



Interview No. SAS4.06.02
James Jones

Interviewer: Julia Koo
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Q: What year you were born.

Jones: I was born in 1935, Baltimore, Maryland, not far from here on Tessier Street. We used to corrupt it and call it Tissha Street, where Martin Luther King Blvd. is now. It was between Orchard Street and Biddle Street. And St. Mary's Seminary was on the other side of St. Mary Street. Now Biddle Street is called Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Q: When did you first become interested in music?

Jones: My whole family sings, just about. My grandmother used to sing in choirs and sing spirituals. Most of them weren't formally trained. But there was always — one summer night I was bored and there was a group of people singing old hymns, and I was sitting on the curb. And the basses were there, the tenors were there, and they were sitting out in the yard drinking beer and singing spirituals. And I was just sitting there. It was gorgeous. And I had an uncle who was in show business for 30 years tap-dancing, guitar.

Q: What was his name?

Jones: His name was William Joseph Jones, better known as Jo-Jo. He taught me the rudiments of the music. He was a professional guitarist. And in fact he taught me the relationships of chords. And later on, when I was singing in a quartet, I was in Junior High School and he used to arrange our music. And he was going to veteran's school at the time. So he experimented on us. So what he did was he taught us all the chordal relationships. At that time I wasn't reading too well, I was doing most of it by rote and my musical ear, but then I started reading and analyzing chordal relationships.

Q: And this was all around what age?

Jones: Well, I was still in junior high school, and that's when I met my master teacher, Mr. Robert Earl Anderson. He taught at City [Baltimore City College], and he taught first at old <pic Douglass High> Douglass High School<>. He taught me the rudiments of voice production,

reading techniques, taught me to hit the high C when I was in junior high school. I remember him playing the piano, and he started me on an exercise. I tried to hit it one time, and I couldn't control it. He put me back against the wall, and when I hit the high C, he said root it — he meant from the diaphragm. And it's all in your legs in your back muscles, I came off that wall at an oblique angle, he was playing piano and at the same time he pushed me back. But then, he taught me to control it. And he said, you'll take it to your grave.

Q: Do you know what Robert Earl Anderson's musical training was?

Jones: He went to Howard University and Boston University. He was a master pianist, and he taught at a high school, and he formed a choir up there.

Q: So he was a choir director?

Jones: He was a master teacher. He was one of the first Black teachers at City College. At one time Black musicians couldn't even go to that school — Black singers weren't invited there. Which when I was going to Morgan [State University] I was satisfied with what I was doing because I wanted to sight-read and I didn't know how. What I was doing with Mr. Anderson was he taught me the cycle of fifths, fourths, minor keys, he showed me the relationships on the piano about intervals, ear training. At that time I was married. I didn't have much money, so I asked him, how much is this going to cost me? He said, you got a family; he said you got 50 cents. He taught me the seeds of relationships of theory, he taught me the seeds of intervals. Anyway, he went to Howard, Boston University, but he dropped out before he got his masters. But he taught at City, and Douglass High School, that's where I met him. He was a music teacher. Georgeanna Chester was the head of the music department; she was a master musician also. there. She had absolute pitch. I used to accompany Mr. Anderson to recitals, and I would see him writing things down. I used to go to him for opera analyzations for the Met. He would invite me up to his apartment and we'd sit there and I heard this man singing one of the greatest operas. This man hit the high C, and he told me it wasn't a high C. He said sometimes the great stars, the men from Europe, come with two scores. If they were feeling well, they would hit the high C. But if they were under the weather, they'd use the second score, a transposed one. And I said what? A student couldn't do that at school, if they couldn't do it, they couldn't do it. But that's what he taught me, that's what professionals do.

There was a man named William Meredith Birch, I met him in elementary school on Preston Street, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, School 122. He found out that I could sing. I sang with a group he formed called the Baltimore Boy's Choir. I was nine. I was a boy soprano. Are you familiar with the Royal Theater?

Q: No.

Jones: That was in the Black section. See, we couldn't go into the so-called Caucasian sections. Everybody had their own little — and I'll say 'ghettos.' The rich folks stayed over here, Italians stayed over here, and Black folk in their own area. That's before they integrated the schools though. I was baptized Catholic — Roman Catholic. Well, Mr. Birch found out that I could sing so I sang in his choir [The Baltimore Boy's Choir] in the late 1940s. We sang at all Black

churches; we had sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses. He used to bring the Greats that would appear at the Royal Theater, which my grandmother used to take me to see. I saw Fats Waller, Nat King Cole, Ray Charles, the white men Woody Herman, Charlie Barnett. So I was bathed in jazz and spirituals. Well, let's get back to Mr. Birch. Mr. Birch — one day he called me out of my class. He said, go down to the Music Department. So, I walked down with short pants on, and Mr. Birch was talking to this man. This man had suede shoes on, the first time I've ever seen them. I looked at his face and he had bags under his eyes. Mr. Birch said I want you to sing. So I sang for them. Later on, I found out it was Duke Ellington. Another person I met was Sally Blair. She died a couple years ago; she sang for them too, she went into the jazz field. She became a confidante of Adam Clayton Powell. She was just a wonderful person.

Mr. Birch brought Ella Fitzgerald down too. I found out she couldn't sing without a microphone [laughs]. So, she starts singing for us in the gym, and we couldn't hear her, so they had to bring her a mic. She was a fabulous jazz singer. You've heard of her, right?

Q: Of course

Jones: Now, also, my uncle, Joe Jones, was forming a group and would bring people over to my grandmother's house, 1324 Lanvale Street. His combo group. That was the time the big bands were playing. He had different musicians with him. Because when he was in the army, he had formed a little band. Can I tell you a little story about him? He was drafted in — they used World War I helmets — he was in the first draft. It was in Macon, Georgia. It was very prejudiced. He used to take his musical groups up in Delaware, and you couldn't stay in the hotels, they were so prejudiced. Anyway, his army segregated unit was getting ready to go overseas, and he wasn't very patriotic just like I'm not very patriotic [laughs]. He said they wanted musicians in the band. He practiced all night and he learned how to play the melophone and he qualified. He said he had tears in his eyes when his unit came off the troop ship. The army had white officers in charge of the Negro units at the time. He was AWOL all the time, but yet he was buried out in the National Cemetery where the soldiers are buried (both Black and white) — where A. Jack Thomas (my master thesis subject) is buried. It was a bad experience. I learned when I was young that certain people didn't have to accept you. My mentor at Morgan State, Dr. Strider, the Music Department Chairman, told me they needed a singer at one of the churches on Charles Street. I walked in and I sang a song, and in general the music director said: sing the tenor section. And I sang it, and then he said sing the soprano section, sing the alto section, sing the baritone section. By that time I had broken down because I wasn't familiar with the lower voice range clefs. So when I went back Dr. Strider said how'd you make out? I told him what happened. He said don't worry about that. But to me, psychologically, I didn't look at music for two weeks because I felt that I was inadequate. That's a subtle way of saying we don't want you.

I used to go to auditions, which I hate. I worked with master teachers at Morgan. I worked with George Shirley, the first Black tenor at the Metropolitan Opera Company. I worked with Howard Roberts, who has written many spirituals (he was a teacher at Morgan for a while), Joseph Eubanks, a bass baritone, and I also used to work with [Igor] Chicagov, who used to be the accompanist for the Baltimore Opera Company <www.baltimoreopera.com>, who showed me things that you wouldn't normally get — like literature for tenors with different cadenzas.

