite that had Lincoln Center's customers fleeing for the exits and journalists pondering the propriety of an institution handing its first commission to its own musical director . . . . "

And then came the massacre. Rob Gibson sent a letter to every member of the Lincoln Center jazz orchestra over the age of thirty telling him he was fired. It is inconceivable that Gibson did this without the consent — if he did not indeed do it at the behest — of Stanley Crouch and Marsalis. (Crouch does have that much power: Giddins, who writes that he and Crouch have been close for twenty years, notes in his Voice article that Crouch vetoed an idea for a concert on music of Don Redman to be conducted by Loren Schoenberg.) Shades of *Logan's Run*, not to mention *Soylant Green*. Here was discrimination with a vengeance, not racism this time but agism. And after all of Marsalis' statements about respect for The Tradition. "As a young person myself," he said in 1984, "I can appreciate the fact that it's hip to be young, but I look to older people for guidance. I expect them to know more than I know, and I don't go around acting as if the reverse were true. Nor do I wish that, as I get older myself, I could go back to being younger. Older people trying to be young look stupid."

He had also said: "The promotion by the media of pop culture has affected our society on several levels." He wrote: "One result is that our culture has become very youth-oriented — we have a terrible hang-up about age in this country."

He had passed 30 when the Lincoln Center massacre occurred. The public response was immediate. Aside from denial of the value of having younger musicians work with veterans, the act contravened American law: job discrimination by age is illegal. And Gibson had to rescind the order, notifying the dismissed musicians that they were rehired. The incident left a bad taste, and called into question the competence of Marsalis, Crouch, and Gibson to run so valuable a program.

All of this entails the pressures to be politically correct, and isn't confined to Lincoln Center's jazz program. For example, a couple of years ago, pianist John Eaton, from Washington D.C., played a recital at the Museum of Natural History in Denver, Colorado. He was asked by the museum staff to play a program that was politically correct. They asked him to perform only music by black composers. Eaton dismissed this "impertinent proviso" as "a new version of an old practice dormant since the McCarthy years." He told the museum staff he would play what he felt like playing or not come to Denver. The museum staff relented — a little. He arrived in Denver. The emcee at the museum made what Eaton considered a "bizarre request."

The emcee asked, "Would it be all right if we put a portrait of Duke Ellington on the stage while you're playing, Mr. Eaton?"

Eaton, amazed though he was, agreed, noting in passing that the painting was "the most grotesque likeness of anybody I've ever seen," although Ellington, as he put it, was "an excruciatingly handsome" man.

Eaton played his recital, which in fact ended with a selection of Ellington pieces. It was not enough. He was accused after the performance by a museum staffer of not appreciating "adequately the importance of Afro-America in the music you played tonight."

Eaton was sufficiently disturbed about the incident to write an article for the Washington Post about it; and the Rocky Mountain News was embarrassed enough for Denver to write an editorial about it.

A Jewish friend of mine said, "If you say 'Good morning' to some guys they will take for an anti-semitic remark." He was referring to his own brother, who had taken offense at the Mordecai Richler novels.

Recently on an airplane I fell into a conversation with a young woman starting a career as an advertising copy writer. I read some of her stuff, and it was good. She said it was difficult for a women to get a foothold in the profession. I did not comment that it's hard for a man, too. I had in my briefcase the articles I recently wrote about two women musicians, Maria Schneider and Karolyn Kafer. I thought she might want to read them. She did, and then said, the meaning of the question obvious, "How come you always referred to the women by first name but to the men by last name?" I told her to read it again: I had consistently referred to Gil Evans and Gerry Mulligan by first name. I refer by first name to people I have known personally or those whose given names are so universally used that their avoidance seems like an affectation, as in the case of Bix. None of that mattered: the young woman had a need to find offense, and she simply ignored any evidence that did not support that need.

The writer Grover Sales got caught between reverse racism and radical feminism at San Francisco State University, where he was teaching jazz history. When he applied for tenure, Patricia Lee, head of the music department, said without blush or

apology that the post could not possibly be given to anyone who was not a member of a minority.

Grover said, "I'm a member of three minorities. I'm a Jew, I'm old, and I'm an intellectual."

But then he made a bigger mistake. He told a time-worn musicians' joke to his class. A jazz musician dies and goes to heaven. Gabriel greets him. (These jokes always begin that way.) He is told he can do anything he wants. Can he form a big band? Of course — and with all the vast pool of great musicians now resident.

