11 *Aiee!* The Phantom

Horace Tapscott

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 Daáood

Eulogizing Horace at the postfuneral repast in Leimert Park, Kamau Daáood asked the assembled mourners, "A great tree has fallen. What will hold up the sky in its place?" Horace's passing left a void in the African American community and its arts world. For almost forty years, undeterred by whatever problems arose within the community, he was a continual and visible artistic presence, who created and guided the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra and UGMAA, performing before thousands and attracting hundreds of artists to support a movement focused on their community in which the only certainties were great music, passing on a rich tradition, and few financial rewards. Without fanfare or thought of personal material advantage, he immersed himself in its life confident that he could contribute something of value, gaining satisfaction from the myriad personal, artistic, and social connections he forged with those around him. As he concludes his autobiography, "I found my part to play and I fit in, just my part and not as so-and-so fit in, or as Coltrane did it. At the end I want to be able to say, to show, that I lived in the community and I appreciated it, that I wanted to keep it up and I wanted to be a part of it, because I loved people and I learned to love life."[1]

In an increasingly market-driven society dominated by selfish individualism, Horace's achievement is all the more remarkable, while simultane-

ously raising a number of intriguing questions. During its brief residency at the Shop in the late 1970s, the UGMAA Foundation issued a brochure of some two dozen pages outlining the purpose, personalities, and programs of the organization. As executive director, Horace was portrayed in coat and tie, seated at a desk in front of a paneled wall, pen in hand, and hunched over a stack of papers.[2] It is a most uncharacteristic image. One can only imagine the photographer's skill in somehow maneuvering Horace into such a traditional pose of institutional leadership. Yet, if this role was so out of character, then how did the Arkestra survive over a period of almost forty years without a dominating leader or leadership and lacking strong organizational structures? How did Horace keep it together and replenished, when there was rarely any money involved? Why were artists continually attracted to it and willing to make the necessary sacrifices to be part of this movement? The answers lie in aspects of his character and lifestyle choices, in the quality of his musical art as composer, pianist, and band leader, and, perhaps most importantly, in the role he forged and the example his life set as a community artist, exemplifying an ethos and aesthetic that resonated throughout his community.

The Man

The success of the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra can be partly attributed to certain aspects of Horace's character, especially his charisma, "cool" demeanor, integrity, enduring loyalty to those around him, and to his lifestyle choices, which embraced both elements of bohemianism and a commitment to family. These are not the sum total of Horace, and in many respects he was all too human, as some of his lifestyle choices reveal. But the combination of these characteristics was potent and gave him a revered status within his organizations and throughout much of his community.

One of the words most frequently used by UGMAA members to characterize Horace's appeal is "charisma." Despite its overuse (along with "legendary") in the jazz literature, there is simply no other word adequate to the task. "The men loved him. The women loved him," notes Marla Gibbs. "He definitely had it. He definitely did. That smile!" Arthur Blythe concurs, "He had that charisma. He could get support from the musicians. He had a way of getting it without it having to be about economics." During his tenure in the second UGMA house of the 1960s, Tommy Trujillo saw Horace at rehearsals a few days each week. "He was like this big godfather of the movement. Everybody respected Horace, and he just had this presence and this aura. This was when he was young and he was like bad. He was just a heavy

motherfucker. And everybody was, 'Hey, whatever you need, Horace. You need us to blow up the fuckin' City Hall?' It's a good thing he was just a musician." And to Danyel Romero, "He was a magnet, what can I say. Everybody came. . . . He made things happen in the unseen world. He made something out of nothing and that's godly. That's what it's all about. We all have that potential, but I've never known anybody like Horace." Among the players who arrived in the 1970s, Fuasi notes, "He stood so tall and looked like he was ten feet tall. When he walked into a room, he commanded such a presence, everybody was like, 'Hush. Horace is here.' "

