

**This is the Robert Danziger call held on [Date]. File Name: 12442606**

- **Bob Danziger** - Christian, this is Bob Danziger.
- **Christian McBride** - How are you going?
- **Bob Danziger** - Good, how are you today?
- **Christian McBride** - Good.
- **Dan Ouellette** - Hey, Christian, how are you doing?
- **Christian McBride** - Hey. How's it going, man?
- **Dan Ouellette** - Going man. You're getting ready to go on the road, huh?
- **Christian McBride** - Yeah. I guess we're always kind of preparing to go on the road at some point.
- **Dan Ouellette** - I'm going to just miss you at Perugia [Umbria Jazz Festival]. You're playing on the Sunday night, and I have to leave on Saturday.
- **Christian McBride** - I'll be there on Saturday. I'm just not performing. But I may run into you.
- **Dan Ouellette** - Oh, good. Thank you for doing this.
- **Christian McBride** - --My pleasure--.
- **Dan Ouellette** - --Bob is the man in Monterey, and I'm here in New York helping out as much as I can.
- **Christian McBride** - Nice.
- **Bob Danziger** - Christian, there's two or three things I hope we have a chance to get to. One of--the first one is--I'd like to understand where you're going with the commission piece. There's an extraordinary musical history here in Monterey, and it's always good to put the commissioned pieces in the context of our musical history here. And secondly, I really want to talk to you about the "Brandenburg Concerto" quote that you talked about it being one of the first bebop pieces. I'm going to be teaching a class on jazz and the "Brandenburg Concerto" in the fall. And then, also I want to talk about the Jazz House Kids and how we can hopefully move Cal State Monterey Bay toward some of the same kind of standards that you use for that program because we're kind of getting started on a lot of that.
- **Christian McBride** - Great.
- **Dan Ouellette** - I remember a couple of years ago talking to John Clayton about something else, and it was like two months before the festival. I said, "So, what's it going to be like?" He goes, "I don't know yet."
- **Bob Danziger** - I taught a whole class on this commission piece last spring. It was just wonderful. So, Christian, about your commission piece, what can you tell me about it at this point and to what extent Monterey or other home influences, Philadelphia, New Jersey might be in it?
- **Christian McBride** - I'm writing a tribute to Roy Hargrove. Tim Jackson asked me quite some time, would I be interested in doing something for Roy? So, it made sense. And so, the piece is called "Roy Anthony: The Fearless One." So, my big band will perform that for the commission piece. [Roy Hargrove is from Waco, Texas].
- **Bob Danziger** - That'll be great obviously, we're huge Roy Hargrove fans out here. Have you looked into the history of music here in the Monterey Peninsula?
- **Christian McBride** - I know it well.
- **Bob Danziger** - Well, if you have any thoughts on that with respect to music in Monterey?
- **Christian McBride** - Well, I love the fact that there is a commissioned artist in the first place. I don't really know too many other festivals that will actually every year commission

someone to compose something. I think that's pretty amazing. John Clayton was the commissioned artist the last time I was there, which I believe was last year, wasn't it? Or maybe it was 2017. John is--I'm sorry I missed his--I think we were on at the same time. But, I mean, John is one of my favorite composers and orchestrators in the world. So, I know whatever he did, it was great. He's got a lot of imagination.

- **Bob Danziger** - Two thousand seventeen.
- **Christian McBride** - Seventeen, okay. And so, I know Clayton, Maria Schneider -- all of my favorite arrangers and composers have done something there. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, I was also in Monterey one year when Dave Brubeck was the commissioned artist. It's a great, great legacy. And I'm quite honored to be a part of it now.

- **Bob Danziger** - It was an astounding piece of work. John did give us a nice quote on the "Brandenburg Concerto" stuff. He talked about the influence that Brandenburg and Bach had on his (unintelligible) when he was a teenager. And Dave Brubeck also talks extensively about the impact of the Brandenburg. And then, there's also a lot of variations on the Brandenburg. There's Mexican versions and Cuban versions and Brazilian versions and all that stuff that are running around. And you said if you listen to the bass parts in Bach, the "Brandenburg Concerto" is like bebop lines. And I wonder if you could expand on that a little bit.

