

Jazz, Creativity, and Imagination: A Conversation with Dr. Bill Banfield and Vaughan Bradley-Willemann

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KATHRYN YORK (PRODUCER): Hello, and welcome to The Big and Little Podcast. My name is Kathryn, the Museum's podcast producer and digital content manager. And today, on the show, I'm excited to introduce two talented musicians to discuss jazz, creativity, and performing music for children. First, I'll let my colleague Vaughan introduce herself. Hello, Vaughan.

VAUGHAN BRADLEY-WILLEMANN: Hello, listeners. I'm so excited to be here today as the guest host for this episode of The Big and Little Podcast. My name is Vaughan Bradley-Willeman, and I'm a staff member at Boston Children's Museum, where I lead the Arts and Social Impact team. I also have a background as a musician and have been playing the violin since I was about three years old.

For the past few years, I've had the honor of performing as a member of the Imagine Orchestra, which is why I'm thrilled to be here today to interview Dr. Bill Banfield, founder and artistic director of Jazz Urbane Collective's Imagine Orchestra ensemble. Before we hear from Bill, let's take a listen to a piece called "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy", performed by the Imagine Orchestra at the Institute of Contemporary Art here in Boston.

[IMAGINE ORCHESTRA, "MERCY, MERCY, MERCY"]

We just heard a clip from Bill Banfield's Imagine Orchestra ensemble performing an arrangement of the song "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy." And now Bill is here with us to share some insights about jazz, music, creativity, improvisation, and performing for children.

BILL BANFIELD: Well, hello, Vaughan. Great to be here with you. That was "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," a Joe Zawinul tune arrangement of mine with the fabulous Imagine Orchestra of which you are a part of, and it's good to talk to you in this way. That's just a well-known standard, but we try to bring a little bit of a modern interpretation to it, and we had a great time. That was at the ICA in Boston, that performance.

And so, yeah, I love that you asked about the imagined notion of an orchestra because we don't call it a big band. Traditionally, in jazz, you have a big band, but some of us have called our big bands orchestras because of the way in which we bring the different families of music instruments together. You are a violinist, and you play in a section in this jazz band, essentially, that has a string section. But we have our woodwind players, who play clarinet and flute, and we have bassoonist sometimes. And so it does really just swap out.

It's kind of a hybrid group. And I call it the Imagine Orchestra because I have a bigger-- those of us that have these large ensembles, we can imagine different ways that it sounds and different ways that it connects to people. And I think to bring those two worlds together, the kind of traditional big band and the

orchestra, is the way the American orchestra essentially should be because it's made up of the American, kind of, popular music impulses, along with the symphonic chamber thing.

So I think this is a great thing to your other question for kids because, well, kids have such beautiful, wild, wonderful imaginations. They don't distinguish the same way. They don't bifurcate things and put things in these boxes. They just hear sound. They hear violins. They hear the drums. They hear the bass. They hear whatever, and they just get excited.

VAUGHAN: Speaking of performing for children, Imagine Orchestra had a performance very recently for a Juneteenth celebration at our KidStage theater, where we also performed "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy".

BILL: Yeah.

VAUGHAN: Can you talk to us a little bit about the significance of introducing jazz music, specifically to children?

BILL: Yeah, I think they naturally go there. So I was really excited when we came to be in residence at the Children's Museum because that's really a great audience. And your audiences at the Children's Museum are wonderful because you've already gotten them thinking about seeing science and art and culture and all these things and these ways. So when they hear a group like this, they automatically go there with us. And they're participatory in the way in which they listen, but they also engage in a wonderful way, which I really enjoyed what we're able to do there with the kids.

And when you're playing jazz as an art form, its basic premise is that these are masterful musicians. So when you see them, you go, oh my goodness, this is going to be good right there. They're playing the music that's written or arranged for them. In my case, as a composer, I get to be like Leonard Bernstein or Quincy Jones or Beethoven or somebody or Maria Schneider. I'm a composer who has my own orchestra.

So they see me and the musicians there doing that. And in the sections that are open, where there's a solo section, they hear the musician doing their imaginative thing with the music, which is-- we call it improvisation, but it is really a kind of a bringing together of your own sense, just the same way you talk. You look at a book. This is a book called Jungle Book. And what does the person say? I like this book. It's a great book. I read such and such page, and you know what? So you go on, and you talk about it. That's essentially what musicians are doing in jazz. They're taking the constructive elements that define the music. You're not playing any old thing. You really have to talk about, the book, the Jungle Book because you read it. You know it, but you can talk imaginatively about the ideas that you see coming together.

