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EXC 011 Luquen Cannon

Excelsior Band Collection (EXC), Acc. 756

**Interviewed by Ryan Morini, Michael Campbell, and Willie Dinish on August 31, 2022
52 minute audio recording • 22 page transcript**

Abstract: In this recording, Luquen Cannon 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. Cannon begins by discussing the Maysville neighborhood of Mobile where he grew up, and his early experiences with meeting some of the outstanding musicians from Mobile at that time. He reflects on the value of music education in shaping him as a musician, and the means of expression that music offers him, particularly jazz. Mr. Cannon describes his experiences playing in the band at Jackson State University, and what it was like to join the Excelsior Band. The interview concludes with Mr. Cannon reflecting on some of his favorite moments playing with Excelsior.

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 011 Luquen Cannon
Interviewed August 31, 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:

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EXC 011

Interviewer: Ryan Morini; Michael Campbell; Willie Dinish III; Bradley Cooper

Interviewee: Luquen Cannon

Date: August 31, 2022

M: This is Ryan Morini with the McCall Library of University of South Alabama. Today is August 31, 2022. I'm here with my colleague:

MC: Michael Campbell.

M: As well as:

D: Willie Dinish III, with the Black Ink Coalition.

M: And, possibly participating:

BC: Bradley Cooper.

M: I mean, you're here. [Laughter] And we have the pleasure today of interviewing:

LC: Luquen Cannon.

M: Thank you for joining us today.

LC: Glad to be here.

M: If we could begin with when and where you were born?

LC: I was born here in Mobile, Alabama. You know—[Laughter]—born here in Mobile, Alabama, man. That's where I was born. Here, the birthplace of Mardi Gras.

M: Okay. Okay. And who are your parents?

LC: My parents is Luquen and Irene Cannon.

M: Okay.

LC: Luquen and Irene Cannon.

M: So, you a junior, or—?

LC: Not a junior; we have two different middle names. I have my granddad' first name, you know. And he's named after his granddad. His middle name is after his granddad. So, he just passed it on down.

M: Okay. So, it's kind of braided together like that.

LC: Yes, yes.

M: Okay. And where did you grow up in Mobile?

LC: I grew up in Mobile, I grew up in the Maysville community. Maysville community, that's basically—they consider Maysville and Down the Bay, you know, they coincide with one another.

M: Okay, okay. So, I mean, how would you describe Maysville as you knew it growing up?

LC: Maysville is a historic community. And, you know, it was one of those communities that everybody knew your parents or grandparents. You know? And relatives. You do have relatives that—you know, hey. So. It was one of those peaceful communities where—family-oriented communities. And, that's about it man.

M: Okay. And were your parents from Mobile originally as well?

LC: Yes, originally from Mobile. My mother was raised—born and raised here in Mobile, and my dad was born and raised here in Mobile. My dad is originally from the Down the Bay area. He's a graduate of Williamson High School; 1965, class of [19]65. And my mother, she was born—basically, what they call "down in the Bottom," Roger Williams area. She was a graduate of Central in [19]63.

MC: Okay.

M: Okay.

LC: You know. So, Central has a lot of legacy. So, you know, she—. [Laughter]

MC: Yeah. Central gets brought up—

LC: A lot? Yeah, yeah. I heard Central had one of the best bands too, man, you know. Always hear the stories about Central marching band. Like, they say during Mardi

Gras: you knew when Central was coming down the street. And we have a member of the band—actually, two members of the band. Leon and Theodore? They marched in Central High School band, and that's all they talk about. [Laughter] You know?

M: Well—so, on that note, I mean, how does music kind of become a part of your life?

LC: Well, music—

M: And when?

LC: —music became a part of my life as a child, man. I started out on a drum set, you know, as a percussionist. And I played in a couple churches growing up. In elementary school, I was playing in churches. And then, I went on and I went to Dunbar Magnet School at the time, and I met Lewis Coaxum, one of the great band musicians. I don't know if you guys ever heard of him, but he told my dad, "He can't play the drum. His lips are shaped like he's a brass player." So, you know, I end up taking on playing the trombone. And he used to work us around multiple instruments.

D: Dunbar. So, what was that experience like?

LC: Dunbar experience, it was one for the—it was a culture shock for myself. Because most of the schools that I went to at the time were predominantly Black elementary schools. Then I was supposed to go to Mae Eanes, which would be considered a predominantly Black middle school. But it was more of a culture shock, man. And the arts was amazing. You know? It was Dunbar Magnet Creative and Performing Arts. So, most people did dance music, and theater, drama; all of that. All of those great things. And mine was circled around music, and that's where I took the craft of jazz. Also, keyboarding, you know, and learning how to play an instrument in the concert and symphonic band. So, it was—Dunbar was a cool experience, man. It was cool.

M: That's a lot of branching out. Why did you start with drums? What was the attraction?