- **Christian McBride** - Well, what I mean is the linear motion of those lines. There's so much melodic content, and it's rhythmic. You know, a lot of classical music from the romantic period, like the later classical and the romantic period--much of it is quite impressionistic. And as great as that is--because that certainly influenced a certain sound in jazz also--but, there's something about baroque composers, particularly Bach. His music is just rhythmic. It's rhythmic. It's linear. I'm sure a lot of the--I mean, I get the sense that there were a lot of bebop musicians who paid attention to that, not saying that they listened to the "Brandenburg Concerto" and said, "Oh, now I've got ideas to write a song." But, at least just in terms of the shape of the way Bach's lines formed. And, as a bass player, I can almost guarantee you any bass player who plays--any jazz bass players who know even a little bit about classical music--they will tell you how much they love Bach because Bach always keeps the bass busy. And that's another rarity I find in classical music.

- **Dan Ouellette** - Christian, what was your first experience working in Bach? Was that part of your upbringing or classical upbringing (crosstalk)? When did you first experience it?

- **Christian McBride** - Probably middle school, playing in the All City Orchestra, and we played--well, there were two Bach pieces that I remember. We played the "Brandenburg Concerto" number two, and then, we also played the Bach "Double Violin Concerto," which I wound up recording with Regina Carter many, many years later. Middle school, maybe my freshman year in high school is when I got turned in to that.

- **Dan Ouellette** - Sometimes did it influence you?--obviously, you're very encyclopedic in terms of who you're listening to at that time, but, did you see the bridges there?

- **Christian McBride** - --No. No, it was just--no, I mean, at that time, I was just simply playing music that I enjoyed. I wasn't really consciously trying to point between the bridge of Bach and Bird and Tra ne. But, later on, once I started to discover more classical music--I mean, because all of this is a journey, right? You discover more and you learn more the older you get. So, at age 15 or 16 I had no idea or no interest in trying to bridge the gaps between those different styles. But, as I got older and learned more music, part of me went, "Wow, Bach really is a bad dude," because I'm not experiencing the same stimulation from playing a lot of other classical

music the same way that I did Bach. So, that's when I kind of backtracked, and I went, "Wow, this dude is really something."

- **Bob Danziger** - Yeah. The "Brandenburg" was the first thing that grabbed me that said, "you have to learn how to play this." Do you remember the first thing you heard where you went I have to learn how to play this? Remember what that song was?

- **Christian McBride** - Well, probably--the first time I played the Bach "Double Violin Concerto," I couldn't play it because I had never seen that many sixteenth notes on a bass part before. So, I had a lot of trouble struggling to learn that in middle school. But I liked the piece so much--and I'm always up for a challenge, something that stumps me. I'm the kind of person--I'm going to close myself off in my room and figure it out. So, that's what I did. I really wanted to figure out how to play all these sixteenth notes. And then, once I finally figured it out, I went, "Oh man, this is pretty incredible." And then, later on, when we played the "Brandenburg Concerto" number two, it wasn't quite as difficult because that's the beauty of practicing.

- **Bob Danziger** - Did you ever play the fourth concerto, by any chance?

- **Christian McBride** - Yes, yes, absolutely.

- **Bob Danziger** - That one's got a lot of notes in it.

- **Christian McBride** - Yes, it does. Yes, it does.

- **Bob Danziger** - Well, you know, the second Brandenburg Concerto (first movement) is the first music on the "Golden Record" on the side of the Voyager Spacecraft.

- **Christian McBride** - --Right, of course. That's one of those top 40 classical pieces--.

- **Bob Danziger** - Yeah, for the next 250 million years. I used to work at Jet Propulsion Lab when they were running that Voyager program, So, that's one of the things that inspired me was that that the "Brandenburg" was the first thing on the Golden Record. That's why I really had to learn it. In fact, I still play it probably a couple times a day and practice just cause I love doing it.

- **Christian McBride** - Nice, nice.

- **Bob Danziger** - Nice way to wake up.

- **Dan Ouellette** - Bob tells me that there are Funk renditions of the "Brandenburg Concertos," which I haven't heard but he has. What's your opinions on those?

- **Bob Danziger** - Yeah. Have you ever tried to apply "Brandenburg" or Bach directly to funk or jazz or other things where you go, "Let me try this combination," you know, if you put it in a different rhythmic context?

- **Christian McBride** - Not really. It stands so strongly on its own. I don't think it needs any other type of rhythm behind it, I mean, unless you just want to have some fun experimenting with it. The only other version I really know of is Ron Carter's version where he improvises on top of it.

- **Bob Danziger** - Right, right, not his best work I don't think.

- **Christian McBride** - I'm glad you said that, not me.