That's essentially what's going on in a jazz kind of scenario with an improvisation. The musicians are trained musicians. They know the chord changes. They know the melody. They know the rhythms. And they can hear what the other musicians are playing. So they just continue that conversation at their moment that they do a solo.

And for young people hearing that, they get it. They go, wow, the person is doing music in their own way. But it makes sense because the musician is called upon to interpret the elements of the thing that makes the whole there, in this case, the book, but in this case, the music. They're commenting on it. And kids get it.

VAUGHAN: That's a really great explanation. So having a mix of some structure and then also leaving space for imagination.

BILL: Well, you just cut my whole long-winded explanation right to the core. Yes, that's exactly what's going on. Thank you very much for that. [LAUGHS]

VAUGHAN: And how about thinking about improvisation for children or adults who maybe don't have a musical background? So you gave the analogy of books.

BILL: Yeah.

VAUGHAN: What are some other ways that people already think imaginatively and use skills of improvisation in, maybe, their daily lives?

BILL: Well, I think the notion of improvisation does have a psychological, social, cultural, spiritual kind of notion to it. I think the thing that really got people thinking about improvisation was in the first instance was some people call the father of this, that is Louis Armstrong, because he recorded, as a young man, these incredible feats of virtuosity over and above the recording that was done.

And everybody in the world-- no, I mean, the European world said, oh my goodness, America has come across something. And we have one of the first geniuses in American music, and that was Louis Armstrong. And so people heard that and that became the way in which everybody took their moment to solo or to do their own thing.

And he also did that not only in the trumpet by extending the range, by extending the character of, now in an orchestra, you have the individual voice. Usually, you hear an orchestra band, it's just the section, trumpets. But in this case, Louis Armstrong stands up and he plays. And everybody goes, oh, he's the star. He's the young genius. Then Louis Armstrong starts to sing.

[SCATTING]

And he mixes in a few of the jazz notes from his solo in his vocal. That becomes vocalese, and it becomes scatting.

[SCATTING]

That whole rhythm, that whole freedom of expression, that begins to tie into the whole notion of America being this place where freedom is explored. Now, there's a whole-- we can go on historically about the notion of freedom. If you're talking about Black Americans, I mean, the whole idea of slavery is a part of this thing.

You're talking about freedom, but you're also talking about freedom for other people and around the world who also embrace freedom. So the notion of democracy and freedom and the right to say what you believe and how you live, those are important elements in the human narrative.

VAUGHAN: Yeah, I love the connection to exploring this notion of freedom in so many multidimensional ways and thinking about the history of-- or the context of history.

BILL: Yeah. So jazz gave everybody an opportunity to explore the notion of freedom, and it made our music in America distinctive in the world because musicians weren't just called upon to play on what they saw on the page. They were also called upon to play what was inside their soul and inside their heart.

And when people hear that, they go, yeah, that's him and it's also me too.

And so everybody gets to share in this experience where the music doesn't have the same boundaries anymore because people are allowed to play inside of those ideas. I think that's where the idea of improvisation becomes a real celebratory thing that welcomes everybody in.

VAUGHAN: How might the goals of a performance for an adult audience, where they may have more of that contextual understanding, change for a performance for kids, where maybe they don't have that background or these are bigger topics for them to explore?

BILL: No. I think they get it, like I said from our original conversation. The adults need that sometimes because they've been so restricted. Wear this on that day. Go to work at that time. Do that in order to do that. So we, in our acculturation, become very rule-oriented, sometimes in a box that's made by somebody else. But musicians and poets and dancers and singers and painters, when kids see that, they see the freedom of their soul right there in the colors and the way in which the rhythms dance before them.

So I think young people are a little less inhibited by those strictures that are restricting. They just see, oh, man, that's a beautiful painting. You and I go, oh, that color doesn't match with that texture and the title doesn't match what the aesthetic is. It's like, what? But it's paint. It means it's free. It's beautiful. It's about the soul. You can see butterflies in that mess of purple and yellow you see. There's butterflies there because you can see the wings.

A kid sees the wings. Adults go, what's that blip on the paint there? Kids go, don't you see it, Dad? That's a butterfly. You know what I'm saying? So they naturally come with the equipment of interpretation and life and fulfillment and the joy of exploring the world, which we, as adults, sometimes lose that. So I love kids for that reason.

