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EXC 008 Aaron Colvin

Excelsior Band Collection (EXC), Acc. 756

Interviewed by Ryan Morini, Michael Campbell, and Willie Dinish on April 28, 2022

35 minute audio recording • 17 page transcript

Abstract: In this recording, Aaron Colvin is interviewed by Ryan Morini, Michael Campbell, and Willie Dinish in the McCall Library at the University of South Alabama about his experiences in the Excelsior Band. Mr. Colvin discusses being the youngest member of the Excelsior Band. He also reflects on his development as a musician, and the role that music education played in the process—including previously learning under current members of the band. He also offers reflections on the musicianship of the band, and on Excelsior's legacy.

This interview is part of the Excelsior Band Collection, which was started in April 2022 to record the history of the Excelsior Brass Band. Founded in 1883 by Mr. John Pope, Excelsior Band has since remained in continuous active operation, having long been a fixture in Mardi Gras parades in Mobile. Over the years, Excelsior has included many of Mobile's most outstanding musicians amongst its ranks. The collection explores Excelsior members' experiences in the band, and some personal reflections on the role of music in their lives.

Preface: This is a transcript of an oral history recording archived at the McCall Library of the University of South Alabama. Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, which has been minimally edited for readability.



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EXC 008 Aaron Colvin
Interviewed April 28, 2022

This is a verbatim transcript of an oral history interview recording, composed and formatted in accordance with the McCall Library transcription style guide.

Verbatim transcription is a style of representing as closely as possible the exact wording and phrasing of the speakers on the recording, though false starts, repetitious phrases, and other minor edits have been made as needed only for the sake of clarity and readability. Readers of this transcript are strongly encouraged to listen to the recording.

Please note that if any text is **bolded** in the transcript, this indicates uncertainty of either spelling or accuracy of transcription regarding what was said. Italics indicate emphasis, or are applied to titles and similar proper nouns.

This interview was transcribed by:

Draft transcript:	Terrion Thompson, June 21, 2022
Audit-edit:	Latresha Maddix, 2022
Second audit-edit:	Ryan Morini, May 8, 2023
Final edit:	Ryan Morini, August 14, 2023

EXC 008

Interviewee: Aaron Colvin

Interviewer: Ryan Morini, Michael Campbell, Willie Dinish III

Date: April 28, 2022

M: Okay. So, this is Ryan Morini with the McCall Libraries at the University of South Alabama. It is April 28th, 2022, and I'm here with my colleague:

MC: Michael Campbell.

M: And:

D: Willie Dinish III.

M: Yeah, and we have the pleasure of interviewing:

C: Aaron Colvin. Nice to see you.

M: Yeah, thank you for joining us today. So, when and where were you born?

C: I was born 2004, right here in Mobile, Alabama.

M: Okay.

C: Born and raised.

M: What area in Mobile?

C: I've always lived in Midtown. I used to live around here, actually. But yeah, mostly Midtown. I moved towards there when I was like around 7 or 8, which made me really close to, you know, all the Mardi Gras stuff. Which is a big part of how that became part of my life, too. It's just so convenient going downtown and seeing all the Mardi Gras parades. And that's also how I ended up meeting Hosea London, who obviously leads the band. So, you know, I guess that little difference made all the difference in the world for me. [Laughter]

M: Sounds that way. [Laughter] Yeah. Well, and so, where does music first enter your life? Like what's your earliest memory of music that you can think of?

C: Oh, man. I mean, I guess I was a little too young to remember things then, but I know for sure that music, ever since I was born, was part of my life. Just, you know, from—it's like, people have always talked to me about music, you know? And they always made me listen to music when I was a very little baby, and, like, it grew into

me. I don't know exactly the day that I fell in love with it, but even before I played an instrument at all, it was something that I would always, you know, mess around with. Like, I played drums on my table when I was like 4 or 5, you know, and I was always thinking about having an instrument, pretending to play trumpet with my hands, it's like—. And then, finally, that got way too annoying for my dad. He's like, "Fine, I'll just buy you a trumpet." [Laughter] So, by the time I was seven, you know? And the rest is history from there.

M: So, your dad was the one who said, "Here's a trumpet"? It wasn't you saying, "I want a—"?

