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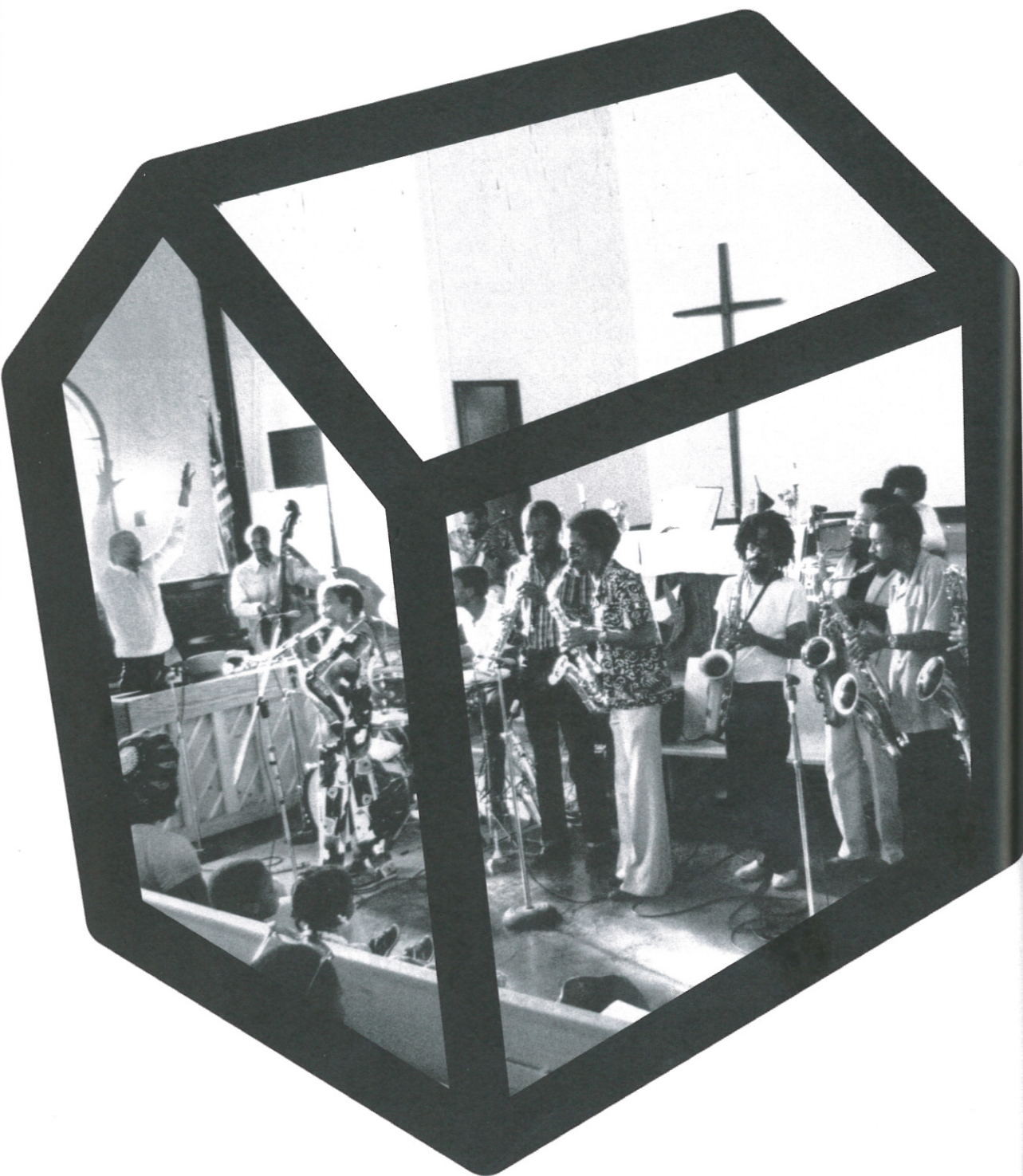
The Man Behind
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Safe Haven

Pianist and composer **Horace Tapscott** cultivated the Los Angeles jazz community

text **Andy Thomas**

***“I am Horace Tapscott
My fingers are dancing grassroots
I do not fit into form, I create form
My ears are radar charting the whispers of my ancestors
I seek the divinity in outcasts, the richness of rebels”***

—Kamau Daaood, from the poem “PAPA, the Lean Griot”

“It’s like bringing up your children in a certain area because you want them to grow and be aware of certain things. This same principle applied to us, as far as Black musicians were concerned,” proclaimed the late pianist, composer, teacher, and community activist Horace Tapscott in the notes to *Live at I.U.C.C.* by the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra, the towering spiritual jazz ensemble founded by Tapscott in his adopted home of Los Angeles back in 1961.