- **Bob Danziger** - Well, if you ever get the chance just to check it out -- one of my favorite versions is by a mariachi group in Chicago called "Sones de Mexico Ensemble Chicago." They do a mariachi version that's astounding. And "Tiempo Libre" does a Cuban version that's astounding. There are some Brazilian versions. But my favorite actually is the Mexican version. In the breaks they do it on one of those hat dance type of stands and it's pretty amazing. I enjoy that a lot. Wynton Marsalis did a nice version of the second "Brandenburg Concerto" in one of his albums, a straight up classical version.

- **Christian McBride** - Oh, yeah. Sure, sure. My eyes squinted for a minute. I went, "Really? I didn't know he did that with one of his--with Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra?" But it was in the classical version you were referring to.

- **Bob Danziger** - Yeah, exactly.

- **Christian McBride** - I'm glad that didn't sneak by me.

- **Bob Danziger** - Cal-State Monterey Bay gave me the first Honorary Doctorate in Music they'd ever given out. I'd re-written the Brandenburg for any two instruments playing in any octave, so I could specifically to put the bass lines into the lead line, among other things--.

- **Christian McBride** - --Yeah, nice--.

- **Bob Danziger** - --And did a few funk versions, a couple hip-hop versions, things like that. Not that it's a big thing. But it was an amazing journey, just one of the favorite things I ever did in my whole life. I totally loved doing that. So, that's one of the reasons why I'm teaching this class. And it relates to, actually, Jazz House Kids and Cal State Monterey Bay. This is the twentieth year of Cal State Monterey Bay. Until last year or the year before, it really didn't have any association with the Jazz Festival. So I sort of took it upon myself to try to bring that--get them pointing towards excellence in their music programs. And I thought a strategy for that was to get them hooked up with the Jazz Festival and, in particular, the commissioned artists, the artist in residence, and the other featured artists so that at least they could hear what excellence really sounds like

- **Christian McBride** - Right.

- **Bob Danziger** - and set up an example of what they maybe should be shooting for at some point. So, I wanted to ask you about that. You're the artistic director of Newport Jazz Festival and perhaps has the best overview of anybody. Also as the voice of jazz, which you do an astounding job at. What can we do to support Tim Jackson, support the jazz festival as a university, either within or outside of the music program --it's frankly a pretty weak music program right now. So, except in the adult education where there's tons of jazz stuff going on. But, what do you think we could do to be more supportive of the Jazz Festival?

- **Christian McBride** - Oh man. I'm sure whatever answer I give you, it's--it'll be incomplete and not as good as it will be probably in another year. But I'll do the best I can. I always feel like the jazz world in general is really, really small. It's like there's probably 0.5 degrees of separation between the most popular person in all of jazz, most powerful, most popular person in all of jazz and someone who just discovered today that they like jazz. There's probably 0.5 degrees of separation. And when you look at the entire landscape of the United States, there's probably only a small handful of towns that have real, true dedicated, effective jazz studies programs or just jazz programs in general. And there's probably even fewer that have major jazz festivals. So, I've always thought that collaboration and really trying to help each other out the best we can--because here - I live in Montclair, New Jersey, which is literally--I still think of it as New York because we're so close to New York, and culturally speaking, it's close to New York. So, just here alone, you have Jazz at Lincoln Center, you have the National Jazz Museum in Harlem, you have Jazz Foundation of America, you have the Juilliard School, the New School, Manhattan School of Music, the Vision Festival, the Brick Festival in Brooklyn. And then, out in Jersey, you have New Jersey Performing Arts Center, which has their own jazz education program as well, you have us, Jazz House Kids, and there's another jazz program that Julius Tolentino just started right down the road. So, that's only in New York. Now, you get to places like Detroit, you get northern California, you get southern California, you got maybe Chicago--there's probably not that much going on. So, I think the best way to really help this music in

general with all of these different individual organizations that really do a wonderful job in helping the music, I'm always one for collaboration. It's much better to have a big nation as opposed to having small sovereign nations. And sometimes I think in jazz we get--we take ourselves a little too seriously, just in terms of like--there's not that many people--the biggest job jazz always has is trying to get more people into the music. And ultimately, at the end of the day, that's what every last single one of these organizations are trying to do. So, if we sort of all had the exact same goal, then we should all come together. We still do our work separately. But it's beautiful that you even asked that question, like, "You know, what can we do to help Tim Jackson?" I mean, I know that, when I think of Tim, it kind of all runs together. I start thinking about the Kuumbwa. I start thinking of Monterey. I start thinking of Next Gen. I'm sure if I sat down and really thought about it, I'd be able to know what separates them all. But I tend to think of just the northern California areas as one of these very important, deeply important regions to the entire scope of jazz. And I mean, you know, just--I guess the best way to help Tim or any of these organizations is to simply ask that question. "What can we do to help?"