I worked for the post office for 38 years, and I retired in 1992. I took some money with me, put some money for my grandkids' education in stock, paid off my house. If you're financially able to do all these things, you are able to eat regularly. Like my grandmother told me, make sure you take care of your family, make sure you take care of your bills, make sure you have a roof over your head. You're born and you're dead, what you do in the between time, whether it's positive or negative, is called life. And that woman didn't have a formal education. But she did expose me to a musically cultured family. I met good teachers that went out of their way like Madame [Alice Gerstl] Duschak, Mr. Anderson, Joseph Eubanks, George Shirley. I got something from every teacher. I didn't do it by myself. I didn't go off the path, I rooted myself in it. When it comes to pop singing I got a chance to sing down on the Block, which was owned by the gangsters. When one of the musicians, his name was Al "Madman" Bates, a saxophonist, said we need a singer, I'd run down there and I'd sing all those popular songs. I was with a quartet when I was in junior high school.

Q: Where was this place called?

Jones: It was called the 2 O' Clock Club. No, it was the Tropicana.

Q: And this was owned by gangsters?

Jones: Oh yeah, the gangsters used to own all that stuff. Real gangsters. But when the politicians came in, it started getting very moral. They started closing the places down, that's why Baltimore Street doesn't have any. There's a place called Chick's. It was the first integrated club. There were some fabulous musicians. See, I had a chance to go to the segregated clubs to see some of the jazz Greats you read in the history books. That was when they couldn't get the big jobs anymore, and they would come down on a contract to play there. Gene Ammons was a fabulous sax man. Max Roach. Ethel Ennis, used to sing with my uncle's group before she made it to the big time. I saw Nat King Cole at the Royal Theater. One of the greatest dancers in the world, his name was Baby Lawrence, would come over to my grandmother's house on Lanvale Street with my uncle. He was sitting in there, but he was a dope addict. He was a dancer who would dance with the best orchestras like Count Basie Orchestra. He would improvise with the drummer, the drummer would do something, and then he would do something. They would improvise together. He was fabulous. There was one man in my childhood my mother told me. His name was Smokey — Alex Payne. In the 1920's he was such a child star that they sent him up on Broadway. His mother and father squandered his money. He's dead now. One night, when I was in junior high school, my quartet sang for the Morgan College alumni over at one of the Black clubs. My uncle was playing the guitar, and Smokey got up and did what was called "soft shoes" dancing. But these were mostly Black folks that didn't appreciate it. The things that man did with soft shoe, you would think he was Fred Astaire. He was fabulous. My uncle was a dancer too.

I remember one time with the quartet we sang in a place on Fremont Avenue, it was called the Wagon Wheel. Anyway it was a club. And we were old enough to sing in it, but we weren't supposed to drink in it. So we got up on the stage and sang our songs in close harmony, and everybody was digging it, you know, as they said in those days. And there was a door cracked open, and there was an alleyway in the back of the club, and I peeked and looked. And I saw

these men coming with satchels of money on a card table. Just piles of money. You know what it was?

Q: No.

Jones: It was the illegal — then — lottery. The numbers they used to call it. People would pick a number, and then if you got it, the man was supposed to come around and pay you off. Well, now, it was illegal then. They would put the people in jail for doing it, because the government couldn't get tax off it. Now it's legal, and I don't play it. Because those people were making a living at this.

Q: Right.

Jones: Sometimes people would go awry. Man wouldn't show up to pay you the money and skip town. And his name was mud after that. Because when he stepped back in town, somebody would usually do physical harm to him.

Getting back to what Black singers had to go through: Like now, they have the Billie Holiday contests. They used to have the Black and beautiful contests. One time I called up on a fund raising radio show, it was last year, and I talked to the female conductor of the Baltimore Symphony. And I asked her, I gave her a question: I said, why can't they integrate the Black musicians, the Duke Ellingtons, for the present conductor? She said, oh well, it would take too much to copy the music. Which to me is balderdash. Because when we went up to Paul Whiteman years ago, we would go up and sing, just with the harmonies we had. The pianist would be playing, and if we made a transition to keys. It was my uncle's musical arrangements, when he went to the veteran's school, he was doing all this with us, with the quartet. Okay, that night, there was a full orchestration for the orchestra. So what she told me was really not...

Q: Right.

Jones: Now they just realized they got Asian composers. Okay. You know, I mean does an Italian feel anymore for a love song that an Asian person who has a loved one? So it's still a little mixed foolishness going on. Take you for your talent. I don't want you just because you're an Asian. If you have the talent to do it, I shouldn't have to make you up. But they can't understand that a Caucasian can't fall in love with an Asian person, or a Black person can't fall in love with a Caucasian person or Asian person. They're still back into the '40s and '20s. Ethnic people will not integrate people into their background. I know this.

The children left in Korea weren't accepted by most of the Korean folks there. Or in Vietnam rarely, they didn't accept the mixed. They call it the devil. So it's a human problem of this society.

When we used to sing, we had a Mayor [Theodore McKeldin] that used to come to the Back churches for speeches. And I used to sing in the choir.

Q: What was his name?

Jones: Oh, it will come to me. Wonderful man. I used to talk to him when going to work at the post office down at Central, and meet him in a bookstore down on Baltimore Street. And we would converse for almost twenty minutes. He didn't mind touching your hands. He wasn't even in the office or wasn't even running for office. He would talk to you.

And we sang in a church with the choir, with the Baltimore Boys' Choir, he wouldn't leave until we were through singing all the songs. That's what I see, a human politician, not only when it's election. When it's no election. I don't see that now. I see a lot of foolishness and a lot of facades, as well as the Baltimore School System being — I came through the Baltimore School System, and they had good teachers. There's something wrong with it. Why are they trying to advance these children out? They know they got a problem maybe with home life. Some of the parents are on dope, and the kids have a physical problem. Why are they trying to ruin the public school system? And now even the private school system wants money, my tax money.

And my advisor's name was Dominique-Rene de Lerne. Told me what are you going to write about? And I said I'll write about the bandmaster, A. Jack Thomas, which you were reading there. They had, after the war, Second World War, a veteran's school for basically Blacks. There was a man named Dr. Herman Schwartz [founder and director of the Herman Schwartz Choral Society of Baltimore, Dean of the Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts in the early 1950s], came from Germany, and I thought he was wonderful — taught at Peabody, but I'm not sure. Was one of the main people, one of the main teachers. All white hair. Fabulous musician.

Theodore McKeldin was his name, was the governor, was the—

Q: Mayor.

Jones: Mayor. He became a governor one time, then he was a mayor, and he was a Republican. But the man was not prejudiced. He was not a cellophane politician. Polyester I'll say, that's the word I want to use. You see them on television, even that pseudo president. I'm sorry, I mean, the man got into an office. I don't want to politicize this thing. It's pseudo. Pseudo means, want to be like, supposed to be like. It's the biggest joke in the world.

It's like when they wouldn't accept you into Peabody or University of Maryland. You had to go to, one of my advisers in high school, I used to go down to the post office to go to work, she was standing outside the bus station. I said: What are you doing down here? And she said: I'm going up to New York University working on my masters. She couldn't work on it at the University of Maryland.