LC: I just wanted to beat on stuff. [Laughing] I wanted to be the one to make all the noise, you know? Hey, that's what they tell you: drums ain't nothing but a bunch of racket. You know? I mean, but nah, I just wanted to make noise, man. But I found

it intriguing. You know, intriguing, man. And, that's just—I just wanted to make some noise, man.

M: Fair enough. And then, we've heard a few stories about band directors just kind of choosing for people. [Laughter] "Yeah, okay. But now you go—." [Laughter] What was that like? I mean, what was the experience, I guess, of learning to play brass?

LC: [Laughter] Well, I laugh man, because one of my neighbors said, "Man, I prefer for you to go"—you know, growing up in the neighborhood—"I prefer for you to go back into drums. Because man, when I hear you play that horn, I want to come over there and just stick something in it." But—. [Laughter] But nah, it wasn't that bad. [Laughter] It wasn't that bad, man. I mean, it's like anything, man. It's like a child; you crawl. You know, you got to crawl before you walk. And you know you going to crawl; you going try to stand up; you going fall, get back up, fall again. So, it was mainly, like, you know—like learning how to walk, man. So that's what it was like.

MC: Did you enjoy it?

LC: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. And I still love it to this day. I mean, I can take on other instruments, man, but I'm always emphasizing jazz. Like, even when you come to my area of work, I'm playing some type of jazz, or I'm playing some type of music of that sort, man. It's that general. So. I still—yeah. So yeah, that's what that was. It was a task to take on, man. Learning how to read music? You know, that was a thing, too. Learning how to read music; I mean, we could say, "Hey, let me give you this paper. Let me teach you phonics." You know? And music is similar to that. Breaking down the words like breaking down the rhythms.

M: Are there other musicians in your family? I mean, were are you kind of off on your own doing this?

LC: Well, you know, I haven't done any research. But I do want to do more research, because I was told by my aunt—who, she's deceased now, and she was big in Davis Avenue, Martin Luther King—they have an association down there, and she said we had a couple of members that participated in Excelsior Band, like, back way back when, you know? So, I haven't done my research. Since she's always told me that, I wanted to do my research; but you know. And I have a couple—and I did have a cousin who play percussion, man. He's a percussionist. He's a professional percussionist, and that was one reason why I wanted to make racket. [Laughter] You know, and he played, he marched—I hate to say this, man, but he

marched in the worst band in the SWAC. But he'll be okay. [Laughter] If this ever get out—and he a graduate of South Alabama, too. So, I—but see, he wasn't in South' band, now. He marched in Alabama State band. And then, he finished out at South. So, you know, yeah. He—you know, so. Just a couple of the guys that—musicians in the church, too, that sparked me a interest in music.

M: Okay. Like who?

LC: Well, it was so many, man! [Laughter]

M: That's okay.

LC: No, it's just that, you know, when going on with times, this is the main—and I say this, let me go back and say this: I love old music.

M: Okay.

LC: Okay? And I always—and I use this song for an example. Because we all know back during the Motown era that a lot of music had to be played—originally, without synthetic sounds. You know, without a keyboard, without this, and without that, man. You know, my parents are in their late 70s. So, I used to hear a lot of that around the house. And I can decipher the two, like, “Hey,” saying that's—they had to play that song. And I'll throw that song out there like, “Papa Was a Rolling Stone,” you know? Like, you know how the long riff that it rides in on, man? And then I used to always say, “If they mess up, they got to start that song all over again!” [Laughter] But that's basically it, man. It's just, it was music, and then during Mardi Gras too, as well. You know, my dad knowing a lot of members of the Excelsior Band when they used to come down the street. And it's crazy, because he still say to this day: when I was a child and they had me at the Mardi Gras Parade, and I'm on the barricade, and I'll say, “Man, I want to be in that band one day. I'mma be in that band one day.” And then: bam! Like hey; I'm a part of the Excelsior Band now, you know? And there were other high school bands that I used to love, man. I used to imitate Mardi Gras. Like just—I used to imitate it. Like literally, just grab me some buckets; just beat, beat, beat. [Laughter] Because, you know, I mean, at the time, all parents are not fortunate to give their children everything that they want. So, when you love music, you find any kind of thing to make a sound. Like, you know? I don't know if they, when I started the program, they used to have those little flugle—little, like, plastic clarinets and stuff like that? So, you know, I was excited to get that type of stuff, man. Because I can go make

more noise, and imitate Mardi Gras. [Laughter] You know? So, hey, that pretty much sums it all up, man.

MC: So, what high school did you go to?

LC: Oh, I went to Williamson High School and I marched in the band at Williamson High School too. Under Clifford Thomas. He was the director at the time at Williamson High School. So. He exposed us to a lot of the colleges. You know, Mr. Thomas used to take us on trip after trip after trip after trip. So, we'd visit Grambling, Southern, Alabama State, Florida A&M, Jackson State. Like, he just exposed us. And, you know, he even took us to Howard University. At the time, I can't remember who the band director was, but he was a graduate of Williamson, at the time, at Howard University, man. And he even took us to DC, and Howard University Jazz Band was amazing at the time, man. Because they was cutting albums and everything.

