

2023

Unconventional Wisdom in Resonating Echoes of the Past: A Memoir on the Life and Music of royal hartigan

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Unconventional Wisdom in Resonating Echoes of the Past:
A Memoir on the Life and Music of royal hartigan

Joseph Elias Boulos

Master's document submitted
to the College of Creative Arts
at West Virginia University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in
Musicology

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Morgantown, West Virginia
2023

Keywords: Royal Hartigan, Percussion, Music Performance, Memoir, Ethnography,
Collaborative Ethnography, Oral History, World Music
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Abstract

Unconventional Wisdom in Resonating Echoes of the Past:
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Joseph Elias Boulos

Detailed fieldwork achieved by people in the discipline of social/humanistic studies, specifically ethnomusicologists, in any form: book, biography, documentary, etc., have contributed to the strengthening the understanding of any group of people, community, or culture. This research project is a co-authored memoir grounded in oral history and collaborative ethnography on, and with, Dr. royal hartigan. The purpose of this ethnographic research is to fill in the lack of information readily available on royal, from his sole perspective, and to also gain a comprehensive and coherent narrative on his life. The data collected from royal's point of view on music and life will reveal new facets or subcategories within the field of drum set and beyond. This project can also lead to others interested, and support them, in pursuing similar ethnographic research.

Dedication

This document is dedicated to my family. Without all of your support through the good and bad times, I would not be where I am today. Thank you for all of your unconditional love. At some points in life, I felt I did not deserve it, but you all still gave it. I am forever grateful for all you have done for me. You have all allowed me to be my truest self with no judgment or question. I could never imagine a life without all of you in it.

I am privileged to have a family that loves me. Unfortunately, others in this world do not, which makes me hold them closer to my heart and music.

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Acknowledgments

Throughout the process of completing my degree, and this document, I have received an immeasurable amount of support and guidance. It is difficult to mention and thank all people that have supported me from the beginning of my musical journey until now, so if I do not mention your name, please accept this as my gratitude towards you. Every personal and musical interaction I have had with anyone, yes anyone, whether it be good or bad, has shaped the way I perform, think, and live. For the sake of keeping this short, I will give my formal thanks to a few individuals who are currently in my life.

First and foremost, I would like to pay the biggest amount of thanks to royal hartigan. From our first interaction, the freshman year of my undergraduate studies in 2015, despite not knowing me, he radiated a sense of openness and was very welcoming. He took me under his wing and showed me what music really was outside of the institutional academic politics one would often find in music. My life was never the same after meeting him, and I am fortunate to still be in contact with him and have his guidance as I continue with my life.

To Dr. Vercelli, my primary mentor since I began my studies at West Virginia University, I have gained a deeper understanding of music, and he has taught me valuable lessons about the importance of being open-minded and sharing knowledge with others. I would have never expected myself to be on the path I am on today, and that is all because of you. At my lowest points, even when I could not see the bright side of things, you always could, because you believed in me. One of the biggest lessons I learned while working with Dr. Vercelli is that everything we do is founded on education – take that as you will.

To Dr. Stimeling, who accepted me into the Musicology program after completing my Master's in Jazz Pedagogy. I was never much of a writer before this research and writing-based degree, but through the help of Dr. Stimeling, I can now comfortably call myself an (amateur) Musicologist.

To Dr. Merrell, I have never taken a formal class with you, but every interaction we have is real and genuine. Your thought-provoking feedback is always gladly received by me and is much appreciated.

I would be remiss to not mention my primary instrument studies with Professor Wolfe. Your approach to the refinement of my playing has shaped my approach to drum set, my main instrument. For the sake of my sanity and his, I will not go into further detail on our side-tracking therapy sessions...HA!

To all the other faculty, friends, and colleagues that I have met along the way, thank you for being you. Whether it was a good experience or a bad experience, between whomever, you played a role in my development.

Chapter One - Introduction

Significance to the Field

As the late great ethnomusicologist, Bruno Nettl said "...the concept of ethnography grew out of the instance that all the domains of a culture are interrelated...".¹ There is value in learning from every part of a group or culture, hence the purpose of an ethnography. What many would consider a minute detail in the culture of study, may not realize the function or purpose of these details that add to the expansion of knowledge to their area of study. Detailed fieldwork achieved by people in the discipline of social/humanistic studies, specifically ethnomusicologists, in any form: book, biography, documentary, etc., have contributed to the strengthening of one's understanding of any group of people, community, or culture. Whether it is a fully detailed video on the drum crafter's method of building *atumpan* for the newly elected chief of an Asante village,² or interviewing an 'average' person on the street and creating a book on their life,³ all parts are essential to any topic or field of study.

Although the primary purpose of ethnographic research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of a particular culture, the information gathered can have implications beyond its intended scope. It is possible for the data collected to reveal new facets or subcategories within a given field. These discoveries may prompt researchers to explore previously unknown areas or develop new subfields. In this way, ethnographic research has the potential to not only deepen

¹ Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-Three Discussions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 249.

² Hood, Mantle. "Atumpan: The Talking Drums of Ghana". 1964. Institute of Ethnomusicology, University of California, Los Angeles, 00:45.

³ Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (New York: The New Press, 2004).

our knowledge of specific cultures but also expand our understanding of broader fields by uncovering previously unexplored phenomena.⁴

This research project is a co-authored memoir grounded in oral history and collaborative ethnography on, and with, Dr. royal hartigan.⁵ As a performer, educator, and ethnomusicologist, it can be said that royal has had an impactful career on others. This claim can be supported by his various publications on drum set, specifically, his writing on traditional Ghanaian rhythms adapted to the drum set,⁶ along with a multitude of performance and recording opportunities,⁷ and over 30 years of teaching at the collegiate level.

This project can be seen similar to Paul Willis's 1977 book, *Learning to Labor: How Working-Class Kids Get Working-Class Jobs*, an ethnographic study of working-class youth in England to understand how these youth are socialized into particular ways of thinking about work and social class. The working-class youth in this case is a musician, specifically a percussionist, and the social aspect is how percussionist, royal hartigan's life was shaped by all events that led him to who he is now.

One who may find themselves interested in learning more about royal will find that the most extensive information on him is only on his website, royalhart.com, which only contains a brief biography on his life, curriculum vita, and a list of milestones, without a description. Additional information on royal, such as short biographies that accompany some of his

⁴ Timothy Rice, "Time, Place, and Metaphor in Musical Experience and Ethnography," *Journal of the Society for Ethnomusicology* 47, no. 2 (2003): 151-179.

⁵ royal prefers his name in lowercase letters, so it will be written as such throughout the document.

⁶ royal hartigan et al, *West African Rhythms for Drumset* (Miami, FL; Manhattan Music, 1995). Additional Publications can be found in Appendix I: Publications.

⁷ A selective discography of royal's work can be found in Appendix II: Selective Discography.

publications on publisher websites, can also be found. The lacune of extensive research on royal's life in music can now be considered filled, to an extent, with this document.

During my undergraduate studies between 2015 and 2019 at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth,⁸ I was privileged to meet and collaborate with royal in and outside of the classroom until his retirement in 2018. Subsequently, our communication has remained intact over the years through phone conversations, occasional personal visits, and performances when I return back to Massachusetts. I recognize that everyone in my life has played a significant role in my personal and professional growth, and I would be remiss not to acknowledge their contributions, so please consider this as that. Nonetheless, with this project focusing on the life of royal, the following portion will briefly discuss my relationship with royal.

From the moment I got to know royal, his impact on my music has been profound, giving it a deeper sense of purpose and meaning. It all began during one of my first interactions with him during my freshman year when I informed him of the death of one of my family members. He was incredibly consoling and sympathetic, making it feel almost as if a member of his family had died. During our conversation, he advised me to keep a family member in mind whenever I play the drums so I will always feel their presence with me. After that day, my entire perspective on music changed. I finally understood that music can communicate what words cannot, and every time I play, I do so with purpose, as royal taught me and continues to demonstrate in his own performance. No matter how pleased or dissatisfied I am with my playing, I always play with intention.

⁸ University of Massachusetts Dartmouth is also referred to as UMass Dartmouth.

The contributions to my musical growth and development from royal are immeasurable. His care and guidance have propelled me to strive for excellence in my craft and provided me with a deeper sense of purpose and meaning in my music and personal life. Every time I talk to him or go out to one of his performances, he continues to inspire me. I believe others feel the same way, leading me to create this document, in hopes of inspiring others through learning about his life or giving more information on him to those that have already been inspired.

I found it crucial to conduct this kind of research and complete this project, to get a full understanding of his life and music and preserve his experiences and knowledge for future generations. This collaborative ethnography was made to help royal create a coherent narrative of his life. Additional benefits that arise from this document are scholarship added to the drum set music education and ethnomusicology communities.



Figure 1: Umass Dartmouth 2018 trip to Ghana playing in the village of Mampong. (left to right) Back row - Kwabena Boateng, Eric Ajay, Brandon Sylvia. Front row - royal hartigan, Joe Boulos, Noah Mangelson.

I will not be speaking through this text other than through this introduction, my editorial work, and my personal reflection, found in chapter seven.

Limitations

No other interviews were conducted to gain additional information on royal and his impact on people, students, and music. As a student and friend of royal's, I am putting this document due to his effects on me during our time together at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. My personal thoughts in writing found in this introduction and reflections would lead some readers to sense bias, especially if they do not have the same feelings towards royal.

Factors that may lead some readers to question the validity of the accounts that occurred, such as the event being mentioned or the year certain events occurred, come from the primary source of the information gathered is based on an account of oral history, as well as the point in life royal is in now. With the range of this project being from the year 1947 to 2023, one would wonder if thoughts, feelings, or philosophies would differ if this interview were conducted at an earlier part of his life.

This project aimed to get documentation on royal's life from his perspective, This comes from the relationship between royal and me. I did not interview other people that may have been mentioned, such as past and present colleagues, teachers, and students of royal's to gain more information on what was being discussed.

Review of Literature

Through the guidance of my committee members, I conducted a thorough review of scholarship related to my project. This included autobiographies and biographies of individuals and groups, which provided me with valuable insights into how to approach my own work. In the autobiographies, I studied and learned from the method in which co-authors organized their thoughts and recounted significant events. On the other hand, biographies were usually compiled by a single author who gathered available scholarship, facilitated interviews, and recounted

personal experiences of an individual. Authors of these biographies then compiled this information in a logical manner. Most of the works I studied were structured chronologically, with a focus on the impact of the individual or group's career at certain periods.

In addition to autobiographies and biographies, I also reviewed scholarship on ethnographic research and oral history, which helped me to understand the benefits and purpose of these research methods. Bruno Nettl's, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-Three Discussions*, specifically, Chapter 17, "Writing the Meat-and-Potatoes Book: Musical Ethnography" was the most useful as it gave an overview of ethnographic research. The chapter goes into detail on how to approach organizing research gathered in the field, comparing and contrasting multiple ethnographies throughout, to help create a coherent ethnography of a person or community within a culture. It also provides a brief history of ethnographies and how they have evolved over the years, starting as early as the 1910s. This book was a primary resource in terms of gathering and organizing information.

An ethnomusicologist that was often mentioned in Nettl's chapter was Timothy Rice. This led me to the article, "Time, Place, and Metaphor in Musical Experience and Ethnography", by Timothy Rice. The article focuses on Rice's concept of a "subject-centered musical ethnography". This concept is about studying an individual or small group to allow the researcher to add to their understanding of the culture of study.

With this work being grounded in collaborative ethnography, I referenced Luke Lassiter's, *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography*. Lassiter discusses the ethical considerations involved in collaborative ethnography and provides strategies for navigating them such as informed consent, confidentiality, and intellectual property. In the "Methodology"

portion of the introduction, you will find that I have applied parts of Lassiter's approach to this project.

Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research, by Patricia Levy, provides a comprehensive and informative guide to the use of oral history as a research methodology. The book highlights the importance of using oral histories to gain insights into different aspects of history and culture that may not be readily available through other methods of research. Levy offers a detailed process of gathering, evaluating, and validating information through oral histories. The book also offers insights into the ethical considerations and disadvantages of working with oral histories, such as issues of bias and subjectivity. I kept Leavy's methods in mind when formulating the "Limitations" portion of this chapter, mentioning the disadvantages of how I approached this project. Overall, this is a valuable resource for using oral history as a research tool.

Paul Willis's, *Learning to Labor: How Working-Class Kids Get Working-Class Jobs*, was another resource used in the justification of this project. It is an ethnographic study of working-class youth in England to understand how these youth are socialized into particular ways of thinking about work and social class. The working-class youth in this case is a musician, specifically a percussionist, and the social aspect is how percussionist, royal hartigan's life was shaped by all events that led him to who he is now.

In my research, I came across a variety of literature. The book, *Fifty Cents and a Box Top: The Creative Life of Nashville Session Musician Charlie McCoy*, written by Charlie McCoy with Travis Stimeling, and Tony Allen's *Tony Allen: An Autobiography of the Master Drummer of Afrobeat*, with Michael E. Veal, stand out as valuable resources in shaping my approach to this project. The structure of these books, in which the subject provides their perspective with the

assistance of a co-author, served as a primary model for my work. The organization of the material leads the reader to a more coherent reading of the individual's life, compared to other works mentioned below. Consequently, I have decided to follow a similar approach and organize my project chronologically while also incorporating insights on philosophies and current events, which will be described in the "Outline of Chapters" portion of this introduction.

To stay true to royal's candid style and perspective, I decided to avoid censoring his views and experiences. Drawing inspiration from the autobiographies, *Beneath The Underdog: His World Composed by Mingus*, by Charles Mingus, and *Miles*, Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe whose unfiltered storytelling resonates with those familiar with their music and personality, I aimed to present royal's voice in a similar manner. Like these musicians, royal is unafraid to express his thoughts and emotions, which made me reconsider editing out certain details, including his political ideologies, personal frustrations with the world, and views on certain music genres like popular and commercial styles.

The Beat of My Drum: An Autobiography, by Michael Babatunde Olantunji with Robert Atkinson, which is an autobiography on Michael Babatunde Olantunji. Although I appreciate the book's content, I did not find it enjoyable in terms of structure. The book appears to be just interviews transcribed verbatim by the co-author, and compiled into a book, resulting in a lack of flow and detail on certain topics he mentions. It seemed as if the editor was simply writing down all of Olatunji's life experiences as he mentioned them without much consideration of expanding on what was mentioned or for the organization of the material.

An additional book I saw as non-beneficial to this project was Robert Tellez's, *Ray Barreto: Giant Force*, translated by Ronald P.S. Vasquez. This book provides a very brief history of the Puerto Rican migration to the continental U.S., along with a brief biography on

Ray Barreto's early life. It then goes into an annotated discography, with testimonies of musicians from Barreto's recording career, with a very brief description of Barreto's life during that time preceding the testimonies. Although this work is beneficial to those interested in Barreto's career, it does not give background on events leading up to these recordings, other than the chronological order of recordings. The function of this book works more as the experiences of musicians that had recorded with Barreto, and no further details beyond that experience.

Methodology

In the summer of 2022, from July 21st to August 3rd, I went back home to Massachusetts to conduct several interviews with royal hartigan at his home in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. From the first utterance of this project and royal's agreement, I made sure he knew this would take a lot of time, processing, and focus from him. He was more than willing to do so and was honored that I would consider doing something like this for him. During those summer interviews, I gained a lot of information on royal but as I was putting the chapters together, I felt like there was more detail that should be shared within certain sections. This led me to have additional interviews with royal via zoom in the spring semester of 2023, due to me living in West Virginia, where I was able to fill in the gaps.

Before starting the interviews, I made it clear to royal that he did not have to answer any questions or give further detail on topics mentioned if he did not feel comfortable. The information provided to me and that is being shared with the reader is royal's honest recollection of the events in his life.

The first interview was treated more like a friendly discussion. Based on our relationship, I took that opportunity to ask royal questions that I have always wanted to ask him. For the other interviews, I would ask additional questions based on past interviews in order to get more

information on previous topics mentioned. In general, all the questions asked pertain to his youth, personal life, the start of his musical endeavors, and his professional career as an educator and performer. Each interview was between two and four hours long, with breaks in between each hour for both of us to gather our thoughts. During these breaks we would chat away from the recording devices, providing us with the opportunity to talk about personal topics and create memories with royal for which I will forever be grateful.

All of the recordings for this project were captured on a Zoom H6 handy recorder and Zoom Q2 video recorder. All of the photos for this project were provided by royal and are used with his permission. The photos provided are of his youth, family members, former teachers, and performances. All of the files for this project are stored in the original memory cards of the devices they were captured on as well as a cloud-based service and an external hard drive. I also have a personal notebook that was solely used for this project containing thoughts, and additional questions during the interviews. The notebook is a personal item used for this project and can be provided for viewing if necessary. Other than that, all files are stored on a Google Drive that can be shared upon request.



Figure 2: royal's living room in Dartmouth, MA, where all of the in-person interviews took place.

Although I heavily relied on the audio files, I also used a transcription software known as Otter.ai, where I was able to upload the audio files and get a full transcript of the interviews. The software is able to distinguish who is speaking and can summarize common words found throughout the transcript, making it much easier to find specific sections of interviews. Luckily, when looking back at the transcriptions through the software, I was able to play the audio at the same time. One issue with the program was that it would incorrectly transcribe American English words, which could have been due to individual pronunciations and the limitations of the AI. Additionally, I would run into the issue of non-English words being transcribed incorrectly, which is something I should have assumed when using it. Otter.Ai was a very beneficial tool when putting this project together. Despite the minor issues, it helped me save a lot of time.

Outline of Chapters

With the information gained through the initial interviews and literature review, I have decided to organize this project into ten parts: this introduction serves as chapter one, chapters

two through six are all in the voice of royal, chapter seven provides reflection from royal and myself, and two appendices.

Chapter two will be on royal's childhood and how his family got him involved in the performing arts. The timeline will span from his birth in Pittsfield, Massachusetts on January 20th, 1947, to the time he attended his first educational institution in Vermont at Saint Michael's College and concluding with his time in the Peace Corps in 1968. Growing up, royal would watch his mother, Hazel Hartigan, and uncle, Ray Hart, who were tap dancers in the Pittsfield, Western Massachusetts area. Tap dancing is what royal considers to be his first instrument. As well as being a tap dancer, royal's mother was also a pianist and violinist, which led royal to learn piano along with his tap dancing. royal did not start playing the drums until he was eleven years old. At St. Michael's college, he majored in philosophy in hopes of becoming a priest in order to dedicate his life to helping others. After attaining his philosophy degree from St. Michael's royal joined the peace corps in 1968. He saw photos of the Philippines and felt this was where he was being called to aid others. While in the Philippines, royal saw the struggles of living in a third-world culture, altering his life forever.

Chapter three will focus on royal's time as a music student, the period during which he received his undergraduate music degree and PhD in Ethnomusicology. Prior to pursuing his undergraduate degree, royal worked as a social worker for two years after returning home from the peace corps. At that time he realized he wanted to pursue music and attended University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1973 where he majored in jazz.⁹ After his first year at Umass Amherst, royal took time off to provide care for his father who was having medical issues from

⁹ University of Massachusetts Amherst is also referred to as Umass Amherst.

1974-1977. In the spring of 1977 royal returned to Umass Amherst to continue his studies with esteemed faculty such as Archie Shepp, Reggie Workman, and Max Roach. royal spent a fair amount of time studying and conversing with Max Roach. The main portion of those conversations consisted of royal's work in odd-time cycles, and royal getting to socialize with esteemed drummer, Philly Joe Jones at Roach's gig.