Now this is a lucky country. Not because it's supposed to be democratic; and I say supposed. Because nobody has really started really fighting back to the point where they could devastate the whole system. Like is happening in Palestine, which is horrible. Take my tax money and give it to people with all the information to kill somebody, and then justify it. And then wait until they almost devastate the people, and then say: don't you fight back.

My grandmother used to tell me be careful when you walk out on the street. We had all white policemen. We had some good white policemen, but we had some nasty ones. One year, when I was young — you familiar with the *Afro* [*Afro-American*], the Black newspaper?

Q: Yeah.

Jones: It used to be called the Legend as well, got a lot of Black information. They were shooting a Black kid in the back every other week running down the street for target practice. And I've seen policemen, when I was younger, you weren't supposed to shoot dice. It was in a school yard, School 122 where I went. Some guys over there [were] shooting dice on a Sunday and I'll never forget it. And I was always aware of what it's supposed to be, as a child I was always curious. And I looked up there — and this happened to be a white policeman (that was all they had on the force) — walked up there, saw them shooting dice, which was illegal, [he] took his gun out and shot in the air. They all ran, left their dice and their money and everything. He went over there laughing. Picked the money up, put it in his pocket, threw the dice away, and laughed and walked away.

Reality. If you're gonna write an opera, write as close to reality as you can. And when the curtain comes up, and try to romanticize and say, oh, I want you to do this. That's what makes a good director, a good writer. If you're gonna write the information, put it down. If society doesn't accept it, put it down anyway. 'Cause what's less comfortable is just as important as what you put in there.

So this is what — the thing that we see — the experiences that I've had. As well as the young Black minister who didn't want me to sing a spiritual for a funeral in his church. For years, when I started singing classical musical, I shied away from the spirituals for some reason. I thought it wasn't on the level of classical music. Then, when I went back and start analyzing, don't you know that the spirituals had every rhythmic pattern that you would use in the classics. It's the same notation written for a different subject matter. But technically, you can learn everything about rhythm you want just singing one of the spirituals that has syncopation and sixteenth notes.

People have a habit of putting in those sixteenth notes and running faster. It's not that. I learned that when, in Africa, there's one drummer that plays one pulse. He doesn't play anything else. He keeps the pulse going. You can improvise around it as fast as you want, but you got to come back to that one pulse.

My wife and I went to Canada to a festival, a Caribbean festival in the 1970s. They had the longest, at that time, the longest conga line in the Guinness records. We jumped it, it was fun. But then at the end of it, what they did was they had an African group come in right from Africa, with that bass main drum. This is what they did in Africa in ancient times. He just kept the beat — boom, boom, boom. He didn't deviate. He kept the what? The pulse.

People around here did it [sings elaborating rhythms]. "Boom." He never deviated. "Boom, Boom, Boom. That shows you something. No matter what you learn at Peabody, when you start learning what the ancients did, it's right there before you. Okay? It's right there before you. It's all been done before.

So what I say is, I learn from everyone, even if it's negative. Don't let anybody frustrate you. I'm already sixty-seven. Still got a little voice left, because I don't smoke. I can't stand it.

Tell you another story: I was in the car with my uncle, and at the time they used to call it reefers. They didn't call it marijuana then. I never did like the smell because I never fooled with it. I tried to smoke when I was eleven. I was repulsed against it. Never went back. I can't stand a cigarette within a hundred yards.

Anyway, got in his car. He was going to a gig, they used to call it. He had a couple whites in his group. There's about five of them. Crack musicians, I mean crack musicians. They rolled the windows up, and I was a teenager. They started to pull out these cigarettes. I didn't know what they were. Started smoking. I had tears from my eyes. I was sick when I got to the club. And when they got on stage, some of them were a little glassy eyed but they were playing.

See, that stuff doesn't help you to play well. That's just to kill that frustration thing I think. But it doesn't make you play any better. So I tell any young musician, stay away from it anyway. You can drink now and then, when your system takes it. Don't eat peanuts. I had to tell people that want to learn to sing, because for some reason it gravitates toward the [vocal] cords. Oh, misnomer — not cords, they are folds.

I had a good education at Morgan [State University], because learning about the physiology of the voice, talking, singing, it was like going to medical school. I use my books now. You know, the human body is a marvelous system. And for somebody to place that voice and use that air and sustain and sing. That's why I say the Baroque years were more of a challenge than what you're singing now.

Nowadays, you got an opera singer, who's got a voice, stand up and look good, so they sing, and just sing. Oh that's wonderful. Yeah, you can make it. They're still picking people. Like Miss Church. Beautiful singer. I know singers here in Baltimore who would sing rings around her. But they're not accepted.

Q: Miss Church?

Jones: Oh you know the young lady that came from England to sing. I forget what her first name. You know, she's a teenager now.

Q: Oh, she's a little girl — Charlotte Church.

Jones: Yeah. Well, she's not little anymore. And when she sang, she had a gorgeous voice. But I have heard people right on this block. It's according to your agent who pushes you. [Andrea] Boccelli's going to sing here. Gorgeous instrument. He's blind, but it doesn't matter. When he opens his mouth, he's like...

Now I got interested in opera — I didn't tell you the story about Josph Schmit. He's about five foot, five. He's from the Jewish religion. But he wasn't accepted because he was too small in

stature. But he would come out and sing. But the people that didn't like the way he looked, they closed their eyes. They would cry.

I got all recordings of the old timers, the light tenors, the dramatic tenors, and I heard him sing. And I read about what happened to him. He went all over Europe when the Nazis came in. They chased him all over Europe. When they finally got a hold of him, he came out. They asked him, he said I'm a singer, and they laughed. Some soldier said, well, sing for me. He walked out. When he walked around the piano, when he was behind the piano, you couldn't see him. He opened his mouth, and they just stared. You know how he died? The story was he was in a concentration camp, ill health, and he died.

I got recordings that when I hear I just cry. Fritz Wunderlich is the man I couldn't remember with Madam Duschak we were talking about. Wunderlich, used to get recordings of his. He was supposed to sing at the Met. He was in his thirties. The story was an opera company was coming through, and he was a baker, he was baking, in this shop. And they heard this gorgeous voice. They went over. What's that? They sponsored him to go to one of the universities, conservatories. He sings so beautifully, I cry when I hear him sing.

And when I hear certain singers. Gigli, Schipa, Mr. Anderson, my first teacher, God rest his soul, he would beg me and come up, let's go, let's do the opera tonight. And he would tell me certain things. Listen to this, listen to that, listen to the other. And he made me aware vocally.

When I hear these men singing, the Giglis, the Tagliavinis, Fritz Wunderlich. When I was with the Metropolitan National Opera Touring Company up in New York in 1966-67, they gave us tickets to the dress circle. We could take our scores up there. I heard a performance of *Aida* with Leontyne Price, Robert Merrill, Carlo Bergonzi, Grace Bumbry, and Thomas Schippers was the conductor. Getting to the tenors, which I'm interested in, [Bergonzi] sang that aria's high note pianissimo, the big aria ["Celeste Aida"]. He had a standing ovation. There was confusion for twenty minutes. I said a long time. And people said, but why did he hit that like that. Because no other tenor had the control to do it. He hit it pianissimo, and Thomas Schippers held the orchestra right under the pianissimo. And the curtain, and the curtain was slowly coming down. When it stopped, there was silence for about a half a minute. Then all hell broke loose. They couldn't understand why. Most tenors will hit it with vibrato, because they can't control the pianissimo. But it's in the score, pianissimo.