"Wonderful," the musician says. "I want to start immediately."

"There's only one problem," Gabriel says. "The Boss has this girlfriend who thinks she can sing."

A delegation of five women went to Lee, complained that Sales was a sexist, repeated the joke, and told Grover it was insulting to all women and specifically to girl singers. Dr. Lee took these complaints completely seriously. Following a series of similar encounters with the Chair, who tried to tell Grover what he could and could not say in the classroom, he was forced out of San Francisco State under the academic fiction that budget cuts demanded more work had to be provided for tenured PHDs. Grover migrated to Stanford University.

Let me return for a moment to Arthur Taylor's book *Notes and Tones*. Years ago, when I was editor of Down Beat, I was cautious in my friendships, knowing always that I was being used — by musicians, record producers, publicity people. That's all right; we all use each other, and there's a decent way to do it and a wrong way. When I quit that job, thereby surrendering a pathetic power I had never wanted in the first place, I found out fast, as I have said, who my friends were. Philly Joe Jones and Art Farmer were high on that list. Arthur Taylor was one of the musicians I had allowed to pass through the barrier of my suspicions and accepted in my heart as a friend, and indeed a fairly close one. I guess I was wrong.

To be continued

Records

So many people have told me that they appreciated my recommendations for listening that I'm going to make more of them. I do not get to hear everything that comes out. But I listen a lot, and hear a few splendid records amid the mediocrity. These recommendations reflect my own tastes and nothing more.

Ron Carter and Friends, Blue Note. The Carter ensemble, which includes four cellos, gives a subtle jazz treatment to European classical themes. Carter, a phenomenal bassist, is heard playing arco on piccolo bass. Hubert Laws is aboard. The album is imaginative, exquisite, superb.

Ron Affif, Pablo. This is the impressive debut album of a brilliant young guitarist. Brian O'Rourke is a knockout pianist and Andy Simpkins on bass and Colin Bailey on drums are the definition of support and swing. This quartet cooks all the way. The producer is Eric Miller, whose track record of excellent albums warrants notice.

Brubeck Trio, MusicMasters. Dave on piano, sons Chris on electric bass and trombone, and Dan on drums. Anyone who thinks the Brubeck quartet was only about Paul Desmond should hear this album with Dave in the company of two of his gifted progeny. Danny Brubeck is an outstanding drummer.

McCoy Tyner: New York Reunion, Chesky. I am nuts about McCoy Tyner's playing. I love the energy and drive, the invention, the power, and certainly his tone, which is crystalline and beautiful. He has never stood still, and he can be very outside. This album is a reunion after 20 years with tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson. The amazing Ron Carter is again present, working closely with Al Foster on drums. The recorded sound is conspicuously good, totally transparent.

In case you missed it, there's a stunning album, issued last year by Verve, called **McCoy Tyner: Big Band**. The same kind of energy that he has in his playing carries over to this band, which has charts by Tyner, Slide Hampton, Howard Johnson, and the superb drummer Dennis Mackrel. Not for the faint-hearted.

If you have a taste for this sort of thing, I'd like to turn you on to two choral records, both in the form of a Mass, both by contemporary English composers. The first is John Rutter's **Requiem**, composed in 1985. I heard it on a car radio and bought it. It is a gorgeous piece of music. It is performed by the Cambridge Singers and the City of London Sinfonia, with Rutter conducting. On the Collegium label. I find I like it as much as the Faure Requiem.

The other Mass is **African Sanctus** by David Fanshaw. I attended a concert performance of this work in Los Angeles in the mid-1970s and never could get it out of my mind. Fanshaw traveled throughout Africa, doing field recordings in various countries, then scoring the work for chorus and percussion built around the center of the tapes he had brought back. At a reception after the concert, I talked to Fanshaw, a sensitive and I think reverent man. He told me that many of the segments of the piece could not be duplicated: some of the singers, whom he had come to know as friends, had died in tribal wars and massacres. And of course some of this folk material is simply being forgotten. I asked Fanshaw how he brought the tapes into synchronicity with western pitch. He said it wasn't necessary; the field recordings were in accord with it, though of course there was much melismatic singing on the tapes. There is a reissue of the work, which Fanshaw recorded in Britain in 1973, on the Philips Classics label. I stumbled on it in a record store and bought it immediately. It's an incredibly powerful work, with complex driving percussion and startling melodic lines, which reaches levels of the hair-raisingly beautiful.