C: Yeah. Fun fact about that actually: it wasn't even a trumpet. I wanted to play saxophone, but—[Laughter]—he got me a trumpet anyway, and he was like, "I'm not returning this trumpet. So, this is what you're playing." [Laughter] And I stuck with that. So, there you go.

M: So, how did you like it when you first started?

C: Well, at first it was frustrating. As is picking up anything new that you know you're not very good at. It can be a very frustrating experience. But for me, I found a little bit of determination out of there. I was so frustrated, in fact, I was like, "No, I am going to get this!" And I started lessons with Theodore.

M: Oh, okay.

C: So, that's how that happened, too. I started lessons, I stuck with lessons from him for like—I think four or five years until I switched and did lessons with Hosea, since he was also a trumpet player. But I must say, Theodore Arthur is like, you know—I would not be playing trumpet or doing anything like that if it weren't for him. He definitely kept me pushing along, and before I even knew what the Excelsior was, he was there. Very big part of my life. And he's like my first real mentor, you know? And that's always been something I found really, really important. But that's on a side note. But just to answer your question, yeah, it was frustrating at first, but something that I found a lot of inspiration in.

M: Hm. What was the toughest part about it at first?

C: The toughest part? Just picking up the horn and starting to blow. [Laughter] You know? That's the toughest part. I mean, once you really get into it, the practice, it becomes secondary. You know? You know what to do; it's a process, you just go

through the process. But you got to find the reason to do it first. And sometimes you're like, "Oh, I'm having a lazy day, I don't feel like playing trumpet today. I can go a day off," you know? That's the first attitude. But then you start rocking with it, and then there's people like Theodore who push you along. And then you're like, "Yeah, I can do this." And that determination drives it, you know?

D: Mmhm, mmhm.

M: Well, and with the teachers you've named, I'm guessing they started pretty quickly teaching you about keys, and music theory, and things like that, but—.

C: Yeah.

M: Yeah, yeah.

C: But a lot of it was mostly just, you know, trying to figure out how to play scales and stuff like that before anything. Before the complicated theory came in. But yeah, that was definitely part of that.

M: Mmhm. Well, so—and is there anyone else in your family that plays, by the way? Or—?

C: No.

M: No. It's just you.

C: No, it's just me. They've talked about trying; they don't. But I guess it's just a me thing right now. But yes.

M: It's easier to talk about trying than to do it.

D: [Laughter]

C: Yeah. Yeah. And I mean, to them, I guess it feels like, "We already have one kid who's playing an instrument. Why do we need more people in the family doing it if we got the one guy?" [Laughter] You know? Like, I'm fine with that.

M: Fair enough. [Laughter] Have you had any additional mentors? You mentioned your—Hosea and Theodore. Who else?

C: Well, they're definitely the biggest contributors. The trumpet director here at South.

M: Okay.

C: He currently gives me lessons right now. And I mean, I've known him for a while, even before the lessons. But he's definitely been a mentor. And then, first time I was ever in the MSYO, which is the Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra; that was a very long time ago. It was one of the first real programs I did, you know? Besides just, like, outside high school jazz bands and things like that, I joined the orchestra. And the director at the time, Robert Seebacher, was also a very big person in my musical journey, so to speak.

M: Okay. And what about influences in terms of just, like, styles, or particular trumpet players? Like—yeah, what sort of inspired you as you've gone along?

C: Hm. I guess, for me, I didn't really study the names of trumpet players all that much, in my first early days. I just heard certain songs and I heard certain recordings, and it was like, it sort of drove me into, you know, wanting to do it. I guess Miles Davis was definitely a big—I know that's a cliché answer for a lot of trumpet players, but it's cliché for a reason. [Laughter] And I think he's a very big inspiration. Another person was Doc Severinsen, who I had the pleasure of meeting once, and playing with during an event that was here at South, too, a number of years ago. That was another—I think the experience of meeting him, more than anything, was a very big part of why I ended up getting inspired by his music. Because honestly, when I first met him, I was like, "Who is Doc Severinsen?" And I looked up videos, and I was like, "Oh my god!" [Laughter] "How did I get to meet this guy before knowing the guy?" [Laughter] And I found out he's like in his 90s, and I'm like, "I think trumpet playing is keeping this man going." [Laughter] If you want to know the secret to a long life, there it is. I mean, that's kind of besides the point, but—yeah, it was him. And if we're going to talk about recordings, I'd say that there's this old recording of "Night in Tunisia" that was done by Dizzy Gillespie that I heard a long time ago that really got me. And then, there is a recording of a piece called "Carnival of Venice", classical piece, by a—I believe—Russian trumpet player, Sergei Nakariakov. And those were two things I just heard and I was just blown away, you know? The playing and the proficiency. And I spent like a good three or four years just playing "Carnival of Venice," practicing it; I'm still practicing it right now. So, maybe one day you'll see all that on TV or something, I don't know. [Laughter]

M: Fair enough. Oh, sorry—oh, okay. And, oh sorry, were you also—?