VAUGHAN: So why don't we switch gears for a little bit and talk more about Jazz Urbane Collective? We'd love to know more about the inspiration behind this collective forming and how that supports these larger goals of music and access and music education.

BILL: Yeah. The Jazz Urbane Collective is-- the Jazz Urbane Imagine Orchestra is this great group you play in, and you've been so wonderful as a musician and someone who's in education and someone who is in arts and all these things. That group is filled with people like you. And that group, the idea is that we create an ecosystem of artists and educators who exchange ideas. It comes through our music, but it also is a part of our mantra when we share it with our audience and younger people. This is what we do.

At some point, when I was here, I start to talk to people about if we could create a space for that. And I think, at the time, it was Esperanza Spalding. It was at Berklee, when I was a professor there. She was a younger professor there. And I said to her, why don't we do a thing on Monday night and invite some folks? And it turned into an exchange. This is before she really became, really, the big star she is now. She was in town, and we started this series at a local club called Daryl's.

And it turned out to be intergenerational. And the symphony members were coming every Monday night. The Berklee faculty, students. You had these new stars like herself. There was Christian Scott. There was Grace Kelly. These are all really, really well known stars in music now. But in those days, which was not that long ago, we were doing this experiment. And I called it the Jazz Urbane because I thought that we were doing it in an urban area, and urbane meaning sophistication and a mix of various eclecticism, and I called it the Jazz Urbane.

Well, it caught on. And the New York Times began to call our night one of the best jazz nights in the East Coast, blah, blah, blah. And I decided, OK, we're going to call it the Jazz Urbane. And then I decided, well, let's record this. And we made a record out of it, and I got a really wonderful producer, George Duke, to produce it. And we invited all these stars. At that time, it got to be Grace Kelly and Terri Lyne

Carrington, and it goes on. Christian Scott, all these jazz stars, who came on the project called the Jazz Urbane.

Well, we recorded this record, and it got out there. And that became the recording aspect of it that then became the record label Jazz Urbane. Now it's like-- I don't know-- 15 records or something on Jazz Urbane. There's dozens of songs in the catalog. And that became the Jazz Urbane And soon, we're going to have the Jazz Urbane Cafe here in Boston, which is the building that's in the Jazz Urbane Cafe, where now we can actually host musicians. It's a restaurant and a club, so people can come hear the music. And we have international acts there, local acts. So that small experiment that we started with the Jazz Urbane at that small restaurant in Boston has become now an international label, a branding, and it has its own orchestra. And soon, it'll have its own space, a club where those musicians can play and interact with other musicians. And not just musicians, we're hanging art in there in different ways, and we're doing art installations. We can do film in there. We can have kinds of community things going on so that we can bring the kids on Saturdays.

This is what I love about the 501(c)(3) part of it. We can bring kids to the Jazz Urbane Cafe, which is going to be in Nubian, and do cooking classes on the weekend or we could do music things for the nonprofit on the days that the musicians are not playing during the day. So I think it creates an ecosystem where young people, like, we come over to the art museum. Well, we could bring a bunch of kids from the art museum over to the Jazz Urbane Cafe.

And I think that's the kind of exchange that I think this partnership you're talking about has grown into. It becomes a community house, and we're able to make this connection with everybody. And I think that's what the vision of arts and education is all about. You have to be able to reach across generations and styles, and you have to be able to reach into communities to do this thing of education and cultivation of arts, which we all believe in.

VAUGHAN: It's really, really exciting to hear the plans for Jazz Urbane in Nubian Square, particularly the Saturday programming for youth. I don't think I was aware that was in the works, too.

BILL: We're having a great time building this, and I think it's because, usually, when these things are done, Vaughan, they're done by other people. I love all the people, but when I just think about-- when I say other people, I mean administrators and corporate, which corporate is great, but whatever. But this is done by the musicians. The musicians said, hey, we love playing music. We love what it does for other people. We love what it does for kids. We remember what it was like to be a kid and get excited about playing music.

Why don't we create a space and an ideology, basically, a kind of aligning ourselves to the values of music and what it is to think about the inner soul and what it is to think about transformational acts that change people's lives? And since we believe the arts and poetry and music and education do that, why don't we create a space and a happening that everybody knows that's what we are about?

