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The Music Events that Changed our Lives

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Abstract: The authors discuss the musical events in their lives that profoundly affected their journeys as musicians. The events shared contributed to who the authors are today.

Keywords: Billboard, Blakey, blues, drums, jazz, Moanin', organ, piano, trombone, trumpet

Music has its own innate power. It has the power to make people move by either dancing, stomping their feet, clapping their hands, or shaking their heads. Sometimes it can make people feel an overwhelming sense of pride or be moved to tears. Hardly a day goes by that we do not listen to (or at least hear) some music. Paul Elovitz tells us in his Call for Papers on music and musicians that the "importance and power of music is enormous," and in many cases, it touches us in ways that words alone cannot. As we look back over the soundtrack of our lives, we can attest to the fact that there have been several times when the power of music has changed our lives or redefined their trajectories. Today we are retired musicians and music educators, still teaching music and playing professionally, and composing as well.

In this essay, we will discuss the musical events in our lives that profoundly affected our journeys. Had it not been for these events, we would not be the persons we have become. John begins

by discussing two influential musical events in his life, the song "Oh My Pappa," and the jazz album *The Sermon!*. His brother, Martin, will discuss how the jazz composition *Moanin'* profoundly affected his life.

"Oh My Pappa"— Paul Burkhard

John Lamkin was nine years old when he was confronted with the question: What musical instrument do you want to play? This was an inevitable question because about everyone in his family engaged in music. Mother Lamkin was a wonderful piano player and teacher who taught piano in the home at least six days a week to many of the children in his neighborhood. Father Lamkin sang and was part of a singing group with his family that performed in Cape May, New Jersey, and other cities and towns in New Jersey and Philadelphia.

To help with this question, John relied on his parents and his older sister. His older sister put a record on the record player, and as the music began to play, he became enchanted with the instrument playing the melody. He remembers it sounding so smooth, bright, and brassey that he immediately fell in love with its sound and asked his sister what it was. She told him it was a trumpet, and he remembered telling her "that's what I want to play." His sister told him that the title of the song was "Oh My Pappa" and that the trumpet player was Chet Baker. At that age, he did not know who Chet Baker was, and it really did not matter—he was hooked on that sound!

It was not until approximately 68 years later, as John began writing this piece, that he actually heard it again. He asked Elexia to play "Oh My Pappa" on his Echo device and sure enough, she found not only the vocal version but also an instrumental version and played them both. It turns out that these were two early performances of the song: one sung by vocalist Eddie Fisher with the trumpet as a prominent part of the orchestral accompaniment and the other played by trumpeter Eddie Calvert. Both recordings made the Billboard top 10 in 1954, with Eddie Fisher's version garnering the No. 1 position. It was the sound of the trumpet on the song "Oh My Pappa" that changed his life for the first time.

In middle school, John played the baritone horn. The band had more trumpet players than it needed and needed more low brass, i.e., horns, trombones, baritones, and tubas. When the band director asked John to play baritone, explaining that since he played

trumpet, he could easily switch to treble clef baritone, he agreed. John remembers playing the counter melody to "The River Kwai March" from the 1957 movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai* for his grandmother one afternoon. While she was visiting, she was laying across his bed as he was practicing. So he asked her to listen to it. When she fell asleep as he played, John thought she must have really enjoyed it. He thought it was a beautiful countermelody, and it was then he learned what a countermelody was. Since then, he has used the countermelody technique in his composing.

***The Sermon!*—Jimmy Smith**

It was in the 8th or 9th grade when John started listening to jazz music. Around this time, a concurrence of several jazz events came together, which again changed his life. I call them jazz events because that is what they were—not particular jazz songs or specific jazz pieces. His sister had started listening to what she called progressive jazz. Her jazz of choice was pianist George Shearing as well as a jazz group led by two trombone players, J. J. Johnson and Kai Winding. They called their group The J & K Quintet. She had a few George Shearing and J & K records that she would play that sounded interesting to John. It was the sound of the musicians all playing together that really interested him.