M: Wow.

LC: So, you know.

D: That's impressive.

LC: Yeah. Yeah, man. So, he actually exposed us to a lot.

M: Wow.

D: What was it that got you so connected to jazz? You mentioned this a couple of times. What was that like, and how did that happen for you?

LC: I got connected to jazz at Dunbar. Because we had a jazz band. You know, like I told you, Dunbar was circled around arts. So, you know, you would have your concert, your symphonic bands; you would have your keyboarding class; and then we had a jazz group. And jazz is just a form of expression. Like, you can't go wrong playing jazz. You know, I'm just being honest; you can't go wrong. Because it's a feeling of your emotions. You know? You can't go wrong. So, that's what connected me to jazz, because you was able to express yourself more so. When you in class and you got a particular teacher that you been bad for, you could just go in there and blow—[Laughter]—blow your frustrations away. Because you know you couldn't say anything provocative to the teacher, you knew you couldn't be disrespectful, because you didn't want to get a paddle or anything like that.

[Laughter] And then, you know, it was also having that program “Music and Me,” man. Which I’ve always spoke about. And I wish we could take the initiative to bring that back, man. You know, that program geared a lot of musicians in this city, man.

D: Who did you have Music and Me with?

LC: I had Music and Me—it was a group of band directors, man. I mean, it was with the drug education counselor at the time. And I don't know if you may know—I know this may be off the subject—but does the drug ed still—?

D: I know they still exist.

LC: Yeah. So, it was under the drug education council, man. And Ms. Crawford, she was the overseer of the program. But we had directors like Mr. **Colson Lee Barron**, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Bean from Citronelle; we had a group of band directors man. And you know, we would come in as—when I was starting in the program, I know you would have the older group that always mentored the younger group. Man, you put on a little jazz fest, like a little show for the crowd and everything like that, man, and Music and Me was—hey man, that's a program of the ages. And I know you probably have heard people speak on Music and Me. And it was something to do to give you some things to do during the summer, man. Because, you know, like now I always say I wish somebody would bring it back, because children nowadays don't have much to do during the summer.

D: Absolutely.

LC: And, you know, they sitting around. So, why not be that young man or that young lady that can come in and learn something that may can you to another level, you know?

M: If I can backtrack a moment: so, you described being at Mardi Gras at a young age and seeing the Excelsior Band. Do you have any memories—like what's your earliest memory of seeing the Excelsior Band at Mardi Gras?

LC: Oh man, just—first off, before Men in Black, man, I was like, “Man, look at them guys walking down the street.” [Laughter] Like, they walking down the street—I mean, it was the prestige, man. You know, just the sound. The prestigious sound, and then everybody calling their names and screaming their names, man. And I’m like, “Man, these dudes—!” Now that I’m getting older, I’m thinking in my mind like,

man, now, they like celebrities to the city. You know? They're like celebrities to the city. So, that's how I used to view them coming down the street, as celebrities. Like hey, you know? You always had that, "I would like to be like this." All us still wanted to be like Mike, even though we couldn't play—basketball. [Laughter] But just seeing something that you can connect to, you know. And that's what it was all about, man.

M: Fair enough. So, where did you go to college?

LC: Jackson State University.

M: Okay.

LC: And I was a member of the Sonic Boom—let me go back and say that: *The Jackson State University!* [Laughter] And I was a member of the Sonic Boom of the South, and symphonic and jazz band too, as well, there. Now, my buddy over here, he didn't want to do jazz band, but you know. [Laughter] We was selected. You know what I'm saying? We were selected. But he missed out on some great opportunities, and he know it. Just like I think he missed out on that opportunity when David Banner came and had us playing backup for him. You remember that?

BC: I was gone.

LC: [Laughter] No, we was there then, man!

D: Oh, my goodness!

M: Wow.

BC: I mean, I was probably gone. [Laughter]

WC: That must've been something. That's a pretty good memory right there.

LC: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, man. Well, you know, the thing about it: we did have a nice core jazz band under Dr. Thomas. You know, we did have a nice jazz band, man. He's a jazz guy anyway. He wasn't really marching band instructor; he was all jazz, and what's the other class we used to—?

BC: Theory?

LC: Theory. Yeah, he was a theory. He was a jazz and theory guy. So, you know.

D: He must've had a deep personality.

LC: Deep personality, man. And that's why I say; that's why jazz can express—you can express different personalities through jazz, man. That's why I love it.

M: And how did you settle on Jackson State?