D: Oh no, go ahead.

M: It seemed like you had a question, though, or something.

D: I—go ahead. [Laughter]

M: So, you're—you already mentioned your Excelsior Band connection kind of comes in naturally and early on.

C: Yeah.

M: And also, yeah. But what's your first memory of seeing the band play?

C: First time ever?

M: Yeah.

C: I actually think—my first time experiencing with the band wasn't even actually seeing them. I heard a CD from them. And I was like—. And at the time, I was very small, and this seemed huge to me—I mean, having a CD. So when I heard them, I was like, "Woah!" You know? "A whole band, really?" [Laughter] And the guy—I didn't even know that Theodore was even in the band at the time. So, that was a very special experience. But then once I saw them, or I heard them, I started looking out for them during the parades, like, "There they go!" And I just kept paying attention. It was them and one other brass band, actually; Bay City Brass Band, who was another—they were definitely part of this, too. But for Excelsior specifically, that's how I got to pay attention to that. Sort of just drove itself into my worldview.

M: And did you know that was something you wanted to be a part of? Did you know from the beginning? Or, when did you realize that?

C: I wanted to be part of it. My tiny brain was like, "There's no way." You know? Because I was a little kid, and I was like, "This is too big for me." But eventually—the first time I actually had experience with the brass bands, any of the brass bands at all, was with Bay City. I met the leader of that brass band, and I started playing with him. And this was way before I ever started playing with the Excelsior. They started getting me into the parade scene; you know, doing the actual stuff. And after that I was like, "Okay, maybe I can do this." And then I started thinking about,

you know, Excelsior, and I was invited to play with them one. And, you know, sort of just grew into that. Beautiful thing.

M: I mean, was it a challenge? Like, what was it like to learn to march and play at the same time?

C: To put it bluntly: excruciating.

M: Okay.

C: I will say that was a very difficult thing to get used to, because playing jazz music is its own beast. I didn't think playing trumpet was going to be so physically demanding until after my first time. I had a little outline of a mouthpiece on my lips, because of how hard I was pressing into it, trying to figure that out. But walking and playing, and especially for as long as you have to do it in a Mardi Gras parade? Woah. That was just way—that was a lot. [Laughter] You know? My first parade ever, I was like, "I am never doing this again!" [Laughter] "This is the last time! I don't care how much I'm getting paid. I'm never doing this again." [Laughter] And my dad was like, "No, no, you'll learn to love it." And I did, you know? It gets easier. And, it never got easy—but it got easier. And, it got more fun, and once I started learning the songs, I learned how to improvise on them, and I started interacting with the other guys; so like, all that stuff together makes even the hard parts worth doing. You know? And that goes for all the bands that I've ever marched with.

M: Well, and so how did you get into Excelsior Band? Like how'd you actually join?

C: I was invited to join by the leader, Hosea, who—I played with them a few times, but it wasn't official. They just kind of just had me standing in. And I guess they sort of grew a liking to me, felt like I fit in naturally. And he just asked me one day, "Do you want to be an official member?" And I was like, "Of course." So, that's what happened.

MC: Wow. So, what is it like being the youngest member of one of the oldest bands in the state, if not the country? [Laughter]

C: I don't know. I guess it feels a lot greater than I am, you know? A lot of the times, I feel a little overwhelmed. Just when I really sit back and think about it, think about the situation, I'm like, "Wow". It's like, "I'm not sure if I'm cut out for this." But I guess it's a little awkward going down the streets with a bunch of, you know, older guys, and I'm sitting here 17-year-old me on my trumpet. I guess that can be a little

strange, but I find it a little exciting too. But I mean, I guess it's—I guess another way of saying is, like, it was a profound experience, you know? Because there's so much wisdom between all those guys. Between all of them, there's like literally hundreds of years' worth of information just scattered around in the band. And when you really think about it like that, you're just like, "Wow." This is just—you know? More so than any famous—this has nothing to do with fame or money, because there's plenty of bands that are like, you know, huge like that. I don't think—like even if I got invited to play with like, I don't know, name any huge band—Queen. All right? If I got invited to play with Queen, I wouldn't think that's nearly as exciting as playing with Excelsior. Because I think, given the amount of time that they've been doing this, and how dedicated they are, I don't think the knowledge they have compares to even the most famous bands out there, you know? It's a completely different thing. That's extremely rare. That type of knowledge only can be found in things like that.