Feeding this charisma was the manner in which he related to those around him, his integrity, and his refusal to speak badly of anyone, which was strongly felt by members through the years. According to his sister, Robbie, "One of the things that impressed me most about Horace, even as he was a little boy, was that he would not say derogatory things about anybody. He always found something good to say." He usually professed to be the lucky one in another artist's company. According to Najite, "He told me that he was lucky to play with me. For somebody of that great caliber to feel lucky that he's playing with me, imagine how that makes me feel. Man, if there was anything I could do—I would have given a life, you know." Friends and musicians also speak of his integrity and selflessness. According to Arthur Blythe, "I might not agree with some of his conclusions, but he would be genuine. I've never known him to be false." Reggie Andrews, director of the Locke High School music program and an heir to the tradition of Samuel Browne, agrees, "Basically, he was committed to the spirit of the music and what music does to culture, what it does to community. He was genuinely concerned about those things. . . . He was real. There was game involved in Horace. There was no fronting or posturing for the wrong reasons."

His unmistakable "cool" (again, no other word for it) demeanor was another compelling trait. Horace talks in his memoir of his temper and his struggle to master it. Indeed, he could be intimidating, and there was never any doubt about his resolve. According to Fuasi, "He stuck to his word, and he was a strong person; didn't take no shit from nobody, and would throw down. I mean physically throw down with anybody. And everybody knew it. He was a tough cat." However, within the realm of the Arkestra and UGMAA, there is scant evidence of him ever becoming angry. He personified "cool" in its original connotation, defined by Amiri Baraka as being "calm, even unimpressed, by what horror the world might daily propose."[3] According to E. W. Wainwright, "I'm telling you, man, I can't remember Horace ever raising his voice, but everybody stayed in check. He kept every-

body in check. He'd raise that one eyebrow and tell you what to do and what was happening, man, and you did it. And the smile, what a smile! You know, he had the gift." "He got that keyboard smile, that's what I call it," offers Watts Prophet Richard Dedeaux. "Man, when he flashed those ivories, he just sucked you right in. I never heard him yell. I never heard the guy yell, just always talked at a very calm pace, low key." For Michael Session, who would succeed Horace as leader of the Arkestra, and other members, it was more than just an attitude, rather a deeply spiritual quality:

> Horace was one that was touched. He was an angel-like person on the planet. I even sit up and think about him now. The way he was with everybody. You would think he was so beautiful to you, but he was that way to everybody. I can't ever remember a time he was pissed or frowning. He was always so open and warm and smiling. You'd know some things troubled him, but he never showed it.

Michael was touring Europe in the late 1980s, as part of a Horace-led quartet. After a few performances, the bass player's complaints about the rhythm section escalated, and he asked that a friend of his replace the drummer. Michael watched as the bassist confronted Horace:

> Horace just sat in his seat and listened to the cat. Then he calmly said, "Hey, I understand. You're not getting along with the drummer? I understand; some cats just can't click. If you don't want to play, you don't have to play. We'll find another bass player or we'll play without one." I mean it was like no sweat. Me, or anybody else, it would have been like confusion in the band. Horace just sat there. No problem. "You can go. I'll work it out." He just smoothed that right over. I never forgot it. My boy stayed; you can believe he stayed. He didn't make him feel alienated, nothing. Everybody was still cool, no problem. He had a way of cooling everybody out, just making everybody feel special and loved.

Horace's support of his drummer without antagonizing the bassist attested to his deep loyalty to those around him. The social bonds in the Arkestra, UGMAA, and among his friends overrode narrowly musical concerns. Not long after Rufus Olivier joined the Arkestra in the early 1970s, he was participating in a recording session for *Sweet Jesus, Preacher Man* under the critical eye of the producer, who was not pleased to have a high school student at the session. "The guy literally stood behind and over me, watching me play the music. I'll never forget, something happened, and he stopped it, saying, 'This kid missed a note' or something. Then Horace said, 'No, he was exactly right. You misread it.' Then silence, and the guy just left and went back in the booth." At the beginning of his collaboration with the

Arkestra, actor/director Ted Lange questioned Horace about the condition of one of the musicians.