LC: I actually was supposed to be going to Southern University, man. [Laughter] I'mma go ahead and put that out there, man. How I ended up—you know, I was supposed to be going—well, I'll say this: I auditioned in the school possible to get that scholarship money, man. And I auditioned at Southern University, and I liked Southern when I went down there, man. And, you know, it was okay. The environment was okay. But then, I also—you know, we used to participate in Grambling band camp, and I had a full ride to Grambling; but that was just too far from home. And man, I got to Jackson State, auditioned at Jackson State—and I've already been to games and stuff up there. You know, we used to go to the games and do all that. But the college just felt like—hey, like Goldilocks and the Three Bears. That third bed, it just—it's right! [Laughter] This my second home. This right. It just feel right, you know? It's just, that's how I felt. [Laughter]

M: And who was your band director there?

LC: Dr. Liddell. Well, we had several. Dr. Liddell, Dr. Magruder.

M: Okay.

LC: And Dr. Magruder, and who else was it? Dr. Magruder, Dr. Liddell.

BC: [Inaudible 19:21].

LC: No, it was another one. Oh, man.

BC: Pop. Pop was there for a second.

LC: Pop was there for a second.

BC: Duplessis.

LC: Yeah, Duplessis. It was one more, man. It was two more, actually, but he was over the other jazz group. Played trumpet; he was a trumpet player.

BC: Oh, Ware.

LC: Ware. Dr. Ware.

BC: David Ware.

LC: Yeah, David—Dr. Ware. And then, we had the drum. [Laughter] What was the—?

BC: Bethea?

LC: Not Bethea. You remember he gave us that song? And I can't think, but he was a—

BC: Oh, man. You got to give it to him. **Joe** Ringo.

LC: Yeah. Ringo. Dr. Ringo. So yeah, those were the directors when we were there. Marching band instructors, yeah.

M: Okay. Are there any particular ways you'd say you grew as a musician at Jackson State?

LC: Oh yes, definitely!

M: How so? Like what—anything stand out or, is it just—?

LC: Well actually, when I got—we learned more theory of our—you know, and the craft of our music, man. That's how you grow. That's how I've grown. You know, like, you basically—we had applied classes saying, "Hey, I'mma teach you what this trombone is about, or what brass instruments are about." You know, lower brass. So, the theory and applied classes is what, you know, had helped me elevate to be a better musician.

M: Was there anything particularly challenging about Jackson State? Or about the playing at Jackson State, I guess?

LC: The only challenge was those long hours. [Laughter] You don't understand the long hours, man! See? Tight now, man, we would just be going—it's marching

band season right now. We would just be finishing warming up, getting ready to go to the field; then come in and go through about 10—learn a couple songs. Go through about 20 more songs, and then go to your room about 2 or 3 o'clock, and wake up for a 6 o'clock class, a 7 o'clock class. Because you want to—you know, I don't know how everybody felt, but I wanted all my classes early so I could take a nap. [Laughter] I mean, hey, I'm just being honest. Because we had to be at the band hall at 4:45 as freshmans. You know? That was, it was some work, man. But, if you just—not just Jackson State; if you look at all the college bands, you will see the work that they put in. You know, it speaks for itself. It speaks for itself, man. You know, we get into Jackson State, we get into all of FAM—Florida A&M. But man, you got great bands out there like Ohio State, Michigan. We get in all that man. Those walking Michael Jackson field shows? Man, they don't happen overnight! [Laughter] They don't happen overnight, man. They don't. Hey, them guys put in work, man. Those ladies and men, they work, man. Everybody worked. And it's just a good feeling to see that, when you marching down the street, or when you doing your performance: the love that's there, man. Like, I remember sitting in the stands at one of our home games. And I was just sitting right there, man, and a little guy came and tapped me on the shoulder and was like, "Man, I saw you on the band tape!" [Laughter] And, you know, he end up being a part of the band later on. But—. Because I only did three years. But I did stay with jazz; you know, the jazz band. But I only did three years, man, so—the marching band. But yeah, you know, that's like, "Hey, man"—that make you feel like it's a honor. Like, "Hey man, you saw *me* on the band tape?" You know?

BC: That was for real a culture. Like, that tape situation?

LC: Yeah, that tape situation, man. And I'll tell you another person that, actually, while we talking about tapes, man: Mr. Freeman.

BC: Freeman. Yeah.