And when they see that and hear that, we hope that will be transformative to the people to hear that. And they'll have a good time, but they'll tell other people about that. I think that's what culture and education in the arts allows us to do. It allows us to tell the good story, and that's what we want to do.

VAUGHAN: Mm-hmm. And do you also have hopes that this new venue would bring in artists from other cities or some of the great musicians you mentioned that were at the beginnings of Jazz Urbane like Esperanza Spalding and Christian Scott? Can we expect to see talent also like that coming back to Boston?

BILL: Yeah. Those ones you named are required, by the way.

[LAUGHS]

They're required to join again in their family band. Yeah. Yeah, I mean, we have local acts and national acts. The other thing about a lot of venues in other towns is they only do national acts. But the Jazz Urbane Cafe is about the local acts because Boston is a place for jazz, in particular, where Duke Ellington's great-- some of his great performances were from, as you know. And everybody came to Boston, but there were all these great artists.

And so we had, in this city particularly-- it was a big city that because of its education, because of the Boston Symphony that had international acts, we also had these schools in New England Conservatory. That's my Alma mater. It's the New England Conservatory, which is the oldest music school-- one of them, next to Oberlin. One of the oldest conservatories in the country.

And so I came here as a youngster to learn music at New England Conservatory to go to college. So you got all these people who are coming here to study music, and some of those people stay. I was a Boston Public School teacher, so I stayed in Boston. I went away but came back. But the point is that I got my training here, and immediately, I went into the schools. I was gigging all around town.

There are numbers, hundreds of students, young people, and adults who stay in Boston. They may be from here, but they also would have come here and decided to stay and contribute to this great city. So there is a local scene, and we have to support the local scene and local artists, including painting artists and the other artists, too. So I think the Jazz Urbane Cafe-- I not only think. That's why it's been designed. It is going to be a stopping ground for all artists, painters, and people who are thinking creatively about the world and performing. So the local artists that are here create a scene. They hang out together. They have tea there. They have their dinners. Blah, blah, blah, whatever. And there's local performances Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Thursday. But on the weekends are national acts, so all the people you know that you can name in jazz.

But also, for us, jazz does not just mean just the jazz style. It also means a larger term that means we could have Hamilton on the stage. We could have a small theater. We could have comedy. We could have other art forms, spoken word, and other kinds of Bluegrass music on that stage too because, for us, jazz means the larger American family of all musics and that eclectic, very sharing, non-categorical way. We mean jazz that way, too.

So I'm envisioning for us, our programming team, is thinking about the ways that we can have a very, very robust programming agenda that includes educational kinds of seminars, films, as well as the music programming that goes on the night, in the evening. So that's local artisans as well, international and national acts as well.

VAUGHAN: That's pretty incredible, creating jobs and supporting this economy here, locally.

BILL: I was actually invited to the White House with a number of folks, including our mayor here, Mayor Wu. And one of the things that she talked about is how Nubian Square is going to become one of those empowerment cultural zones. That means culture and employment and growth of the city and growth of the neighborhoods. I mean, that's what arts need to do. They really do.

And there were a lot of sessions at that White House, NEA kind of conference that we all attended that had to do with cities partnering with local arts and artist groups to create spaces where people can see

that when you create music, you create employment, and you create places where people can come and be moved.

But people are buying food. They're coming to support the artists. The people who build these things and who take care of them, that's employment. People who manage these places, that's employment. So when you have an arts zone like that, it also increases the way that that zone or that area serves the community.

And that means in economy. Absolutely, it means a kind of a social and an economic economy. I mean, obviously, economic economy. But I mean, the point is that economics are a part of the economic engine that's there, but it also means these other things too that are attractive to people.

VAUGHAN: Definitely. And as our job at the museum, as arts educators, it's also really important for us to highlight other career paths in the arts and that there are places that students and young people can aspire to actually perform and practice their art. And also, other musicians who want to get into museum spaces or into these public institutions and understand that there are pathways into performing here, too.

BILL: Yeah, I love your idea of curating pathways. You really do need these spaces where people can come and see things and be in community learning. That's why a museum is so cool. It's like this place of artifacts and ideas that are collected so young people and other people can come and see those things and have a chance to engage those ideas and those artifacts.

I love museums. I just live in museums, so I'm a real museum geek. I just really love how the curators are able to bring things together that are fascinating and educational and the programs you all have there at the Children's Museum is just great.