I heard Richard Tucker sing. He sounded better in person than on recording. Richard Tucker didn't have a pianissimo. It was almost like matter of fact. I heard one night. I said, oh. It wasn't like a Tagliavini, where he had a small voice that just went up like a little boy soprano.

They don't train people to sing anymore. They train them to make the impression. You got a beautiful voice and do it well. They make recordings and make lots of money. Fine. That's the capitalistic system. But don't tell me, you look at a score and say, why did he do that? Maybe he couldn't do that. He worked with what he could get by with. Understand what I'm saying?

When you look at the Baroque era, these people, that was the golden era of singing. The men, because they didn't allow the women on the stage, because [they had] castrati. I had a recording

of the last known castrato. I went to get the record down around Charles Street, and somebody was bringing the CD back. She said, oh, it bothers my ear.

See they were talking about a different technique. Instead of approaching a tone from the top, they approached it from the bottom. And you could hear this [Mr. Jones sings], from the top. Hit it, support it, sing it, turn it around, sing it, control it, do anything you want with it. Go up, pianissimo, now come back. And when I heard the old timers do all this stuff.

Miguel Fleta, you say, my God, that's singing. That is singing. Not now, just singing one song, hit a high C and walk off the stage because you got to clap. Clapping for that. Love that because that's my song. Where are the vocal teachers? Most of the vocal teachers are dead now. They don't really train you.

One of my favorite singers, Tito Schipa. When I heard him, I just, I wept again, I wept again. Oh I was just flustered. In fact, Schipa was at a party, and his teacher was there. And somebody said sing for us, Tito. So he went on and sang. His teacher got up and berated him, and I think it said actually slapped him. Said you're not ready yet.

Now, there's a theory of mine as being a teacher. I don't want to be a Svengali. You can be an exploitive Svengali, and just keep a student coming back. Or you can be really into helping the person. And showing them when it's not appropriate to do a certain thing, so they won't ruin the instrument. This man actually slapped him on the stage. Said you're not ready yet. Schipa sang up into his seventies. As well as Roland Hayes. I saw in person and conversed with Roland Hayes. He stumbled out on the stage at Morgan College. And when he started singing, you could hear a pin drop.

His Lieder was out of this world. You know the story of Roland Hayes. After the First World War he went to Germany. Some of them didn't want him. When he walked out on the stage, there was pandemonium for about, they said a great length of time. He just stood there, this little Black man, stood there. He was about five-six, five-seven. Just stood there. Solemn. Closed his eyes. And when all the pandemonium was over, he started singing. [Mr. Jones sings *Du bist die Ruh*'] Real quiet. [Mr. Jones sings] When he got through, they picked him up on their shoulders, ran him around the theater, ran him outside the theater.

The power of music is so strong. Catch those vibrations. Keep it under control, and sing from the heart. I teach my vocal clients it's therapeutic for you and for the audience. Just don't sing because you're the top tenor. Oh, I can do this, and people glorify you. That's the wrong approach. The approach is that a creator that I know nothing about. I can appreciate what the creator puts there. I'm not going to put a face on it. I'm not going to put a religion on it. That gives you these vibrations that can be put in some kind of form, and we can learn to reproduce the vibrations because of the ear and the hammers on the inside of the ear transforms these vibrations. And you have what you call a musical ear to discern whether it's high, low, whatever. And they take out of the text —whether it's love, religious, spiritual — something from your experiences. Not from the composer's, because you don't know the composer. If you read about it.

A mother's face, a father's death, a lover, whatever. And if you can bring it to a spiritual level, you can make for that one moment all that tension to create it. And people exploit it. When I look at television at night, on the Leno show. There's people singing or trying to sing, what I call, because they're being exploited by some company to make the money to sell the record. It should be almost like in the spiritual world. It's like religious.

If I go to Peabody and hear a singer, with no expression on their face, not even trying to reach me, they know it technically, but there's nothing behind it. We used to call it soul. It could stop you in your tracks. If you play with a look on your face like, "I want to get out of this place," you're doing me a disservice if I'm paying the money to go and see it. You don't know how you're going to change a person by just digging in. That's your job. You're a therapist. You're a music therapist.

One of the greatest things I ever did was play. My granddaughter was in the hospital with Crohn's disease. You familiar with that? Inflammation of the lower bowel. She suffered. She's still alive. There's a new drug out that helped her out. She's in college now.

There's a little girl in there, Caucasian young lady, eighteen years old. She was almost like a baby. Her father was there. He was changing her and all. Okay? So one day I came in and they were in there. And I said, you mind if I go over to her. He said I don't mind. And she was, you know, she wasn't aware where she was, she would just roll her eyes. So I whispered in her ear and sang, [Mr. Jones sings *This Little Light of Mine*]. And her little eyes, little smile. And her father says, she was smiling. And I felt like breaking down and crying. I didn't do that because I felt sorry for myself or for her. I did it because it's a human being in such a state that maybe I could give some encouragement for her existence. You know?

And another time with the Baltimore Municipal Opera Company, (we do work at different schools) we sang at a school for the severely handicapped. Some of them had helmets on so they wouldn't hurt themselves. And some of them blurted out, you know, I think they call it Tourette's. And while we were singing different things from *The Old Maid and the Thief*, "Old woman, old woman" and some of the other things, the spirituals, whatever. Some of their hands were waving in time, perfect rhythm, perfect direction. And I turned around and I looked at one young lady who was sitting with her feet crossed, looked like my granddaughter, one of my granddaughters. And I turned around to Dorothy (Dorothy Lofton Jones is the head of the group), and I was like this. And I was making like I had a cold, tears just coming down my face.

So I was talking to the principal (he's a Caucasian gentleman), I said you're doing wonderful work. I said, how can you do it? He said, in essence, somebody has to do it. And some of the people were on gurneys. They didn't know what day it was. And it dawned on me, it's madness out here. People got perfect health doing nothing with their time. Look out for their own interest, their own. Politicians don't care. Get the money.

This country is not a democratic country. Democratic things you have to work on all the time. It's a capitalistic republic. Why should they deny you to go to a school that your parents have to pay for. And one staff in the whole school, the orchestration classes, just the little children flunk because of some prejudice. But if you look at Beethoven's scores and other scores, my God

they're like chicken scratches. You would not believe it. That's why, if you're a musician, do research so you can converse with your professors. When they give you something about Bach, read as many books as you can, if you're a fast reader, if you can retain it. Read everything from the pimples on his gluteus maximus to if he had a coughing problem. If he had a problem with his wife. Get all the information you can. With the computers now, you can get anything. But then go beyond that. Make sure about the political atmosphere that these people lived in, whether singer, dancer, whatever, what was going on.

Like I told you about the score about the Moor [Verdi's *Otello*], you're as evil as the black as your face. Now that could be the European people that enjoy European atmosphere at the time. There were Moors and people all through that area. So why didn't Mozart know about this? And is black always evil? Is the Asian always considered scrupulous because they have to live in a hard society or not in a hard society? Can you think about the human being trying to survive when you write or compose something? Are all Jews like this? No. Are all Blacks with the swagger and with the hands? No. That's a taught thing.