LC: Man, Mr. Freeman. He would put out tapes, band tapes. For my birthday, my mom—"What you want for your birthday?" "Oh, give me one of them band tapes from Mr. Freeman, you know, so I can see all the different—." And I think—I really want to say we still got—I know he's deceased now. So, you know, his son-in-law marched in Jackson State band, too. And his daughter was a dance girl in the band as well, at Jackson State. she was a J-Sette. But they still have collections of all his tapes, man. Like, literally. He would—and I'm sure you probably seen them; I can go ahead and describe them to you. Have you ever watched the classics that come to Mobile, and you see the parades that come, and you see that guy with the

camera with the SWAC hat with the different colors, and the SWAC shirt with the different colors? He would have a SWAC **pairs** following every band. So, he was, you know, somebody in the community who also exposed children and high school kids to music programs, man. Some of the bands that you probably think you would never see. Like, you know, Brad is from Texas. So, you just think about, how many trips would I actually take to Texas Southern? You get what I'm saying? Like, when we have Alabama State, Jackson State, A&M, Florida A&M, or Southern in driving distance, why I'mma go all the way to Texas when I can see those bands, you know? But he would let you see. And not just that, he would also show you bands from, you know, Howard University. All the bands in Atlanta; you know, at Morris Brown. All those schools, man. So, he actually just would give us a lot to just look at. And you know, as far as exposure. Now, I mean he probably got a archive. [Laughter] Like a real-deal archive, man! [Laughter]

MC: Man, I hope it's preserved.

LC: I mean, yeah they told me they still got stuff. Because they was going back watching stuff from when we marched in the band at Jackson State and stuff like that, man. I was like. "Wow."

BC: [Inaudible 26:11]

LC: Yeah. I'm telling you, man; everybody had a tape from Freeman! [Laughter]

M: So, how did you first get involved with the Excelsior Band?

LC: Well, when I first got involved, man, when I moved home from college. You know, most of the musicians—we don't have a union anymore. So, it's just word of mouth of a musician. But Sean Thomas, one of the Excelsior Band members? We used to march in another group, you know, at first. We used to march with Olympia Brass Band. And things started changing. You know, times changed. A lot of members started getting old, and, you know, not being able to walk or participate during Mardi Gras. So, it was just, Hosea just, "Hey: I need me a good musician." You know? And the musician union at the time—they used to have a musician union, I don't know if you ever heard about it. But the musician union used to go around to where musicians can just work with different groups. You know, that's how you get hired on with groups. But now it was just word of mouth. Word of mouth.

D: So, Hosea happened to contact you?

LC: Well, we was talking during Mardi Gras, man. And he was like, “Hey, I need me another brass trombone player, man, and a brass player.” So, I was like, “Hey, I’m available.” You know, we would always talk. Because no matter if I did play with a group, he was still, “Hey, I need you to come play this gig with us, man. Come do this, come do this.” Like, we all worked together, you know? And I wish that we can all work together anyway as musicians, because, you know. I mean, hey: it’s the love of music, man. It shouldn’t be no—music is peaceful, relaxing. You know?

MC: Universal language.

LC: Universal language, man. That’s what it is

M: Was there any kind of adjustment once you joined the Excelsior Band? Like—?

LC: No, not at all. It was just like picking up where you left off from the last gig, or the last group. [Laughter] Only adjustment I’d tell you is this: we don’t rehearse. [Laughter] So, you would have to be there for one of those moments. Like, if a new member come in, you don’t rehearse. So, like, the first gig I did with the Excelsior Band, we did a wedding. So, you know, I’m—second line; okay, yeah, I know second line. I can play second line, and the Mardi Gras tunes that you do second lines with. And man, we were just sitting there and then Hosea—you know, I’ve heard the song before, and then Hosea just call this song, and I’m like, “What’s up, man?” [Laughter] And he was like, “It’s in the key of this. Just follow along.” [Laughter] So I’m like, “Wait, hold on; so you expect me to: one, two, ready—play?” [Laughter] So it’s just like, you just got to fill in, man.

BC: I got a story. [Laughter] Man, what did we play? We played something, and you was like, “Hosea, play it again!” [Laughter] It was my first time hearing the song. He was, “That’s okay, you’ll get it.” “Hosea, play it again.” [Laughter] He kept telling him to play it over!

LC: I was trying to get him to, you know, so he can learn it; but that’s your rehearsal. When you perform, that’s your rehearsal. You know. Like, we got a guy now, you know, that’s new saxophone; Herb. It was last night, Herb was like, “I don’t remember that one.” [Laughter] “Where you get that one from, Hosea? I don’t know that one. Where you get the—?” You know, but like you say, you just—if you a musician, man, you just find it, fill in. Find it and fill in, man.

D: We’ve been hearing a little bit about the no rehearsal.

LC: [Laughter]

D: And it's quite a thing—and I've mentioned this in a couple of other interviews—that that is musicianship. You know? That you are picking up on what's happening there, and you are involving yourself in the same key on your instrument.

LC: On your instrument.

WC: You're having to pick up and put down—going forward in the tune.

LC: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I'll tell you this: tell Hosea you know how to play the trumpet, a'ight? And just come tell him you want to do a gig. [Laughter] Because are you a musician? Can you play an instrument?

M: I play guitar.