D: I did have a couple of things that kind of cropped up.

M: Oh yeah.

D: Being the only musician in your family, I did wonder if your parents were music lovers, and maybe if they had exposed you to some different things. Because it's—I'm going to connect it with a question in a second, though. But if you can kind of recall, you know, hearing music in the house, if there was somebody that Mom or Dad loved in particular that they might've shared with you, that might've been an influence?

C: I don't know if they were like specifically music people. Like it was a huge part, but they loved—I mean, of course they liked music, you know? And when they found out that I *loved* music—because I really sort of the initial incident, so to speak—they decided to play it more. A lot of my first introductions into music started with Mardi Gras, and listening to bands play as they walked by.

D: So, you're getting that live experience early—

C: Yeah, that live experience was a big part of it. And it was that. And plus, it's just random things that I heard on the radio that I had a draw towards. And my grandma, she would always play during Halloween this version of "Monster Mash" that I was particularly obsessed with for a while. But it's just, specific memories like that. I feel like—I don't know if anybody thinks about things like that in that way. But just random memories of just listening to a song that I would not stop listening

to for years. I mean, I annoyed the heck out of my parents over “Monster Mash” for—[Laughter]—they couldn’t hear enough of that. Plus, the constant drumming because I wanted to pretend I was in a Mardi Gras parade, or playing a horn; you know? It’s just—I guess it sort of grew in from just hearing music naturally. That’s one way of putting it. But they were music people, to answer your question.

D: Okay, all right. So, this is kind of a weird question, but it’s pertinent. So, your first early influence, you feel, is Miles.

C: Yes.

D: So, that puts you way deep into the world of jazz. And understanding that world. So, do you think that it’s by accident that you are in one of the largest and oldest jazz organizations in the world, and that you’ve been exposed and able to participate at this young age? Do you think it’s by accident, or do you think it’s just endurance, talent, and opportunity?

C: I think it’s a bit of everything.

D: Okay.

C: You know? I think that there was a very small chance, had I not met Theodore Arthur early on when I was playing, or if I chose any other teacher, then I’d be on a completely different course right now. And that just comes down to being lucky. But a lot of it had to do with, you know, hard work. If I didn’t work hard, I wouldn’t be here where I am today.

D: Absolutely.

C: You know? Just a collection of everything, I guess. Adds to it.

D: Because it’s not every young kid that’s going to be exposed to a Miles Davis, and can come back and pinpoint, you know. [Laughter] I remember distinctly listening to Miles, you know? That’s something that’s very unique.

C: Yeah.

D: So, I think that’s something that makes you a unique category.

- C: Yeah, the first time I heard “So What,” it was just on YouTube, randomly. I didn’t know it was Miles Davis at the time. So, I was influenced by his music really early on, but I didn’t know what it exactly I was listening to. All I knew was that I liked it. And I, you know, went back and realized it was Miles Davis. I dove into him. And I guess that was sort of an accident, you know? But yeah, I guess I got lucky with that, too. It was a collection of everything to get where I am now.
- D: The Doc Severinsen thing would be no accident, though. [Laughter]
- C: No, the Doc Severinsen thing is just insane to me.
- D: Yeah.
- C: I keep thinking about it, you know? Given how high he is in talent.
- D: Right! [Laughter]
- C: You know? And I’m sure he doesn’t even remember me, but, wow. That was just an incredible experience. You know?
- D: And it’s not that those people that you brought up early were kind of key, especially to you being, you know, in the position you are in right now, because those are—. I guess those are—it’s, I’d say the word “serendipity,” but it’s like serendipitous— [Laughter]—
- C: Yes.
- D: —that you are, you know, at this age in the organization already. So.
- C: Yes.
- D: It’s something really that got you here at this end point.
- C: Yeah.
- M: Well, and so, I mean, what was it like when you joined the Excelsior Band? I’ve heard it can be a little challenging—well, I’ll leave it there.
- C: Yeah.