Formed as a self-help arts collective to bring pride to the community, the Arkestra symbolized Tapscott’s desire for Black empowerment, and the need for his people to reach back to their ancestral roots for survival. Over thirty years and amid two major social uprisings, the musical and social guidance of this modern-day urban griot helped create a sense of family and belonging across the generations, as

an artistic village was built within Los Angeles’s socially divided sprawl.

Born in 1934, Horace Tapscott spent his early years in Houston, where he soon became acutely aware of the chains that bound him. “When we got on the bus, my mother started heading right to the back of the bus by the ‘Colored’ sign,” he recalled to political writer Michael Slate shortly before his death in 1999. “And I remember my mother saying, ‘Come here, Horace.’ And I said I wanted to sit where I was.”

Arriving in California in 1943, Horace’s mother headed straight for the jazz hub of Central Avenue, introducing her son to the cats hanging around the Black Musicians’ Union. At the age of fourteen, Horace met Cecilia, who became his soul mate and eventually his wife. “Cecilia and I used to walk

the streets together, and we got to see all these people," he recalled in his autobiography, *Songs of the Unsung*. "We used to listen to Art Tatum, Red Callender, and Bill Douglass." He was soon playing trombone alongside the likes of Dexter Gordon and Eric Dolphy, and started to appreciate the importance of togetherness and the role of culture in social advancement. "It had to do with a feeling and a hookup to creativity and understanding," continued Horace, "and how people can come together regardless of what's happening around them." These creative interactions opened up a whole world of collaboration and cooperation to the inquisitive young musician, who would use these experiences as the foundation for his own jazz collective.

After a stint in the Air Force in the mid-'50s, which, he recalled, "got me ready to come out into the world," Horace went on tour with Lionel Hampton, switching to the piano and eventually becoming disillusioned with the showmanship of the band. "I wanted to do something else," he wrote in his autobiography. "I wanted my own thing; I wanted to write it and help preserve the music."

Returning to South Central in the early '60s, Horace found an area blighted by years of neglect and direct racial attacks by Chief William H. Parker's LAPD. As social deprivation grew in relation to the "proactive policing" and what many saw as the deliberate destruction of the African American community, an alternative support structure was desperately needed. The Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra (also known as the Underground Musicians Association or UGMA) was formed by Tapscott in 1961 under the maxim: "Our music is contributive rather than competitive." Whether loading instruments onto flatbed trucks to play on street corners, holding sessions at old folks' homes, hospitals, and prisons, or teaching music and poetry in elementary schools, the Ark's members set out on their mission to preserve the arts in the Black community by taking the music to the people.

The cultural and social experimentation of Tapscott's radical arts group anticipated the later work of better-known jazz collectives like the St. Louis-based Black Artists Group and Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, and matched the powerful collective energy of Sun Ra's better-known Arkestra. "Of course I was aware of Sun Ra's Arkestra, always respected what he was doing, and got my spelling of that word from him, but that was as far as the hookup went," Tapscott recalled. "While he was thinking in terms of space, of an ark traveling through space, I was thinking in terms of a cultural safe house for the music."