Why couldn't I sing at a Methodist Church when I was coming up from the Catholic Church? Why couldn't they sing Christmas hymns at the synagogue or at the Jewish schools? There was a young lady at Morgan who was working at the Jewish school, a private school, and the professor said, was talking about, I think it was ethics or something like that. He said tell them why you cannot sing a Christmas carol at the school that you teach? She said because they won't allow it.

And yet you have to be inclusive because there are all types of people in the world. I can't be just the chosen one. Could all Blacks be the only ones singing the blues? You go up to the hills of Tennessee and you hear a lot of blues. Blues mean that you making a lament. Well, my wife left me for the postman. And I'm singing, oh, she left me.

And then a teacher at Morgan told me, Dr. [Calvin] Lampley, wonderful man, beautiful man. He say, tell Mr. Jones what the blues is. He put it in an analyzation of a chord structure. Not the lament. So then I was totally confused. Because when you play it, you get the same effect as you're singing it, although you don't have the dialogue.

So musicology, all of these type of things, have to center on what is real and not to romanticize in such a way that students or people that's trying to train can get something coupled with their personal experiences. Especially a singer. Especially a singer! And now I'm teaching myself classical guitar because I know the theory. Teaching myself harmonica. I think it's the six-eighty, that's the big one. And I'm learning to play, I did not want to play it by numbers. I wanted to learn the scale so I know where the changes are. And you look at any music, whether it's classical or not, and play it. But if a client comes to me, I don't tell him to go out and buy the most expensive thing. I said get yourself a round pitch pipe. I gave him the circle of fifths, major, and then I show him what the minor is. Count back a third. That's what my master teacher, Mr. Anderson, taught me. And this has carried me all through life.

Rhythm. I had rhythm class with Angelo Gatto_out at Morgan. [Mr. Jones hums a rhythm]. Yeah, for a person in the percussion class, if he has a little piece of music and play it all the time. Oh, I feel something, I hear something. [Mr. Jones hums, etc.]. Then if you can put it down, if you go

to his class, he'd say okay, here's your assignment. Like you're doing your research. Even if it's not what they're teaching in the class.

Now Mr. Anderson taught me. If I would sing something and see a sixteen note, I rushed to where it is. I thought it was faster. Making the effort again. Same pulse, you got to sing the sixteenth note. Now when I went to the class out at Morgan for rhythms. I said, he gave me something to cup onto this. Now Angelo Gatto's giving me something. And I wrote a Bolero for my assignment. And after class I could play it. [Mr. Jones hums.]

And I tell the young singers when I work with them, once you get the rhythms in your music, then opera becomes fun. You can shape the character. If you don't know what you're going to do with the next measure, it should be like a teleprompter, and then you don't have to listen to the record all the time. You sit the rhythm inside your body. Come to a difficult part, gee, look at it. And keep that flow, keep your body flow, your rhythm flow going. Don't just stand there and say what do I do next? If you don't know by that time, you shouldn't stand on the stage.

This is what I learned from Saul Lilienstein and that experience with the Harford [Opera Company]. I'm doing the same thing when I perform with the Baltimore Municipal Opera Company. Many opportunities. I work with the Spotlighters. We just did "Kill a Mockingbird." I did the Reverend because somebody pulled out. I didn't get paid for all that stuff.

But see when I was working for the post office, I was sure that at the first of the month I'd go and get my money to sustain myself and my family. But though I'm not rich, but I'm rich in music, music genre. I love it. Some of the things I reject because I don't call it my style.

And as I say, when I got back to analyzing spirituals, I said, why did I abandon this years ago? Because I was in a groove with the classical. But you can learn from everything coupled with your studies at Peabody.

Now, are you familiar with Ted's [music store]?

Q: Ted's? Yes.

Jones: I knew the original guy before he died. Cause now you can't find anything in there. We were doing Liebeslieder Waltzes out at Morgan. I was doing the tenor portion. As well as my mentor at the time, Joseph Eubanks. So they all had to go out and get these texts. Which cost at the time — I think it was about ten dollars. So I said, well, I'll go down to Ted's. It was dusty and dirty in there, and the old gent said, oh you can go back there and look.

Guess what I got for four dollars? When I went back to sing my part, where did you get that book? I said, down Ted's. They paid twenty, fifteen dollars for their scores. I paid four dollars. I still got it. And I love the Liebeslieder Waltzes. Whenever I'm asked to do something, and now my pleasure is analyzing on my level, sight reading, the things that I can't. And it opens some doors. Classical music for guitar by Fernando Sor, Carissimi. But the melodies. I mean stuff from the nineteenth century, and these men didn't have all the televisions and all this stuff.

I'm talking you out of tape.

Was there anything specific you really wanted, or just wanted me to ramble on?

Q: Just your life in Baltimore and the musicians around here. Have you ever met Ellis Larkins?

Jones: Ellis Larkins was before my time, but my teacher knew him very well.

Q: Which teacher?

Jones: Robert Earl Anderson. And I think, I'm not sure, is he going, have you talked to him?

Q: Ellis Larkins? No. I was supposed to have a meeting with his sister, but that didn't work out.

Jones: I think Robert Earl Anderson — I want to be sure of this. I think Robert Earl Anderson taught Ellis Larkins. See, cause Mr. Anderson was basically a pianist. But he took on the choir at Douglass. Mr. Anderson got his education, like I said, from Howard University and then he went to Boston to work on his master's. And some kind of ways got a little miffed with the teacher. And he didn't complete his masters.

Q: Or Eubie Blake.

Jones: Oh, the lady just died that, when Eubie Blake used to come here, he used to go to the lady's house and stay.

Q: Where?

Jones: She lived on Saratoga Street. No. She's dead now. You wouldn't know her. Her name was Fisher. Her nephew was Dr. Fisher out at Morgan. He's dead now. And he used to play for me. When Eubie Blake used to come in town, he used to stay with her. Her name was Anita, Anita Fisher. She's passed.

And she used to tell me stories about Eubie Blake. Well, I was writing a book on a Black boxer named Joseph Gans. He was a light heavyweight in 1902, and Joe Gans had a bar, restaurant, right over where the new post office is. They got homes over there now. And I'm writing a book on his life, Joe Gans, the boxer.

Eubie Blake used to play at his club, restaurant. It was a hotel.

Q: Do you remember what it was called?

Jones: I think it was the Goldfields Bar. I'm not sure. He won, when he won the lightweight championship, he won a lot of money, and he came back and established that bar, the boxer. And Eubie Blake used to play piano in there. Because it was supposed to have been a fast place, you know. He didn't tell his parents.

And the Goldfields Bar, that was the name of it, and when they tore that place down to put this new building. I went outside there. You know when you go over to Orleans Street, going back east. If you go down Mulberry Street, when you go past Charles Street, and you go down the hill, and go over that, used to call it the Orleans Street viaduct, over that bridge, and you see all the city. Keep on over past Gay Street, and you look over to your right and see a little street, and you see all these houses. They're all new. His Goldfield Bar used to be there, with the new post office here. Used to be right across the street.

And the doors never closed. The only time they closed was, I got the article, when the man used to take care of the place closed it to go to Joe Gans's funeral. He died in 1910, the boxer. And the reason why I'd go to them because when I was young, I went to a couple of the boxing gyms named after him. What was his name? And then I found out my grandmother, and I talked to her and I say, Joe Gans has a daughter and a son. She says I know, I used to play with his daughter. Over on Myrtle Street, Myrtle Avenue in the Black section. And I said, you did? I said did you ever see Joe Gans? She said, yes, I saw him a couple times. He was a heck of a boxer.