LC: Okay, you play guitar. Let's say this man, all right? So, I know you got to practice the riffs and the rhythm and all that other stuff. So, let's just say a band say, give you a call: "Aye man, we want you to come on tour with us, but I'm not giving you a—well, you just show up today at 5 o'clock." And they just start playing. I mean, what you going do? [Laughter] What you going do? You know? You just going have to fill in, man! Fill in. [Laughter] Because I know you playing a guitar, you got to rehearse.

M: Oh yeah.

LC: You got to rehearse those lines. So, "Hey, you just going fill in, man"; and you going be like, "Oh!" [Laughter] The change come, you just got to fill it.

D: He's like, "I hope there is no solo in this!" [Laughter]

LC: Oh, it's going be a solo. You just pick up where you can get in, that's all. That's all. And the solo—now, that's the crazy part, because a solo might not be like—okay a solo, you might just be playing a solo; you know, you sitting around, so you get to the bridge, the riff part, man, where it's just the bassline. So then, you might just be called out. Hosea might just say, "Quen, blow!" "Brad, blow!" [Laughter] You know, I'm just—hey, he might say, "Sean, blow!" "Herb, blow!" Just blow. You know? That's it, man.

BC: You got to feel it out.

LC: You got to feel it out. You know, all solos are not going be great, but who's to say—you know, like I always—like, I done told some people before, man: you just feel. I mean, I'm not perfect. Nobody's perfect, you know? So, you just feel it. You just feel it and go. All right, dude. Aye man, and if y'all haven't tried Brad' barbecue cooking and all that other good stuff, man? [Laughter] I'mma go ahead and put this on the record: if y'all haven't tried it, you need to try it, man. I know he catered my—no, he catered my—

BC: Southern Blaze.

LC: Southern Blaze is the name. He was on the news, too. He don't eat pork or nothing, but he cooks it.

D: He didn't tell that.

LC: He caters. Now, I'm telling you: it's good, man. Southern Blaze. I'll show it to you when we finish. [Laughter]

M: Okay. And I'll see if we can't find the way. [Laughter]

MC: I mean, he was talking about steaks he was going—

LC: [Laughter] Oh, he caters, man. They cater. Yeah, they cater man. They catered our—I know this off the record, but they catered my wife' and I wedding rehearsal. After the—you know, the little meal, man. And aye: it was good, bruh! [Laughter]

M: I'll have to check that out. I mean, I know some folks have mentioned you can eat pretty well in Excelsior Band, too, sometimes. [Laughter] Not a bad perk to have, I guess.

LC: Not at all, man. I mean, hey; when you going off doing those gigs. Aye man, I'll tell you. And I know you'll be surprised—like, literally, how much the people—well, you probably won't be surprised; you probably done heard it a lot. But how much the people just actually love the Excelsior Band. Like, I mean, we can walk down the street during Mardi Gras, and if they cooking, "You want a plate?" [Laughter] You know, they—it's the love, man. Yeah, they feed us pretty well, now, you know? They take care of us. When we go do things, they take care of us.

D: I don't doubt that, I imagine that's pretty good. [Laughter]

MC: You mentioned, actually, about a Music and Me program. And I'm thinking, is there anything that—because I actually never heard of that before.

LC: Yeah.

WC: And I'm wondering, what would be some of the things that you would kind of like to see, like, that do?

LC: Well, just something like bringing that back, man. To introduce the youth to music, and besides other things that they normally can get into outside of—you know, let that be a gateway from trying to—you know, trouble in the communities and things like that, man. But you know, Hosea actually—he have a young jazz group that's similar to like what Music and Me was about. You know, putting on concerts and things like that, man. It was just another way of teaching young men and young ladies something, another craft. You know, another craft. Aye, I tell you, man: if I was able to put the time in and find the resources to help bring it back? And it's a lot of guys and women who participated and directors who probably would just come back and do it, just to do it, you know? It was around about the same length of Youth on the Winning Side.

MC: I remember that one.

LC: You remember that one? [Laughter]

MC: I never participated in it, but I used to always hear about it when I was coming up.

LC: Yeah, man. And Music and Me was right there, man. It was right there. I think it like phased out in, like, 2002.

D: Well, the thing about being a young musician is that it requires discipline. You got to pay attention, you got to do the things that require you to be professional beyond your age.

LC: Yes.

D: So, it diverts your attention from anything else—

LC: Anything else.

D: —that could really be going on.