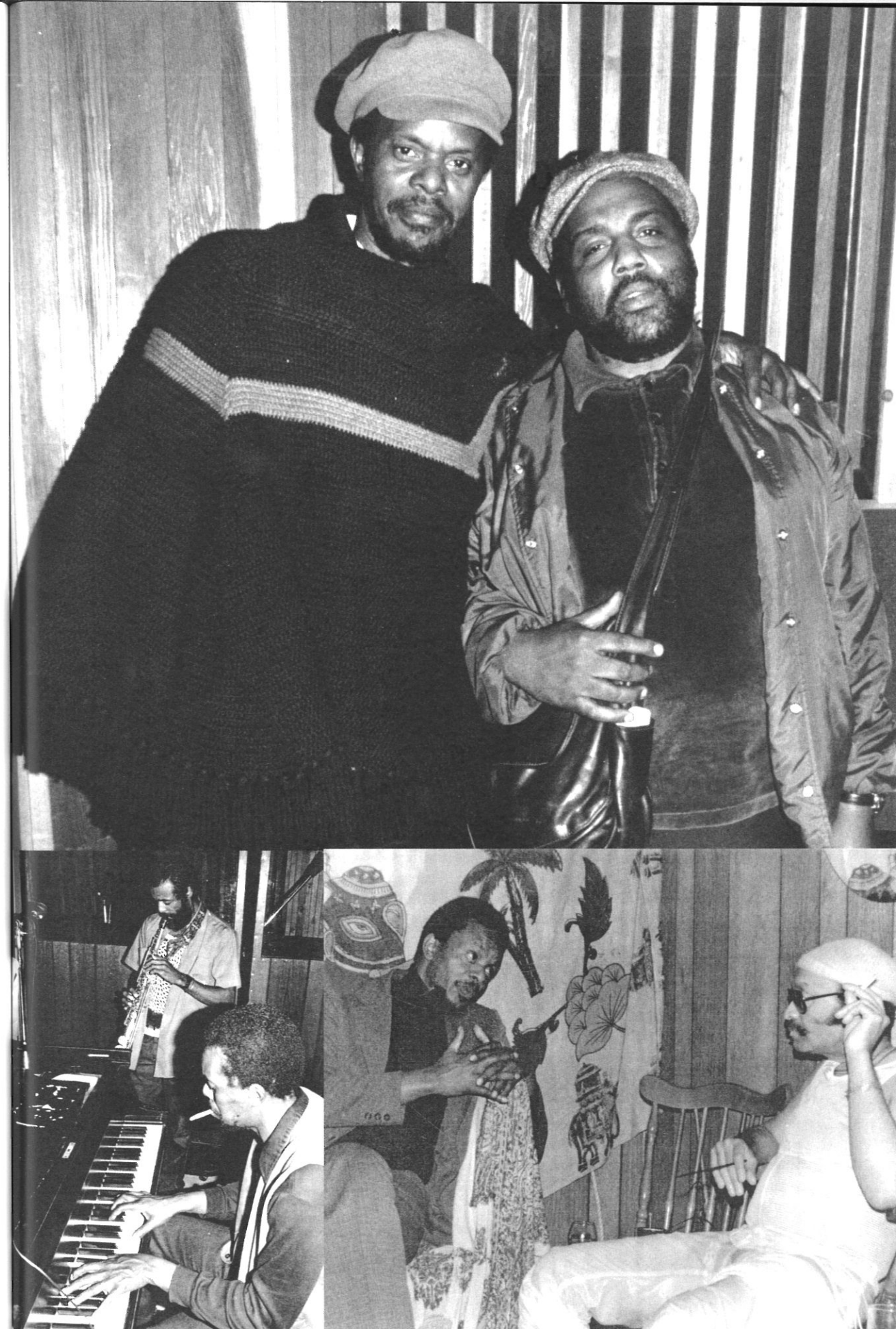
Central to the growth of the Ark was its family ethos and reaching out to the children in order to continue the lineage. At the heart of the family was the organization's matriarch, Linda Hill, who not only helped balance some of the macho weight that was thrown around but also provided the group's first home, which was celebrated by Horace in one of the Ark's standards, "Lino's Pad." In Steve Isoardi's book *The Dark Tree*, another sister, trumpeter Danyel Romero, recalled the deep contribution Hill made to the Ark: "Linda was like a big flower... She was connected to the spirits or sources of the unseen world that most of us were not dealing with." While Linda certainly became an important figure for women in the organization, Elaine Brown, Black Panther activist and close friend of the bandleader, also found in Horace a man who was equally at home in women's company. "He was the most non-ego-centric man you could imagine and a real friend to us as women," she says fondly. "He didn't have that macho thing but was very protective and was a man in every sense of the word."