It is important to note, royal briefly discusses the three levels of artistic expression; technical, syntactic, and semiotic. This was taught to him by his professor from Umass Amherst at the time, Dr. Roland Wiggins, in this chapter. In short, the technical level is gaining the basic knowledge and understanding of a certain art form. The second level, syntactic, is how one organizes the information gained from the technical level and present in a way that is expressive of one's self or the art form. Semiotic, the third and final level, is the meaning and depth of the music, the intent beyond yourself in the genre. These three levels later appear in his teaching philosophy, in chapter four, and can be considered the basis of his teaching; guiding students to find the true meaning of what they do, beyond themselves.

After graduating from University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1981, royal attended Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut in 1981 to pursue a Master's in Ethnomusicology (1981-1983) and then decided to reapply for his PhD in Ethnomusicology (1983-1986). During his time at Wesleyan, royal worked with master artists in their respective cultures. This included the study of Traditional West African music and dance with Freeman Kwodzo Donkor and Abraham Adzenyah, Javanese Gamelan with I.M. Harjito, and drum set with Edward Blackwell.

Chapter four will focus on royal's life as a music educator. The chapter begins with his philosophy as an educator but will mainly focus on his time after his graduation from Wesleyan

University in 1986 to his retirement from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth in 2018. I have chosen this specific timeline because royal began the bulk of his music teaching at that time. His other occupations aside from being a music educator are mentioned in the previous chapters. Within his discussions of teaching royal informs how he approaches music of other cultures in the world in an academic setting.¹⁰

Chapter five will cover royal's performance career, starting with the first funk group he played with during his time at Umass Amherst and ending with the formation of his group *blood drum spirit*, an ensemble that he consistently performs with. royal has had many impressive performance opportunities throughout his life including playing alongside Kenny Baron, traveling to Europe, and playing for Duke Ellington at the Eagles Next Lounge at the Holiday Inn, in Lenox, Massachusetts.

Although royal has worked with various musicians that are mentioned in this chapter, he goes into detail on two key people who had a large influence on him, Fred Ho and Hafez Modirzadeh. Ho and royal met briefly at a jam during his time at Umass Amherst, and later reunited at Wesleyan University, where Ho invited him to go to Italy for a recording session. They would then go on to tour multiple countries and record multiple albums, creating memories together for 27 years, until Ho's passing away in 2014. In 1987, royal and Modirzadeh met through Fred Ho, as they both performed regularly in one of his various ensembles. Eventually, Modirzadeh moved to California, with royal following shortly after in 1993 for a job offer at San Jose State University. They began playing in the group *Paradox* together, led by Modirzadeh,

¹⁰ Ted Solis's, *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles*, which is a collection of articles from various ethnomusicologists and master artists of cultures on their approach to teaching world music.

touring the U.S. and recording albums. Despite royal currently living in Massachusetts, he travels to California to perform with Modirzadeh when possible.

Chapter six will discuss royal's life after retiring from Umass Dartmouth. It will discuss the performance opportunities and residencies he was able to pursue directly after retiring. Leading up to 2020, the covid year, royal had many touring opportunities scheduled before the pandemic caused everything to shut down. As things start to open back up, he plans to reschedule the lost time with performances and masterclasses. A final interview was conducted with royal at the end of March 2023 to obtain updated information on his life and projects.

Chapter seven will consist of a personal reflection from royal on the process of completing this project and our personal relationship. This section also includes my personal reflection on the completion of this project and demonstrations of how he has influenced my music.

Appendix one is a list of royal's publications. This will include articles, books, book chapter contributions, reviews, and films. Appendix two is a selective discography of royal's works. The discography consists of the albums mentioned throughout this memoir along with additional albums I enjoy listening to and recommending to others to listen to.

The references and bibliography section consists of all the interviews conducted with royal from the summer of 2022 and the spring of 2023. It also consists of all of the scholarship used in preparation for this project.

Chapter Two - Early Life and Awakenings, 1947-1970

Starting Music

I was born on January 20, 1947, which they say is the cusp of Aquarius, I believe. I don't know what that means, but anyway, it was a cold, deep snow, winter Monday at the Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. My first memories – not sure which ones are the first – are in darkness, and just being aware. So I don't think that was being in the womb, but it was possibly sleeping in a dark room or something. Just being aware that there's something there, maybe that was as early as one or two years old or earlier. The first three years of my life, we lived in Lanesboro, Massachusetts, which was a small agricultural village, just north of Pittsfield. I remember being in that house and outside one hot summer day, maybe July or August, just being out in the driveway walking around and playing with the warm air and a sense of freedom. That's all I remember of that part of my life. When I was three, we moved to Pittsfield, and a house that my parents – James and Hazel Hartigan – were dreaming of; they finally got lucky, it was suddenly up for sale, they bought it with a loan, and found a home where I have several memories.

Around that year I was just starting to tap dance a little, my parents had these small shoes for me, and I did a song and dance act, sometimes alone or sometimes with my mother. I was not a very good singer but I'd sing to records and mimic them. I began my life hearing my uncle Ray Hart and my mother tap dancing. I felt the whole world through the sound of my taps on wood floors and bakelite mats. She had me tap dancing a little bit, and I loved it. Looking back, it made life present, it made it exciting. I felt like I was dancing beyond the tap mats and lights that were around me in a theater. It was my first feeling of the arts. It was something magic and beyond, transcendent from everyday life and the 'normal.'



Figure 3: royal's parents: James and Hazel Hartigan.

Tap dancing was magic to me, something about interacting with people. Even if it was in a little tiny place, like an Eagle's fraternity hall, or senior citizen center, there were people listening and they really appreciated what you did. There was something magic about giving something to them, sharing it and getting something back from them like smiles or applause. In larger spaces, like auditoriums or concert halls where we'd have recitals, there was a sense of nervousness, but it was a kind of excitement. We tap danced and there would be floor lights, my uncle Ray would put up these colored lights that would go on to the stage, the mats were on the floor, and I had my metal taps on, and I'd tap dance. You could see the audience, but you couldn't always see their faces in those theaters, but you could see the silhouette sometimes, which was really interesting. You were tap dancing to that audience, but it felt like you were doing it out to the whole world, as if that audience was a gateway to the whole world. I loved it

and I just wanted it to continue. That feeling is something that I still have every time I perform, whether it's for six people in a little tiny club, or 2,000 on a stage in Beijing or 8,000 on a stage in Accra. It's magic that has stuck with me from when I first started tap dancing.

As I continued tap dancing, I began studying piano at eight years old. I started listening to Errol Garner, Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck, Thelonious Monk, and Oscar Peterson. At first I studied classical piano with a nice lady named Hazel Slater but then went over to jazz with John Galletly. He had a band that would play around Berkshire County. Whenever he had gigs happening at the same time he would always call me to fill in on piano. I got to play quite a bit, for weddings anniversaries, and other festivities.

The first time he called me was in 1962 for a wedding in Dalton, Massachusetts. When I showed up to the gig I was really scared. I had this fake book, what they call the real book now, and asked, what am I going to do? I wasn't very good, but I got through it and played okay. It was trumpet, bass, drums, and me on piano. The trumpet player, Bruce Symanowitz, was very cool. We would be in the middle of a song and he would just point to the next one as we were playing, making a medley. Through that I learned how to do a four bar segue from one key to the other. For the segue I'd play the one chord of the key we were in, then diminished up a half-step, followed by then the two minor and five dominant of the new key, and we were into the next tune.

I kept up with my piano gigs for many years. In my last year of high school, in late April, I started playing seven nights a week, at the Edgewood Motel in Lennox. It was my first long term gig and I learned a lot. It was a nice place where you felt like you were in a big city but it was just out in the country. The group was a trio, with Dick Vinette on acoustic bass, Wilfred Wannamaker III on drums, and me on a beautiful-sounding baby grand piano. We would play six

hours a night and then we eventually got down to five. We all loved jazz so we played some Monk tunes, and I was really into Dave Brubeck so we played his *Blue Rondo Ala Turk*, *Strange Meadow Lark*, *It's a Raggy Waltz*, and *Take 5*, [sings beginning of *Blue Rondo Ala Turk*] without the saxophone. I don't know how we pulled that off. Because we were using the real book, during our set breaks, I would go around and take requests. Most of the time I would end up having the tunes in the book and we would play them. I kept that playing at the Edgewood Motel until September of 1964, when I left for college at St. Michael's in Vermont just outside of Burlington.

When I was around 11, I somehow got a pair of drumsticks and then my parents bought me a snare drum for Christmas.¹¹ I eventually joined the Pittsfield Boys Club Cavaliers, which was a junior drum corps.¹² I had a wonderful time traveling and socializing. It was really cool because we had a close-knit society in those days. In the 1950s you felt like you knew everybody in Pittsfield, so it was a real community. There were no mega stores and multinational corporations, except General Electric, and everything controlled by electronics and technology at that time. Everything was personal, in three-dimensional reality, time and space, with direct contact with people, and little or no separation. The only technology that was prevalent was the telephone, and that was before answering machines, it was wonderful. And it was a phone you had to actually dial against resistance and feel and hear the dial revolve around with each number. You would only call up your friends to say hello or make plans to hang out, or possibly chat for a while. Technology was not a big deal in our lives; we were not dependent on it. Human life revolved around humanity, nature, and the environment, the connections that we all

¹¹ royal still owns and performs with this drum.

¹² Now known as "The Pittsfield Boys and Girls Club." The drum corps does not exist anymore.

have, what I consider reality. Nothing virtual. Joining the drum corps was great and gave me more of those connections with all the people in my hometown. One person in particular who I became close with was Stokes Hall Jr. Our dads both worked at the General Electric Company and we were both snare drummers in the Cavaliers, so we got to hang out a lot. I had other friends from my childhood, but he was my closest friend. We are still friends to this day and he has now taken the name Mulazimuddin Shareef Rasool and works as a poet and social activist.



Figure 4: Pittsfield Boys Club Cavaliers performing at a Halloween Parade 1959. (left-right) royal hartigan, Mulazimuddin Rasool, and James McConnell.

When I was about 14, I started to gain an interest in drum set. I didn't have my own at the time but occasionally I'd have a chance to play somebody else's, and it just came to me naturally when I'd play. On Christmas of my junior year of high school my parents surprised me with a drum set of my own. I didn't take lessons for a long time and just listened to records or saw people play and tried to do what they did. I had some ideas of my own and went from there, I loved it. I kept up the rudimental patterns at the time and still do them today, just on my own, because it's good discipline for your hands, especially with heavy sticks on a blanket or pillow with no bounce.

My father wasn't a musician, but he enjoyed music and taught me how to drum. He was really sensitive to rhythms. I remember one time he was hitting a snare drum of mine with his hand and played a rhythm. It turned out to be what is called the Bo Diddley beat, which reflects the *Kpanlogo* bell pattern of the Ga people of West Africa, or son clave. I learned that rhythm from him. In those days, they used to call that rhythm "shave and a haircut, two bits." The drum was always a very powerful thing for me. Maybe because of my early experience with tap dancing from my uncle Ray Hart, and my mother. We were all so close and they gave me a love of life and music that has stayed with me till the present. I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't had all three of them in my life.

My mother played the C melody saxophone, and a beautiful violin with a warm tone. She also sang a little bit when she played in a women's band in North Adams (20 miles north of Pittsfield in Berkshire County), where she was from, in Western Massachusetts. Her tap dancing was what really inspired me. That's how I got into drumming. I've come to learn that drumming is not just isolated rhythms, it is also tones, timbres, sounds, and feel. So, it's much more than just patting a rhythm on a surface. It involves that, yes of course, but it's got something more in the depths of it. When I later went to study world music, I saw that many cultures in the world play the drums with these ideas in mind. The strict rhythm, the sequence of strokes or attacks that you make. And to me, that was really cool. Very new and makes me want to learn more about it. So those are the three paths, tap dancing, piano, and drums.

Ray Hart

My uncle, Royal Francis Hartigan, and I were very close. Whenever my parents would go somewhere to visit somebody, I would stay with him and hear all these stories of his life in music. I remember him telling me about how he played banjo, ukulele, whistle melodies, scat,

and piano, but he was mainly a dancer. He learned how to Irish clog dance at a very young age and used a pair of one-piece wooden shoes he kept all his life. After the death of his father, he hopped on a train to New York to earn money for the family. While in New York he won the championship for Irish Clog at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan, and eventually moved into the art of tap dancing. He started tap dancing in traveling vaudeville shows and international organizations that went all over the world: Asia, Australia, and Europe, with people like Bill Robinson, Peg Leg Bates, the Step Brothers, the Nicholas Brothers, and the Hines Brothers. I have the same name as him but due to the theater marquees in those days, 100 years ago, more than that, he had to have a short name to fit, so he took the stage name Ray Hart, the very source of his passion, the heart.

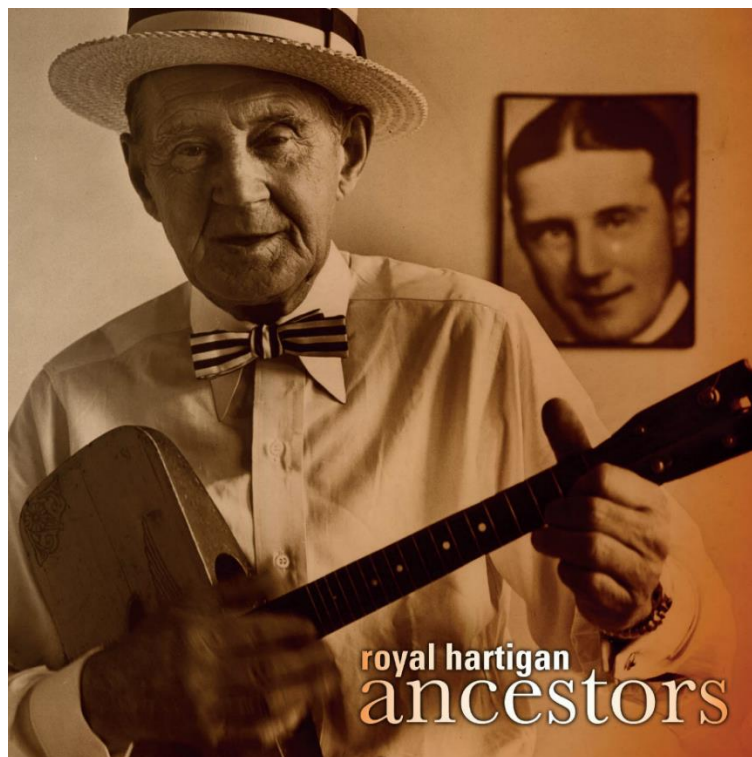


Figure 5: Ray Hart.

At the age of probably 16, or so, sometime in the early 1900s he jumped on a railroad car, hid away, and got all the way down to New York, where he had to live off the streets, found

friends, and tap dance. He learned from tap dancers in New York, the metal tap dancing and he got very good at that. He was traveling all around the world until he got hurt in an accident. In the early 1930s, he was playing at the Winter Garden Theater in New York, when he fell 30 or 40 feet to the stage and injured his spine. The ropes which supported an upside-down tap act he was doing had been frayed almost to breaking by a group of horses in an act that preceded Ray's, and their breaking apart caused his upside-down tap mat and equipment to collapse and he fell to the stage, somehow miraculously surviving.

He retired to the Berkshires in western Massachusetts, and it just happened to be that my grandparents on my mother's side had a guesthouse, so he stayed there for a while, and started teaching, at first, acrobatics to students at Williams College. He maintained dance studios in North Adams and Pittsfield. My mom studied with him, and she got so good that they became a team. They danced professionally as a duo throughout the northeast and taught dance, specializing in tap, from the 1930s to 1960s across the Berkshires in western Massachusetts.

In the 1940s my parents and their family members built a house for my uncle in the North Adams area. It was on the road going towards Williamstown in a place called Braytonville with a beautiful view of Mount Greylock from his backyard. The house was like a big circle with two sides. One side was the kitchen, and the other was the bedroom and bathroom. The big inner circle part of the house that people would call a living room was his studio. There were windows all the way around it so when you walked in you could see the sunlight coming. It had tap dance mats, a grand piano, all his stringed instruments, and a few couches and chairs so you could sit down. He eventually got a little single channel television in the early-mid-1950s when TV was first coming into people's homes.

When I'd go over to his house to dance, I'd get to hear him play piano, along with his other instruments. Those were very memorable days for me. What was wonderful about it was that we were all very close together, my uncle, father, mother, and I – a psychological home, and may I say a spiritual haven.

My uncle's grand piano was right in this room right here in my house in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, until three years ago.¹³ My uncle taught and performed until retiring in June 1964. He passed away on November 1st, 1964, in Pittsfield. He was well known for his appearances throughout the Berkshires for stage shows, concerts, recitals, benefits, and for organizations like Pittsfield's Colonial Theater, Palace Theater, Berkshire Museum, the Eagles, local Granges, and the Golden Age Club, among many others.

St. Michael's and the Peace Corps

Well, believe it or not, I was going to be a priest. One of the places where they had a philosophy major, which was a common prerequisite for the priesthood, that sounded interesting to me was St. Michael's College in Vermont. My childhood friend was going there so I thought about it. I was considering going to UMass Amherst, but then I decided to go to St. Michael's in the fall of 1968.

At the time they only had a Glee Club for music, so I joined it. They didn't have instrumental music until my last year. Dr. William Tortolano, still alive at 94, taught the glee club. One year, I played piano for a few pieces and drums for one composition, and it was cool. We toured all over the Northeast; New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island,

¹³ These interviews were conducted in royal's living at his home in Dartmouth, MA, 2022. He had his uncle Ray's grand piano up until 2018.

Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and had some wonderful concerts. That kept my interest in music alive at the time.

St. Michael's was a time for reflection, thinking about the meaning of life. At the time, in philosophy, you study the existence of God. I started to wonder; I wasn't sure there was a God. I got really disillusioned and very sad. If you're not sure if there's a God, it makes it hard to become a priest. My motivation for wanting to become a priest was to try to help other people, but that goal took another path, even though priesthood or spirituality was something like music because it dealt with transcendence. It dealt with the ultimate meaning and wasn't supposed to be part of a workaday world where you just go along and everything's normal. You were really in a way apart from the world and its compromises and surfaces in a certain sense and I felt it as a good sense, and still do.

In my last year at St. Michael's in 1968, I was considering continuing with my graduate work. I applied to Notre Dame and received a scholarship offer. At the same time, I also put in an application for the Peace Corps, thinking that I probably won't do this, and just continue in philosophy. Something clicked and I realized that my vision was for helping people, so I went with the Peace Corps and it was wonderful. It changed my life.

The idea of the Peace Corps is that you live with the people. You don't live above them like a colonialist, military, or businessman. Very few volunteers ever just lived alone, you lived with a family, you ate the same food, and you learned and spoke their language. If you were working as a teacher for example, you got paid the same amount as someone from the culture received to do the work. I was placed in the Philippines and was living in the north on the largest island called Luzon, at Dagupan City in Pangasinan Province. My assignment at first was

teaching, but then I saw some of the horrible conditions in the hospitals. There was no medical social worker at the local government hospital, Pangasinan Provincial Hospital. So I put all my energy into it: people would come in with all kinds of diseases, stab wounds, gunshots, and other injuries. I would help doctors with acquiring blood from the Red Cross and get patients medicines and money they needed for care and survival in the hospital. During my elementary through high school years, I had saved 847 dollars in a small box and asked my parents to send it to help save the lives of these people. I used everything I had, going into debt but then paying it back eventually. I worked on what I felt was the most important thing, to help people that were in need.