And I think that's really the role of an institution like a museum. It is an arts education, cultural, kind of, codifying place that you actually create codes for how people understand the world that they live in because you've captured those things. And you've put them out there in a way that people can explore and ask those questions and have a better picture of the world. So I'm so excited to be a part of this with you all.

VAUGHAN: As are we. We are very much looking forward to Jazz Urbane being coming back to the museum.

BILL: Yes! Let's do it. Let's do it. Let's do it. Well, can I ask you some questions? I mean, is this part of it? I want to switch the hat here. I mean, that's so exciting because that's what we hope people move to. You have a curriculum that, actually, is a pathway to those questions and those themes that you raised. When you're there at the museum, Vaughan, and you see hundreds of kids come through, how does it make you feel that you know that you've provided a space for them to do those things? Does it give you some joy?

VAUGHAN: Oh, absolutely. I mean, I know, personally, the benefit that I've had from engaging with music formally or informally. And to see someone light up when they see an instrument up close that they've never seen or make a connection between something else they've seen outside of the museum and what we're showing them, it's definitely fulfilling to see that.

BILL: Yeah. Yeah. When I'm there, I hear all these sounds.

[HUMMING]

Because it's the Children's Museum.

VAUGHAN: [INAUDIBLE]

BILL: Yeah. It's a lot of wonderful, happy sound. I think that what we should be doing is talking about, creatively, how we can continue to do more of that. And I think a museum and these kinds of sites like this, places, allow people to be reminded of how important it is to come together to do this. So I'm glad you're talking about it. It's great.

VAUGHAN: Yeah. What you're saying makes me think of, at the Museum, we call them habits of mind, which are mindsets that we try to cultivate in our visitors--

BILL: Wow.

VAUGHAN: --especially around music and participating in music and the arts, thinking about resistance and persistence and taking risks. Those are all sorts of qualities that we try and think about in our programs.

BILL: Habits of mind. Wow. Wow. Habits of mind. You know what is interesting for us? We'd love to know, and I'm glad I get to interview somebody at the museum. What's your daily or weekly or monthly take? How many kids are coming in and out of your space?

VAUGHAN: That's a good question. I mean, I think that we can reach anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000 visitors in a day or a couple of days.

BILL: Wow. That's crazy.

VAUGHAN: Yeah.

BILL: Yeah. I think that notion of 2,000 young minds that you get to engage, I mean, that's tremendous. I mean, they get to go back home and tell their other kids' friends to come back the next time. But you can imagine what that does to so many young people who get a spark.

See, all you need is a spark. A spark can change the world. A couple sparks. You got 2,000 sparks up in there. That's a global, universal change. You know what I'm saying? It's possible for people to be reminded of the value of human life. That's very important. So that you see 2,000 young people and inspire them that way, that's beautiful.

VAUGHAN: And sparks is a good way to put it, thinking about that many visitors coming through a space and maybe the contact that you have with them is fleeting. Maybe it's two minutes. Maybe it's 30 minutes, but it's relatively brief. So how can you program something that will stick with them for a variety of backgrounds, people coming from a variety of contexts?

BILL: Yeah. And one other question. So when you all are thinking about the year, how do you develop the themes that actually define your year, your semester? I mean, is it you just talk around the dinner table there or the conference room table? This year, we're going to look at happiness, habits of happiness. I mean, how do you come up with these themes? What's that process like?

VAUGHAN: Definitely, a lot of conversation.

BILL: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

VAUGHAN: I'd say our summer programming, when we are open seven days a week and we have a summer camp, there's a team of people that come together to think about what the theme for the summer is going to be. You know, summer of imagination, summer of creativity. And then, individually, we have different content teams within the programming and exhibits department, and we'll each have our individual goals and trajectories for that year.

BILL: Wow.

VAUGHAN: For the Arts and Social Impact team, a lot of our goals are around access and working with artisan groups, who are really community embedded, so that we can bring that voice into the museum and also reach a wider audience.

BILL: That's beautiful. That's very exciting. When can I come back to the museum?

[CHUCKLES]

VAUGHAN: We got to make it happen. This fall, absolutely.

BILL: Yeah. No, I want to come back not just to be there to do the music. I want to come back and just hang out with you all and see all those wonderful kids being excited about all the things you're doing there. That's an exciting place. That's great.

VAUGHAN: Yeah. There are a lot of things happening in the museum.

BILL: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

VAUGHAN: So thinking about our audience for this podcast being largely parents, caregivers, and people who are very invested in the lives of children, what advice would you give to them to help cultivate that spirit for children in their lives?