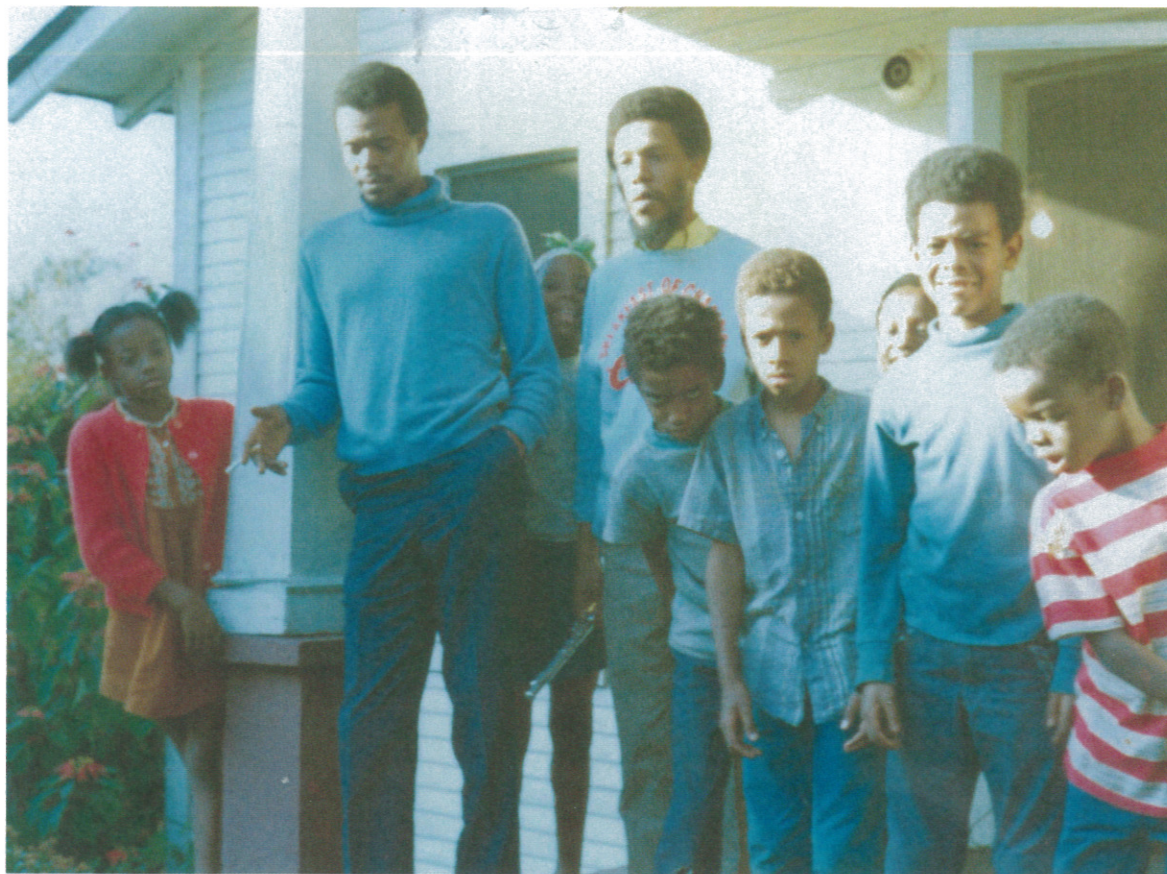
While a family was most definitely being developed at Linda's place, it was not one based on any traditional American model, with the mysticism and bohemian atmosphere enhanced by the constant use of herb. "We were just wild," recalls saxophonist Arthur Blythe. "It was like we were part of that hippie movement, but we were like Black hippies. It was experience with drugs, music, freedom." Elaine Brown certainly concurs with this image for the man who later became known as "the Phantom" because of his late-night drop-ins on friends. "Horace smoked weed all the time," she laughs affectionately, "and I mean all the time."

By the mid-'60s, the Ark had become a powerful vessel, sending positive vibrations right across South Central L.A. In *Songs of the Unsung*, Tapscott recalled how he sought out freethinking band members who might bring something new to the Ark: "I started by looking for different kinds of personalities who were involved in the music. And every person I brought in was an outsider, so to speak." One of those outsiders was a young conguero named Taumbu, who rode with the Ark throughout the '60s. "I was living in Venice Beach when I was invited to the UGMA house," Taumbu recalls. "It was [a place] for real resistance artists. At the time, I was a fugitive of the L.A. police. Also, I was homeless... It was about Blackness and Black music without compromise."

Alongside the dedication to the family was an even stronger commitment to defend the community at

(top) Horace Tapscott and Arthur Blythe, 1980. (bottom left) Nimbus recording session for Billie Harris's *I Want Some Water*, 1983. Billie, soprano sax; Horace Tapscott, piano. (bottom right) Horace Tapscott and Cecil Taylor, circa 1979. Photos by Mark Weber.





Horace Tapscott and Will Connell at Will's house, 1970. Photo by Michael Dett Wilcoats.

large. "It was a revolutionary period, and all the cats and chicks were revolutionaries in the true sense of the word," Taumbu explains. Invoking the mantra of the great Fela Ransome-Kuti, the Arkestra trombonist Lester Robertson proclaimed, "This horn is a weapon, and I'm prepared to use it like that."

This was a time of some serious thinking in the Black community. "I got exposed to Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm, and Dr. King," Horace told Steve Isoardi. "There were certain Black men out there who seemed to be working for the betterment of the whole country. We were feeling that if we were together, we'd be an asset to our environment." In "dashikis and them long naturals," the group spoke to their people with a stark, direct truth. "We were also talking against the things that were happening in the community, like police brutality," continued Horace. "We were into that early... People weren't used to standing up to the police and talking about respect."

The tensions that had been steadily building reached a critical point in the hot summer of 1965. A Black man named Marquette Frye was taken into custody following a routine traffic offense. The riots that began on August 11 and lasted for six days claimed thirty-four lives as nearly four

thousand people were arrested. On May 7, 1966, two cops shot and killed Leonard Deadwyler, an African American man rushing his pregnant wife to hospital. As mirrored in the Rodney King incident almost three decades later, the police were cleared of all charges.