- **Bob Danziger** - Well, one of the things we're doing--there's a few things we're doing. One is, starting last year, the--we permanently funded an annual concert where the artists in residence from the jazz festival give a concert to Cal State Monterey Bay and a master class. So, at least once a year, the school sees what real talent looks like and that sort of thing. And then, it's videotaped and there's interviews and all that sort of stuff. And then, the Jazz Festival is now going to be promoting the adult education and other jazz things that are going on at the University. We've got like five different jazz classes in the adult education program, and they're all sold out every year.

- **Christian McBride** - Nice

- **Bob Danziger** - And that brings in new people because, in Monterey, we have a constant stream of retirees coming here. Maybe a thousand retirees a year come here. And they're looking for community, and they're looking for things. And it's really interesting because about half of them have never seen jazz before. And what we've found is that by educating, exposing, talking to them that, they develop a really deep interest in it and like the community have started participating. But, going back to your point about collaboration within the larger jazz community, that suggests that if we can figure out how to hook it more into Kuumbwa, and SF Jazz, how to hook into the things that are going on into New York so maybe we're a performance venue for when people are coming through. They can stop by here. And there is a new performance space that actually is being dedicated next month. They built a new building, and they built an amphitheater, around 300 seats outdoor. It's going to be an absolutely gorgeous place to play music.

- **Christian McBride** --Oh man. That's great--.

- **Bob Danziger** - --Yeah. And it's going to be named after me too, which I'm pretty happy about.

- **Christian McBride** - Really? Oh man! Look out!

- **Bob Danziger** - I don't know about that. But it's going to be called the RND Amphitheater. And I picked that because I originally wanted to call it the John Jack Monk amphitheater after Thelonious Monk's great grandfather. But that turned out not to be possible. So, it's going to have all these stories connected to it, including this interview will be--so, when somebody 50 years from now says, "Well, what's the RND Amphitheater?" they can go to library and pull up these interviews and things like that as part of it.

- **Christian McBride** - Wow, fantastic.

- **Bob Danziger** - So, we've got to figure out to hook into the kind of resources so that we can help out those other things when they're in this area. And by doing that, it helps us.
- **Dan Ouellette** - You were saying, Christian, you thought of something else?
- **Christian McBride** - Yeah. I had thought of something pretty simple that could also be quite effective. I tell this to audiences often when I play. Usually when I see parents or grandparents, whoever it is, when they bring their child with them or they bring their grandchild or their son or their daughter--always point them out--I always say, "Listen, whoever you are, we deeply appreciate you because you are helping us cultivate the next generation of supporters for this music." So, I look around the audience. I say, "Now, listen, you probably have someone in your family or you know somebody or maybe you don't know someone who's between the ages of 16 and 30 who you probably look at and go, 'Man, they don't know anything about good music.' Well then, be proactive and take them to something that you think is good music. Bring your child. Bring your nephews. Bring the young person who you know needs to see this like these people did." And I always thought that if you just simply bring a young person with you to expose them--and I know from personal experience, sometimes you go see something as a kid, and, of course, you probably don't like it or something that--"My mom is dragging me to this concert. Oh man, I don't want to do this." But, much later on, it starts to--it creeps on you. You're like, "Man, that was great." So, yeah. **Exposure to the people who you know need it, I think, is probably really important. And I don't think it's that hard.**
- **Bob Danziger** - Yeah, I agree with that. One of the other programs we started is we got tickets--grounds tickets for all of the dishwashers and janitors at the Community Hospital of Monterey.
- **Christian McBride** - Are you serious? That's cool.
- **Bob Danziger** - Yeah, and their families. So, we--and they work so hard. A lot times a real chance for them to go have a family day at the jazz festival--and it was really--it was extremely successful if only in the sense that they were wonderful family days for those folks. And almost every jazz musician--or every musician in the world has a story about being a janitor or being a dishwasher or--you know, Tim Jackson was a dishwasher. I used to muck stalls. stuff. It's part of the community. We can keep that going--and it's also a permanently funded program. So, that's an annual thing. That's about 70, 80 tickets, something like that.
- **Christian McBride** - That's great.
- **Dan Ouellette** - What Monterey is doing is like miles beyond what other communities are doing in regards to that, I mean, kind of having that--kind of really open mind about how to pass the music on in that way. You know?
- **Bob Danziger** - Well, we've got to keep it going. It's got to be--it can't just be one year and out. We have to keep it going. And at least those two programs are permanently funded. We've got to figure out how to expand it. With your permission, I'd like to have another conversation when you have some ideas about how we might hook into--I'll have the conversation with Tim and we'll all have it about--how do we become a place that makes it better for the community of musicians who come to us from other places where, where CSUMB is a useful or profitable part of that program some way? That would be a good thing.
- **Christian McBride** - Sure, absolutely. And, at some point, you should probably speak to my wife as well because she's the brains and the muscle behind Jazz House Kids. And she--I just do what she tells me to do.
- **Bob Danziger** - I definitely hear that. I would love to talk to her sometime. Let me get our thoughts organized, and we'll definitely follow up on that.