> There was one guy who was a big heroin addict in the Arkestra. Sometimes he couldn't see straight, but he would show up for the rehearsals. He would get his shit together for the music. I said, "Horace, this guy is fucking out of it, man." He'd say, "Don't worry. He'll be all right. Look he's got problems, but he's a great musician. He knows how to make music. I'll worry about the musicians. You just worry about the play and the actors." And I said, "You got it."

Horace's friendships were many and strong, and each person felt special because of that bond. Bob Watt enjoyed the casual encounters: "We'd run into each other at times and just start laughing. Not hello, how you doing, slap hands, but just start laughing, just glee and joy that we ran into each other, such a special, unique feeling." While Vinny Golia was leading his Large Ensemble at Hop Singh's in Marina del Rey, California, to celebrate his fortieth birthday, Horace and Cecilia walked into the club. "During intermission, Horace came up and played 'Happy Birthday' and took it out. Man! But the coolest thing was they sat with my mom and dad, who had come out. It was like old home week. I was almost crying. It was just amazing." Bobby West recalls, "The last eight years I've been doing a lot of traveling, and, no matter what, Horace would take an interest in what I'm doing, where I'm going, how am I faring. He never told me, but I always knew that he was proud of me." Amina captures this quality: "He had so much caring, and he had so much love in him, that everybody got individual love and attention. Even if we were all in the same room together, you could feel that individual thing."

While these characteristics explain many of the close personal relationships that provided much of the social cement within the Arkestra over the years, Horace's lifestyle choices also fostered his larger-than-life persona. His life embraced two dramatically different, seemingly incompatible paths. He lived as a bohemian, serving his muse and reveling in his artistic freedom, as well as indulging in the excesses of a rootless artist. Yet he was also a dedicated family man, bearing the responsibilities of a husband and father and advocating the importance of family. Though his life was not without problems and, at times, discord, managing both roles successfully contributed to Horace's stature.

As much as anyone could, Horace followed his own drummer, regardless of artistic boundaries and social conventions. Poet and novelist Eric Priestley saw him as a true bohemian, "somebody that draws a line in the sand

and says, 'My time is my time, and I'm going to spend it being who I am. I'm going to spend it doing my art.' There are very few people who can do that, who actually draw that line because it's real difficult. Horace lived like that." According to Stanley Crouch,

> He was a totally original person. I've never met anybody like him. You couldn't think, "Oh, he's like so and so." He didn't remind me of anyone. He had his own sense of humor; he had his own carriage. He was always the same way from when I first met him to the end. He was clean and he had fun, too; he had a lot of fun. He was also amazing in that way. He was really a special person, a very dignified guy, very down to earth, extremely intelligent, and very proud, but not in an obnoxious manner, very great pride, but it was a soulful kind of pride.

Horace's bohemianism included aspects of his life lived outside of social conventions, involving varied relationships with women, a lifelong penchant for marijuana, and many sleepless nights and late-night wanderings around South Central Los Angeles. In many ways he was elusive, recalling tricksters, rambling musicians, and other such figures from African American folklore. In 1996, Arabesque Recordings released Horace's CD *Aiee! The Phantom*. The title track, based on a piece Horace composed in the early 1970s for the film *Sweet Jesus, Preacher Man*, was a reference to an image that had come to be associated with him, a reflection of his bohemian, underground reputation and his penchant for late-night ramblings, his sudden visits to friends and music venues, and abrupt disappearances. "He'd just appear out of nowhere, talk for a while, and then he'd be gone, just gone someplace," Charles Owens recalls. Frequently, he would go days without sleep and was liable to turn up at any time, day or night, signaling friends by tapping out the beginning of "The Dark Tree." According to Donald Dean, "At night time, he'd come by my house and 'beep beep beep beep-beep beep.' He'd want to take a ride. And we'd go around to everybody's house, talk a little, and then go on—the Phantom." Arranger and copyist Marion Sherrill placed a lamp in his study and turned it on to signal Horace whenever he was up late. Choir member Amina Amatullah remembers those nights when "the phantom would call," a low voice at the other end asking,

> "What you doing? You gonna be around?"
> "No, I'm gonna be a square."
> "Well, I'm gonna be a square, too, baby. I be there at ten."
> "Okay." . . .
>
> It would never be for a long time, because he didn't stay anywhere long. And it would always be when the moon was full, around midnight, for years. I'd look up and see the moon and say, "Oh, the phantom will

probably be here." Sure enough the phone would ring. "What you smokin', baby?" And he'd come by. Maybe he'd just been at Leimert Park or Catalina's, and he'd put in the tape and we'd listen to it.