M: What—?

C: I understand. I can see how it would be challenging. For me, I didn't find it too challenging, but that's because I, you know, was marching in parades for a pretty long time even before the Excelsior. I think hadn't that been the case, yeah, I'd find it very, very difficult. So, if you want to talk about, you know, just getting lucky enough to be invited to another band before that band? Yeah, it was pretty—the way they describe it or the way they talk about the band to other people in terms of what they do to practice—which is that they don't really practice, they just go in. You know? They're like, "Here. This is your parade. You meet this time. You don't know the songs? You'll learn them as you go." And thankfully, since I knew the members already, I learned some of the songs earlier. But yeah, I got—for me particularly, it wasn't that hard. But you know, I can see how it could be. [Laughter]

M: So, makes it a little easier—.

C: Yeah.

M: You were a little prepared.

C: Yeah, a little prepared. Yeah. [Laughter]

M: Well so, what are, I mean—what are some of your favorite memories, so far, of being in the band?

C: So far?

M: Yeah.

C: Wow. I think there was a—there was an event, I think it was like the reunion of something that was held in the firehouse—Creole Firehouse, the name of it. There was a procession, or—it was actually just a random playing session of them, for these people in this house that I was invited to, kind of sort of last second. And I showed up, and it was a very—it didn't feel Mardi Gras-centric. It was the guys, and they were in a corner, and Hosea was just talking; and it felt really intimate, I guess. Maybe "intimate" isn't the right word, but it felt more—it just felt more personal. And I understood, right then, what exactly this band had that I didn't really think about, and that was just this sense of family, you know? And the way people rally, very personally, to this band. And you could see all these people in this house were really connected and focused on what was going on. And I was like—I've

never seen that happen with any other band, you know? And it's not like they all were related; it wasn't like a family thing. It was just like, the music was so tied into their childhoods—because the band's been around for so long—and what they've known, and their love for it, that they felt like, "I can just invite these people into my home and have them play." You know? And it's like having a family reunion. And I thought that that experience really kind of awakened something in me. Just how personal and magical music in general can be. Seeing those people, they're genuinely just very emotionally attached to what was going on. It was like—that's a very powerful thing.

D: Wow.

M: Well, and to follow up on that, even though you sort of touched on this in different ways—but I mean, what does music mean to you on a personal level? Why do you do all this?

C: That's a good question. For me, music has been such an integral part of my life, for as long as I've been alive, that I find it as—I couldn't imagine living without music. You know? I need some form of it. And if I were to ever go deaf, I would always need like a little speaker right next to me that I can touch, so I can hear the vibrations, you know? I actually did an interview for local Fox News channel here, and they asked me a similar question. And I said, "It's like, you breathe air; you eat food, drink water; listen to music." That, for me, is how—you know, I couldn't even imagine a life without it at this point.

M: Well, and so, what's your favorite part in being in the Excelsior Band? Like, generally, not event-specific, but just—yeah.

C: I'll say that right now, I think I like the Mardi Gras parades and the experience of that. Mostly because of the people that I meet, you know? Everybody knows Excelsior, and I've gotten to know plenty of the guys there, and they're very fun to talk to. Beyond just the massive amounts of knowledge they have, they're just funny, fun guys to be around. That, topped with the hundreds of people on these parades, it's like—it can be a little euphoric, almost. You know? To the point where it's like—I wouldn't say sensory overload, but you know, you feel like on top of the world then. Because you're playing all this music for all these people that have such a big—because, I mean, Excelsior and Mardi Gras are like—can't have one without the other. So, it felt really good being a part of that, and getting that experience.

M: And so, what do you know about the origins of the band? I mean—and who have you learned it from?

C: Well, a lot of the origins, that goes back to, I don't know, ancient Rome. There's a lot of origin. [Laughter] But I guess, the most basic parts of it were told to me by Theodore Arthur, you know? Just over the course—and it wasn't like a formal lesson—like, "Here's the history about Excelsior." He would just tell me random things about the band over the course of me practicing with him. And I guess it sort of integrated in that way. But yeah, I guess I haven't really gotten a formal lesson on the history. I would like to. But I mean, I guess that's kind of what you guys are doing with this; learning everything from these people. But yeah, sort of just a part of it, you know? Sort of thrown in there, every now and then. It's garnish. I guess it wasn't important for me to know then, since they didn't know if I was even going to be in the band. [Laughter]

M: Well, sometimes you can learn things in pieces.