BILL: No, no. You asked a very important question in a time when music and arts has been reduced. It's been reduced. I mean, music is background or blast. Someone said to me the other day, someone I was interviewing said to me, Bill, music is only on in the background or on blast. On blast meaning it's just loud all the time. You walk into some place, there's loud music. It's on blast. Nobody's listening. Or it's so quiet in the background, nobody hears it or cares. It's just background.

But I think the concert scene, jazz, in particular, but also classical music and any time you have a folk singer that sits down with a guitar and they're just singing a song, people sit and they listen. And I think that what we need to be doing to teach everybody again is how to listen because when you listen to music, you also listen to the stories in the songs. You listen to each other. You listen to how people envision and experience the world, which is what a poet would ask us to do.

A poet asks us to look at our inner souls and ask us, what does our inner soul tell us about the external world that we're in? That's an existential question, but it's also a question that's about human value and human meaning. So when art does that, it's doing its best work. And you get that in music. You get that in poetry. You get that in painting.

And so I think kids listen in that way, but also, adults that are training kids or bringing young people up, they need to teach them that, when you come to a concert, you're listening to some individuals who are sharing their ideas, and you have to sit there and listen. It's not for running around. You could run around to it, but sometimes it's meant just to sit down and hear the lines of poetry or see the painting or see the dance. And music is the same thing.

So I have a new record out, and it's called Take Time to Listen. And I got that from my dad, who's 100 years old. And one day, he said, I want to talk to you. And I said, well, Dad, yeah, I'll talk to you, let's talk. He said, yeah, I'm willing to talk to you, son, but you have to take the time to listen.

And it hit me like a ton of bricks from 100-year-old saying, listen, if you want to waste my time, you better take the time to listen. If you want to sit down, let's talk to each other. And I think that that's the thing that we should do when we engage young people is teach them to listen again and to listen to each other.

VAUGHAN: Well, I think you sort of answered my next question already with the beautiful answer you just gave, which I was going to ask, where is a good starting point or entry point for a young person who

wants to engage with music but maybe doesn't have access to an instrument or doesn't know where to start?

BILL: Yeah. No, I think that's the thing. See, I'm just three years older than you are. Just three years older than you. And when I came up-- you're laughing. Why are you laughing? It's true. We had music in the public schools. You didn't have to go to the symphony to learn to play an instrument. You went to school, and you heard the band. You say, oh, there's a flute. I want to play that.

And kids, generally, they self-select. But in that self-selection, there are geniuses in that group. See, that's the problem in today. We look at all these kids, oh, these wild kids. Because they're young, they got all this energy. And in that group is an Einstein. And in that group is a Hillary Clinton. And in that group is whatever politicians and great men and women. There's a great James Baldwin and a great poet. There's a great dancer, an opera singer in those kids, but you missed it.

But when you got music, they self-select because they have a sense of what they want to do. So I came up at a time when you got public education. There were music. They got music teachers. So there's violin and flute and band, blah, blah, blah. So today, the kids don't have that in school, unless they go to a private school or a public school that has those programs, and there are lots of them. Don't get me wrong. There's great public school programs with great music teachers teaching today. I just went to a couple last week. That was amazing. The strings and blah, blah, blah.

But I think that that's what, I think, adults have to do. They have to let kids hear the music. See, the other thing that we have a lot today is we have the internet. So young people can actually go and look at a band or look at some instruments and go, wow, I think I want to play flute or clarinet or piano or guitar or bass. And I think that's really great that, today, young people are trained to go to the internet.

If we walk with them and say, here, there's all kinds of documentaries and concerts that they can watch. They can hear a symphony orchestra. They can hear a big band. They can hear a rock band. They can hear a grunge band or a country and western band or a chamber group. And so they can say, I think I'd like to play that music. And then I think it's important for parents to know the community music schools. If you can't get that in your public school, there are community music schools in every community, Boys and Girls Clubs, the community music schools where maybe it just costs \$5 for the year. Maybe they've got some kind of a wonderful program that kids can get involved with. So instead of going to do other things, the parents can take them or the kids can walk down the street and go to a music lesson and learn how to play guitar or whatever. So I think that's the thing. I'm a real advocate of music education, that the true way to get people back to hearing each other and listening again is to teach them music.

VAUGHAN: Well, before we wrap up completely-- we talked about this a little bit with the future of Jazz Urbane, but what else can we expect to see from the Imagine Orchestra?