While he eschewed hard drugs and alcohol, Horace indulged in his favorite herb, marijuana, which he smoked religiously. He enjoyed telling the story of Louis Armstrong and Lionel Hampton turning him on in Las Vegas, and of Armstrong's extolling the medicinal benefits of weed. "I've been smoking reefer since I came out of the womb, and I'm gonna smoke reefer all the way to the tomb" was an Armstrong mantra that Horace repeated to the end of his life.[4] When supplies ran low, there were urgent phone calls. According to Donald, "That was one of his favorite things; he had to have it all the time. He'd call you up no matter what time, three or four in the morning, 'May Day! May Day!' " A stick was always at the ready. Not long after earning his private pilot's license, Bob Watt received a call from Horace asking to be taken up. Soon he was taxiing down the runway with Horace and two other UGMAA members settled into the passenger seats of a small plane.

I pushed the power in and as we go down the runway, I say, "This is it. You ready?"

Horace said, "I'm ready."

I rotate and as soon as we get the nose off, I hear *[inhaling sound]*. You can imagine in such a small space and he's passing it around. I look and I say, "Oh shit! What are you doing?"

"I always wanted to do that. I couldn't do it in a jet, but this is private. This is all right, isn't it?"

I said, "It's private and it's much smaller than a jet. And we're all going to get high together."

He said, "You, too?"

"Yes, no shit."

"Oh. You ever flown?" *[referring to getting high]*

"No! Now you did it. Now we can all experience what it's like to fly high, even me, and I ain't never done it!"

"You gonna be all right, Bob? What do you think?"

"I don't know. I can't tell. I've never experienced this. I feel okay." The plane was full of smoke. . . .

It was something, and I thought, "Only Horace."

Horace's relationships with women also took him considerably outside of social convention. During the family's early years in Los Angeles, his sister, Robbie, recalls, "All the gals were crazy about Horace. I could never get to use the phone because they were always calling Horace." Wendell

Lee Black, one of Horace's earliest friends in Los Angeles, marvels, "The girls were after him. They were after Tap. . . . And all these girls would bring him food. I don't know what it was, but they'd feed him. Everybody wanted to take care of Tap." As an adult, the combination of his personality, bohemianism, and artistry proved irresistible to many women and Horace indulged. He recounted the affairs that resulted in children in his memoir, but it was an ongoing aspect of his lifestyle. Donald rolls his eyes: "I got stories to tell you, but they're mostly x-rated. And a lot of women loved him. Boy—whew—I knew all the mothers of his kids, and watched his back on many occasions. I mean—whew—He'd come down here and slap me upside the head: 'Doubles, don't say nothing!' He was a character." And through it all, Horace emerged relatively unscathed. Jon Williams concludes, "You know a guy is true blue when women can't get mad at you."

The bohemian phantom was also committed, however, to his family, one of the reasons he decided against a mainstream career in jazz and another, final reason for his appeal to those around him. Growing up in a mostly female household, Horace claimed a particular appreciation for women. "He spoke often of his mother and his grandmother," according to Amina, "and of the compassion that he felt from them and the strength he got from them as women. When a man can connect to women's strength and women's pain and women's everything, and then hold it without it being a threat, hold it in very, very high esteem, this makes for a very compassionate person." Eric Priestley explains that even in his talks with local gang members, Horace held out the importance of family and heritage: "He didn't appreciate the gangs and the violence. He didn't like that at all. These guys would ask him where he was from, and he would say, 'I'm from Robert out of Mary.' He was a beautiful cat."