C: Yeah.

M: That's, yeah. That counts as well. And Michael kind of asked this before, but I mean, just: what's it like being in such an old band? I mean, like a crazy old, like I didn't even—until I got to Mobile—realize that there was a band that was this old anywhere. And you're in it. [Laughter]

C: I guess it can be a little intimidating. Once you've been in this band for so long, it's like you can see your face is getting carved into the cave paintings, you know? Dating back to the Dawn of Man, and then that's—not even, I guess that kind of sounds insulting, calling them old. But I mean that in a way that's like, they're important, you know? They're integral. And now that I feel like I'm a part of that, I feel like I sort of have a responsibility now. And that's something that I actually love. It's a bit intimidating, but I welcome it. Fully.

MC: Okay so, how are you using this experience in, I guess, thinking about your future? We don't get to ask—well, we haven't had the opportunity to ask any of the previous members what they're doing. [Laughter]

C: Oh yeah, that makes sense. I guess for this, for my future in particular, I say that music is always going to be a very big part of it. I don't plan on doing music professionally, exactly. But it's something that I feel like, as long as I've been doing it, you know, for the 10 years that I've been playing music; it's going to be here for

a while. You know, I'm not going to stop, ever. I don't even think I could if I wanted to. Like, there have been times where I've just put down the trumpet, and was like, "I am just so exhausted with this." It can be a little annoying being so busy with all that stuff. But I always come back to it at the end of the day. It's, like, calling me. You know? So it'll always be a part of that. But in terms of my future? I guess one of the things that Excelsior specifically fostered into me was, you know, at the very basic level, just having responsibilities and meeting expectations. Just basic things. And I guess it's a bit of an anticlimactic answer, but basic things like going there on time, you know? Having the correct uniform on. Things like that. It starts to evolve. It starts to help shape you into a better work ethic that can be carried on to future prospects, whether it be college or whatever. For me, it'll probably be college, I do plan on going to college. But that was very helpful from Excelsior to my future.

M: And you've mentioned like marching in Mardi Gras and things like that. Excelsior Band seems to play in a lot of different—I'll use the words "venues" loosely, because it can be just people's houses and stuff, or—what's that been like? I mean, all of the range of places that the band ends up being called out to? What's it like to—?

C: Well, I've only done so many venues, besides the house thing. There was one other thing that I went to. It was like a concert thing. It was like a brass band concert thing, that I was in. And I was on the stage. And that was another thing that was—I guess, to answer the question, the experience of what that was like: it was different from marching. Because with marching in a Mardi Gras parade, the people there, they're there to catch beads, you know? And food, from random people's giant papier-mâché floats. [Laughter] They're not specifically there for the band. The band is just, like, exciting when they are there, because you need the music. But people who go to those other events, they're there for the band. And having people really pay attention to you like that, it's something you'd have to adjust to. Because I guess people with stage fright would find that intimidating. I'm not one of those people, thankfully. So, I never found it to be that. But it was fun, you know? I guess I can't find a better word than just, it's fun.

D: Well, it was a fun day.

C: Yes.

D: I did happen to go to the—.

C: Yeah, you were there. [Laughter] He knows all about it.

D: [Laughter]

C: I don't know. Did I look terrified when I was up there?

D: No, you looked like you were having a good time to me. So. [Laughter]

C: Okay. Well, that's the important thing.

M: Fair enough. Well, so—like, what would you say—how would you describe the legacy of the Excelsior Band?

C: The legacy? I think that even if the band were to be completely disbarred right now, their effect would just carry on for generations and generations. You know, at this point, they've sort of etched themselves into not only Mobile history; I think jazz history. I think it goes that—and people don't really think about it—but it goes that far. It's the little things. And, for here in Mobile specifically, I don't know where we'd be if it wasn't for Excelsior and how long they've been able to sort of fuel the engines of what Mardi Gras was, and just the jazz scene. Because Mardi Gras was one of the very first things, it's one of the biggest things about Mobile. And they've been here for so long. And I feel like, you know—like I said earlier, they're very connected. So, in terms of their legacy, I think that—forever and ever. Considering how deep their history runs, and just with Mobile itself, I think that's going to last forever, as long as it can. Even if it were to stop right now. That's just an incredibly important legacy, put simply.