The response from the Black community was to get organized, as music became a tool for change. "The [Arkestra] just happened to be hooked up with the revolutionaries, that's just the way it was," Tapscott told Bob Rosenbaum in an interview. "There was Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, the cats, they'd come around and sit around while we'd rehearse and talk about the music." Elaine Brown remembers how culture and politics were inseparable as resistance to the brutality grew: "We were just all there experiencing the same things; in it together with Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. It was a moment of time where all the forces lined up for the oppressed; so we had no choice but to find each other. There was a tidal wave and you could either get in it and swim, or not, because everyone was caught up in *something* if you were in Los Angeles at that time."

After meeting Horace following her breakdown extenuated by wrongly prescribed drugs, Elaine Brown soon

"This horn is a weapon and I'm prepared to use it like that."

—Lester Robertson

experienced the protective arm of the bandleader. "Horace starting taking me home and making sure I wasn't gonna get killed," she says. "Watts, at that time, was a dangerous place with a whole lot of people with a lot of rage and carrying guns. I was so out of it, I needed to be taken care of, and that became a big part of our relationship."

The authorities were not oblivious to the power of music in the community, as Horace recalled to Michael Slate in an interview in 1996: "You know, the police blamed the Arkestra for the riots. See, in 1965, we was still on 103rd Street at this coffeehouse, a place called Watts Happening... We were out there rehearsing and playing and having classes. We had all kinds of people in these classes. We had people from the Panthers and from all these other kinds of groups... All these people came together when the music was being played." This coffeehouse became the focal point for the Ark and the cultural renaissance that followed the uprising. "All the artists got together, you'd talk about the times, and there was lots of space for performance," bassist Wilber Morris recalled to Isoardi. "All kinds of things: acting, dancing, a big stage for the big band. That was exciting... It was like things are getting better—revolution time."

The increasing attention of the authorities was evidence of the music's revolutionary power. "We got raided by the FBI one day," Horace told Michael Slate. "We were rehearsing and we had thirty-five cats in the band. Upstairs was Rap Brown and some of the cats from back East... At the rehearsals all the time we'd always see these cars on the corners following different cats."

Elaine Brown thinks Horace was drawn into the political fight as much by circumstance as design. "You've got to remember that the Watts uprisings were a direct response to the inequalities that Blacks suffered in America," she says. "By the time Martin Luther King was killed, there were one hundred cities that exploded. So any kind of Black militancy or Black consciousness or anything that disturbed the status quo was being crushed. So Horace was certainly swept into the whole thing that the FBI was trying to destroy."

While he was most definitely a part of the struggle, Papa,

as Tapscott was affectionately known, was not a complete supporter of the Panthers' revolutionary tactics. "Horace was always trying to impose with people not to be violent with each other," says Brown. "He was very patient and always wanted to bring everyone together in a non-antagonist way. Even though we had differences, to have that kind of cool person in this rough area meant he was very respected... He was able to show people that we had a greater interest in being united than being divided and that we had to know who we were. And music was his contribution in helping bring us together around something that would build, and not destroy, community."

Horace Tapscott's connection to the Black Panthers, in the eyes of the authorities, was sealed by a collaboration with Brown, who, as well as being a party activist, was an aspiring singer whom Horace had helped nurture. *Seize the Time*, the 1969 LP the two friends recorded together with members of the Ark, was a powerful cry for liberty and, according to the newspaper the *Black Panther*, contained "the first songs of the American revolution." Elaine Brown recalls how the recording came about: "John Higgins and Bunchy Carter were killed at UCLA, and I was there. It was very traumatic, and I wrote a song about it. Then I sang at the funeral of Bunchy Carter, and the head of the party, David Hilliard, came down and said he wanted to hear my songs. So we went off and got a piano, and he liked one of them in particular ['The Meeting'] and said, 'That's gonna be the Black Panther Party national anthem.' So next thing I knew, he was saying I had to make an album."

The recording sessions for this heavyweight LP were closely monitored. "It was a really rough time," remembers Brown. "The police would come outside the studio, and they would stop people; it was horrible. Because they didn't want this album made. But Horace was totally unmoved by this. Whereas some people would have been full of bravado, he would just focus on the music."

While music became a healing force in the community, others looked back to similarly deep-rooted ancestral traditions. "We had a lot of spoken word," Tapscott told

Isoardi. "People would come in and talk about how they felt about getting beat up by the police that week. They would talk about what happened and how it happened."

The Watts Writers Workshop was the brainchild of screenwriter Budd Schulberg, who wanted to create a forum from where out of "hopelessness might rise a Black phoenix." By the mid-'60s, acclaimed writers like Stanley Crouch and Quincy Troupe were regulars at the workshop, as was Ojenke, one of the first poets to join the UGMA.