And they used to give dances called cakewalks. That dance where you throw your feet up — high step. They used to give dances. Joe Gans was like the Joe Louis of his era. Now he was born in 1874 and died in 1910, the boxer. Eubie Black was a teenager and he played piano in his bar. Eubie Blake's mother didn't know it though. So they considered that place a rowdy place, you know. And they used to give dances for Joe Gans when he would come back from boxing.

And the place was jumping all the time. And various celebrities used to stop there. Jack Johnson, the great fighter. And, in fact, when they tore that place down, I was working at the post office. It didn't dawn on me what I should have done. They had a nameplate in front when the bar was put up, with the name of the bar and all. This is what the Black community does, they don't understand.

They don't have the political power. I don't know what the Black historians today write about other things. Just because it was my interest. If somebody knew that that plate was there, don't you think they would halt that construction? And to this day, every time I go by there, why didn't I just take the time off, find out who was the head of construction, and say if you find it please reserve it for me. As well as I go out to the gravesite where he's buried, and it's in disrepair.

And when I went with my grandson, weeds all over the place. Now this man had people coming from Europe and different places just to visit the gravesite out there in Cherry Hill. And one tombstone was down, one tombstone was up. And I found out it was his uncle buried there, and his son was there. And I called the people who were responsible. They pushed it up. But people used to come from everywhere to see his gravesite. In fact, when Mike Tyson came, he went out there. But his name is not too good now, but it doesn't matter.

It just shows you how we as Black historians now and researchers don't hold onto the one aspect, unless there's really some money in it for somebody. But I wasn't in it for the money. I wanted to know that there are more people here than the Cal Ripkins. No harm. Cal Ripkin's a nice man. As far as getting the history is concerned.

You know, I don't know what people are doing. And I really don't care. But I know if I want to write about you, I'm going to find out everything I can about you. If it's something personal you don't want, I won't put it in. But you have to have the curiosity. Yo Yo Ma, wonderful musician. I want to know, what troubles did he have to go through. Was he accepted right away? See, this stuff that's going on now is subtle.

Like one time I went down to Peabody and I was disgruntled. I wasn't getting what I wanted at Morgan. There was a big German lady, she was sitting there. She said, do you read? I said, well, she gave me the test. It was the preparatory department. She started playing, and I sang something. She said oh very good. She said, now duplicate everything I do — ear training. And I duplicated everything. She said, now sight-read this, and I didn't know a thing about sight-reading. I did everything by ear. I went, uh, uh, uh, uh. And I could see her point.

Oh you, don't get me wrong, musically, you're illiterate. But Mr. Anderson didn't say that. Although he was not a Caucasian. He said I'm going to work with you, because he knew my background from the school. And we started from the mother of all scales, the major, C major. He taught me about intervals. And when I started to know what a major third was. Didn't have television then, I'd sit by the radio, and there was only one station in classical music, and I'd turn it on. The slow pieces. I heard [sings], that's a major third. You see. I had relative pitch, not absolute pitch [sings]. I'd pick out all the major thirds.

Then I found out do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. And I started doing it forward and backwards. And I used to play games with myself. See, I hear music all the time. In the background when I'm talking to you, I'm hearing stuff. And I wanted to know how to put it down. Why I can't sing that? He said, it's a skill level, so you have to work with it all the time. And this is the way I got my music education.

At the time when I was coming up, every Black church on a Sunday, you could go from church to church and hear concerts. If it was spiritual, gospel or whatever. You didn't have to sit in front of the television. I'd go one church and you know, and go to another church, and they were in my whole neighborhood on the corner. Five Blind Boys who Ray Charles used to work with, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, she used to sing gospel music and had a guitar. Okay?

And my mother says she remembers when at one of the theaters which isn't there anymore, the Lincoln Theater, where some of the great singers. Ethel Waters, sang there. Of course, the Royal was the education of all educations. And the politicians didn't have enough clout for them to keep it there. Because they could still have performances there.

And where I learned about Scott Joplin. A man made a statement the other night, a historian. I saw "Porgy and Bess" a couple of weeks ago. Said that Sportin Life, oh 'Porgy and Bess" was the first written about ethnic, you know, Black. I say, you got to be kidding. Scott Joplin wrote *Treemonisha* before George Gershwin was even born. And the prototype for Sportin Life was Zidzetrick, which I've done many times.

And I'll tell you another story. There was a young gentleman doing a couple of minor roles, James Atherton. He worked with the Baltimore Opera Company. Wonderful. When I worked

with the Harford, I was doing *Madame Butterfly*, And I always shaped my own characters. I never let a director tell me how to shape my character unless it was really out of form. And I remember the Japanese culture, so I took a fan and kept flicking it like the Kabuki. So that's where I took the character.

He walked in at one of the rehearsals, and he was doing it with the Baltimore Opera Company. So I was at the stage where I didn't care if anybody come and copy anything, which people had been doing for years and taking from Black people. And I didn't even see the performance. So I talked to him. I used to meet him when he used to come back. He went all over Europe. And I did my thing, and I don't know what, how he shaped his character, but he was fabulous. But he did all the comprimario roles. I can't remember. He went to Peabody, but he's dead now. And I won't get into that story, about I think how he died, because he was going with one of the famous conductors. Doesn't bother me at all.

But he came out there and watched me. I used to talk to him. Which didn't matter to me. And this is the way you shape characters. You learn something about the culture. You don't make it superficial, you make it real.

So various things I have learned from different people. I know that the field, the music field that we are in, is very. You meet some characters who think they're the only ones that can do this, or you can't tell them anything. I always said this, never tell somebody to do something unless they ask you. Could you show me? And if you don't mind, you do it. But you have a person that's reached that upper level and don't mind doing it for you, then you got a treasure trove of experience that you would never get from this person.

Like I say, Baltimore was so musical, so musical. You would not believe. The churches, basically that's where we used to get that information from. And then a few people would sing, like Paul Robeson would come through and sing at the churches. Because they were accepted all over the world then. But in this country, certain places, they weren't accepted. Like Mr. Hayes couldn't sing in a lot of places in the South right where he was born. But he ended up buying the same farm that his parents had worked on as slaves.

She gave a lot of information on how to get along in life. When I was coming up, Blacks couldn't go in the stores downtown to try on clothes. Certain places we didn't go. And we went out to Druid Hill Park, you know where that is. We walked on Fulton Avenue on the median strip where the grass was. You didn't walk on the side because it was all Caucasian.

And that's the kind of atmosphere that a parent had to send their kids out to school. Along with the so-called Black bullies, we had to be careful of irritating the white bullies. So it was just almost like now. Only thing now is more open, and it's much more problems with kids with the dope and that sort of thing.

And I used to go in clubs, musician played with my uncle, and they would see him and beg him for money so they could pay their rent. Yet they were driving cabs during the day. That's what I wrote my junior paper on. We had to pass what they call the junior proficiency at Morgan

College. Five hundred words with less than five mistakes, or you'd have to take it over again. And you know what I wrote it on? The Black musician during my time — from my experiences.