While I was in Dagupan I was able to play a bit of music. I was introduced by a teaching colleague, Ning DeVenecia, to a musician in the city that had a dance band and they played some jazz. A dance band in those times was almost like a ballroom dance or the newer styles like rock and funk dance. His name was Dady Reyes and the band was called Dady Reyes and d’Jewels. They had bass, guitar, piano, vocal, and drums, and I got to play a little piano and drums with them; it was an oasis of musical energy in the midst of the horrors of people hungry, dying, and without good clothing and shelter in a so-called ‘Third World’ country.

I was in the Philippines for two years after college, 1968-70. What I saw there turned my life upside down. You can see pictures of the devastation, but you can’t know what it is until you’re in it. Despite not being a Filipinx, undergoing all that horrible neocolonial suffering, I felt it, I wasn’t of it, but I was in it. It changed my life and it gave me a cosmic anger. I saw the real consequence of the colonial and neo-colonial effects, and what has now become industrialized and technocentric genocide that has been forced on the world, not just from the US, but from all of the other “developed countries.” At that time, I could never believe in anything again. I didn’t

believe in countries or any of that foolish stuff, any of the distinctions among peoples, the lie that all of it is, on every level. Every founding ideal is based on was written by people that were slave owners, colonialists, and murderers. There's slavery and injustice all throughout the world and it's been an ongoing thing for millennia, corrupt to the core. This would have deep influences for the rest of my life.

Chapter Three - A New Direction, 1970-1986

After the Peace Corps

In 1970, after completing my time in the Peace Corps, I returned to Pittsfield, and was lost due to reverse culture shock: living amid relative plenty while still feeling connected to the people dealing daily with survival, poverty, disease, lack of education, clothing, shelter, and necessities. I played locally in groups to contribute money to our household. In the fall of 1971, I also began study as a surgical technician at the Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, assisting with surgery in preparation for a life in international medical assistance, like the current Physicians Without Borders.

My goal was to continue the type of work I did in the Peace Corps, but with advanced medical skills toward becoming a physician's assistant in what was called the 'Third World' but now commonly referred to as the 'Global South.' We would work in the operating room in the mornings as we learned by doing, with four or five hours of preparing and assisting surgeries in the operating room followed by afternoon classes for about three hours. Seeing intense surgeries and life and death hanging by a thread, it was emotional, as I got too involved with the patients' suffering and eventually realized that this was not to be my path.

I also studied jazz piano and theory privately with a brilliant musician, John Talarico, an experienced pianist, saxophonist, clarinetist, flutist, composer, and arranger. He showed me a world of sound and ideas, modal systems, advanced concepts of pitch, time, rhythm, and the human aspects of music. I absorbed the music of medieval chants, Bach, the classical, romantic, and contemporary composers, and new concepts 'outside the box.' It was the music of Debussy, Igor Stravinsky, Penderecki, and other 20th century styles that hit home. The rhythms of

Stravinsky knocked me over, and I was focused on how time and rhythm can be expressed, something that in my later years would become a foundation for my playing and composing. I was especially intrigued by what are called 'odd times' but are not odd except in a common practice western perspective. I heard time cycles of 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, and so on, as unique and each with a personality of its own.

As I was studying surgical tech and jazz piano, theory and rhythm, I had an experience that changed my vision.

One day in March 1972 I went over to UMass Amherst and heard a great concert by McCoy Tyner, who had been John Coltrane's pianist, and his group with Sonny Fortune on saxophone, Calvin Hill on bass, and Alfonse Mouzon on drums. They played two suites, which lasted a total of four hours! There was no intermission, and it was transcendent. It was so deep and uplifting that I said to myself, I don't know if there's meaning, I don't know if there's a God, but whatever that sound and feeling is, I want to give my life to it. That was the point at which I felt the beauty, the spirit, and the power of African and African American peoples through their art and wanted to play it as deep as I could, in a certain sense, as a guest in their culture. I'm not *of* the culture, either West African or African American, but it resonates with me, and I want to play *in* it with integrity, as my later UMass Amherst teachers advised. To paraphrase their advice: Yeah, man, go ahead, it's not about your skin color, it's about what's inside you. It's not just the sound, but what it means, real for people, something deep, something hopefully good. Something that will go beyond the 'normal.' In the words of Bill Lowe, a trombonist in Boston and mentor in later years, "to create a space for the gods to descend," to go to another place in time, like Sun Ra's philosophy toward the omniverse, to transcend, as all deep global music and art does, here African drumming and dance and African American jazz. But true also of Indian

music and Javanese gamelan, Philippine kulintang, and other global cultures. In my case it started, and remains, primarily focused on African and African American music.

In fall 1972, I had just received a job offer to be a social worker for the state of Massachusetts in Pittsfield, following a successful summer audition to be a music major at UMass Amherst. I wanted to earn money for my family, so I temporarily went into social work. It was a way of helping people and was rewarding, but it wasn't enough after my Philippines experience, which had seemed so personal and intense. It was during that year I realized music was my path. My social work there was completed at the end of June 1973.

I started attending UMass Amherst in the fall of 1973 and was there for one year, but my father, James, suffered multiple strokes in June 1974 that made him practically a quadriplegic, not being able to move from the neck down. I took a break from school to provide him with 24/7 care at home with my mother from 1974 until he passed away in the summer of 1977. When he occasionally had to go to the hospital for treatment, I had an impulse to do something related to music, so when he slept, I would write down and tap out rhythms and time cycles and their permutations of uneven groupings, such as 11 as 3332, 3323, 3233, 2333 or 22223, 22232, 22322, 23222, 32222. This would prove to be one basis for my work in time cycles and rhythms at UMass Amherst, Wesleyan, and beyond in my teaching, composing, and playing.

While at home I volunteered from 1972-78 at the Harambee Cultural Center, an African American community space as part of the Christian Center and Church, in Pittsfield, teaching jazz piano and drum set. At that time, I first directly experienced African diaspora drumming, including Caribbean percussion and steel pans. People brought congas and other hand drums, bells, and rattles. Hearing the music aroused my interest so I joined the group.

The Christian Center and Harambee together were a center for social, economic, and cultural justice and advocacy, something that I joined as a volunteer, working for free breakfast programs in the city's public schools, improved education, and being part of artistic presentations, performing solo or in ensembles at community, church, and city festivals, and even on a local TV station housed in a nearby former school, the Tucker School, across the street from the Christian Center and Harambee. The advocacy included neighborhood house-to-house and downtown street-to-street canvassing with handouts, attendance at city government and school board meetings, and petitions for support of programs benefiting those in need. After experiencing the devastation in the so-called 'Third World,' in the Philippines, I was shocked at the attitudes of a few people who espoused racist and 'elitist' views of help for others.

By the time I returned to UMass Amherst in January 1978, I was highly motivated to learn more.

Overlapping this time, from 1973-81, I heard and met Clifford Jarvis, a unique drum set artist and percussionist who also played congas. In summer 1973, he, bassist Vishnu Wood, and vibraphonist Jay Hoggard performed at Avaloch Inn in Lenox, Massachusetts, as the Safari East Trio and I began study with Clifford. He also worked with Sun Ra, Archie Shepp, and Clifford Thornton, among others. Cliff and I played together as drums and conga and piano and drum set with the Berkshire Jazz quintet that also included pianist/saxophonist John Talarico, my high school buddy saxophonist Jacob Epstein, and bassist Steve Murray, and occasionally with guest vocalist Vivien Murray. Clifford also gave me a realistic sense of the music, its history, drummers' styles, and his own creative way of playing. Whenever I mention his name among experienced jazz artists – Reggie Workman, Jay Hoggard – Clifford is mentioned as one of the greatest players in the tradition.

Cliff also introduced me to several jazz artists who visited him to play in the Berkshires, including saxophonist Sam Rivers, trumpeter Hap Carter, pianist Gilbert Coggins, and bassist Paul Brown. On a few occasions I got to play with Gilly and Hap and once I got over some nervousness, we hit! Clifford left Pittsfield to resume full time touring in the fall of 1981 just as I was beginning my studies at Wesleyan. He went on an international tour with Sun Ra, whom he had played with many times before. When he left I was moved beyond belief, as he gave me his practice pad set and a beautiful Slingerland brown wood kit, which I still have to this day in New York. We corresponded via letters but I didn't see him again, as he was located in London, England, for a number of years performing. I didn't know he was diabetic but was told later he may not have had his medicines and went into diabetic shock, passing away shortly after in November 1999 at 58. His playing was like dancing on time and now that I look back, on life.

University of Massachusetts Amherst

From 1973-74 and 78-81 I met, and worked with professors Archie Shepp, Reggie Workman, Max Roach, Dr. Frederick Tillis, who began the African American/Jazz program, and other great artists. Roland Wiggins taught in the music education PhD program; he was a musical/cultural Einstein, a philosopher of African American culture, politics, and history. Many visiting artists and musicians would be brought from New York: you walk in the room at different times and see guest musicians/teachers like flutist Yusef Lateef, trumpeter Ray Copeland, percussionists Sa Davis and Brubbi Taylor, visual artist Vernon Stevens, and dramatist Paul Carter Harrison, I'm thinking – 'am I dreaming?' and Max brought Eubie Blake, at 95! A legend, right here with us, I shook his hand, spoke with him – 'I must be dreaming!'

During the Spring 1978 semester at UMass Amherst, I successfully re-auditioned for full time student status. Having previously taken numerous humanities courses at St. Michael's, I

didn't have to attend for four years and completed the course of study in what amounted to a little less than three years. My mom got sick so I took off the fall of 1979 and went back in the spring of 1980 when she got better. I graduated in June of 1981 with honors. My thesis was a precursor to my studies at Wesleyan in world music, focusing on the drum set and its history, styles, and future creative possibilities, including asymmetric time cycles. It was an honor to have Dr. Frederick Tillis, the founder of African American studies at UMass Amherst (for whom the concert hall is now named in his honor), Archie Shepp, and Roland Wiggins on my honors committee along with Dr. Dennis Brown, who wrote a comprehensive history of the drum set to 1942 in his PhD dissertation at the University of Michigan, percussion director Dr. Peter Tanner, and Dr. Miriam Whaples, a brilliant musicologist with whom I had taken classes.

My time at UMass Amherst was wonderful. I got to play in many diverse ensembles, such as the percussion ensemble, the symphony orchestra, the wind ensemble, and the Gospel vocalists and Choir, led by a master of the artform, Dr. Horace Clarence Boyer. In addition, the contemporary music chamber ensemble directed by Charles Fussell, was small and difficult to join, but I loved the music and eventually took part in my senior year. The percussion ensemble director, Peter Tanner, knew many of us liked world music, so we assembled a student-created hand drumming group based on African/Caribbean percussion inspired by Max Roach's *M'Boom* percussion ensemble. There were four or five of us as I remember, including John Ramsay, Steven John, Charles McPherson, Jr. We got to play in the percussion ensemble concerts during 1980-81.

In 1973-74 and 1979-80, I played piano and occasionally drum set in some of the student jazz chamber ensembles, being a part of Archie Shepp's, Reggie Workman's, and Max Roach's groups, in which we rehearsed and played many compositions by our teachers plus arrangements

we would bring in. I submitted a few and one, an arrangement of Bobby Benson's *Niger Mambo*, was performed in a concert. I had heard this first played by Randy Weston's ensemble at Avaloch Inn in summer 1966. Archie Shepp's student ensemble would include many of his and others' historic arrangements in the African American tradition, especially those with political, cultural, and global justice themes. One artist's repertoire was that of Cal Massey, a renowned revolutionary composer. Others were pieces such as *Sunrise on the Sahara*, and Lanie Robertson's musical theater work *Lady Day*, on the life and legacy of vocalist Billie Holiday. We performed the drama in the Student Union Ballroom at UMass Amherst, and it was magic, with Prof. Shepp playing baritone saxophone and leading the ensemble. Actors and actresses came from New York and the play was directed by Paul Carter Harrison, who among others such as visual artist Vernon Stevens, came to our campus to foster and teach global and diverse arts and styles. Playing piano with excellent musicians for singers and actors/actresses along with Shepp on saxophone was a major inspiration in my development.

One of the many things I learned from Archie was his style of teaching. He would run the ensemble through a piece and keep repeating it until every student could play it with integrity. No one was left behind, even if it took hours, and sometimes it did! He treated every student's learning as important as everyone else's, and he cared. I remember us going over a piece and him saying 'One more time!' in a warm and amicable voice innumerable times. Those of us who grasped the music more quickly at first were wondering, but after many repeated run throughs, we had memorized and internalized his music, so when we eventually played it in public, it was instinctive, and we played at a high level. He taught me the importance of everyone learning, no matter how slow, and that each person's outcome, not simply opportunity, mattered. And also,

that internalizing the music beyond reading was essential to this aural artform, a sentiment also emphasized by Max Roach.

The intense experience of the music up close, directly, and personally, was like living in New York among the greats but close to home yet surrounded by master artists who were open and sharing in their approach to students, a rare opportunity. We were on a first name basis and the egalitarian atmosphere they cultivated resonated with my views of education, ensemble interactions, music performance, and life.

This entire multicultural global vision for education that was created and developed at UMass in the early 1970s reflected a national movement toward educational equity as a model for global equity. It included a new vision, majors and programs, research centers, diverse faculty and student populations, and campus activities celebrating underrepresented peoples. Much of this new work centered in the department of Afro-American studies developed by several professors, including Michael Thelwell and John Bracey and located in New Africa House, a marvelous building not far from the Bromery Fine Arts Center. In addition to offices, classrooms, and lecture/rehearsal spaces with African dance taught by artist Eno Washington, it had a barber shop, the Augusta Savage Art Gallery, and a unique restaurant in the basement run by Yvonne John, a powerful woman who oozed good feelings and unequaled cuisine from Africa, the Caribbean, and the southern U.S.

On a cold winter night with below zero temperatures and after a long day in music – rehearsing, performing, taking classes, practicing – some of us would head up the hill to New Africa house and Yvonne’s. As soon as we entered the front door, we could smell the various dishes she made daily, and everything was ok. The food was an expression of Yvonne: open,

healthy, heartfelt, and rejuvenating. After a full meal, we would go out into the New England frozen nights and not feel cold at all, internally or externally! Her son Stephen played in our small drum ensemble that was part of our percussion performances.

The Afro-American studies program and related faculty in education and the arts helped connect my personal experiences in the Peace Corps and subsequent research on world and U.S. history, African American history and the systemic racism embedded in the U.S. My outrage at the world being upside down in the 20th century was too insane and unacceptable. A vast majority of the planet going to bed hungry, without medical care, education, riddled with disease, absent meaningful employment, without shelter or clothing, was/is a constant source of horror and universal anger and the need to change things by “any means necessary,” in Malcolm X’s words.

Cecilia Adams Gross, a professor at Simon’s Rock College in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, near Pittsfield, was a friend and colleague in my efforts to arrange benefit concerts for African famine in the 1970s. She was an activist and brilliant scholar of African and African American history and literature, having taught in Sierra Leone. She helped me understand the historical and cultural details and context of the present ‘plantation earth’ condition so many African Americans and other global peoples speak of. I came to see the actual history of the world and this stolen land in the Americas through the eyes of people who have lived through it: indigenous First Nations peoples and African peoples. This awareness connected directly to my study of artists and scholars like William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Paul Robeson, Bessie Smith, and James Weldon Johnson, among others. To see that those now called the 1% are the connection to many of the world’s inequities through history and across the globe, with different

names, places, and situations, but the underlying dynamic remains in poet and novelist Imamu Amiri Baraka's words, "the changing same."

The UMass Amherst experience was to be seminal in my vision for my life and music, and my work in global education and curricula, reflecting the world in learning and the arts. It was further developed in my Wesleyan studies and brought to my teaching and curriculum development at the New School (1991-93), San Jose State University ¹⁴ (1993-99), and UMass Dartmouth, (1999-2018).



Figure 6: *Clouds* (left to right): royal hartigan, Avery Sharpe, Clyde Criner; Bromery Arts Center, UMass Amherst, November 1979

One ensemble I played in was with a revolutionary pianist, Clyde Criner, who was working on his PhD in education with Dr. Roland Wiggins, and bassist Avery Sharpe, who in 1980 began touring internationally, first with Art Blakey's *Jazz Messengers* and later, McCoy

¹⁴ San Jose State University is also referred to as SJSU

Tyner's ensemble. It was incredible music, and we named our group *Clouds*. We performed many concerts on and off campus including Symphony Hall in Springfield, Massachusetts, and the Berkshire Athenaeum in Pittsfield. Clyde later would go on to play with Art Blakey and form his own ensemble, as well as do solo concerts and CDs with RCA.

The department had more than one large jazz ensemble, and I got to play in two of them. I was first in the Chapel Big Band in 1980, which rehearsed in the landmark Old Chapel at the University. In my last year, 1980-81, I joined the 'number one' big band that rehearsed in the new Fine Arts Center, now the Randolph Bromery Arts Center, after Chancellor Bromery's creation of diverse courses, programs, majors, and addition of diverse faculty at the university. It was cool to play with a large ensemble, and among the guest artists that academic year were saxophonist and composer Frank Foster and trombonist and composer Steve Turre, who I believe still plays on the *Saturday Night Live* TV show. I got to play with them in rehearsals and concerts, and they were real gentlemen, making the students feel at home. I remember once Steve and a small group of us were playing while waiting for the start of a rehearsal, and someone asked why we were playing before the rehearsal; Steve answered, "We're just getting to know each other." It was great!

I was immersed in music for three years, and of course Max Roach was there, so he was my primary teacher for drum set. He had group percussion sessions where we talked about drumming, music, and life. I also remember getting a lot of advice from Archie Shepp and Reggie Workman, the bassist who had played with John Coltrane. Great artists, and they gave me an education in the arts and music, especially in relation to African American history. That music is not simply sounds, it is meaning, and not just any contrived meaning as we see in pop music or commercial airport, elevator, and background muzak, but deep meaning, transcendent

meaning, almost as if music is a spiritual system, not just an artistic system. I would see this reinforced in my later studies at Wesleyan University.

Max didn't give private lessons, but we would have what in effect were group lessons. It was like a personal clinic, with six or however many drummers sitting around, trading ideas. We each got to play for him, and he would show us something at drum set, then we would talk about it. Once I played some time cycles I had been working on as I remember in 15/8, 11/8, and 7/8. He seemed intrigued by my work in this area as he had composed and played pieces in non-traditional time cycles such as 5/4 *Driva Man* in his *Freedom Now! Suite*, and 7/8 in a section of his *St. Louis Blues* arrangement. In all we did, Max would emphasize finding a concept or meaning in everything we played or composed, so the goal is that every sound you play is directly related to that underlying meaning.

Max treated us like friends he had known all his life, and this equity impressed me, since it was clear he, Dr. Tillis, and the other artists and faculty lived the justice and equality they advocated. This taught me these values need to be consistent in life as well as music, teaching, and learning. We felt like these legends, these elders, were our friends and it was great – an inspiration to be accepted by them.

In summer 1980, Max invited me to his home in Westchester, New York, for a few days. I witnessed his quartet with trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater, saxophonist Odean Pope, and bassist Calvin Hill, and got to sit in during a sound check (!). At that rehearsal/sound check Max introduced me to Jonathan Samuel 'Papa Joe' Jones, a drum set legend since the 1930s with count Basie's orchestra and many others, who was also in attendance. Max's snare hadn't been tuned or checked yet, and the snares were loose. Papa Joe yelled over to Max in the distance

from offstage, ‘Max, tighten your snares, they are too loose.’ So Max adjusted them. Papa Joe advised me to always keep my snares tight enough to give a clear sound.