Like Tapscott, Anthony Hamilton had experienced the full force of Central Avenue before moving to Watts, where he took on the name Father Amde. Becoming the assistant director of the workshop, he went on to form the mighty Watts Prophets (alongside Richard Dedeaux and Otis O'Solomon), whose contribution to the Black arts is often overlooked in

playing John Coltrane's 'Equinox.' To play in that Ark was like having the angels and the ancestors behind you. It was like being home, and you were in a place where you were supported and loved."

It is both a sign of the Ark's fierce reputation and Horace's unwillingness to compromise that during one of their most serious periods they only recorded one album. The Horace Tapscott Quintet's *The Giant Is Awakened*, released on Flying Dutchman in 1969, was one of the most powerful releases on this label. Talking about the title track, which he wrote in 1964, he told Michael Slate: "The Giant Is Awakened' was about the people here in this country, and how things was happening to Black folks in this country, and we had to wake up and start to protect and defend and push forward our beliefs and our thoughts and our dreams."

"Then you see them dancing down the street hummin' to 'Dark Tree,' it puts a lump in your throat. I mean, cats eleven to fifteen." —Horace Tapscott

favor of their East Coast counterparts, the Last Poets. Another key L.A. poet to rise out of this scene was Kamau Daáood, who explains how out of the workshop were born two related but distinct schools of spoken word: "The writing of the Watts Prophets was more folk based and came out of the tradition of rhyming couplets and that kind of thing, which is why they became known as the godfathers of hip-hop. And then you had another style, which came out of jazz-based or sermonic traditions and improvisation, which was where Ojenke came in. But one thing that is also important to remember is, you [had] all these cats down in Watts reading Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche, so you had that mixed up with all the militancy. So the movement was not only very oral, performance based, and radical, but also [deep] in terms of imagery and surrealism. It was very deep."

While the Watts Happening Coffee House became a regular focus for the poets to join with the Ark in performance, Kamau Daáood's first experience of working with Horace came at another important venue for the collective. "They used to have regular festivals on Malcolm X's birthday at a place called South Park," he says. "Horace had heard my poetry, so he asked me to come onstage and read before this fourteen-piece orchestra with the horns

The album also included "The Dark Tree," which had been part of the Ark's set since the early '60s. "Then you see them dancing down the street hummin' to 'Dark Tree,'" Horace recalled to Bob Rosenbaum about how during the insurrections the song had become a rallying cry right across South Central. "It puts a lump in your throat. I mean, cats eleven to fifteen."

Despite critical acclaim, Horace was unhappy with the end result of *Giant* after being kept out of the final mixing process, and it was the nearest he would come to a major-label affiliation. The whole experience increased his mistrust of an industry that would never fully embrace his genius. Unfortunately, unlike other collectives like Strata-East and Tribe, the Arkestra's self-reliance did not expand to a record label. After years of neglect by the industry, however, the Arkestra was eventually taken under the wing of a six-foot, blue-eyed German American named Tom Albach, whose Nimbus label would release the group's finest work. "When he came down into the ghetto, he came down there and said what he had to say, and he got the respect of the cats," Tapscott told Isoardi. "So he's got a niche in the Arkestra that no one White has ever had. He came and told his story, and he took care of a lot of the cats... He helped some cats



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The Community Cultural Arts, Freedom Suite, Directed by Horace Tapscott

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Luther Keyes, poet

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(top) In concert at South Park, late 1960s. Photo by Kamau Daáood (bottom left) "Angela Is Happening!" flyer, circa 1970. (bottom right) Leaflet for Arkestra concert, 1976, courtesy of Kamau Daáood.



Horace conducting at South Park, late 1960s. Photo by Kamau Daáood.

get back on their feet, that kind of thing. And all those guys never forgot that, you know.”

Despite the loss of longtime Ark members such as Arthur Blythe and Butch Morris, the mid-'70s saw the Ark reborn under the leadership of a heavy multi-reed player by the name of Jesse Sharps, who had first encountered the Arkestra at the Coffee House in 1966. Other long-standing members, such as bassist Roberto Miranda and alto saxophonist and future bandleader Michael Session, joined Sharps as the Arkestra reached one of its most creative periods. The late flautist Adele Sebastian explained how one of the Ark's songs, “Quagmire Manor at 5 AM,” captured both the mood of their new home and the dedication to their art that Jesse Sharps's discipline had instilled in the group. “I believe that song pretty much tells the story of what the ‘Quag’ was like around five o'clock in the morning,” Sebastian said. “You could find musicians somewhere in the house playing, blowing, letting it all out. And that was beautiful too.” Thankfully, Tom Albach was around to capture the creative energy of one of jazz music's great ensembles, releasing the albums *The Call* and *Flight 17* in 1978.