LC: Yup. And you know, you can tell that music programs have changed a lot, man. I mean, like, when I was in school it was a requirement: take your instrument home and practice. Practice, practice, practice, practice. You know? Now, you got kids in music programs that, “I’m just going play it at school and leave it where it’s at, man.” It was a requirement. Like, I remember Mr. **Cosman** used to go through and check: “Aye, somebody left they horn.” He would know who horn it was, you know? And so, he knew you wouldn’t be practicing. So, when you playing a song, he might say, “Hey Quen, stand up.” And I got to stand up and I can’t play it? I’m in trouble. You know? So, you know, you didn’t want to shame yourself. And then, you wanted to—you know, we was very competitive. So, you didn’t want to show no, expose no weakness; because somebody can say, “Hey, I want to challenge you for your seat, even though—. And I can go back and play that same piece that you can play.” [Laughter]

D: I remember those days. [Laughter]

LC: Yeah. So, you know, that made you step your music game up, man. Like, “Aye, okay, I’m going home. I’m fixing to practice.” You know, like I will say—like, I will say for myself, I be like, “Okay, yeah.” I know now, since we—I have a family, in a professional setting I just can’t go home and grab my horn the way I want to sometimes. But, you know, I said I was going start taking pride in myself. Going start doing that, picking it up more and playing it more, you know? Just, it’s something you can’t lose. It’s just something—like, I know plenty of musicians that say, “Man, I wish I would’ve continued to play my horn!” Or “I wish I would’ve been able to continue to do it.” It’s just something you don’t lose, you know? You just have to find that time and play. Try to get it in or play in between. I started priding myself on doing that. I was like, “Okay, well I’ll go out here where they can’t hear me.” [Laughter] “Or go here where they—.” And just pull out my horn and start doing little riffs and things like that. And just trying to keep the feel, keep it going. And as much as we played during the—well, during that week, you know, with the film crew and all that, that came in from San Diego? As much as we played that week? Oh yeah. Now, that was a true rehearsal. That’s about the only rehearsal we going get. [Laughter] That was about the only rehearsal we were going to have. Even though—like, when we came and did the performance here. When we did the performance here? That was rehearsed. See, you get what I’m saying? Were you here for the performance?

M: Yeah, yeah.

LC: Okay, so that was a rehearsal. [Laughter] Did it sound like a rehearsal?

M: It did not.

LC: But that was rehearsal! [Laughter] That was rehearsal.

D: It was very well done. Was very well done.

LC: Yeah.

MC: That's cool. [Laughter]

M: Oh, okay, I thought—seemed like you were going somewhere with that.

LC: [Laughter]

MC: I was trying, but it wasn't coming.

M: Okay. Well, so you did mention, you were kind of exposed to a lot of HBCUs in high school and coming out of high school.

LC: Yes.

M: Is there anything you'd say about the importance of HBCUs and the musical tradition there, or—?

LC: Well, I mean, all—I mean, it just don't have to be HBCUs. All the music programs have a true tradition. You know, they all traditional. You know, everybody have their own themes, their own marching styles, their own techniques. And just, like hey, I could say Florida A&M? You know, the way they enter the field. Their entrance on the field with that double-time. Jackson State: first thing everybody want to hear when they see Jackson State is "Get Ready," you know? I mean, there's a lot of rich history. And then, if you've ever watched Michigan, Ohio State, how they introduce their drum major for the season. Those—so, it's just not focused—it's just not all down to—all of them have rich history and tradition. That's one thing that I like about the marching bands in college, is that tradition. Because, I mean, tradition is something that is sacred, you know? It's something that just—

you can't take it away from nobody. You know, if it's rich in tradition, it will stay, it will embark. It'll stay there, man. Embark on it.

D: So now, about tradition, what about some of the Excelsior Band traditions? How do you relate to that? How do you feel about that?

LC: Same thing, man. I mean it's just—you look at the Excelsior Band, man; we're not just a Mardi Gras brass band. We are a group that go out and play—I mean, the tradition still's the same. I mean, hey: the tradition even goes back to when Hosea said he got in 40-some years ago, *he* didn't rehearse. [Laughter] So, that's tradition. You know? So, but just not being a Mardi Gras band. Like, we pride ourselves in keeping it where, you know, the guys who originated the group—just keeping everything based on playing Dixieland music, and all of those famous tunes of that era, you know? So, that's mainly it. And we pride on tradition. And, I mean, Hosea focuses on teaching us, teaching us, teaching us, because it's just something that we can't let go down the drain, man. We have to do what we got to do to maintain that tradition, man. That's like, even I spoke with him about your young jazz group; I said, “Well, Hosea why you won't—?” He said, “I'm fixing to take—I'm thinking about it, I might do what you say,” after I told him this. I said, “Why don't you take a couple of those young guys and those kids, man, put them in a nice black and white suit so they can feel the concept of what—you know, the feeling of marching down the street during Mardi Gras, so the tradition continue to rolls on,” you know? You can't change it. One you embed it, you know?

D: It's hard to let it go.

LC: Yeah. And I mean, hey: you know, it's to the point where you know the Excelsior Band; you know what we do, if you listen to us. I mean, and to this day—when I first started playing, I didn't even know Mobile, we had our own song. You know? Like, literally, I didn't. And, just as—like I said; here go another rehearsal. Here go another example. Just like when he taught you guys “On Mobile Bay”? That's how I had to learn it! [Laughter] You know, I mean, of course I knew the song “Stars Fell on Alabama,” by Billie Holiday. I know those songs, you know. But like I say, it's not just playing the songs. It's also entertaining. Singing and getting the crowd involved and all of that. That's what the Excelsior Band was all about. Even though when I was in some of those music programs, they'll invite them to come play; they did the same thing then when I was in high school and middle school that we do now. So, it's—we have to stay on our tradition, on the legacy of the group, man. The legacy of the band.