Later, as we were sitting next to each other offstage, Papa Joe and I discussed the drum set and he told me he wanted to play low boys – a precursor to the high hat whose cymbals were at ankle level– with his sticks as well as his foot, so he invented and added a rod mechanism that would bring the two foot-controlled cymbals from foot to snare level so they could also be played with sticks or brushes. He related that someone from the Leedy Drum Company became aware of it and registered the patent, in effect stealing his idea and usurping the profits over decades. This is typical of inventiveness by African American musicians being stolen by others. By that time he was nearly 80 but still with a powerful spirit and vibe.

One semester, I sat in on a few classes with Professor Roland Wiggins. At the end of every class, we’d come out transfixed, thinking, what is my name? I don’t even know what my name is, where are we? He would spin us through multiple universes in those 50-minute classes! He would say there are three levels of artistic expression. There’s the technical, where you learn all the nuts and bolts to become a musician, painter, or any kind of artist. The second level is the syntactic, which consists of the forms and the way you put all that technique together to express yourself or the style. The third level is the deepest, where the true music lies, what he called the semiotic: the meaning and depth and ultimate reality of what it represents. His opinion was that, for most music teaching, learning, and performing, it’s all concerned with technique, and how you put it together and present it. People are very often, especially nowadays, more and more, without any of that deepest level, without which, in his opinion, music exists. He said music is not just organized sound, there’s a lot of organized sound that isn’t music. There’s a lot of what

people think of as music, that isn't music in his concept. For him, it had to have a deep personal, cultural, spiritual, and for some people, political context.

I came to understand his concept and agree with it. I believe art must have some level of expression that goes beyond just a pretty or catchy shrink-wrapped melody [or, for that matter, a rhythm you can bump to]. It needs to get to some other place, to transcendence. This is especially obvious in African arts. For example, even when we're told that a dance drumming is recreational music, or it's social music, in my experience it is never about just having a good time in itself. Yes, you can have a good time, but every sound relates to spirit and beyond. Personally, I have always understood that and agreed with it most of my life, and I have come to see that, for me, the only music that I would even call music, is music that has that deeper level. Everything else is not only not music, but it is not interesting. I'll hear some pop stuff, and yeah, I'll hear the ideas, maybe it's nice drumming, and this is not necessarily a criticism of the people that do it. They are well meaning and a lot of them are excellent players. It is not to disparage anybody, but for me, that approach has no lasting meaning, what the late Fred Ho calls the "flavor of the month" or nowadays, of the day or minute, in the endless grab for more spectacle profits from what is seen as 'entertainment.' It is like form without content, without anything deep. For me, expression in any art must have those deeper levels, or it's just not music or art or expression at all. This idea also came from my experience occasionally playing in the African American Church in my hometown, the Price Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church, in the 1990s and 2000s. That's how I feel.

Another example of Prof. Wiggin's brilliance is in one class he said "There are [some number] of ways a leading tone migrates to the tonic in Baroque music, all equally valid; here they are" and went on to list them. He then followed this with "Such an equality is true also of

life and the environment, outcomes should all be equally shared – so I don't want clean water running by my backyard if everyone can't have it.” Reflecting Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's idea that no one can be free until everyone is.

These faculty artists gave me a lifelong lasting experience at UMass. It was wonderful and more than anyone can get in most schools, colleges, or other institutions. It really opened me up to a wider sense of music and life, their meaning, cultural and political context, and may I say, spirituality. The views of these legends, Archie Shepp, Reggie Workman, and Max Roach, as well as professors Tillis, Wiggins, Thelwell, Bracey, and others, were considered revolutionary by some, but their advocacy for racial and universal economic, educational, and human justice, is not radical, that's normal, natural. We shouldn't even have to advocate for these things in the 20th, 21st, or any century. Being around these elders in the music, we learned that you cannot divorce the music and art from history, philosophy, and their cultural and racial implications. For me, it's spiritual implications, in addition to the personal ones that you bring to it. It was a wonderful time at UMass Amherst and it still resonates to this day. I still keep those memories with me when I play.

Wesleyan University

After graduating from UMass Amherst, I went straight to Wesleyan University. At first, I was thinking of trying to go to UMass Amherst for a graduate degree, but then I went down to Wesleyan and met Ed Blackwell and saw Abraham Kobena Adzenyah and Freedman Kwadzo Donkor with their West African drumming and dance class. I said 'Oh my God this is unbelievable' so I made up my mind. I was there from 1981 to 1983 for my master's, and then reapplied for the PhD and was there from 1983 to 86 for my doctorate, which I got in June of 1986. I was happy to get accepted to the graduate program. It was a very small program, with

many students from all over the world. You meet all these wonderful people, especially the faculty, graduate students, and some of the undergraduate students, representing the cultures from which they came artistically, mostly in music.

Being in the Peace Corps-Philippines, when I first saw the gamelan from Indonesia, the instruments were very much like Philippine gongs and are actually related to them historically. Indonesia and the Philippines are both Island cultures of Southeast Asia. There is a connection to the Philippine kulintang, which derives from the Javanese gamelan. Very different traditions, different sounds, different aesthetics, different everything, but related historically. Therefore, when I saw and heard them, I was just knocked over – something I had to do.

The Wesleyan Music faculty reflected the world as well, with most being from all around the world. There were two South Indian teachers, Tanjore Vishwanathan, who focused on flute and vocals and Tanjore Ranganathan, who taught mridangam, a double headed barrel drum of south Indian classical Karnatak (also spelled Carnatac) music and rhythmic syllables known as *solkattu*. There were three Indonesian Javanese gamelan master artists, Pak Kanto, a revered elder, Sumarsam, and Sumarsam's wife Maeny, who taught dance. When Pak Canto retired in 1983 after my first two years, another wonderful artist, I.M. Harjito, was brought in. His wife Srihadeni also performed and taught Javanese dance. From West Africa there was Abraham Kobena Adzenyah who taught drumming, and Freeman Kwadzo Donkor, who also drummed, but taught dance. In African American Studies, there was Bill Barron, a great tenor/soprano saxophonist whose brother is the well-known pianist, Kenny Barron; Bill taught jazz improvisation, theory, and ensembles, and trombonist Bill Lowe, who taught jazz history and large jazz ensemble. On top of that, we had Ed Blackwell teaching drum set! And a visiting

teacher pianist Fred Simmons from Philadelphia, who I would rehearse and play with many times along with Bill Lowe.

I lived just off campus in a place called India House that was initially envisioned to allow the students and faculty to live together as they do in India, a parallel to the lifelong way of learning common in many world cultures. Previously, Indian faculty and students that studied Indian music lived there. The goal was for learning to be continuous, daily, and personal; you wouldn't just go into a class and when the big hand hits the hour you're done and you go out. By the time I started at India House in fall 1981, that was no longer the approach and general music graduate students lived there. We did have occasional informal dinners and celebrations at India House with faculty, students, staff, and community members, all bringing food and taking part in the inevitable music in many rooms at once. This proceeded into the night, resulting in dancing, song, good humor, all taking place in multiple rooms at once, with a general sense of celebration of life. Quite a wonderful way to have a music (or any field's) department!

If you were a musician, especially a drummer, you would go crazy. You could spend 24 (or 48!) hours a day, seven days a week, doing nothing but one of the traditions. And of course, I and many others wanted to take everything. The problem is what are you going to do? How can you possibly do all the things you want to do? A lot of people consciously decided to just do one thing, which I understand, because you can really get deep into it, which is good. But if you hear all the things happening around you, how could you not want to do all of it? You'd have to have ice in your veins to not do it. The only frustration was wanting to do more in each music culture but the time limited you. I could have learned more over more years, but I did everything I could. Something like life, I guess.

Wesleyan had a beautiful approach at that time with great trust in the students. Wesleyan was known, unlike a lot of other schools, for being very individual and free. You only had to pick three of any of the required graduate courses. For somebody like me to have that freedom without a hammer over your head for requirements, I ended up doing far more than I needed to, playing in every ensemble possible. I first enrolled in beginning West African drumming, South Indian *mridangam* (a barrel-shaped traditional drum) and took an ethnomusicology course with Mark Slobin along with lessons with Edward Blackwell, which I would continue all my Wesleyan graduate years. In spring 1982 I joined the beginning Javanese Gamelan ensemble class and was in the advanced West African drumming ensemble. I transferred from *mridangam* to *solkattu* (rhythmic syllables), due to Tanjore Ranganathan's advice that I could adapt the rhythms to drum set and composition.

I also took an ethnomusicology course with David McAllester, one of the founders of the Society for Ethnomusicology in 1955 and the Wesleyan world music program in the mid-1960s. He turned out to be one of my major influences at Wesleyan and to this day, in music, scholarship, teaching, and life. His manner was global, open, and he cared for us personally.

Bill Lowe was my primary MA advisor and David was the primary advisor during my PhD studies; they were my overall mentors, great human beings. David retired in the late 1980s a year or two after I graduated. Everybody loved David, the most wonderful, sweetest guy. He had lived elsewhere, but eventually moved to Monterey in southern Berkshire County in Massachusetts in the early 1980s. I visited him, and his wife Susan, who was a photographer, with my mother a few times, as Monterey is not far from Pittsfield. David could sing and play Native American music and knew about the music deeply. He had an ultimate respect for cultures and traditions and was just wonderful to be around.

A background for McAllester and Wesleyan: McAllester was one of the two people that started to globalize the music program at Wesleyan. In the 1950s and early 60s Wesleyan had a very tiny music department that was mostly European-centered and they just had a choir I believe. Around the early to mid 1960s, McAllester and a European composer, Richard Winslow, realized with the increase in ethnic pride and a global sense and respect for other cultures, Wesleyan should develop its music department to reflect the music of the world's peoples. By coincidence, they got the ability to do that when Wesleyan invested in Xerox, or in one of those duplicating companies by the mid-1960s. Xerox at the time was a little foundling company, but suddenly, boom, it took off and became a huge corporation with wealth, making investors millions and millions of dollars. Wesleyan reaped a huge benefit from this and one of the things they did with the money was ask two of the senior music faculty, Winslow and McAllester, to come up with their vision for the music department. McAllester lobbied successfully to start a world music program at the undergraduate and graduate level, eventually up to the PhD in ethnomusicology. They built music studios, a rehearsal hall, the world music hall that has a big area for dance and the gamelan, and the Crowell Concert Hall among a few other buildings, beautiful places. Just gray stone architecture, nothing deep to see from the outside, but remarkable.

After being part of the strong and large UMass Amherst music program, with European music that I played – orchestra, chamber groups, and percussion ensemble – and focusing on Jazz/African American music; and then coming to this global program with Javanese gamelan, South Indian music, West African drumming and dance, and jazz ensembles, plus everything else, led by this marvelous human being, David Park McAllister, I was beyond inspired. He passed away in 2006. Very sad, he was 90 and lived an incredible life. He was a scholar that had

done a lot of fieldwork among the Navajo and other Native American peoples, but primarily among the Navajo and wrote a number of books and did a film with their permission, and was an authority on the music, despite not being Navajo.

In my second year I continued with West African drumming, the advanced Javanese gamelan ensemble, solkattu, and my MA thesis course. I occasionally sat in on African American music history classes with Bill Lowe and Jazz Theory and Improvisation with Bill Barron. Of course, I studied with Ed Blackwell every semester from fall 1981 to spring 1986. I would walk a block off campus to his house and play with him for an hour, it was paradise!

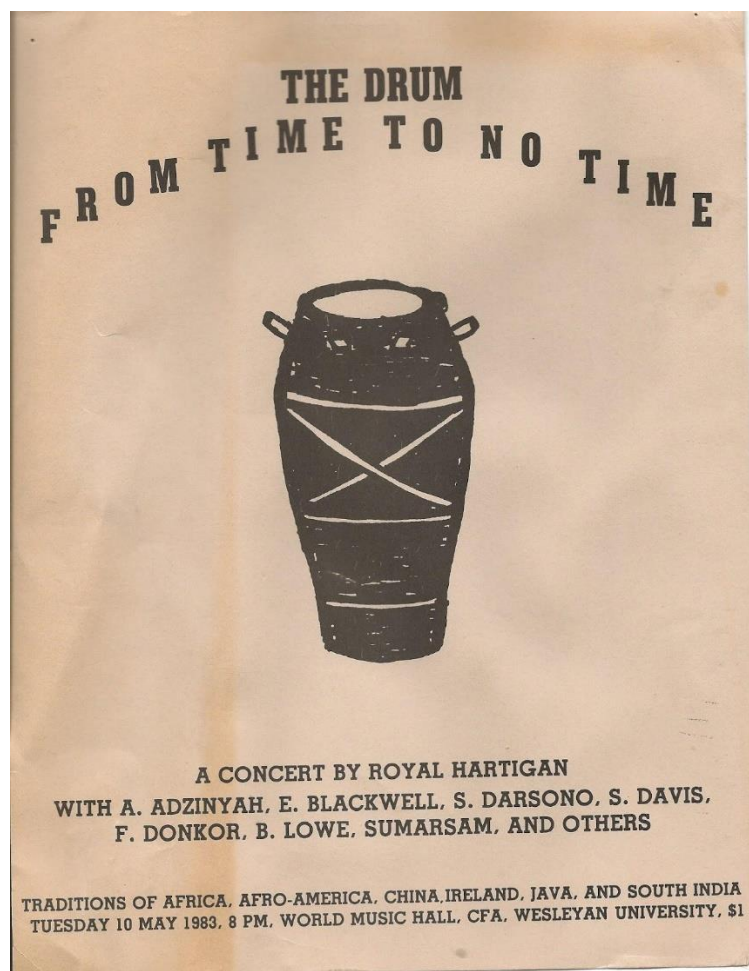


Figure 7: Wesleyan master's Thesis Concert Poster, May 1983.

For my PhD dissertation I wanted to do an original study adapting global rhythms for drum set, and ended up studying, practicing, rehearsing, recording, transcribing, and putting together a work with 30 one-hour audio cassettes [now digitized], and 1,670 pages on the drumming of West Africa, African America, Native America, Central Java, and South India, traditionally and adapted for drum set. My preparation was the entire academic year 1983-84, and recording from September 1984-May 1985, with some additional recording sessions in summer 1985. This went along with writing; each week before and after the Wednesday sessions in the music department, I would write, often at late hours during the night without any disturbance. This dynamic allowed full concentration with total silence so I got a lot done, usually ending sometime between 3 and 5 am, but feeling a true sense of accomplishment. In 1985-86 I added many written items, revised transcriptions and writings with advice of my committee, and submitted the full work in early April 1986, with a defense in May. So the overall project lasted 3 years, and was worth every minute.

Each week I would meet with master artists Abraham and/or Freeman, Edward Blackwell, and later with Mixashawn and Paul Hadzima for Native American styles, Sumarsam and Harjito with gamelan, and Tanjore Ranganathan with south Indian solkattu and *tala* (time cycles). It was living the music with the masters from each culture, their interactions, and playing every single item we discussed and I wrote.

I look to make this work, *Blood Drum Spirit: Drum Languages form West Africa, African America, Native America, Central Java, and South India*, along with parts of my UMass Amherst honors thesis and my Wesleyan MA thesis, *The Drum: From Time to No Time*, into a book with digital audio files. The depth of these masters from global cultures, including Edward Blackwell's drum set artistry, needs to be available to the world of musicians and composers.

My undergraduate work at UMass Amherst and graduate work at Wesleyan was supported in large part by Mary Ann Knight, of Pittsfield. Mary worked at the Berkshire Athenaeum in Pittsfield in the Music and Reference areas of the library. Her help with research on music, recordings, and authors on specific topics in world music and jazz allowed me to find and decipher many sources in my understanding of music. Her editing and suggestions for my thesis and dissertation were invaluable and made possible the completion of both works. We also shared a love of the environment, and together founded the Friends of Springside Park in Pittsfield, working to keep the park as a natural open space, freely accessible to everyone. At different times we successfully confronted the proposed invasions of tennis courts, a golf course, soccer fields, and a dog run, any of which would have destroyed the natural essence of Springside. Mary remains an inspiration in my work for environmental justice and music.

Everything came together with the faculty, students, playing, and general experience at Wesleyan. The memories of my Philippine kulintang reflected in the Javanese gamelan. My previous work in time cycles for several years on my own before learning about India became present in south Indian solkattu and time cycles. The power and depth of African music and dance; the African American tradition of jazz artistry right before my eyes and ears. Everything I worked on at Wesleyan coalesced, with my past life, present environment, and beyond. This experience continued during my next three years there for my PhD, expanded. It would have major influences on my life.

Chapter Four - Life as an Educator, 1986-2018

Teaching Philosophy

My first experience teaching was watching and learning directly from my uncle Ray Hart and mother, Hazel Gay-Hartigan. My uncle was so intense when he would teach and that taught me that music, dance, and life matters. A former student of his, who studied with him when she was young, wrote a beautiful article in the *Berkshire Eagle* newspaper about him teaching tap dancing at the Legion Hall in Adams, near Pittsfield. At the end of the article she talked about when she did a recital and was embarrassed, but he encouraged her. She said Ray Hart taught her that when you dance, you dance with all you've got, and you dance no matter what, and in reading that it made me realize that it wasn't just tap dance. In life you live and give no matter what, and you live and give with everything you've got. My mother also had an intensity, it wasn't quite as extreme as my uncle, but she also had a real obvious openness and caring for the students. You could tell that she was really locked into how they felt, and all their students understood and reciprocated.

The first thing I learned from them is to bring intensity, just like a performance to extend to the audience/students. The second thing is that you teach with an openness, and you do it with passion, or I'd like to say you do it with heart. You teach and you play with heart and spirit. Some people might say there's no difference between that and music expression generally, but I need to think of it that way. It's not some sterile set of codes or a simple information transfer. Even before I started teaching, I had some sense of what living and playing and teaching would be about through the example of others, beginning with Ray and Hazel.

My Father, James, also taught me this by example. He worked as a security guard at the GE plant in Pittsfield and after suffering a debilitating stroke in 1954 at the age of 56, he couldn't move his right arm or leg. But his will to work against the odds and slowly regain the use of his toes and fingers, then hands and foot, then arm and leg to some extent, made it possible to return to work and care for the family he and my mom created. His intensity in recovery and work also reveals this approach to life: to put all one's energy into each thing and never stop until it is completed and done at the highest level; existence matters, and we give it up to live, unconditionally, and with heart.

The whole educational idea of turning out robotic virtuosi, that can play any tune in any key at any tempo, is missing the point. That's not saying that the technical means are not important, but if it doesn't have a heart in it, what good is it? That's what Roland Wiggins distinguished in the three levels: technical, syntactic, and semiotic. In short, technical is all the nuts and bolts in what you do in your art for expression, syntactic is the grammar of it, the way you put it together in compositions and solos, forms, and the semiotic is what it means at the deepest level. This isn't a criticism of teachers, since the arts and education are underfunded, or you don't have enough time to teach everything, so you're just trying to do what you can as a teacher, and you're just giving students all the information you can, but that still misses the point. Without the semiotic, the rest is worthless. In fact, if you don't have the third part, why are you doing it at all? There's no point in my view.