- **Christian McBride** - Sure.
- **Bob Danziger** - Weren't you both awarded the African American Classical Music Award from the New Jersey Chapter of the Spelman College National Alumnae Association?
- **Christian McBride** - --Oh, that was quite some time we got that--. Frankly, we were surprised because we didn't know that Spelman has an alumni chapter in Montclair. Every year, they do this event at the Montclair Art Museum. And they chose Melissa and I as the recipients. We were thrilled. Neither one of us have a tie to Spellman. But we were quite flattered to get that.
- **Bob Danziger** - That led me to look into black composers and stuff that I wasn't really familiar with.
- **Christian McBride** - Well, George Walker lived in Montclair for many years. And there was another woman who lived in Montclair. She just moved out of here maybe two or three years ago. She took a job at Washington D.C. But she casually mentioned that her grandfather was William Grant Still. And I say, "Are you kidding me?" "Have you ever heard of him?" I said, "What? Of course I've heard of him." So, yeah, that was a fun conversation.
- **Bob Danziger** - I bet it was. By the way, I noticed that Freddie Hubbard, who you speak so highly of. I noticed that he used Bach mouthpieces. Do you guys ever talk about Bach when you're playing?
- **Christian McBride** - No, we never--I never ask him about trumpet stuff.
- **Bob Danziger** - By the way, Al McKibben said that Charlie Parker used to call him up at three or four o'clock in the morning with the "Brandenburg" playing in the background and him improvising over it.
- **Christian McBride** - Oh, I believe it.
- **Bob Danziger** - That had to be a hell of a phone call.
- **Christian McBride** - Well, it's a pretty known fact that Bird was quite the classical music aficionado. So, that doesn't surprise me at all.
- **Dan Ouellette** - I'm looking at the time here, and I think, Bob, it may be time to get a little bit of background on family history from Christian and then we'll call it a day here.
- **Bob Danziger** - Christian, one of the standard questions I ask everybody that I interview is, what lullabies their parents or grandparents sang to them what you may sing to your kids. But I was wondering what lullabies your parents or grandparents, or others might have sung to you?
- **Christian McBride** - I remember my grandmother singing--you know, the general one on one stuff--[like] --"Frere Jacques." But, my mom's a hit mom. So, the lullaby she sang to me was "Dance to the Music" [by] Sly and the Family Stone.
- **Bob Danziger** - Perfect. Now, I know why you're a bass player.
- **Christian McBride** - Right.
- **Bob Danziger** - Well, that's a wonderful answer. I love that. Do you remember the first piece of music you heard when you were a kid, of any kind, and said, "I just have to learn how to play that."
- **Christian McBride** - I'm sure it was a Motown piece, probably something by The Temptations or Smokey Robinson and the Miracles or something like that, but probably something by The Temptations.
- **Bob Danziger** - That's certainly a good choice. With Angelique Kidjo, it was The Jackson 5's, "I Want You Back." Christian, one of these days, I hope we get a chance to sit down and just chat for a while. I'd love to just talk to you forever. But I sure do appreciate your time.
- **Christian McBride** - Oh man, it's my pleasure.
- **Bob Danziger** - Thank you very much.

- **Dan Ouellette** - Good talking to you, Christian.
- **Christian McBride** - Alright, gentlemen. My pleasure.
- **Bob Danziger** - Bye-bye.
- **Dan Ouellette** - Bye-bye.
- **Christian McBride** - Talk to you guys soon. Alright, bye-bye.