During this period, the Ark was tapping into a cultural force across the nation. “You had all these different

movements of artists coming together to form collectives—from St. Louis to Chicago,” Kamau Daáood recalls. “So it was about artists of like minds involved in developing their art and, at the same time, having social consciousness and a sense of responsibility.”

Throughout the '70s, the Arkestra had played every last Sunday at the Immanuel United Church of Christ on the corner of Eighty-fifth and Holmes. The invite had come from Reverend Edgar Edwards, and the Arkestra was an integral part of the church minister's community outreach program. Recorded between February and June 1979, *Live at I.U.C.C.* (including saxophonist Sabir Mateen's killer spiritual jazz track “Village Dance”) is a heavy testament to the freedom and fire of those sessions.

The four Arkestra albums recorded for Nimbus were powerful ensemble works, with the collaborative spirit enhanced through the delegation of writing duties to members of the group. This freedom also led to Ark members branching out to record their own albums on Nimbus. Bassist Roberto Miranda recalls how Horace guided members to reach the peak of their creativity: “Horace was as much a musical mentor as one can be when one leads by love and example. By that I mean, he let you

know he loved and respected you, and he played at a very high artistic standard. He led and inspired in the same way. However, if one did not meet the artistic standard he set in his example, he did not discourage them. He smiled that great smile of his and somehow let you know he believed that if you worked hard, you could do it.” Tapscott's music had always reached beyond the African American jazz heritage to Latin, Caribbean, and African music, and that was certainly reflected in Nimbus releases of the period such as Miranda's mighty Afro-Latin LP *Raphael*.

Another musician drawn to the collective, Lagos-raised percussionist Najite Agindotan felt the comparisons between Tapscott and another of his own great mentors. “He reminded me exactly of what Fela [Kuti] did,” he says in Isoardi's book. Arriving in L.A., Najite found a city with a long heritage of community percussion playing stretching back to late '60s when the drumming circles started in Venice Beach. A veteran of that scene and Ark member Conga Mike recalls what it was like to be creating the rhythmic foundations for the group: “It was a new experience for me, playing with all those horns. I dug it. Horace hardly ever gave me any specific direction except to keep playing. A lot of the tunes lent themselves to traditional conga rhythms; some didn't. It was new for me, playing those tunes with more than one time signature, and those odd time signatures—11/8 and 7/8 and 5/4. I figured out some cadences to play, and kept counting.”

While the '80s were a relatively quiet period for the Ark, with a number of members passing on (most notably Adele Sebastian, whose death still hits members hard) and Reaganomics tearing at the social infrastructure, it proved a transitional time for Horace both personally and musically. Following a near-death aneurysm in 1978, he returned to be viewed by many as a different player capable of even deeper music. The solo piano albums he released for Nimbus entitled *The Tapscott Sessions* captured a man at the height of his art and sit there alongside solo releases by piano legends such as Randy Weston and Abdullah Ibrahim. Future Arkestra singer and now member of Build an Ark, Dwight Tribble recalls catching one of these solo sessions. “I couldn't believe what I was seeing and hearing,” he says. “It was so intense by the time he finished, I was exhausted. I had never seen anybody give that much of themselves.”

The ongoing slashing of social support and the flooding of the area with crack cocaine to support the contra army in Nicaragua had left the Black neighborhoods of South Central blighted like never before, as gangs and the LAPD

did their best to destroy the area. It would take the televised beating of Rodney King to reveal the truth about what had been happening for years, and to finally tip the community over the edge. “We saw it coming,” explained Tapscott to Michael Slate about the 1992 uprisings. “Being here in the community, you saw it from the ground up and you saw where it was going. Eventually it boiled over. And I thought the same as I did in the Watts Rebellion. The reasons why it happened still haven't been addressed correctly.”

As South Central burned, a creative haven took root around the Black arts enclave of Leimert Park, as young and old came together to make sense of the madness. “Lester Robertson, my dead partner, used to say, ‘First there's shit and then there's the flower. There's concrete and then there is some grass growing out the concrete,’” explained Horace. “We at the point of how do we keep these things, hone these plants up to the point where they blossom into something out of this rock, out of this shit that we in. We in a lot of shit, we in a hard place right now with our youngsters and our oldsters together.”