Hartford Public Schools, Wesleyan, and The New School

When I graduated from Wesleyan in 1986, I was a little over \$9,000 plus in debt. I had a series of recordings that I had completed for my dissertation with Abraham Adzenyah, Freeman Donkor, and Edward Blackwell. I wanted to pay them for their work during our recordings in

1984-85 so I had taken out a couple of student loans. I had paid some of it off while I was still in school, gigging with various groups in the Hartford and New Haven, CT, Springfield/Western Massachusetts area, and I would also perform often with a group in Albany, New York. One day, in June of 1986, I decided to call up Hartford Public Schools, and somehow, I don't know how it happened, was hired to teach at Hartford Public High School. I, who never really sang much in my whole life, was hired to teach the choir (?!). I paid off my debt right away because I don't believe in owing anybody any money and kept working there for three years, fall 1986 – June 1989.

It was fun, even though I knew at that time it wasn't going to be my ultimate life thing. We did some interesting things nobody had ever heard before in the public schools. Instead of typical choir repertoire, I made arrangements of jazz standards and other compositions including rhythm and blues, funk, and swing. I could not believe that the students – mostly young people of color, with significant African American and Latinx populations, had never heard of the jazz greats, except a few knew Louis Armstrong (?!) I got a few school grants to bring African drumming with Abraham and Freeman and our group called *Talking Drums*. For the vocal concerts I would have jazz groups accompany the choir with myself on piano and worked with the kids on some theater works like *West Side Story* and brought musicians in for a jazz version I had arranged. Based on students' requests, we also collaborated on a hip-hop group that I had as an informal class, sometimes during and sometimes after school. I got really involved but a lot of the faculty and administration didn't have a clue as to what we were doing. However, the kids dug it and we got along. The concerts were quite original and demanding for a high school but the members of the groups performed excellently.

The job was frustrating at points but rewarding, since it was a lot of social work, as well as music education. I got along well with the kids and identified with them because most of them were from poor blue-collar families. There was a heavy Latinx and Black population, along with a significant Vietnamese and Chinese Asian population, so it was a very diverse group including the relatively small Anglo population. Some of the students would come to me with problems that they had. It really tore my heart apart and meant a lot to me that they would trust me, who was from a very different background. I referred them to the appropriate counselors, but oftentimes they couldn't really get the help they needed. I remember one instance when a student didn't have money to pay for her baby's formula and was frightened and devastated. I couldn't get personally involved, but simply gave her \$20 in an envelope so at least I knew she and her child would be ok. She never forgot that gesture and never needed more help, as she worked after school and was able to get back on her feet. The administration was defensive against students and faculty, possibly enhanced by drugs and guns right out on Forest Street where the kids go out after school; it was really frightening.

I will never forget one day, some students were outside with some guys and a couple of cars, it was clear they were trying to entice students to do drugs or something. From what I saw, there was a commotion and it looked like they were bothering the students, so I ran outside and chased off the non-students that weren't in cars. I went about three blocks over from the school, yelling 'what are you doing' until I didn't see them anymore. Later, I got this letter from one of the vice principals, Anna Consuelo, sayin', thank you for your demonstration of courage. Then the principal, Amato Cruz, came up to me and said, "Do you know what you did?" He told me I could have easily been injured or worse. So possibly the disrupters thought I was a plainclothes cop, since I posed no threat to them and was relatively skinny and small. My ignorance from not

growing up around the inner-city drug scene could have led to a tragic ending. I wasn't brave and didn't realize how dangerous it was, and I was just worried about the students.

During that time, I also kept my contact with Wesleyan. I'd have to get up at 5am to get to school before 7am homeroom and leave at 2pm. As soon as I finished teaching, I would go right to Wesleyan by 2:30 to play in the African drumming ensembles and then go to the gamelan classes at night, and of course practice drum set. I was there still doing what I did when I was a student, still being a student, although having technically graduated. Everybody welcomed me. I ended up leaving my job at Hartford in 1989 and went back to Wesleyan as a part time adjunct faculty member.

I taught a world music course through the Graduate Liberal Studies program at Wesleyan, which was mostly for people that weren't regular students, but adults returning for their master's degree. I didn't teach that course every year, but I taught it a couple of times during that four-year period from 1989 to 1993. I would also teach the overflow of Ed Blackwell's beginning drum set students because he had so many he couldn't cover them all. In my last two years when Anthony Braxton, who came on the faculty in 1990, would go on tour I would teach his jazz history class. I would prepare for days and make it lively. There were three blackboards in the classroom, and I would write out the whole class outline on them so the students could see where I was going. I like to do it in three-dimensional time by hand to this day, which involves much more work. I know there are other ways that are easier like sending them an email with everything included, but I want to have them look at it in real time and space. (Luddites are us.....)

My first trip to Ghana was in spring 1991 and it focused my life, living and playing with the people in Kopeyia village in the Volta Region, with master artist Godwin Kwasi Agbeli at the Dagbe Cultural Centre. It would be the first of many later study trips to Ghana with students through 2018.

In my last two years at Wesleyan, I took a position in New York at the New School (now the New School University) Jazz and Contemporary Music program, which is like Berklee College of Music in Boston. It was a very highly regarded university like Wesleyan, but it had an interesting jazz and contemporary music program. There was no world music so when I got there I started a weekly 3-hour world music survey class mornings and a weekly 3 hour global drum ensemble with a focus on West African music in the late afternoon, all on Wednesdays. I made sure that all public performances had funding for Abraham to come down and lead the ensemble because Freeman Donkor, who I was very close to at Wesleyan, passed away from cancer in the summer of 1989.

San Jose State University

In 1993, I had an offer from Dwight Cannon and Hafez Modirzadeh, faculty leaders of the Improvised Music Studies Program at San Jose State University to go to California and teach with them. I took a position at SJSU, which was in the south Bay Area of California. There was a good side and a bad side to moving to California. I always think about how I never fully moved to New York City. I don't know how successful I would have been, I don't think I would have been any big deal, I wouldn't want to be a big deal anyway. But I think I would have made a lot of connections with like-minded people and toured and played a lot more than I did. And in my heart, I've always known that that's what my vision is, even more than teaching, although I love teaching. I don't know why, but I love to discuss things and present things and interact with

people and ideas. At the same time, the move gave me the ability to teach regularly and to later successfully apply for grants that led to many international trips and touring, support for CDs, books, videos and even 3 films, as well as a position as a tenured professor at UMass Dartmouth. I still played a good amount in New York starting in 1987 until 2013 with Fred Ho's ensembles (and until the present with my own and other groups), and they were cutting edge music and revolutionary politics. While I was in California, I would take the red eye flights on Thursday or Friday night after school at SJSU and arrive early morning in New York, ready to rehearse. It was exciting and the music gave me such an inspiration I was never tired.

I was at San Jose State University for six years from 1993 to 1999 and taught a world music class and jazz history class. I directed the big band and sometimes played piano when needed, and Dwight Cannon, who founded the SJSU Improvised Music Studies program, wanted teaching and music to be outside the box, an avant-garde style of music which, playing with Fred Ho's ensembles in New York, fit my approach: creating art with strong political or personal content – not mainstream or what some call cocktail, corporate, super-jazz – but music, dance, song, and poetry beyond the edge, parallel to the aesthetic of Sun Ra's *Solar Arkestra*.

Dwight wanted something revolutionary, so we did it. We called it the World Repertory Ensemble, doing all kinds of things, free music, but we did some straight-ahead stuff, too. Over my years there we worked together to express jazz and cross-cultural global music elements from West Africa, West Asia/Middle East, the Philippines, India, Afro-Peru, China, European (Gregorian Chant!), among others. Dance and poetry/literary arts were also part of the collaborations, which were based on my perspective but just as important, the cultural background and visions of the students from year to year. A prominent faculty member in this program was vocalist, Baomi Butts, who was a seasoned performer of Gospel, Blues, Jazz, and

many other styles – and she could scat to the edge! I still keep my connection with her, recording a number of videos for my *royalhartigan* youtube channel and her contributions to my *Ancestors* double CD.

The *Kekeli* (from C. K. Ladzekpo – ‘the light’ or ‘spreading the light’) West African music and dance ensemble and the World Repertory Ensemble performed across the bay area at festivals in Oakland, the Berkeley Jazz Festival, Santa Cruz, and in San Francisco. We even did a world music arrangement of John Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme Suite* that lasted 55 minutes for the John Coltrane Church in San Francisco, The San Jose Jazz Festival, and other venues in Oakland and around the bay area.

Eventually, I started a West African drum ensemble. I wasn’t hired for that, but I wanted to do it because I loved it. I made sure that any public events we performed, there would be someone from the culture there to lead us. There was a master artist from Ghana, C.K. Ladzekpo, who taught at the University of California, Berkeley, that I would bring in as often as possible, and always for performances. He lived in Oakland and would come down, about an hour’s ride to our campus, to lead us. I don’t believe in representing a culture through performance, even if I can play the technique, without a master artist from that culture present and in charge. Because the expression is not simply the technical and grammatic, as we discussed earlier, but is centered on the spiritual and meaning at many levels. My time there lasted until 1999, when I moved back to Massachusetts.

During this time I continued my study trips to Ghana, bringing students in 1994, 1995, 1996, and 1997. In 1996 I also had students do video recordings toward a short film, *Eve*, and eventually 2 books with video on African drumming and jazz/drum set: *West African Rhythms*

for Drum set (1995; Warner Brothers, Alfred Music) and *Dancin' on the Time* (2006; TapSPACE music and Print Tech Publishers).

With Improvised Music Studies, we created a community of globalized students, joined by some faculty and community members. It felt that we created a close-knit scene at the university and region, like a celebration of life via the arts.

I was also part of a committee to forge a new diverse curriculum and while most of the committee was Eurocentric, we somehow managed to push through a new curriculum. My advocacy was based on my Peace Corps, international, and Wesleyan experiences, and I successfully gave the committee facts on global music, art, and history that made diversity an important consideration. It was something of an unexpected revolutionary victory for our students and what I believe true music education to be, focused equally on the music of the world's peoples, in which the European tradition is simply one part, but not any more than others.

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

I moved back to Massachusetts in fall 1999, after my mother passed away. I had put out an application to UMass Dartmouth thinking I would not be considered. Suddenly, I checked and they were interested. The music committee asked me to come and give a talk, play, and they interviewed me. It turned out they wanted me, so I started in the fall of 1999.

In my first year at UMass Dartmouth, I taught a European music history course, ear training/basic musicianship, and a world music survey. The college dean at the time, John Laughton, wanted to have global arts and diversify what was otherwise a very non-diverse department, College of Visual and Performing Arts, and school. The music program began to

add world music requirements to the curriculum. I brought in master artists when I could for classes and always for public concerts. Eventually, I arranged to have a full West African drum and dance program with my friend Kwabena Boateng of Ghana, who would come each week and teach the class with me. A couple of years later, in 2003, the dean bought a Javanese gamelan, and we advocated successfully to have another master artist, I. M. Harjito of Wesleyan and Brown universities, come once a week. We had a wonderful music department with steel pans, being taught by Jamie Eckert, European music, and some jazz with vocalists Semanya McCord and Marcelle Gauvin, saxophonist Rick Britto, pianist John Harrison, drummer Herbie King, and bassist Wes Brown, among others. The addition of the West African drum and dance, and Javanese gamelan significantly added to the program. I moved from 2000 into consistent teaching: world music survey each semester, African music and dance, and Javanese gamelan, plus advising music majors and serving on numerous college and university committees and doing recruitment. I also led an informal jazz ensemble most semesters, and for one semester the large jazz ensemble.

The West African ensemble played everywhere: the whole New Bedford area and southeastern Massachusetts region, on campus, off campus, sometimes up as far as Boston; we went over to Wesleyan in Middletown, CT, near Hartford, to play a music celebration concert in 2002 and a retirement concert for my former teacher, Abraham Adzenyah in May 2016. It was just wonderful. Our *Kekeli* African Music and Dance Ensemble (same name as at SJSU and later the University of the Philippines) performed challenging repertoire for both concerts; our student jazz ensemble I informally taught and played piano in was able to do original pieces in West African styles and time cycles of 11/8!

Our world music program was very successful. I was there for 19 years and then when other prospects like my film and other things got to be so important and pressing, I decided to retire in 2018. I regret it in a way because I still miss the students, music, and teaching. I still do some teaching and residencies, but I miss full time interactions and sharing. Yet I have filled time and space with writing books, and as soon as COVID gets a little better, I'll be back to traveling internationally to perform, like I do, to Africa, Asia, and Europe or wherever else across the country.



Figure 8: UMass Dartmouth students in Mampong Asante, Ghana in 2018.

While at UMass Dartmouth, I was able to receive a number of grants that facilitated my research trips with students to Ghana (2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014 and 2018); and for my own research and performances to China (1999, 2001, 2004, 2011, 2012, 2015) the Philippines (in addition to the 2006 Fulbright awards, 2009 and 2010). I went on 2 sabbaticals and stayed an extended time: first at the New School and the University of the

Philippines as a J. William Fulbright scholar/teacher in 2006 and later as a visiting full-time faculty and Fulbright scholar/teacher in 2013-2015n at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumase, Ghana. For our UMass Dartmouth study trips, in addition to my own research and the students' international experiences, I bought instruments and traditional cloths; we primarily focused on learning music and dance that were included in our repertoire back at UMass Dartmouth, as well as what I brought from my earlier trips while at San Jose State University.

I had advocated for a world music curriculum since my coming to campus in 1999, and finally bent enough ears that in 2008-09 we developed and got approval for a unique music curriculum for all music majors, including a mandate for European music from the first year, and adding Music Technology in the second year, African American music/Jazz in the third year, and world music in the fourth year. Each year included courses in history/survey, theory and improvisation, and ensembles the students performed in. In my research, UMass Dartmouth has the only such curriculum in the country and our efforts to diversify students' learning experiences remains one of my most positive efforts in education: making learning and teaching a global reality to reflect the world we live in.

I advocated for a graduate Music Department during my 19 years at the university, something that would have drawn hundreds of students, both young and returning for educational certification, and supported new global programs, faculty, instrument acquisition, and recruitment of diverse global students and faculty. But the administration of the department, college, and university, with a few notable exceptions, was unconsciously (or more likely consciously), deaf to the realities of educational needs and true student benefits.

About five to ten years after I got there, I noticed a change. The change was in student (and faculty) responsiveness. I didn't blame the students/faculty for it, I could see it was a symptom of something else. I was wondering what it was, so I reached out to other faculty and people I knew around the country to see if they had similar issues. I realized my experience was universal in our university and across the country.

I guess education has not always been just this pure thing that people want to believe. Despite education always being framed to some extent as a business – like other aspects of life – there's a gradually (and not so gradually) increasing business side to it that has steadily eroded a sense of public vision, public good, public existence, in favor of privatization, a withdrawal from the community good and interdependence, a withdrawal from real connections to others. In effect a limitation into a silo of the self, as one author calls, 'the triumph of the market,' meaning that it's not really a triumph. The right wing/conservative market mantra of the radical individual, profit-driven capitalist ego, greed, economic system, a profits-over-people way of life, that dictates everything else. You see it filtering down, like poison in a lake that has polluted down into the soil of existence and collective consciousness. That poisoning of the idea of what it is to exist and be human, and then what it is to be in the world, and what it is in society, and what it is in institutions like education that are supposed to be serving humane ideals, they all get turned into just bottom-line businesses. Historically, education was to some extent, a bastion of thought, and real freedom and individuality, but now you can see how pathetic it is, not much more in most places than a Pavlovian assembly line for programming automations to fit in as cannon fodder, cogs in a corporate world making the world safe for Pepsi Cola and the 1%. This is tragic and personally hurts those of us who care for real learning aimed at the growth of

students to achieve a deep level of self-consciousness and awareness of the world, its history, current condition, and future possibilities to enhance our planet and peoples.

This poisoned 'education' had an effect on students. The students used to take classes because they loved the subjects and could interact and actually be students. Now, they can't be students, they're cogs in a wheel, they are numbers with incredible pressure and stress. They have to get out of school quickly, because they can't afford the huge debts they take on, some have told me feeling that they have to escape in the shortest time. What do they get if they graduate? They don't even necessarily get a job, so they don't have any means to pay back the hundreds of thousands of dollars they owe after four or more years of school. They are being nailed to the wall and they know it. It breaks my heart, even if I'm getting my health insurance and pension, what good is that if I'm not doing something meaningful. Seeing this perversion of human relations in our 'society' and education that some call a garage sale instead of a country denies generations of students the ability to experience true global reality, history, art, theater, dance, and music. That is one of the saddest things I see following my retirement. While not the decisive reason for leaving academia, this global philosophical mutation, at every level poisoning of the world, society, and education is a tragedy. My heart goes out to the students who are denied and left alone, empty, in my view something like educational and spiritual orphans.

My vision is that education needs to be free for all at every level, a graduate needs to perform 3 years of service nationally or internationally after gaining a BA, 4 years for an MA graduate, and 5 years for a PhD This would ensure a constant flow of new ideas, energy, and contributions in the students' major or chosen fields, sometimes when appropriate as an intern. It would eliminate student debt, and the schools would be supported by tax funding diverted from significant defense complex support and taxations of the wealthy. This seems so logical that I

can't understand why it isn't already in place, except for the fact that it would necessitate moving money from the corporate sector into humane areas.



Figure 9: A Kekeli concert at UMass Dartmouth with audience onstage.

Education is first caring, and this quality is difficult to maintain in a place where self-interest trumps everything else.

Chapter Five - Tap Dance to *Clouds* and *blood drum spirit*

Playing Philosophy

This could be considered my ‘full disclosure’.....I was once invited to go on a tour, but I declined, while I was on the West Coast in the 1990s at San Jose State University. The gig paid well and all I had to do was bring an African drum with me. I was teaching African drumming but would only perform publicly with a master artist present. I can’t represent the culture because I’m not *of* the culture. I might be *in* it and sense it and identify with it and feel it and love it, but I’m not of it, and don’t have that right. So I politely said no thanks.

My goal is to never play a sound, any sound on any instrument, in my case, mostly the drum set, sometimes piano or tap dancing, that does anything except touch that deep spiritual thing we have in our being and give it to others. Of course, I am human and many times fail to play deeply, I’m not sure if anyone can, but I can’t. But I always try to do so with nothing else clouding my goal. Therefore, nothing commercial, nothing popular, or anything meant to impress an audience or critics or reviewers, or the so-called charts, or whatever. If it doesn’t do that, if it doesn’t express that spiritual essence as my internal motivation, then I feel I have no right to go near those instruments and play them, even including the drum set, and if I do, I’m lying to the audience and myself – I would fail as a human being as well as a musician. I didn’t figure this out on my own. It comes from the great artists that I have worked with that feel that way, not just by saying it because a lot of times they don’t, but by the way they are living.

While I have performed in innumerable ensembles over the years, I would like to note a few main groups I have played in. These do not include the European music I played with the Berkshire area chamber and full orchestras in pieces such as Igor Stravinsky’s *L’Histoire du*

Soldat (whose constantly changing time cycles reinforced my sense of time), Bach's *Mass in B minor*, Handel's *Messiah*, Benjamin Britten's *Noye's Flood*, Puccini's *Gloria*, Edgard Varese's *Ionization* for percussion ensemble, Johan Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus*, among many others, usually percussion and/or tympani. Also during my college years at St. Michael's, I was a member of the Glee Club directed by Dr. William Tortolano that sang throughout the northeast, presenting large works such as Brahms *Requiem* in 1966 (actually recorded at Jordan Hall in Boston, commemorating the assassination of President John F. Kennedy), Sergi Rachmaninoff's *The Bells*, Modest Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, and many others. For other shorter and lighter works, I got to accompany the ensemble on piano for a few pieces during the 1966-67 year.