I mean, these guys were fabulous. You'd see them come in and pick the bass up. Because I went there with my uncle, but I couldn't drink. I wouldn't drink in there. The man would lose his license. I would sit there and just watch them. They said, how you doing? Used to call me. They'd go and play. Then I'd hear them go over, you know, I got to pay my rent. Had to go over and beg the white owner for a little advance.

And the last time my uncle played, I saw him play, the place was right over from the new post office. There was one drunk in there with his head on the table. Smoke all over the place. I was in the Navy, and I went down to see him, and he was playing. He used to let me get up and play the guitar. I only played the blues in B flat. [Mr. Jones sings].

He let me play. Anyway, these guys they weren't making much money. Some of them ended up drinking a lot, using, whatever. It was the frustration. But that's what I wrote my thesis on, because I knew the subject, and I didn't get fancy. Independent clauses, comma here where I knew it was supposed to be. And I didn't get faluting, or verbose so I could pass it. And I passed it. It's out there in Morgan's English Department's files. I guess they threw it away, but I passed it. I wrote what I knew. And I would encourage anyone if they're writing a song, write what you know about — not something you don't know about. If you never had a lover, don't write about it. If you know what it feels like to see somebody that you adore and they don't respond, you know how to write it. You know, like Hugo Wolf. You know the story of Hugo Wolf? You know who he was, the musician?

Q: Yes.

Jones: He ended up on street corners. He was in the era where there were two musical giants, but they didn't recognize his music. As well as the painter, Modigliani — selling his drawings just to get some wine. It's heart rending what we let society do to us.

So I tell any young musician, Black musician, look, here we are. If you're not accepted on that level, they don't pick you for the audition, don't stop your talent. God gave you the talent. Don't let human beings mess it up. They don't even let you at these festivals. So, what's his name, Cliburn, won one festival. What's he doing? Awadagin Pratt is still performing.

Do you know a friend of mine that plays for the Municipal Opera Company, Maxwell. You know Maxwell?

Q: No.

Jones: Maxwell Brown. He's already graduated. He works down at the University of Maryland. He knows Pratt. And I said, Pratt comes in town, wants to get on the basketball court. I said, Maxwell, that man messes his hands up. He said, that's what he wants to do. See, Pratt was one of the first that didn't go for the image that he had to be like the Caucasian, manicured. He still

keeps the dreadlocks. I said, bravo for you. As long as he doesn't come out naked. Bravo for you.

It's the talent we want. I don't care if he comes out in short pants. Glenn Gould was one of the most — you ever heard about Glenn Gould? I said, don't let the door hit him. So what? But what did he have to offer? As long as you're not too ridiculous and come out and throw paper wads at the people while you're playing. Or come out and sing and belch all over, you know.

As a musician there are certain things you have to do to maintain your dignity, and not stay on that particular level, so that people won't make excuses. Well, you know, he was late three times. So you're out, if you want a good job. And you always have to walk that treadmill. I met some wonderful people that didn't go for any of that stuff. As long as you act with dignity. You know, and like I say that Svengali type thing: you can't go without me, I would never tell a client — that's what I call them, clients, not students — not to do this. Mr. Hayes told me when he came here to Goucher [College]. One of the things he told me is I said, should a teacher telling a student (or a client I call them) what to sing? He said, no. You give him the techniques.

I said a long time ago about gospel singing, I wanted to write a thesis to give to people teaching gospel in the churches: How not to have people ruin their voices. But look at who we got. Most people in gospel, they can't talk the next day, they can't talk the next week. They're talking in a whisper. They can't talk at all because what? They're doing something for the glory of their creator. But the screaming and hollering is ruining this beautiful instrument they got.

You got to have some technique. You have to train just like I was, from here, from the diaphragm and to place the vowel. You can get so carried away with doing things for Jesus and the Creator and God that you blow your whole instrument, the gift that was given to you. And you were destined to use that. But you have people not thinking. They use too much of the heart than the brain.

So I wrote my thesis on A. Jack Thomas, which I found a mass of information.

Q: Why did you want to?

Jones: Because he was important in Baltimore musical history. In fact, he was the one that pushed. He had a big symphony orchestra, if you want to call it that. He did a lot of things to open up Black Baltimore to classical music and also, you know, band music also. He was a bandmaster. He wasn't the first now. That's where I made a mistake in my thesis. And he was one of the first. He wasn't the first.

And Miss Eileen Southern was a researcher when Delerma submitted my work to the researchers up in Chicago. They sit there, hawk eyes, and the audio version, when I talked to A. Jack Thomas's first wife, and I asked her how did he compose. She said, he would sit at the table. He didn't need a piano. Apparently, he had absolute pitch. And then Miss [Elizabeth] Schaaf, last year I think it was, I couldn't find his scores. I couldn't find them at Morgan. And I have a catalogue of all his music. You'll see it here. She said go over there and look in that box. All the scores.

Morgan didn't know where they were. Everything was in the catalogue and Dr. Strider, the head of the music department when I was going out there had passed. His wife said he had passed, didn't know where they were. I looked and looked and looked. Asked people, nobody knew. Miss Schaaf had them [at the Peabody Archives]. I don't know where she got them, but she had them. And they performed his works at that Live, Gifted and Black concert. I said, just mention my name, that's all. She mentioned my name. I heard them. I went. He was a master orchestrator. He fought in the First World War. OK? He was born in Pittsburgh. Well, you can read it.

Q: Yeah. I read it.

Jones: And the prejudice he went through. He used to play out in the park. He had certain things about derogatory terms against, then they were called "colored" people. Now it's African-American. I don't know what it's going to be next year. What's going on now, you don't know what's going to go on in this nation.

I would tell any musician don't let human beings mess you up. If you don't win a competition, keep singing. God gave you the voice, not human beings. Now I went down for an audition one time and sang from [Mozart's] *Così Fan Tutti*. It was just "My love is a flower" [Mr. Jones hums]. It was right down here at Peabody. And a blind singer by name of Alphonso Williams, who was an opera genius, an opera genius, he was in the audience. I didn't know that at the time. So I sang it in English.

English to me is the most difficult language to sing in. 'Cause everything is naked there. Italian is the most easiest language to sing in. It's almost like, don't get me wrong, baby talk, "Amore." Now, cut that with "I love you." You know, "you." So I sang it in English [Mr. Jones sings]. You know, good technique. So when I got through, one of the adjudicators says why did you sing that? He knew it was hard. I'll put it this way, not hard, difficult. When I sing English, I sing like I sing Italian. I go right to the vowels. Cut the consonants, go right to the vowels.

And real consonants, like the *Treemonisha* we're doing. I go right to the vowels. And it's more understanding if you keep it, keep the rhythm going, support it. And I don't think like I'm singing in English. I sing like I'm singing in. I cut to the vowel and carry it right through. Because once you attack the vowels properly, especially in any language, it eases what. It eases the air support.

Cause that's what, gives the air support, the vowels. It's not supporting those consonants. So you cut right through it. So when we went, when I sang in a synagogue. They said, you going to sing in here. I said, I don't know. He said you're singing. [Jones sings]

When I was with the quartet we sang *Eli Eli*. We used to put that in our repertoire. All Black kids singing *Eli Eli*.

Q: What was the quartet called.

Jones: The Starleers.

Q: Star?

Jones. Star leers. Like a star, and then l e e r s.

Q: Was your uncle in it?