M: Well, and hoping that it doesn't stop right now—

C: Yeah.

M: —what would you like to see the future of the band be? What would you hope for?

C: I guess I wouldn't mind seeing younger members come in, you know?

D: [Laughter]

C: I was excited that I joined. I think—and there are some other, you know, younger people who have played with them. They're not official members, but they've played with them before. And I think there does come a time when you need to

pass on the torch. And I hope—and it does seem like they want to do that, too. They have the same idea. The name of the game is to just keep this going, you know? People who are passionate about this, they'll find their way over to the band. And the band's going to find them, and it'll keep going in. It's going to be fueled by nothing other than people's pure passion for the craft. As long as we have that, I don't see any reason why the band would ever stop. You know? As long as we have that, it's just—that's locked in. Yeah.

D: Yeah. Yeah.

M: So, the last question I think I would have—and then I'll defer to my colleagues here—but what advice would you have to a young—like, a younger-than-you aspiring musician? Let's say—well it doesn't matter how old. But what advice would you have? Yeah.

C: My advice to that person is, no matter how hard it becomes to just to get up and do that, the name of the game, in terms of getting really good at this, is practice. You have to practice. I'm sure a million people have answered with that question, but a million people have answered that question with that answer because it's true. You need to practice. And as long as this hypothetical kid has already picked up an instrument, they got the hard part done with. That's the real hard part: just picking it up and finding the determination to do it. But as long as you keep going, and you believe, genuinely, that the practice is going to carry you—and it will, it always does. There is not a single person that's good at what they do right now who did not practice doing it. As long as you have that, you're going to get there. And I think that's something you should never lose sight of. Even if it becomes hopeless: "I'll never get this!" You will. You just got to practice.

M: Fair enough. Well, I think that's all of my questions, but—.

D: So, I have a question that I had asked a few members of the band. And I think it's probably a good question to ask, since you've been playing for 10 years already, and already jumped into the Excelsior Band. What level of musicianship do you think the Excelsior Band displays?

C: Level of musicianship. Wow.

D: Yeah.

C: I guess with all of them—I don't even know how to answer that. It's like trying to fathom a different color than the ones that exist currently, you know? [Laughter] It's like trying to ask me, "Count to infinity right now." [Laughter] A ton, I guess? I feel like that's not a good enough answer. It's a lot; it's a ton. I don't think there's a word for it.

D: So, let me break into it a little bit. So, you're playing with musicians that are Hosea London and Theodore Arthur; I'm not sure if you played with Brother Charles Hall. But, you know, those are all people who are integral to what has been in place in the band. So, they are basically the keys of what the musicianship has been like. So, if you want to maybe go to that level and maybe relate to it personally.

C: Well, I can say Theodore Arthur—I'll start with him, because he was the first person I ever like actually, you know, listened to? Hearing him play for the first time was sort of like an awakening. Like, I heard him play saxophone—and this wasn't really complicated, hard stuff. He was teaching me scales for the first time. And I guess it makes it a little more personal, you know? Because I guess any person that plays me their first scale becomes sort of etched into my mind automatically. But for me it was him, and I guess no matter how I want to slice it, that's always going to bring it up another level for me when I think about them. Hosea, same thing; he was another one of my teachers. So, just being able to play with them, listen to them, get stuff from them—and that's outside of musicianship. Just his ability to teach, and get me to be parts of bands and stuff like that. But speaking of musicianship, I guess, for them specifically? It was pretty nurturing, I'd say. What I got from it, you know? It wasn't so much as a, "Wow, I can't believe how awesome this sounds!" But more like, "Wow. I can't believe how much I'm learning from this." You know? And that's what I got.

MC: I actually have no questions.

C: All right! [Laughter]

M: That's acceptable.

C: That's fine, yeah! [Laughter]

M: Well, thank you very much.

C: It's been a pleasure. I love this.

D: Thank you.

C: Very fun interview.

D: We appreciate you coming in.

[End of recording]

Transcribed by: Terrion Thompson, June 21, 2022

Audit-edited by: Latresha Maddix

2nd audit-edit: Ryan Morini, May 8, 2023

Final edit by: Ryan Morini, August 14, 2023