In addition, there were a group of John's friends—Bobby, Gordon, Arnold, and Frankie—with whom he grew up. They bought jazz recordings with their lunch money and would go to each other's houses on the weekends to listen to their music. In a recent conversation with Arnold, he reminded John that during one of those listening sessions, they were knocked out by Ahmad Jamal's recording of "Poinciana." John remembers that recording well and especially liked the rhythmic groove that supported the melody. For John, that groove is amazing and only belongs to "Poinciana."

Eddie McDonald, who was a couple of years older than John, played drums and loved jazz! He would come home from school and practice all afternoon with his record player blaring some jazz tune he was working on. Eddie would invite John over to his house and listen to him practice. John's parents began to see that he was gravitating toward jazz. He would be over at Eddie's house listening to him practice as well as to his sisters' George Shearing and J & K records from time to time, and his friends would be in and out of each other's houses listening to their jazz records.

The Christmas of his freshman year in high school, Mother Lamkin and his dad bought a small record player and a 1958 jazz album called *The Sermon!*. The recording was by the renowned jazz organist Jimmy Smith. The cover featured a picture of Smith with his hands and arms extended and the expression on his face looked like he could be preaching. With the animated expression on his face, along with the complementary gestures with his hands and arms, he looked like he could be a preacher, preaching *The Sermon!*. John thinks that is what his mom saw when she picked that album for him.

When he began listening to that album, he remembered how excited he got. He had never heard anything quite like that and was thinking to himself, "what is this?" Of course, at the time he did not know it was just a simple medium tempo, 12-bar blues with the head being played twice by Jimmy Smith, as is customary when playing a blues head. After the head, Smith went right into his solo, which was far more interesting than anything John had heard. As he soloed, John could hear the drums and the guitar accompanying him, which was just as interesting as Jimmy's solo. Later John found out that the organ at church was the same Hammond B3 organ that Jimmy Smith was playing, but the church organ never sounded anything like that!

After the organ solo came the guitar solo played by Kenny Burrell. John had never heard a guitar player play like that. All the guitar players that John had heard were in R&B or Rock groups. Consequently, he did not know a guitar could sound like that. Next came the alto sax solo played by Lou Donaldson. As he played, John's interest intensified! His lines zigzagged around the horn with amazing fluency as he soloed on top of an even more interesting foundation laid down by Smith, Burrell, and Art Blakey, the drummer.

Then came the trumpet solo, played by Lee Morgan, which was completely mesmerizing! Preparing for this essay, John listened to his solo once more, and again got chills of delight. Lee starts playfully in the low register of the horn and begins to play syncopated lines using space and the half-valve technique. He continues using space between his ideas, some of which are developed using a double-tonguing technique, some using wide intervals, some using altered pitches like flat-5^{ths}, and most of them using unexpected syncopations. All these unique techniques, together with the space, create a feeling of laid-back, relaxed playing. Then, in

the eleventh chorus, he explodes with a double-time 16th note run and brings the solo to an end with a series of eight-note triplets. For John, Lee's solo was logical, soulful, and exhilarating.

The final solo played by tenor saxophonist Tina Brooks was also great but could not top Lee Morgan's solo. After Brooks' solo, the tune faded out as Jimmy Smith restated and riffed on the head. *The Sermon!* was 20 minutes long! John remembers trying to play along with Morgan's solo and getting completely frustrated. Although he has transcribed several jazz trumpet solos since and learned several jazz trumpet transcriptions, he never tried playing Lee Morgan's solo on *The Sermon!*, but at one time he could skat it note for note.