The World Stage, set up by Kamau Daáood and veteran jazz drummer Billy Higgins, and Fifth Street Dick's coffeehouse, the home of Vietnam vet and homeless jazz-and-coffee-obsessive Richard Fulton, sat just a few doors east of Ben Caldwell's KAOS Network, which became the breeding ground for the legendary Project Blowed sessions at the Good Life Cafe. It was only a matter of time before the jazz elders and the hip-hop generation found a common ground. Out of these sessions came the rap group Freestyle Fellowship, whom Horace would go on to both play with and record for. “It was like this,” says the group's lyricist Aceyalone. “When the Good Life was going on, it began around eight [and lasted] till ten, but then it starting flowing over until the early hours. And we would take our sessions over to Leimert Park and start jamming with the live bands, so there was a whole load of going back and forth.” One of the elders and now grandfather to Aceyalone's daughter, Dwight Tribble recalls the energy of the times. “It was so electric every night of the week,” he says. “I just loved to go and stand on the corner and breathe the air and see what beautiful surprise would be happening today, and also to stir up the water a bit myself to be a part of a family.” Helping make the links between the generations was Jamm Messenger Divine (JMD), who became something of a linchpin for the scene. “The natural connection came through jazz musicians around my way like JMD,” Aceyalone recalls. “He was one of the producers

who put together the jazz and hip-hop."

Horace described the importance of these creative interactions to Michael Slate: "We bring all the guys together, all the age brackets and all the different kinds of people... And these Black youngsters here have learned how to be together without killing each other or stabbing each other... The system says that's not good. We don't want you strong."

Kamau Daáood was another figure who had experienced the reactions within the arts scene during both insurrections. "One of the things that connects what happened in '65 and '92 is that when people feel they are oppressed, and they rebel," Daáood says. "After they go through those major explosions, they are wide open. Their emotions are wide open, and their minds are wide open, and they need to express themselves. But more importantly, they need to listen to others and to try and make sense of the things around them. So it brought people out to talk to each other and made the community look at itself. And that had happened during both uprisings. So now in '92, you had veterans of the previous time, in the midst of young folks experiencing that kind of situation for the first time in their lives. So with the World Stage and Fifth Street Dick's and all these venues, you had this creative form of the exchange of ideas. It was pretty much the same thing really, the poets and the hip-hop guys, because they were both spokesmen and reporters for what was happening at the time. Soaking up and spitting out what was happening around them."

In a mirror of what happened thirty years before, the focus of the LAPD moved on to the arts. "I wasn't surprised at all by the police invasion that night when they attacked Project Blowed," explained Horace. "It told me and proved to me that the race was getting stronger, coming together stronger. You had all these youngsters on the corner rapping and talking the way they do. Fifty feet away from them was some older guys rapping and one hundred feet from them was some senior cats rapping. All these people out here together, the grandfathers and the grandsons."

Aceyalone speaks for the whole Good Life scene when he talks of the lineage he and his crew became part of. "Leimert Park has been falling into different meanings for different generations," he says. "I think, for our generation, which was the first youthful generation to use Leimert Park and the jazz heritage as an example, we really embrace all that. So our generation knows the World Stage, it knows about Billy Higgins, Kamau Daáood, and of course, it knows about Horace Tapscott."

Back in the '80s, Tapscott recalled what it meant to him to be working across the generations. "I wanted Black people to appreciate their contributions to the culture here. I mean people all over the world knew the contributions Black people made but the Black people here didn't even know; it was kept hidden from them. Today I think these young rap artists got to know the contributions they make. It's to the point today that these young rap artists look to cats like me, in my age bracket, to always remind them that rap is the grandson of the blues. The music started a long time ago. It began when we were first brought here and contributions have been added to the music ever since then."

Visit the corner of Los Angeles where Horace spread his community ethos during nearly forty years, and speak to anyone who met him, and you get an idea of both the power of the man and the loss to the community that his death in February 1999 brought. And looking back on what Horace set out to achieve, one can only feel a sense of the great debt that community owes to their Papa. "I had to get the truth told whether it was accepted or not," Horace once said. "That was my life's thing... It's part of having a stake, making a contribution to this country. We came over here as slaves. We didn't ask to come here but we here now and we made a contribution in spite of all this crud they put us under. We have to be proud of what we did, but we have to know what it was we did. It's very important for me that our people, the young people, can dig themselves and the contributions they can make."

For a man who touched so many in the community, it's fitting that one of those he saved gives the most moving and concise summary of Horace Tapscott's legacy. "First of all, he wrote extraordinary music in the tradition of Mozart and Ellington," concludes Elaine Brown. "While his music has not been heard widely, when people are looking back at the history of jazz, he is in the pantheon of the greats as both a musician and composer, and that has to be recognized. He was a genius, in being able to get all those people together in the orchestra and to inspire all those great people. And then as a man, he was inspirational to a whole lot of people, including me. He was a facilitator who helped people find their way. Anyone who met Horace Tapscott has to say that they could do some stuff that would be good and meaningful to humanity. There was no way you could be around Horace and not be transformed into a better person."

Andy Thomas is a London-based music writer currently working on his first book, *The Spirit's in It*.

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