Jones: Oh he had different groups, but he just put them together to play in clubs. Ethel Ennis played in his group. She's a known jazz singer. She used to sing down at Annapolis with Charlie Byrd. And her husband was named Arnett. He used to work for the "Sunpapers." Earl Arnett I think his name was. But Ethel Ennis used to play in my uncle's group. Different groups, he would get people together and play at the clubs. He was a master. Tap dancing. Instrument man.

When I went out to Morgan, I didn't have too far to go. But I learned a lot from Dr. Strider too. I learned about orchestration. And everything came so close. Bits and pieces I picked up. When I was quote "musically illiterate." It's a tough city.

And now I look at things. I didn't know about the movable C. Where if you move it, it's still C. Wherever you move it, it's C. That's why I say I don't want to go another school with the English method of schooling. I like the German method. Get the bibliography, come back, you pass the test, you get your degree. You go fight in the field, in the army, then come back, take the test. You passed young man.

Not attendance every day. Dr. Strider told me a story. You ever heard of a man named Morton Gould?

Q: No.

Jones: Morton Gould was an American orchestrator and composer. Excellent. Went up to New York University. Was it Columbia? One of those schools in New York.

Q: Where's he from?

Jones: Oh, I can't remember. He's a Caucasian composer. He's written a lot of beautiful music though. Dr. Strider was in one of his classes. Both of them were students. That was the man who was at Morgan that sent me out on Charles Street to sing for the musical director tat wanted me to sing all those parts.

Anyway, he said Morton Gould got up and walked out. They didn't like the way he was writing. He said they were too slow for him, and he walked out. Became world renowned. Ask some of your teachers about Morton Gould. They'll tell you. And Dr. Strider said, this man became a famous composer. As well as Dr. Strider, who was an African American gentleman.

I thought he was the most easiest teacher. Some people thought he was lazy. One day he brought us into the classroom, and he said, the whole page, underline what I tell you. This, this, this, this. Go to chapter 2. This, this, this. It was orchestration. He had. I said, well, why did they write the whole book? And then it dawned on me: just to sell it.

If you had the central things in the textbooks they give you, you wouldn't have the biggest book in the world. You understand? At one of the classes I had at Morgan, you had to make what they call legal briefs. And they said, go and read the text of this law, and break it down into two sentences or three sentences. You don't need all that other stuff.

That's the way the system is set up. And like I say, I've had good teachers. I'm not the richest person in the world, but when I see what I call a second-rate choice for somebody. When I go to an audition, somebody's going to be an adjudicator. I don't like it, because somebody should get something from standing up there and trying to sing. If they can't be picked for that role, pick them for another role.

Nobody should walk away with nothing. And that's the way they set this system up. And then behind that system you got people on the board that puts a lot of money into it. And sometimes, you know, the picks will come in. I've seen them audition. If the picks come in, you can forget about it.

One time I went for an audition over for the Baltimore Symphony to sing with the Baltimore Symphony, which I have done. I've sung with the Baltimore Symphony. The Porgy and Bess things — did it twice. One time I did it with my professor, Joseph Eubanks, and did it with someone else. I did Sportin' Life.

The critics were, I don't pay no attention to critics, but let me show you. The first year we did it, oh, it was wonderful. Next year, the Baltimore Symphony was the star. Now this will show you the prejudice of so-called critics. Same performance. So if you pay attention to critics, you'll be frustrated, in a padded cell with a straight jacket on. Like Hugo Wolf. I'm a composer. I can write music. Do your thing. Let the critics say what they want. Most critics are frustrated actors, frustrated directors, frustrated this, frustrated musicians. Okay?

Now this is what I can impart to the people that's in this field. When you become a professional in the field and get paid for it, you're supposed to be on time. Do your job. The critics be damned. Otherwise you would never do anything. Do it to the best of your ability. Even if you know they're not going to pick you, just go there before they expose you.

So like I say, it's a long road, and I may never get to that level. I was at that level one time, when I was on tour with the Metropolitan Opera's touring company in 1966-1967. But I observed and I learned what were good directors. Jose Quinterra, that was way before your time. He used to work with Ingrid Bergman, the movie star. He did *La Boheme*. And there was a gentleman from Japan. I can't remember his name. He was a Kabuke, from the Kabuki Theater, did *La Traviata*.

He didn't work out too well because he was moving too slow. So they took it out of his hands. And every day he wore, I guess you call it a kimono that they wear. But he would sit there with a smile on his face, because he knew they had to pay him, and he had showed up. I learned so much from him.

Gunther Rennert, German. I used to come down there to the rehearsals at the theater when I wasn't supposed to and just sit in the audience and watch these men work. Watch the genius

come out. So when I direct something, I don't look for the big things. I look for the practicality and what will get them through that. Especially with inexperienced singers, and how they should be pointing toward the audience. And how to make their character work. When I work on an opera, it's for the person to shape the character. I don't care if you got the best costume on, but make that character stand out. So somebody can say: wow, was he really drunk over there? Or did she really do what she said, because of the look on her face? And along with that beautiful, good singing, and good rapport in the theater, do not drop that character — you got something.

I don't care if you're at the Baltimore Opera, you're with Municipal or with Annapolis. If you're up there with a stone face singing about love, then something's wrong.

For instance, when I was on the road, a lady was supposed to do the "Quando" song in *La Boheme*, by Musetta. And she was sitting at the counter in a sandwich shop, I think it was in Illinois. She said: "I'm supposed to play Musetta." And I didn't say anything. So I said: how do you feel? Don't you feel catty sometimes, like you could take on any man in the world? That's the way you're supposed to feel about yourself. I'm the best in the world. Here I am. Take it. If you got money. An old man, he's thinking about his youth. Well, he can't do certain things, and he's following her around hand and foot, and she's using him. So I said you have to feel that. You have to pay fifty dollars for somebody to teach you how to be a woman — a wild woman. You know, with the experience of all the world that take any man in the world and drop him at your feet. You've got to drop that discipline and get into the other discipline, and let it all out. That's why some actors like to act.

If they've got a killer instinct, which the Army pulls out of you when you go in, you got to play a nasty role. Without going to jail, you can let that out. And we all got it in us. You've got to go to acting school?

For instance, I was singing with a singer. He came backstage with crumbs in his mouth — like croutons. I said what the heck is that? Don't get me wrong. But his teacher told him that if you put something in the mouth and do that, that will loosen your mouth. I said, my God, suppose he swallowed it and get stuck down in there and kill him! This year I was working with a young singer. She had a piercing through her tongue. I said dear, could I say something. She said yeah. If you can, that would impede your singing. Please try to have it extracted next time. I'm giving her breathing techniques and this is pierced through her tongue. I said oh, you got to use that tongue.

I mean, it's amazing what people let their kids do to themselves because of styles. And I've seen, one of the singers from Peabody, female, beautiful voice. She sang a love song. And I'm looking at her, and she looked like she was a cadaver. No expression whatsoever. Who's her teacher? You know, you can't get it. How do you feel about the song? Do you sit down and analyze this thing?

I know I've never been crucified, but I've read about crucifixions, so when I sing songs about crucifixion, I get the feeling behind the words. If I can make myself cry, which is very easy if I hear something emotional. I can make somebody in the audience say, wow, he really means that. If I play something by Mozart or Beethoven, I don't have to be too much distorted, contortion on

my face, but I can show with you the strength of my hands. Show you the emphasis of what I'm doing. That's making music.

END OF SESSION