The impact this record had on John was profound. It was then that he decided to be a jazz trumpet player and musician, and started hanging out with the upperclassmen at the high school who were playing jazz. He started going to various musical bars and asking the bands if he could sit in (in the summer in Atlantic City, every bar had a band, and they were all playing jazz). He started hanging out with friends around the nightclubs in Atlantic City where jazz was being played. One such place he would "hang out" was on the corner of Kentucky and Artic Ave. We called it "KY and the Curb." It was in front of a nightclub called the Wonder Bar that featured an organ combo. One night, he and his friends saw Jimmy Smith playing in that club!

***Moanin'*—Bobby Timmons**

When Martin was eight years old, his brother, John, brought a record home. Martin was listening to something that he enjoyed on a 45rpm record playing on his record player. But the record John shared with him was a 1958 album by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. The title was *Moanin'*. This was his first introduction to jazz music. Can you imagine the impact this music had on an eight-year-old, who had never heard anything like it? The Jazz Messengers were a jazz quintet that consisted of: Lee Morgan, trumpet; Benny Golson, tenor sax; Bobby Timmons, piano; Jymie Merritt, bass; and Art Blakey, drums. The rhythmic drive and competent instrumental solos intrigued Martin. The harmony was different from that of church music, and it touched something in him that he did not understand at the time. However, from that point on, Martin followed a path of listening to and playing Jazz.

Shortly after his introduction to jazz, Martin started playing

the trombone. The first Jazz trombonist Martin became familiar with was Curtis Fuller (whom Martin later studied with). Later, he became familiar with J. J. Johnson, Kai Winding, and Wayne Henderson of the Jazz Crusaders.

Martin played in the marching and concert bands and orchestra at school, but the sound of jazz intrigued him the most. Martin later bought a record by Horse Silver entitled *The Cape Verdean Blues* on which J. J. Johnson played three tracks. The recording was released in 1966 when he was 16 years old. J. J. played a trombone solo on "Nutville," which was the best and most intriguing trombone solo Martin had ever heard. Despite knowing nothing of the structure, chord changes, or technique, Martin learned this solo note for note on the trombone.

After that, he continued to pursue jazz and jazz performance. This love of trombone and jazz has had a profound effect on Martin's life. He's played in many places in the United States, Canada, South America, and Europe. What marked his inspiration? Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers playing *Moanin'*.

Coda

The first major change in John's life was when he heard "Oh My Pappa" and he turned to the trumpet to be his instrument. The second major change was when he heard *The Sermon!* with Lee Morgan on trumpet and he turned to become a trumpet player and a jazz musician. This was also when jazz became his passion. The major change in his brother's life came when he heard *Moanin'*. He knew then that he wanted to be a jazz musician and play jazz music.

During their lives, John and his brother have played a lot of music. They have played in many jazz bands, both small and big bands. They have played classical music, jazz music, classical solo performances, and classical ensembles as well. They have played in major shows and have been on the road with touring bands. They have played on recordings. John has recorded two albums, one of which features his brother Martin playing trombone and also features one of Martin's compositions. The Lamkins are music educators who have taught music in the public school systems in Atlantic City, Chicago, South Carolina, and Baltimore. They have also taught at the university level as well and continue to share their knowledge and love for their instruments and jazz music. Today, as retired musicians and music educators, John and Martin still

teach regularly and play jazz music, and they are willing to share their passion for jazz with all those with whom they come in contact. Music set the course of their lives.

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Wedding Song

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Abstract: This paper illustrates how wedding songs conduct and facilitate community gatherings, social-emotional focusing, and symbolization of the marriage bond. It is exemplified by a music listening guide.

Keywords: Ave Maria, cello, eternity-knot, marriage, music, nonduality, song, union, wedding

Original Compositions

The "Ring" song that follows was part of a series of three wedding songs that I composed during my engagement, just before my wedding, and during my honeymoon. I offer it as an expression of preparing to join together with my husband in marriage. I will let it stand alone, open to interpretation and direct experience, as a portal to how wedding songs can capture the imagination of the emergent marital bond.

Ring

In the quiet
In the cold
Something growing
From the old

In the stillness