BILL: Well, I'd like the Imagine Orchestra to really become a staple music organization in Boston. I remember when I was here, like I say, those few years ago when I was an undergraduate. You're not laughing yet. Good. You weren't laughing. That's good. That's good. That's good. But we have big bands. I studied with a guy named Pat Hollenbeck. He's still around. And my great teacher there that was a big band director was a guy named George Russell. George Russell, the great jazz conductor and orchestrator, who worked with Miles Davis. And there were others. I think it was Jackie Byars. There were all kinds of big bands that were in the city.

I had another teacher. What was the name of that big band? Man, I'm going to get in trouble for forgetting his name. But there are three or four or five big bands, and they were experimental. They were a big

band, but they had electric guitar or synthesizer or they had various orchestral instruments. We don't see that as much anymore.

And since I'm a composer, I'm like Beethoven or, I said, Maria Schneider or Duke Ellington or somebody. I get to write the music for the musicians. Like, you play. I'm always trying to get you to do solos. We could do solos. We didn't talk about your solos. I try to get you to do solos. I should write you out some stuff. But here I am, able to write you out stuff to play on these songs because you and I have a musical relationship and a friendship. That's the way these should be.

I want people to see that, that kind of way in which you know the music is freshly coming out of the experiences of the musicians. So I would like the Jazz Urbane Imagine Orchestra to become a staple orchestra just like the Boston Symphony. That sounds ridiculous because they've got 200 or 300 years. Let me see. How old is the Boston symphony? 1890.

But the point is, is that, if we have those ensembles that are known by the public, then people will know, oh, I'm going tonight. I'm not going to see the Boston Pops. I'm going tonight to hear the Jazz Urbane Orchestra over at the Jazz Urbane Cafe over in Nubian. Or if the Jazz Urbane Cafe Orchestra, the Imagine Orchestra, plays in the public schools or plays at New England Conservatory, everybody knows that that's the orchestra that has this imaginative mantra, aesthetic, and people. That's what I would like. So I would love the Jazz Urbane Cafe to grow so everybody goes there to hear music and see entertainment and also be there to have great food and have a great time in the arts. But I'd also like our artists in the Jazz Urbane to be known locally as being a source of that. And that those groups are going out into the community and play. So I would love people to see the Jazz Urbane Orchestra, the Imagine Orchestra, much more frequently.

VAUGHAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Well, I'm excited for that, too, because I'm looking forward to playing with the group more.

BILL: Yay!

[APPLAUSE]

Yay, yay, yay.

VAUGHAN: And one day, improvising.

BILL: [LAUGHS]

Yes, yes. And you were telling me the other day-- we get to put this on tape, Madam Producer.

VAUGHAN: [CHUCKLES]

BILL: That Vaughan, actually, is a singer as well. Did you know that?

VAUGHAN: I have sung. I have sung.

BILL: Yeah. Yeah. So we need to hear that voice, your voice of your instrument on the violin, but also the voice of your natural singing talent as well. We should feature you on some vocal pieces. That would be great.

VAUGHAN: Yeah. Things to add to the list for the future of--

BILL: Yeah, right.

[LAUGHS]

Well, thank you so much. It's been such a joy being here with you, Vaughan, and with your wonderful audience and your wonderful, wonderful producer. And thank you so much for having me.

VAUGHAN: And thank you so much, Bill, for sharing this time with us. And before we go, where can listeners learn more about you, Jazz Urbane or Imagine Orchestra?

BILL: Well, I think, these days-- and this is not a plug. You actually asked, but this is what this is all about with the social media. Go to jazzurbane.com, jazzurbanecafe.com, or billbanfieldmusic.com. And all those places, but particularly, the jazzurbanecafe.com. Jazzurbanecafe.com. You can learn more about, in the coming months, more about the Jazz Urbane Cafe, what acts are going to be there, what's going on with the new development of it, and we can stay in touch that way.

VAUGHAN: Great. Well, we will add those links into the show, and we're going to close out with some music.

BILL: Great!

[IMAGINE ORCHESTRA, "MERCY, MERCY, MERCY"]

KATHRYN (PRODUCER): Thanks for listening to this episode of The Big and Little Podcast, and thanks to PNC Bank for sponsoring this podcast. Be sure to like, comment, and subscribe, and stay tuned for more.

[MUSIC PLAYING]