Various Groups and Performances, 1964-1968

Apart from solo tap dancing since the age of 3 and string bass in a dance ensemble in my high school years, as well as my Pittsfield Boys Club Cavaliers junior drum corps playing snare drum 1959-60, my first ongoing ensemble experiences were playing piano in the early 1960s. The first was the *Four Aces* quartet that included trumpeter Bruce Goguen, clarinetist Bruce Wilner, and drummer Victor Herbert Chapman, a lifelong friend until his sudden death due to cardiac arrest in 1967, a shocking and jolting loss. We played at local churches, our high school, and other places and enjoyed a collective sense of exploring jazz music, primarily New Orleans and swing styles.

In my last year at Pittsfield high school, in spring 1964, I played piano in a trio with acoustic bassist Richard Vinette and drummer Wilfred Wannamaker III. We began an extended engagement at the Edgewood Motel in Lenox, Massachusetts, playing 7 nights a week, 4-5 hours a night from early April to early September when I left to attend St. Michael's College in Vermont. The group continued playing at Edgewood well into the fall. It was like playing in a

big city club since many of the customers came from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other urban centers to spend time in the Berkshires, a well-known vacation area with many cultural attractions such as chamber music, the summer home of the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood, art venues, Jacob's Pillow dance Festival, the Williams Summer Theater, the Great Barrington Theater and many others. They wanted to hear jazz much of the time, so we got a lot of experience performing some dance styles and jazz for listening. At that time, we were exposed to the music of Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, and Dave Brubeck and tried some of Brubeck's pieces in time cycles – *Unsquare Dance* in 7/4, *Blue Rondo a la Turk* in 9/8 and 4/4, *It's a Raggy Waltz* in 3/4 and 2/4 simultaneously, and of course, his popular *Take Five* in 5/4, plus ballads such as *Strange Meadow Lark*. The people dug it! It was my first extended performance experience.

During my years at St. Michael's, I played jazz and dance gigs during the academic year in Vermont and on school breaks/vacations back in Massachusetts, mostly piano, in order to help pay for my college education. In summers 1965-67 I would play in the Berkshires at places like the Holiday Inn (1965, 7 nights a week) and Avaloch Inn (1966 and 1967, three-four nights a week), both in Lenox. Avaloch had a jazz policy, and employed three groups, including Berklee student groups and faculty and in 1966, Randy Weston's trio and septet. What a great way to play and learn!

Each summer I would attend jazz concerts at the Music Inn, also known as the Music Barn, in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, not far from Tanglewood. It was opened in 1950 by music enthusiasts Stephanie and Philip Barber as a creative music venue, and home to the historic Lenox School of Jazz from 1957-60. Among the school's faculty were John Birks 'Dizzy' Gillespie, saxophonist Jimmy Guiffre, bassist Percy Heath, and drummer Max Roach. Students included Ornette Coleman, composer and educator David Baker, pianists Dizzy Sal and Paul

Bley, and guitarist Attila Zoller. During the 1960s a jazz series was curated by Donald Soveiro, who presented Sunday evening jazz concerts with artists mostly traveling up from New York. The space was laid out so that if you got tickets early, you would be near, only 10-15 feet away, from the musicians; you could feel them breathe and interact up close, as if you were part of the group.

The artists I experienced during those summers were all part of the tradition I loved and it was incredible to be close and talk with them after the concert or during intermission, in effect a concert hall that was as intimate as a club. The orchestras of Count Basie, Woody Herman, Duke Ellington, and Buddy Rich, and the smaller ensembles of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (including a young pianist, Kenny Barron, who with his brother, saxophonist William, were people I would meet and play with in later years, albeit only once or twice), Thelonious Sphere Monk (with saxophonist Charles Rouse and the great drummers Frankie Dunlop one year and Ben Riley another), the Dave Brubeck quartet (with bassist Eugene Wright, drummer Joe Morello, and saxophonist Paul Desmond), pianist George Shearing (with a young vibraphonist Gary Burton, guitarist Mundell Lowe, and drummer Vernell Fournier), saxophonist Stan Getz (again with a young Gary Burton, bassist Steve Swallow, and drummer Joe Hunt), the Modern Jazz Quartet led by pianist John Lewis (who by the way, also knew and played classical music to the amazement of Stephanie Barber, a classical music aficionado, as I was told by a dinner guest, when they discussed, among other things, the nature of Bach fugues over dinner!). The MJQ also included bassist Percy Heath, vibraphonist Milt Jackson, and drummer Connie Kay.

One experience I will always remember. In summer 1965 I played solo piano at the Eagles Nest lounge at the Holiday Inn in Lenox, a few miles from Tanglewood. One night in late August a group of elegantly dressed men in tuxedos walked in, most carrying horn cases. I

immediately knew they were members of Duke Ellington's Orchestra coming back to their lodgings following a rehearsal with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for its annual concert with outstanding ensembles and artists. I was intimidated, knowing they would likely see my playing as lacking. Yet when I took a break and went over to greet them, they spoke with me and were kind about my playing, making me feel less nervous.

During a break I went into the hallway to use the pay phone, calling my parents to tell them I had seen, played for, and spoke with the members of Duke Ellington's great ensemble. Just as I finished, who walks down the hall, but Duke himself, immaculately attired and with a red carnation in his tuxedo lapel. I sheepishly went up to him and asked if I could shake his hand, as I knew he was a legend, and it was an honor to just talk with him. He stopped me, and asked my name, and told me I was special. In our conversation he made me feel like I was somebody at a time when I was doubting it and taught me the true humility and equality people like Duke Ellington live by. After a long day rehearsing he didn't have to spend time with me, in my eyes having played for kings and queens, presidents, and officials and institutions across the world, but he did, and gave me a sense of how to relate to people and how to bring that sense into my music. I will never forget his openness. This would later be repeated by most every jazz legend I met and studied or worked with, a personal sense of connection and goodness. I heard Mr. Ellington's orchestra five times from the mid-1960s until the early 1970s, but to meet him and interact personally will always stay with me. Among his artists were saxophonists Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves, and Harry Carney; trumpeters Cootie Williams and Mercer Ellington, trombonist Lawrence Brown, and drummers Sam Woodyard and Rufus Jones.

In the summers 1966-67 I played mostly at the Avaloch resort in Lenox, literally across the street from Tanglewood. Following a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert the entire resort,

restaurant, and clubs would suddenly be filled with vacationing concert goers from major eastern cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston and across the country and world. There were three music spaces, and I led a trio that played outside the restaurant called the Five Reasons Steak and Ale House. Inside the restaurant pianist Randy Weston's trio was featured in summer 1966 and it was an honor to play opposite his ensemble, knowing that we were nowhere near his level of musical artistry.

I would go listen to his trio that featured bassist Vishnu Wood and drummer Lenny McBrowne, being amazed nightly at how they spontaneously interacted in the moment, always at a high level of creativity and passion, exploring the new with heart. Randy's was tall – 6' 7" – and hands could reach an octave and a fifth! So he easily played 10ths and wider intervals in some of his solos and accompaniments, especially pieces like his signature *High Fly*, the final piece performed at his funeral memorial in New York in fall 2018. [It brought the entire Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Harlem into a state of ecstasy, screaming and cheering, and for many of us who knew him, weeping amidst the joy of remembrance.] The trio's intimate performance style taught me that technical excellence by itself and formal structures – compositions and forms – which they all possessed, was only a means to the aesthetic goal of expressing meaning toward transcendence. In my studies at Wesleyan and living in global communities, I would later understand that this vision is common to most all world music cultures.

Despite the differences in our age, playing, and experience, Randy, Vishnu, and Lenny were open and encouraging to me, as if we had known each other for years. Randy was a major figure in the connections among West African, Caribbean, and African American cultures and music, composing many pieces such as *African Cookbook Suite*, *Little Niles*, *Berkshire Blues*,

and arrangement of works such as Bobby Benson's *Niger Mambo*. He and his ensemble would become a major influence in my life and music, especially my work in African and African American styles. I see my work in this area as inspired to a great extent by Randy's lifelong advocacy for African culture and arts, and its intimate musical heritage that includes jazz.

I got to know drummer Lenny McBrowne by watching him every chance I got and studying with him each week. My parents invited he and his wife Tilly for dinner at our home and Lenny and Tilly related many stories of their travels in jazz throughout the world with Randy's and other groups, such as Hugh Masakela's and Lenny's ensemble *The Four Souls*. At the end of the summer in 1966, he gave me his trap case and I still treasure it to this day.

In late August the owner, Michael Bakwin, who loved and supported jazz, had Randy's full group play for two weeks at Avaloch. It included some of the seminal creative players in the tradition spanning decades of contributions. In addition to the rhythm section, it included percussionist Danny 'Big Black' Rey, trumpeter Ray Copeland, tenor saxophonist Booker Ervin, and Baritone saxophonist Cecil Payne. My friends and I would sit as close as possible to experience the music personally and feel every aspect of their art. Every night the septet played it felt like we were in another world, and on many nights Big Black would do a 3-conga solo in the midst of a piece. I especially remember one when it seemed his 20-minute solo brought the audience to another place, and the drums didn't sound like drums anymore, they sounded like something from another world, maybe unseen but in the moment audible spirits, pure sound and feeling. Time seemed to stop, place didn't matter, even our personal selves were not there, but something else. Perhaps all deep art does this, but Big Black's music moved me in a way I had never experienced before. I can still hear and see him playing.

When Randy's septet played his *African Cookbook Suite*, each band member's solo was speaking to us through their instrument; I'll never forget the look in Cecil Payne's eyes, so intense and his baritone saxophone sounds were like ancestral voices coming to us over time and space. We were all mesmerized and could hardly move. Music would never be the same again for me and I am sure others in the audience.

The next year I played again at Avaloch opposite a quartet from Berklee College that included saxophonist Pat LaBarbara and drummer Joe Labarbara. Pat would go on to be Buddy Rich's primary sax soloist, and Joe toured with many greats, including a long tenure with Tony Bennett. One night they let me sit in on piano, and I was nervous, but played some Monk voicings I had figured out – mostly open minor 7ths and major seconds and using whole tone scales, and off beat chordal accompaniment. Afterwards, Pat said my playing was interesting and that I should get some bread together and attend Berklee to develop. I was encouraged to hear that, but never was able to follow through.

Various Groups and Performances, 1973-1986

In the 1970s I played with a number of ensembles in western Massachusetts, mostly in the Berkshires and around UMass Amherst: the Berkshire Jazz Ensemble with saxophonist Jacob Epstein, saxophonist/pianist John Talarico, bassist Steve Murray, and sometimes his wife, vocalist Vivian Murray, and drummer/conga player Clifford Jarvis, who was based in Pittsfield much of the time 1973-81 apart from his international touring. Groups in the UMass Amherst area were mostly organized by Jacob Epstein, who taught at UMass.

I also formed a percussion ensemble from my teaching at the Harambee Center in Pittsfield, in practice a Caribbean/world ensemble. It included steel drums, congas and many

other hand drums, timbales, bells, rattles, and other accessories. The main players were Lillian Gaulden, Carlos Merle, Norman Symonds, and at times, Clifford Jarvis. We would play at my home or at Harambee and it was my first experience playing in an African based ensemble with hand drums. Lillian was a dynamic force, interested in percussion and bringing people together, and brought a ‘reality check’ to some of our discussions on music and culture at Harambee. She played and helped arrange our group’s performances at Pittsfield summer outdoor festivals, most notably the city’s Ethnic Fair and African American festival. Each brought hundreds and sometimes thousands of people to the city. I remember one time playing with the group from 2:30pm until 9:30pm non-stop at an Ethnic Fair in August 1973 – people moved to the rhythms and it was hittin’!

After returning to UMass Amherst in 1978, after the death of my father, I was in a wonderful trio at UMass Amherst 1979-81 called *Clouds*. The bassist was Avery Sharpe, who in 1980-81 started playing with Art Blakey, and then McCoy Tyner. I still play with Avery to this day. On piano was Clyde Criner, who also later played with Art Blakey, and sadly passed away at a very young age. Clyde got his PhD in education with prof. Roland Wiggins at UMass Amherst when I was there. We mainly played trio, but sometimes we would play with saxophonists or vocalist Semanya McCord, who coincidentally taught at UMass Dartmouth later in the 1990s until around 2005, when she left to take care of her mother. I worked and performed with her from 1999-2005 at the university. Other guest artists, as I mentioned earlier, were percussionists Sa Davis and Brubbi Taylor, trombonist Charles ‘Majeed’ Greenlee, as well as vocalist Bobby Davis and trumpeter Ray Copeland.

I went to Wesleyan’s world music graduate program from 1981-86 and played with numerous jazz ensembles during that period. It was an honor to play with faculty artists like Bill

Lowe, Bill Barron, and pianist Fred Simmons. I also met and played with freshman saxophonist David Bindman, then 17 years old, in fall 1981 and we were later joined by acoustic bassist Wes Brown.

From 1982-84 I was in a jazz-fusion group called *Himalaya* in Albany, New York, which was a good three-hour drive from Wesleyan and about an hour from my hometown in Pittsfield. I'd sometimes drive all the way up to Albany on Thursday after class to make a night gig or drive to Pittsfield and go over for Friday and Saturday gigs. It was interesting because it was a fusion group with electric guitar, keyboards, electric bass, and a vocalist, but we made it about as jazz as you can get for a fusion group. The various singers were from the blues and gospel traditions, which was beautiful, it resonated with me. Most of the players had a jazz sensibility that they brought to their playing. I had never really been that interested in funk, but it was cool the way we approached the style. Even though it was in a predictable pocket that isn't my favorite approach to drumming, it was still fun grooving and messing with the pocket and going somewhere else especially in solos (AKA undermining or deconstructing the pocket without anyone knowing!)

The guitarist, John Hilton, owned a music store that I think is still around called The Hilton Music Company with stores in the Albany and Utica areas in upstate New York. They suggested I use a different type of drum set for the group sound, so I bought one from them at a discount, in fact at cost. It was a Gretsch drum set, the snare drum was 14 by eight inches, the mounted tom was 14 inches and deep length, which was basically a floor tom to me and somehow hitched onto the bass drum, and the floor tom was 18 inches and deep, like a bass drum! The bass drum was 24 inches and deep, what a huge sound! I was used to playing an 18-20-inch bass drum, a 12-inch mounted tom, and a 14-inch floor tom. I consciously didn't want

dead thud sounds, so I made sure to let all the drums resonate. I learned that quick, subtle playing would often not work in a fusion style, so I had to play more of the essence and skeleton of a rhythm or groove to have it resonate out to the audience. This helped me adapt music in other styles when I needed to use a sparse, essential approach.

The audiences were hip enough that they didn't want to hear the pop recording note for note. Except for the heads, which even that we messed with a little. On the solos we would go nuts and somehow the people danced to it, they didn't mind. For other groups at other venues, people were interested in only hearing musicians play exactly like the recordings. I would never want to play in a band like that, if you're gonna do that why don't you just watch the grass grow or look at a stoplight, it would be more interesting. Who would want to be a robot? I mean if you're gonna do that just go get a metronome and set it up and put a mic on it, that's just as good.

In Albany, you know, it's in New York but not the city so it's a little different. There would be just as many people or more that came to just listen and drink as there were to dance. We played all kinds of clubs, it was alive, it was cool. There was this one place in downtown Albany right on Central Avenue, which was located on a street corner, called Pauley's Hotel. I guess there were rooms upstairs, but it was basically a bar and social club. You could open the doors on the side and the front in good weather, so you were almost outside on the street like it would be in Europe. Another place we played at was called The Shelf, which was upstairs in this big ritzy hotel. The waiters and waitresses were all dressed up a certain stylish way, like trying to be hip and all that. People would tip the band well, I'd usually end up leaving with about 150-250 bucks, which would be almost \$1,000 nowadays. I'd end up giving most of it

to my mother because it was more about the music for me than the money, and being on a fixed income, she could use it.

On a lot of the nights when we had these late gigs, I would always be super tired, luckily I had a cousin who lived right outside Albany in the town of Rensselaer, whose house I would stay at sometimes. There were times when I played Thursday through Saturday or just Friday and Saturday so I'd come home late at night on Saturdays, and sometimes needed to return to Pittsfield. I had been up all day and I played all night and it is four o'clock, am I gonna make it home with a hour or more drive? One of the good things is that coffee keeps me awake, and the venues always had it. I'll never forget one night after a gig we finished playing and I played my heart out, I could have fallen asleep when I walked off the bandstand. I sat down and drank four black coffees, which woke me up enough to get back to Pittsfield and then I collapsed as soon as I got there! I did that for a couple of years up until 1984 where I committed more of my time and energy towards *Juba* and *Talking Drums*.

Various Groups and Performances, 1986-Current

I played in a number of jazz groups during my postgraduate Wesleyan years. There was a jazz bebop pianist from Philadelphia, Fred Simmons, who I played a lot with. He and I played a fair amount, usually with a bassist, Joe Fonda, who I knew from Amherst because he had previously lived there, or Paul Brown, who was playing internationally, but was based in Hartford. In April 1988 I got a call from Joe about a gig with him, and Bill and Kenny Baron. Joe said on the phone, 'can you come up to Northampton right away, we got a gig at the Iron Horse [in Northampton, Massachusetts] and there's no drummer', I said 'Are you kidding? I'll be right up.' I packed drums in the car and went up. I got there and said, Joe, what am I gonna do? We haven't rehearsed. I don't know the music and Joe said to me 'just keep eye contact and

swing your ass off' it was the coolest thing even though at first I was shaking in my boots!

Playing with the Barron brothers (?!)

In the middle of the hit we were doing fours or eights on some bebop tune. I came out with one of them and Kenny and I just hit right together at the top of the form, you know, in the rhythm section. Kenny looked up at me and he was grinning, with an eye that told me he was digging it. I said to myself, 'Holy shit, Kenny Barron is telling me it's cool.' I had heard him with Dizzy Gillespie at the Music Barn in 1964 and had little confidence. It made me feel like a million bucks, just like when I used to play with Archie Shepp in his student ensemble, and he told me he liked my piano playing or when I spoke with Duke Ellington. So going back to my place in Middletown, CT, an hour's drive or more, it's midnight after the gig. I'm driving my car and had the windows down and I was screaming YEEEEAAHH!!!! All the way home, I was so happy.

I played with fellow Wesleyan ethnomusicology doctoral student Paul Austerlitz from time to time, a saxophonist/bass clarinetist and a friend of mine who I knew from staying with other grad students at India House while attending Wesleyan and later at a place in Middletown to share the rent. He's an expert on Dominican *Merengue* and Haitian *Vodun* music and has done a few videos, books, and primarily CDs on Merengue and Vodun and their connections with jazz. In his group I got to play with wonderful master artists from the Dominican Republic and Haiti along with New York jazz players. We did a few concerts and recordings in New York, with the most recent album we recorded was in 2018 called *Water Prayers for Bass Clarinet*. It also included pianist Benito Gonzalez and bassist Santi Debriano. Although Paul was a saxophonist, he played mostly bass clarinet for the recording.

It was just wonderful music because it fit in with my background in West African drumming. I could see in the Dominican and Haitian music, which I had previously worked on at Wesleyan, there was a real connection with some of the African rhythms. For example, the small drum, which is called *boule* or *petit* in Haitian Vodun, has the exact same sound and rhythm as the *kagan* in *Eve* music.¹⁵ Many of the *Eve* musical and cultural connections are clearly obvious in Haitian music and to some extent in Merengue.