M: And what's it like being in a 140-year-old band? I mean, because It's not just—

LC: Aye man, I'm telling you, man; it give me a rush of a local celebrity. [Laughter] Aye, it does man. It give you a rush. It give you a rush. I mean, 140, man. That's 100 years older than me, man! [Laughter] That's a hundred and some—you know? But, I mean, it just give you a rush, man. Just to see that you walking down the street, or you playing a little jazz set, and it's just the people are in awe. They in awe like, "Oh, wow!" So, it's—hey man, it takes the words out of my mouth on how I actually feel, man. Because I just have to say this: you have to be there to experience it. You know. You have to be there to experience it. It was a lady came up to us and said, "My husband and I, we been married for 50, going on 60-something years, and you guys did our wedding." I said, "I didn't do your wedding." [Laughter] She start laughing. Aye, you know, I get what she was saying. You know, the Excelsior Band did your wedding. So, I mean, that just goes to say what happened then, it doesn't change now. It doesn't change now. Even if it was 50, 60 years ago, what happened 50, 60 years ago, it still embarks on what the Excelsior Band is today.

MC: So, what do you think, I guess, the legacy of the Excelsior Band is going?

LC: Where is it going?

MC: Yeah.

LC: Well, it's still striving, man. I mean, we still moving, and like you said, it's just bringing in more younger musicians. Because like myself, Brad, a couple other guys, man; I mean, we're what would be left for right now. So, we have to take in everything so that when the next generation come up, we can instill that in them, man. You know. I think I would go ahead and say, when the Excelsior Band disband, we need to be worried. [Laughter] We need to be worried, man. You know how they have those memes and stuff like that? It might be something, the end might be coming or something, if we disband. [Laughter]

MC: Well, yeah. It clearly is! [Laughter]

LC: It's something that happen in Mobile if we disband.

D: Yeah.

LC: You know, because Mobile take pride in the Excelsior Band. And represents and honor us well, you know.

D: Absolutely, absolutely.

MC: Yeah, you guys are the living legacy of Mardi Gras.

LC: Yes, yes.

MC: And y'all were there at the beginning.

LC: Yeah. It's no matter if we in the front of the parade or the back of the parade; it's part of Mardi Gras, man.

M: Did the parades take any adjustment? Like, some people have talked about all the marching. It's a little different marching in a parade, maybe, than on a football field or something like that.

LC: Oh yeah. Yeah, but see, we don't normally march. Like, when we march, we march to a certain precision. But we don't, you know, march like a performance. Like, you know what I mean? We perform when we play, but we don't do the execution of a drill. You know, or anything like that. We just march down the street, parade down the street, and play our music, man. Have the fans—let the Mardi Gras crowd, you know, enjoy what we play. I mean, aye, we do have—I will say this: we have enough songs that we can start the parade and end the parade with a different song. [Laughter]

D: Oh, man.

LC: I mean, we do. We have enough songs to where we can start the parade with one, and end it with something else, man. Like, we can fill up that whole Mardi Gras route with music, man.

MC: That's what it's all about.

LC: Yeah.

MC: That's awesome.

M: Do you have any—I guess, maybe the last question I can think of offhand is: do you have any favorite kind of moments or memories from being in Excelsior Band? Something that stands out to you?

LC: I have a couple. I know I have one where, you know, being able to see these guys direct you and teach you, and then having the opportunity to sit down and let me play my horn with you now, you know, on a professional level. Because I always considered all the band directors and all musicians professional. Not just—if you're a musician, to me, you're professional. You know? So, it was an honor to play with a couple of the greats that we've had in the band. So, that was a good moment for me, man. And the first time on putting that black suit on and going up and down that street was definitely—because from a child, saying, "I want to be a part of that group one day," to being a member of that group one day; you know, that was historical for me.

D: That brings it all the way around.

LC: Yeah. [Laughter] Yep. So.

M: Well, I think that's all my questions. I don't know if—

MC: Yeah, that's excellent. That's very well done.

LC: Thank you, man.

M: Yeah, thank you.

MC: Thank you.

M: I don't know if you have any final thoughts you'd want to—

LC: Nah, man. Just nothing really. But just thank you guys, and keep supporting us, man. That's my thoughts, man.

M: Well, thank you. [Laughter]

LC: Hey, that's it. You know, you guys probably need to take our interviews, and—you know, I know you can do your editing. Y'all might need to get them on the news for a segment! [Laughter]

[End of recording]

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