Juba

Wesleyan music faculty member Bill Lowe was very open to playing with students. In my first weeks at Wesleyan he told me I had to meet this young tenor player, David Bindman from Vermont, who was really interested in playing. We met and went into a practice room in the music studios, and we just sat down and played for like an hour. It was magic. David and I felt everything together in the music. From there we started playing together regularly but were not a group yet.

Previously, in late August of 1981 before the semester started, I was walking around downtown on a warm August evening and I saw this wonderful music elder, Willie Hunter, who was playing bebop and swing with a five- or six-piece group in an open-air public park. The bass player was on upright and looked younger than the rest of the group. He had a beautiful sound. I found out later it was Wes Brown, he had been at Wesleyan and graduated in 1974, but had hung around and played in a lot of the ensembles and performed in the Northeast and internationally including a year touring with the legendary pianist Earl 'Fatha' Hines jazz trio. Everybody who

¹⁵ *Eve*, also known as *Ewe*. This text uses the spelling *Eve*, but it is recognized through Ghanaian scholars that *Ewe* is preferred; Kofi Agawu, *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

knew him said he was cool so I told him that I'd like to play with him and invited him to one of my concerts with Bill Lowe, traditional Indian, and jazz musicians in December of 1981. He came and dug the music.

Going into the spring semester of 1982, after winter break, Wes, David, and I got together and started playing. It felt natural so we decided to ask Bill Lowe to join us if he was free and he did. We didn't have a name at first but soon after I suggested the name *Juba* and we took it, forming the nucleus of the *Juba* ensemble with trombonist Bill Lowe and later, guitarist Kevin McNeal, a colleague from some of my playing in the Albany area. We recorded our first record (later to be a CD) album, *Look on the Rainbow* (1986). These connections were the foundation for a later ensemble, *blood drum spirit*.

Talking Drums

In the spring of 1983, Abraham Adzenyah and Freeman Donkor formed the African traditional and highlife group *Talking Drums*. It was a combination of West African and western instruments such as drum set, saxophone, bass, guitar, and keyboard. Abraham and Freeman alternated their playing between lead and support drums. Dancer and support instrument performer Kwabena Boateng was also part of the ensemble. Maxwell Akomeah Amoh, who sang, played supporting drums and the bamboo flute *atenteben*, joined the ensemble about a year later followed by Martin Kwaku Kwaakye Obeng who danced, played lead and support drums, and sang. The other members were David Bindman on saxophones, George Alford (later Rick Alfonso) on trumpet, Peter Chipello on piano, Wes Brown on bass, Robert Lancefield on guitar, Ben Manley on percussion/timbales, and me on drum set. We had all studied and played traditional Ghanaian instruments and moved to those in pieces or sections of pieces where it was appropriate. We played a variety of styles, including all of us on traditional Ghanaian

instruments with dance, an atenteben ensemble featuring traditional flute repertoire with drums, bells and rattle, and a highlife group which was a combination of the traditional and Western instruments emphasizing African instruments, sounds, and dance.



Figure 10: The *Talking Drums* Ensemble.

By 1985, we were mainly doing highlife with a strong jazz feel as Wes, David, Rob, Peter, Ben, and I, all had a jazz approach. We gradually adapted highlife into a jazz style, at times hearing it simply as African music and jazz. There was still traditional drumming and dance with it, but we did it in a way that you'd know it was something different than highlife, not just formulated danceable grooving. There were extended solos, sometimes with purely traditional drumming (something I had suggested in a rehearsal) and it was deep! We liked Highlife, but for us it didn't have something the jazz approach had when we play that music. We

found a way that worked to combine the two. It became something that I would consider African jazz.

We played steadily year around across the northeastern U.S. 1983-1992, including some wonderful concerts at SOB (Sounds of Brazil) in New York. And went on a five-week tour in summer 1988, a year before Freeman passed away from cancer. It started off in Connecticut and then to New York, Washington DC., New Orleans, all over the San Francisco Bay Area and then back to Houston, Connecticut, and finally Maine. It was like a dream, we flew around and performed in all these different places for thousands of people. We played together often until about 1992. We still exist although not playing regularly. We had a concert in 2016 at Wesleyan University for Abraham Adzenyah's retirement and renaming of the concert hall in his honor. The group was killing, with extended and unpredictable solos, the use of an acoustic bass (like the original highlife music did in the 1940s and 1950s), and my use of layers of time, altered grooves, and constant interactions with soloists. The group was hittin'! searching, not just grooving. I'm not bragging or anything, but it was so good to be back together playing this unique approach to African music.

Fred Ho

I had known Fred Ho – a revolutionary musician, author, poet, speaker, composer, band leader, and activist – from my days at UMass Amherst, when he would come to informal jazz jam sessions at the Old Chapel on campus on Thursday evenings in winter-spring 1974 at 17 years of age and played baritone saxophone. He was discovering his identity and later became a Chinese American Marxist revolutionary. At one point after graduating from Harvard he said he committed academic suicide by not going into law or other field, but working with the Chinese immigrants, moving to New York and working in the Chinese Progressive Association in lower

Manhattan. He started his own band in 1982, the Afro-Asian Music Ensemble, and came up to Wesleyan in the summer of 1986 for a festival of world music and jazz. He lectured about the Chinese/Asian diaspora and the historic and continuing American racism that have afflicted Asian peoples here. He was to do a concert as part of the festival but needed a group, so Bill Lowe arranged for Wes, David, me, and others to play with Fred. We played some pieces with traditional Chinese themes and I added Chinese instruments to my drum set which fit well. I had been playing traditional Chinese opera instruments for my annual recitals at Wesleyan, in 1986 a suite of Beijing Opera rhythms using large and small gongs (*da luo* and *xiao luo*), woodblocks (*mu-yu*), clapper (*ban*), and drum (*tan-pi-ku*). I added these to my drum set to play Fred's music and he liked it. I found I could use the *da luo* large gong to play like a cymbal and it swung with a powerful deep voice!

In September 1987, he asked me to come and play percussion with his group in New York, where we rehearsed. Later, the drummer left the group and Fred asked me to play drum set. I was overjoyed and accepted, going first to the San Francisco area for his *Chinaman's Chance* opera at the New Performance Theater in the mission area, then to Milan, Italy for concerts and a recording of his album *We Refuse to be Used and Abused!* Its meaning is 'Peoples of the world, people of color, global people are standing up against neocolonialism, capitalism, and everything oppressive!' I had been in one of those low times when you're not playing as much as you want. So to cheer myself up I said, I'm gonna get this passport so if anybody calls me, I'm not going to be able to worry about not making it, I'm gonna go! So I got a passport in hopes of using it to play. Fred called me and asked if I had a passport and if I could play drum set with him in Italy – a hope fulfilled! The Milan recording was with the Black Saint/Soul Note label, one of the most well-known studios in jazz with famed engineer Giovanni Barigozzi, so it

was great to be part of it. Our last night in Milan, I walked most all night and just felt the European life and history in the nocturnal element, places like the Sforza Castle and the lights and shadows of night, filled for me with shapes of dreams of my life and music.

This was soon followed in February 1988 with a series of performances and recording in San Francisco of his *A Song for Manong* jazz/dance/theater work. It focused on the isolation of generations of male Philippine and Asian workers enticed to the U.S. ‘gold mountain’ only to be indentured servants with no prospects of marriage, family, or children, living solitary lives of desperation. The word *manong* in the *Tagalog* language means ‘uncle.’ The Filipinx bachelor society that resulted from the racist U.S. quota system, that still exists today in subtler forms, didn’t allow East Asian immigrant women of color, especially Filipinx, to enter the country. The men came to earn money for their families back home, but they were stranded here, they never could marry, they couldn’t do anything, so they became a society of bachelors. We performed *A Song for Manong* at the Herbst Theater, the Life on Water Complex, among other venues, and also did a radio interview and session with KPFA. The record (now CD) was done just south of San Francisco, as I remember, possibly Palo Alto.

The Afro-Asian Music Ensemble instrumentation was usually a sextet – piano, acoustic bass, drum set, and baritone, tenor, and alto saxophones, all doubling on flute or other saxophones. For specific works, Fred added Chinese, Philippine, Korean, Puerto Rican, West African, or West Asian/Middle Eastern artists to the basic sextet, and sometimes included trombone, strings, or other instruments as well.

By 1990, Fred expanded his compositions to include huge, staged works in different combinations with large instrumental ensembles, vocalists, poets, dancers, martial artists, theater,

and video. He also had intimate quintets, quartets, and trios, usually omitting piano and one or two of the saxophones. We performed and recorded mostly in New York, with performances at venues like Merkin Hall, the Guggenheim Museum, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the legendary Apollo Theater, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Columbia University, among many other institutions, such as the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida, the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, the Myrna Loy Center in Helena, Montana, the Outpost in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Seattle Festival, the University of Notre Dame, Southern Connecticut State University, San Francisco City University, University of Connecticut, Northeastern University, University of Wisconsin, University of Pennsylvania, Reed College in Portland, OR, Dartmouth College, Lower Manhattan Community College, Brooklyn College, SUNY Purchase, Arizona State University, University of Virginia, UMass Amherst (where Fred received the *Duke Ellington Award* for distinguished work in music), and Jazz festivals in Atlanta, New York, Houston, London, England, and many more. Looking back, it was a wonderful experience traveling and presenting these revolutionary works with incredible musicians, other artists, and revolutionary thinkers and activists.

Fred had various large ensembles all conceived as culturally consistent with his vision, such as the *Monkey Orchestra*, the *Journey to the West Orchestra* with Chinese musicians, Philippine Jazz Orchestra with Philippine traditional musicians, Korean ensemble with Korean musicians, and so on. Towards the end of his life, the last five or six years, he had this amplified Big Band of about 20 people called the *Green Monster Big Band*. He wanted to assemble the greatest players on the planet, and it was revolutionary. The tunes he wrote were very difficult, but the band was still able to play them. I would spend some time in the woodshed with the music until I had them memorized. Sometimes I would bring a *donno* and always my Chinese

instruments with permission from my teachers. Because this music wasn't a commercial thing and was a serious, cultural, racial, and political expression, it made sense to me.

Working with Fred Ho brought another level of understanding – everything coming together in life and music. He opened up my whole vision into traveling internationally, recording, and performing. His whole quest was advocacy for global change, global revolution through the arts, which was exactly how I felt after my Peace Corps experience, so it all coalesced. It was just an honor working with him. He was diagnosed with stage IV B intestinal cancer in summer 2006 (he didn't have the health coverage for check ups in a capitalist society that would have detected it earlier) and was told he might live for only 6 months. He fought it and endured through a number of major surgeries and radiation treatments, writing many unique large works, books, articles, gave presentations, composed, led his ensembles despite intense pain, played, and produced an incredible amount of new work. He passed away in April 2014. I worked with him right up till the last performances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and a recording in October 2013. In his last concert at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, he was in intense pain, laying on a couch in the green room. He has a student playing the baritone saxophone parts, but when it was time for the main solo in the work *Sweet Science Suite*, dedicated to Muhammad Ali, he came onstage and play a 15-minute baritone sax solo with the entire house breathless. He had a unique 3-octave range in the altissimo register and played his heart out. It was like he was telling a story of his life. The place went nuts and we all cheered and cried at the same time.

Over the 27 years I was honored to play across the world with Fred and was part of over 30 CDs with him. Fred was and is a major influence in my life and music as much as anything else.

Hafez Modirzadeh – Paradox

Hafez is an Iranian American saxophonist, music visionary, scholar, and author. He currently teaches at San Francisco State University, but we were colleagues at Wesleyan University 1990-92, joined Fred Ho's ensemble together in 1987, and taught together at San Jose State 1993-98. I've flown out a number of times to do workshops and classes and performances with him at San Francisco State and around the Bay Area almost every year until COVID hit in 2020. He had a few different groups, the one I was in was called *Paradox*. We did three or four albums together when I was there in the 1990s and since.

He does music that is original, taking Persian non-tempered tuning and playing throughout a piece and solos, unlike other players who might do non-tempered music as a short-term effect. The music is completely in that approach. For a few of the things we recorded out in the Bay area and on the East coast, he would have the piano retuned to match the saxophone's Persian temperament. The bassist, often Ken Filiano, who's now in New York, a wonderful player, would retune too, in effect by where he put his fingerings. The entire group, except for the drum set, was in Persian, non-Western, tuning for these pieces, and it was wonderful. We recorded one album in New York with Hafez, me, Ken, and the pianist was Vijay Ayer, whom I had worked with in California with Chinese instrumentalist Liu-Chi Chao. Among the concerts we did, one memorable one was a *Paradox* performance at the Jazz Gallery in New York in 2011.

Hafez was a strong influence on me. Even though I don't know Persian music, I came to have some understanding of it through him, and his performance practice. I remember one time we were rehearsing and Hafez was explaining the concept of *taqsim* to me. He said that it was like a journey, where you start in one place and you explore different musical ideas and emotions

before arriving at your destination. And he said that the key was to really listen to each other and respond in the moment.

The free-flowing opening exposition of the music, which has parallels with Indian music, where you have an open non-metric introduction called the *alap*, that fleshes out the feeling or the mood of the piece, a part of human and extra-human essences, like south Indian *raga*, which are believed to express spiritual essences. In the Indian theory of *rasa*, where it's not just a collection of notes that you play, sound evokes a spiritual essence somewhere in the universe, that you have a responsibility to give to people in a positive way, as a spiritual responsibility. *Rasa* is part of the theory of *raga* in Indian music. And in the same way, the Persian modes, *maqam*, are not just a collection of notes, but they have a spiritual essence and a specific emotion that they convey. I know that there are counterparts to that throughout what is known as West Asia. It's something sacred that you see, you internalize, and you respect, and you only play it when you want to give this deep feeling. If you're playing for an audience, you have the responsibility to give that deep spiritual thing to that audience, it's not just to play fast and loud and get on the charts, it's to give them that spirituality, no matter where you are. Most world cultures, if not all that I've come across, including Wagner, Bach, Beethoven, and Stravinsky, Javanese gamelan, Afro-Cuban Santeria, Haitian Vodun, Native American ritual, West African spiritual dance drumming, and a myriad of others, have a profound expression of something more than just in the moment, something beyond that is an overriding level to what we see and feel in existence. Transcendence.

I think that's really the essence of what Hafez reinforced in me – to listen deeply and be open to different perspectives and ideas. And I think that's why our collaborations have been so

successful over the years because we have a mutual respect and trust for each other's musical instincts.

I still play with Hafez when possible and find his work in non-western tuning and cycles of time and rhythm a good connection to my sense of music. The non-tempered sound is so different than what we are used to that it forces you to think, hear, and play differently.

Weihoa Zhang



Figure 11: royal Performing it with my wife Weihoa Zhang playing guzheng at the Ancestors concert. Yoshi's Jazz Hall, Oakland, CA, 2003.

I met my future wife, Weihoa Zhang, while at Wesleyan in 1982, and we later cultivated a relationship and married in 1991. She is a classical pianist and player of the traditional Chinese zither known as *Guzheng*. She has a major interest in creative music and jazz; we have collaborated with guzheng and drum set for live performances (Yoshi's in Oakland California and venues in Massachusetts) and audio recordings for my *ancestors* CD and video from a 2003 Yoshi's concert for my book *Dancin' on the Time*, as well as videos for my *royalhartigan* (no space between names) YouTube channel. We also recorded a duo for my YouTube channel of

segments from Anton Webern's *Variations for Piano, opus 27*. I continue to rehearse with her toward future recordings.

blood drum spirit

From 1990-91 I wanted to have a group with a collective approach to the music, decisions, and most everything. From the group Juba that changed following Bill Lowe's departure from Wesleyan for university teaching in Boston, Wes, David, Kevin McNeal, and I formed the group *blood drum spirit*. We played mostly in Connecticut and Massachusetts with an occasional performance in New York. Following my experience at the Toulon, France, jazz festival in summer 1992, I began composing/arranging toward a CD, which was done in Albany, New York, in February/March 1993, and released in 1997 (now on Innova Records).

My vision and that of the group was to create music in the African American jazz tradition, not simply a repetition of past song styles or forms, but incorporating complex rhythmic, timbral, melodic, and harmonic structures into radical new works, arrangements of jazz classics, and songs and rhythms from West Africa, India, Native America, the Philippines, China, and around the globe.

Some personal features of our music are playing in layers of time, integrating historical styles in the jazz tradition from New Orleans to the present, including West African dance drumming forms, songs, rhythms, and styles in our compositions and solos, free exploratory spontaneous interactions at all aspects of a performance, not just solos as individual melodic invention, and expressing time cycles at the fastest level of duration, such as in an 11-beat cycle where 11 is indivisible. Not as 11 beats, with each divisible into 2, 3, or 4 internal pulses, but 11 beats that are the fastest pulse, such as 2 2 2 2 3. David, Wes, and I have all studied and

experienced world music at Wesleyan for many years. By 1999 Kevin McNeal was no longer available, and pianists Richard Harper (1999-2004) and Art Hirahara (2004-present) have joined the ensemble.

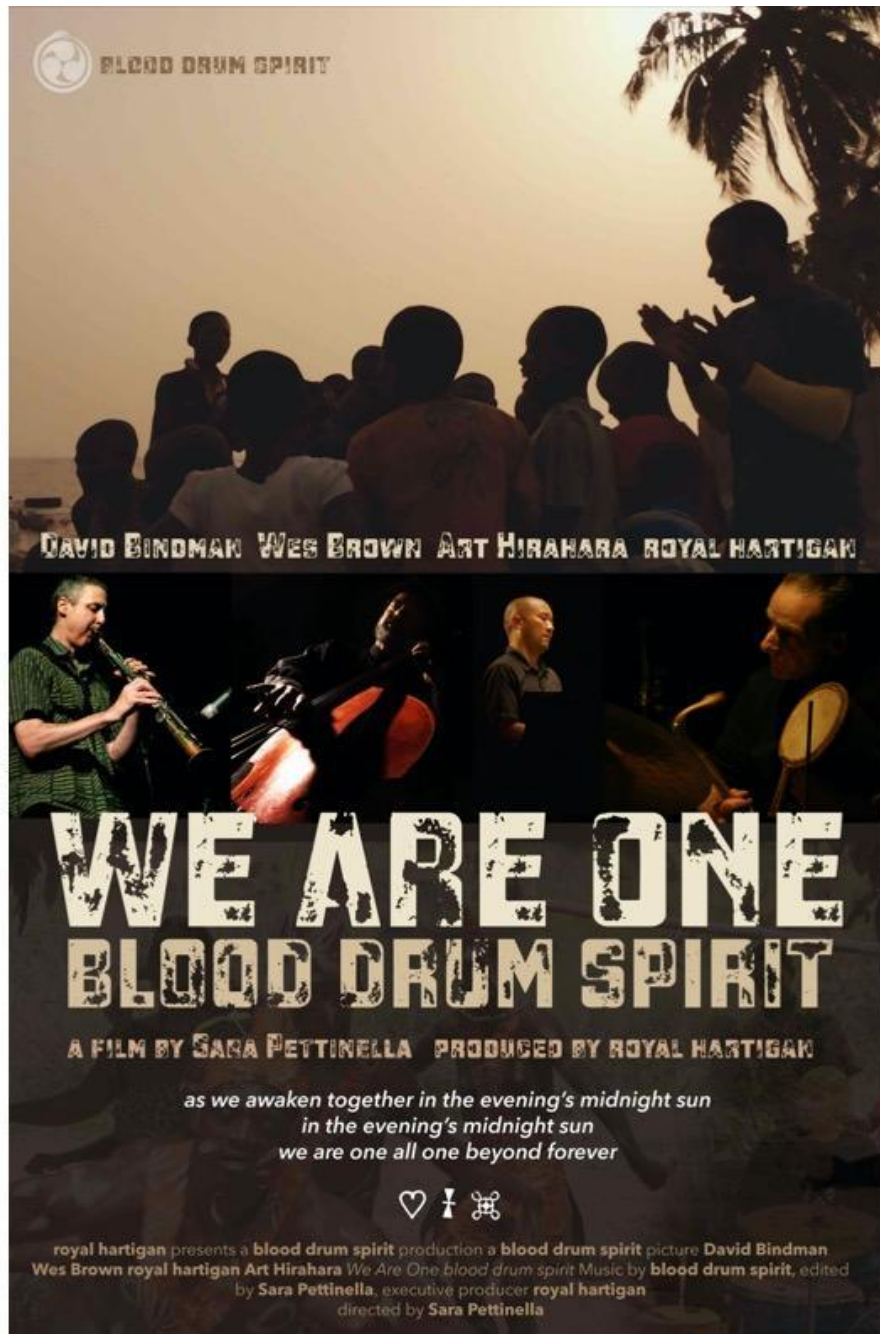


Figure 12: *We Are One* film website.

We have released three double CDs, *blood drum spirit* (2004), *live in china* (2008), and *time changes* (2019), as well as the film *We Are One* (2017) by Sara Pettinella. The film has won many international awards, although I don't care about winning things, and see competition in Reggie Workman's words, as 'A lie.'

I produced an earlier short film in 1997, *Eve*, dedicated to Freeman Donkor and the *Eve* people and a recent film titled *blood drum spirit: truth in the moment* in 2021. Our *blood drum spirit* ensemble is featured in all three films.

We have appeared at many international and national festivals - the Midi Festival in Beijing (2001, 2004, 2006), Cultural Center of the Philippines Jazz Festival in Manila (2011, 2013, 2016), *Chale Wote* festival in Accra, Ghana (2017), and, closer to home, at such venues as Yoshi's (Oakland, CA), New School University, World Music Institute, the Stone, and the New Amsterdam Music Association (all in New York City), Hartford's Real Art Ways, New Bedford's AHA! Arts and Culture Festival, and Boston/Cambridge's Multicultural Arts Center and River Festival.

Since I believe in passing on my/our ideas and music to those that come after us, teaching has usually been part of my/our performances and touring. We share our approach and personal philosophies of music, we have teaching and performing with students at numerous institutions and universities across the US and abroad. The ones I can think off the top of my head are St. Michael's College (VT; 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2010, 2018), UMass Amherst (2010), UMass Dartmouth (2009-11 and 2017-18), Middlebury College (VT; 2018)), the China Conservatory and the Central Conservatory, both in Beijing, China (2006), the University of Ghana (2017), the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (2015), Cape Coast University, Ghana

(2017), the SALT Youth Camp in Trinidad (2018), and the University of the Philippines (2011, 2013, 2016, 2017). In 2017 we toured Ghana for a second time, sponsored by the U.S. State Department.



Figure 13: 2019 *blood drum spirit* Residency at UMass Dartmouth. (left to right) Art Hirahara, Wes Brown, David Bindman, royal hartigan.

You might wonder how and why I chose the name for our group. It came from my PhD dissertation, and the title reflected my meaning for music and all expression: *blood*, the heart and connection humanity shares through the ancestors; *drum*, the metaphorical heartbeat/rhythm felt by all musicians, physical/psychological existence of the universe, and all people (‘if you can walk, you can dance...’ part of an African proverb); and *spirit*, transcendence toward something larger than ourselves. When I thought of what to name this ensemble of personal friends, almost like a family, this seemed to exactly show who we are and what our vision is.

In my individual work and with our group, I look to do another book with video, CDs, and at least one more film, hopefully on time cycles and their meaning.

Pianist Art Hirahara, saxophonist David Bindman, bassist Wes Brown, and I all played for many years in the ensembles of Fred Ho and share a common vision of life and music, to live and play with intensity and passion, to make it real, to dance with all we've got, no matter what, and to give all that's in us, something deep something good, something in spirit, from the heart.



Figure 14: *blood drum spirit* video recording with Dagara artists Tijan Dorwana and Isaac Birituro playing the *gyl* in Medie, Ghana, 2017.

Chapter Six - Current Paths, 2018 - 2023

Following my retirement from UMass Dartmouth in September 2018, I was fortunate to have a number of performance and guest teaching opportunities waiting.

I taught week-long residencies at UMass Dartmouth (November 2018 in African music and dance with Kwabena Boateng), St. Michael's College (November 2018 with our *blood drum spirit* ensemble in my arrangement of the *Missa Luba*), the Mount Makiling Arts High School in Los Banos, Philippines, and the University of the Philippines Diliman, UMass Dartmouth in April 2019 with *blood drum spirit*, and the Yilan, Taiwan, elementary schools. Due to covid, some opportunities for residencies were lost but I did online presentations on world music and jazz/drum set for Berklee College, the Percussive Arts Society (PAS)-Massachusetts, the PAS Philippines/Asia, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Musicians for Musicians (NYC), Cliff Chats percussion website. I look to continue these in person in Asia, West Africa, and the U.S. once covid clears some more. Individual workshops included the Far Eastern University in Manila, Philippines and De Anza College, Cupertino, CA.

My performances since retirement have included the Paul Austerlitz *Afro-Universal Merengue Jazz ensemble* at *El Taller* in New York, Hafez Modirzadeh's ensemble at San Francisco State University, a quartet with saxophonist Masaru Koga at Art Boutiki (San Jose, CA) and Freedom Archives (San Francisco's mission district), *Mixashawn Lee Rozie's Afro-Algonquin Ensemble*, the John Kordalewski trio in Boston, a quartet with bassist Avery Sharpe, pianist Stephen Page and saxophonist Charles Langford in the Amherst area with vocalist Sheila Jordan and New Bedford, Massachusetts, rehearsals with the *Makanda Project* in Boston, and my *blood drum spirit* ensemble in Massachusetts and New York, as well as my *Akoma* trio in Manila, Philippines with saxophonist Rick Countryman and bassist Simon Tan, and the *Yilan*

International Art Festival (Taiwan). During my Asian tour in the Philippines and Taiwan, I was able to record some videos with a unique dancer, Sasa Cabalquinto, in Manila that are on my YouTube channel. She is one of the most sensitive and dramatic artists I have ever worked with.

One performance I was honored to be part of was bassist and composer Avery Sharpe's suite, *400: an African American Musical Portrait*, staged with vocalists, video, African drumming, and jazz quintet, at Williams College in February 2020. It expressed in music and imagery the history of African Americans in the U. S. I look forward to continuing our collaborations.

Covid negatively affected my touring, with a number of other performances canceled in the Philippines, Taiwan, China, and Ghana, as well as New York. I am beginning to reschedule many of these as health conditions allow.

Retirement has given me more space to pursue book publication and films, as well as a CD down the road. Previously, I had to juggle my work among classes, advising, committees, curriculum, and student performances, but the added time has made the completion of my book with videos, *The Pulse of Adinkra*, possible. It is nearing completion and I look forward to contributing this work with master artist Kwabena Boateng in what has been a vacuum of knowledge for this ancient art form and related philosophies of West African peoples. To my knowledge there has not been any detailed research and publication on the expressions of adinkra sayings in the Asante *atumpan* master drums and the drum set. The philosophies and sayings are represented in visual designs and through language. Since sub-Saharan African languages are tonal, drummers can replicate the language tonal patterns on the two *atumpan* lead drums, and I extended this by bringing the tonal pattern to the drum set in various styles of creative music with a focus on jazz.



Figure 15: *blood drum spirit* with elders Nana Owusu-Gyasi (sitting, 2nd from left) and Nana Yaw Boakye (3rd from left) in Ntonso, an adinkra village, Asante Region, Ghana.

My overall aim is to make all my books accessible online as e-books, these include my dissertation *Blood Drum Spirit: Drum Languages of West Africa, African America, Native America, Central Java, and South India* (1986), *West African Rhythms for Drumset* (Warner Brothers/Alfred Music, 1995), *Dancin on the Time* (Tapspace Publishers, 2006), and *West African Eve Rhythms for Drumset* (Tapspace and Print Tech Publishers, 2009).

Once this is set up online for global access, I intend to do two other books with video on Asian gong ensemble music for jazz ensemble and drum set, and time cycles for jazz ensemble, composition, and drum set.

So I want to contribute to the world on my path through time and space with personal connections to people in music and beyond, with teaching residencies, mentoring, live performances and touring, books, film, videos, and CDs.

I hope I have shared with others through my work in a positive way. I believe many of my students and colleagues have drawn some knowledge and abilities with world music and jazz. One thing I haven't been able to do, that I look forward to, is locate someone who can carry on my work in time cycles, a rare aspect of creative playing and something I have focused on for over 50 years. Somewhere I hope there is someone who this will resonate with and allow me to give them a way to hear, feel, and play these rhythms of the heart. Then bring it forward long after I have flown away.

As my parents and uncle lived and gave, I try to dance with all I've got, no matter what, and with heart.....

.....don't know how much longer I'll be on this planet but want to make it swinging!!!



Figure 16: Tap dancing with Roosevelt 'the Preacher' Jackson, Oakland, CA, 2002.

Chapter Seven - Reflections

royal hartigan

When my former student and colleague Joseph Boulos asked about doing a section of his research at West Virginia University on my life and music, I was surprised, thinking why would he, working toward his master's degree, want to interview me? WVU's world music program is well-known and highly successful. I met and knew one of its founders, Philip Fiani, when I was bringing San Jose State University students on a research trip to Kopeyia Village in southeastern Ghana's Volta region in 1996 or 97. We got along well and I got some good ideas on constructing a world music program at the university level.

So I was glad to be a part of it and we worked through the summer of 2022 with recorded interviews, demonstrations, listening, and his checking out my books, films, CDs, and other publications and playing.

Joe was one of my students at UMass Dartmouth from 2015-18 as I returned from two years away as a Visiting faculty and Fulbright scholar/teacher to KNUST in Kumase, Ghana 2013-15. I have a good sense of his work leading to his present graduate studies.

The first thing I noticed was his seriousness. For my morning world music survey for music majors, Joe was always early, and if I needed something he was there. In class, he had done the reading, listening/viewing, presentation, and performance assignments (something not universal among students I must reluctantly add). I emphasize discussion in my classes, and Joe usually brought excellent questions and promoted our interactions on subjects in music such as technical aspects, culture, history, politics, and meaning. His playing was/is strong, and he was a major student leader in our *Kekeli* West African music and dance ensemble, a strong player in

our Javanese gamelan, and played drum set in our informal *Sankofa* student/faculty jazz ensemble.

We also worked on drum set and focused on West African rhythms, transferring the hand techniques from West Asian/Middle Eastern traditions to drum set, 2-, 3-, and 4-way coordinated independence across the kit, and time cycles adapted for jazz drum set.

He also took on leadership roles in our *Kekeli* ensemble and was entrusted with leading the student group for part of our Ghana trip to Mampong, Asante, in June 2018. As a result of his steadfast leadership and student respect for him, he came to be known as Joe ‘I make the rules’ Boulos.

His scholarship in his MA thesis is detailed and complete, giving a full idea of the subject matter and framing the material so it is directly understood. And one thing I like is his use of language. Unfortunately, some ‘scholars’ seem obliged to use polysyllabic terms in writing (and even speaking) and while Joe could, he typically uses straightforward language to express his ideas. This resonates with my approach, remembering what my mother told me when I was young: “The mark of a true learner and teacher is, while knowing a complicated word for effect, a person uses a simple one instead.”

His drum set artistry has grown over the years in mainstream jazz and experimental approaches. One example is my suggestion to adapt the techniques, sounds, and time cycles from West Asian/Middle Eastern drumming for drum set. His playing in the WA/ME tradition is impeccable and I am so happy he is assisting and teaching courses in world music at WVU, including this tradition.

Aside from our running back and forth discussion on his affinity for ketchup as a condiment – with eggs, hummus, and everything imaginable - we get along well and I always tell him to play something on drum set so I can ‘steal his stuff.’



Figure 17: royal hartigan and Joe Boulos.

Joe is what you think of when hoping for students coming to your class - mature, motivated, and always wanting to learn and contribute more. It makes you want to teach all out, just like playing music and now that I think of it, living – give it up and give it all with no stopping!

It is humbling to have him do this research biography, which means a lot to me, having seen and developed so many positive human connections with students over the decades. So many of them are like family, and while possibly not the appropriate place to make such statements, if I could have a child s/he would be someone like Joe.

Joseph Boulos

I believe that some people may know royal, but do not know him. Through documenting royal's life and music, it gives other musicians in modern times an understanding of what the path was in the past, and the transformation that has taken place from the perspective of one person. For anyone that plans on reading any of royal's publications, they are given the opportunity to know the events and experiences that led up to them through this document.

As I mentioned in the "Significance to the Field" this document can be considered an addition to the scholarship in the communities of drum set and ethnomusicology. Despite all of the scholarship written on people such as Max Roach and Duke Ellington, royal is not mentioned at all, despite knowing them. From his interactions with those figures, perspective on them is gained.

Through this document, royal's passion for teaching, initially stemmed from his interaction with Dr. Wiggins three levels of artistry: technical, syntactic, and semiotic. To rephrase the three levels, technical is the basic knowledge and understanding of a certain art form, syntactic is how one organizes the information gained to present it in a way that is expressive of one's self or the art form, and semiotic is the meaning and depth of the music, the intent beyond yourself in the genre. It was only during the interviews that I first heard royal discuss these three levels. I will reflect on my time as a student of his and explain the realization on past interactions with royal after learning about these levels.

The technical level is the most comprehensible level of the three. Anyone accepted into a music program is considered knowledgeable in the basic understanding of music. An example of this is me, being accepted into the music program at Umass Dartmouth. I prepared the

appropriate requirements for the audition, was satisfactory, and got accepted. To understand the music is one thing, to make it your own is another. From the technical level, comes refinement and expansion of the basic knowledge, leading to the syntactic level.

During my undergraduate studies, I was fortunate to be a part of an ensemble called Sankofa, under the direction of royal. The repertory of the ensemble consisted of originals, written by royal or his colleagues of his, as well as arrangements of jazz standards. We were familiar with the jazz standards being given to us by royal but were not expected to perform these pieces exactly like the recordings. The expectation was that we take these recordings and have them influence our playing, making it unique to ourselves as a group while appropriately respecting the music. Through that group, I was liberated in the fact that I was not replicating a person's sound but reimagining it by adding my own voice to it. We were not replicating the famous recordings of Charles Mingus's "Fables of Faubus" or Randy Weston's "Hi-Fly", we were informed by it. To echo royal's thoughts from the performance chapter, "Who would want to be a robot", not me!

If you recall the story of my first interaction with royal from chapter one, on the family member who had passed away, without saying it, I was introduced to the semiotic level. It is hard to put this level into words, as to me it has a spiritual feeling, but I will try my best to explain. The difference between the syntactic and the semiotic levels is that although one is retaining self-interest and -expression in the music the semiotic brings us an expression beyond ourselves. In the case of my family member, I dedicated my music to them, keeping their life in mind as I sat to play. This brought me to see music as something that connects us deeper to those that are not with us anymore. This dedication can also be applied to the history of the music, understanding the meaning or emotion of a certain piece or style, and having it influence our approach to

playing. Regardless of how one looks at music, whether it's with the intent of selling out a venue, or to fulfill the need to show off, one needs something beyond that to enter the semiotic level. Going beyond the music and one's self.

I, like royal, believe music performance involves three levels: technical, syntactic, and semiotic, and that artists should strive to perform at the semiotic level. In addition to the three levels, I also believe that a sense of humility is required among artists. Throughout royal's life, he has had the opportunity to meet and work with whom he calls "jazz legends", feeling a "sense of connection and goodness" through every interaction with them. These interactions are also reflected in royal, always so kind and supportive to his students and never turning them away from the music. How royal felt with these legends, is how I have felt with him.

He has a gift for connecting with his students and inspiring them to discover their own musical voice. His patience, kindness, and empathy create a supportive learning environment where students can feel free to explore and experiment. His curiosity and appreciation for diverse musical traditions are evident in the way he incorporates them into his own performances and teaching. I appreciate how royal recognizes that music is not a universal language, but rather a reflection of each culture's unique identity. He respects and honors diverse musical traditions by playing them with care. This approach fosters cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, and it is a testament to his openness and inclusivity as a musician and a human being.

If it were not for royal and the many others who have supported and encouraged me, I would not be where I am today. I am honored to have him as a friend and mentor, and I will continue to be inspired by his passion and dedication to music for many years to come. This project has taught me so much more about royal's life, and will provide many others, who are

interested, with a glimpse of his life. I have gained a deeper sense and appreciation for music and life. Always remember who helped you become the person you are today. To past students and former colleagues from University of Massachusetts Dartmouth who have been inspired by royal, I hope this gives you the opportunity to learn more about him.

With that, I leave you, the reader, this document in hopes of inspiring you to complete a project similar to this; a formal yet personal creative project.

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Instagram: @weareonethemovie

Youtube channel: @royalhartigan (no spaces)

www.royalhart.com

www.blooddrumspirit.com

www.kekelidancedrum.com

www.youtube.com/royalhartigan

www.vicfirth.com/education

<http://www.weareonethemovie.com>

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Appendix I - Publications

Articles

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Figure 18: royal playing drum set with traditional musicians in Aflao, Ghana, 1996.

Appendix II - Selective Discography

- Blood Drum Spirit. *Time Changes*. Leader Records, 2019, compact disc.
- Paul Austerlitz. *Water Prayers for Bass Clarinet*. Round Whirled Records, 2018, compact disc.
- Hafez Modirzadeh. *Post-Chromodal Out!*. Pi Recordings, 2012, compact disc.
- Fred Ho and the Green Monster Big Band. *Celestial Green Monster*. Sideman Recordings, 2009, compact disc.
- Blood Drum Spirit. *Blood Drum Spirit- Live in China*. Innova Recordings, 2008, compact disc.
- Royal Hartigan. *Ancestors*. Leader Records, 2008, compact disc.
- Paul Austerlitz. *Journey*. Innova Recordings, 2008, compact disc.
- Royal Hartigan. *Blood Drum Spirit*. Innova Recordings, 2004, compact disc.
- David Bindman. *Straw man Dance*. Sideman Records, 2004, compact disc.
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- Hafez Modirzadeh. *By Any Mode Necessary*. Sideman Recordings, 1999, compact disc.
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- Talking Drums. *Some Day Catch Some Day Down*. Innova Recordings, 1987, compact disc.
- Juba. *Look on the Rainbow*. JRT Records, 1987, compact disc.

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Interviews

Date of Interviews conducted with mention of the main topic and time stamp.

- February 25th, 2023. Main Topic – Current life.
 - 1:07:13
- February 23rd, 2023. Main Topic – Various topics, filling in missing information from previous interviews.
 - Part one – 1:36:06
- August 3rd, 2022. Main topic - Performance career.
 - Part one – 57:16
 - Part two – 43:13
 - Part Three – 1:31:25
- July 27th, 2022. Main topic – Life as an educator.
 - Part one – 47:02
- July 21st, 2022. Main topic – Childhood and various topics.
 - Part one – 44:07
 - Part two – 1:20:35

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