While in junior high school, Horace met Cecilia Payne, who would become his wife on July 5, 1953, shortly after he enlisted in the Air Force. A few months later, their first child, Renée, was born. At the age of nineteen, Horace became a family man and for the rest of his life shouldered his responsibilities for them, while they provided unwavering support for his career. Donald remembers, "His wife knew him well and stuck by him. I don't know a woman in the world that stuck by a man as much as Cecilia stuck by him. And he loved her very much. There was no way in the world he would ever leave her." Elaine Brown muses, "This one had to be like a saint. She deserves everything, because he would never have been able to maintain a life. . . . I loved Horace. I don't mean that I would have liked to marry Horace, because who in the hell could live with Horace? That's why I said

this woman deserves a medal. . . . It's like living with Mozart or something. Who the hell could live with these people? You have to be a saint."

The Composer

If Horace's personal qualities provided an essential cement for the Ark, it was the sound of the Arkestra that drew artists and audiences and inspired many to become part of this movement. First exposure to Horace was usually through the music, via recordings or live performances in South Central Los Angeles, and his authority also rested on his compelling talent as a composer, pianist, and bandleader. His musical corpus contains work that is technically sophisticated and challenging, that captures aspects of African American life and history, and celebrates the legacy of African culture, while simultaneously disclosing the universal aspects of these experiences. In combining these elements in his work, he offered to hundreds of artists an irresistible opportunity to participate in the celebration of their culture, to gain a deeper sense of self, and to share their history with an international audience.

Some of the more unorthodox and appealing aspects of Horace's compositions stemmed from his attempt to capture the sounds, images, and feelings of his community. Just as Noah Purifoy, John Outterbridge, and other assemblage artists created masterpieces from found objects, many of Horace's complex rhythmic patterns were drawn from the motions and emotions of the community, from the cadences in his environment. As he observes in his autobiography, "I might see somebody walking and think what time is that. Every day, you see different patterns and rhythms going on, and it's just paying attention to what's around you."[5] He concludes, "Every time I write something, it's about what I've been a part of or seen. If the community changes, then so goes the music. That's just the way it is. I can write about red roses on a bush like everyone else, because we have them here. But it's where those red roses are growing that is really what my music is about."[6] Noticing a different pattern in an individual's gait or the complex rhythms of a group sauntering down a street could lead to a composition in unusual and sometimes rapidly changing meters. Otis O'Solomon observes, "Horace heard music everywhere. Everything was music, the raindrops, the footsteps, everything. 'Did you hear that?' And then he'd go and play it." Horace's relationship to his community was organic. "That's all I write about, is my neighborhood, consciously or unconsciously. That's what I play about. It's not a thing I ever work on, it's just what I do."[7]

Consequently, the music is raw, a rawness that reflects the streets. According to Adele Sebastian, "The value Horace brought to me was the importance of that preservation of our music, keep playing the music and keep it in its raw, natural state."[8] To Fundi Legohn, "That's Horace's style. The hood is raw, and this music is coming from the hood." Billie Harris sees the complexity of everyday life: "Horace's music is more like life is. It's full of changes. It's full of different moods and timings. It's closer to how we are, to how we live. You can set up a lifestyle to go smoothly a certain way, but you didn't bank on a headache coming up or a storm. All of those things be in his music! That's the only way I can explain it. He was writing life."

The harmonic and rhythmic complexities in his compositions pose challenges to even the most proficient reader. According to vocalist Dwight Trible, "They always went somewhere you weren't expecting them to go. . . . Even if you did the same material, it was still different. Nothing was ever, ever the same. Even if the guys played it the same, once Horace started playing, it always took you someplace else." On the vocal lines, choir member Denise Tribble reflects, "I can understand why in the past a lot of the choirs didn't really try to do some of those harmonies. They're difficult. The harmonies that he has in the songs are so close. It's not four-part harmony like a barbershop quartet, where it's so easy to hear. Sometimes altos are singing as high as the sopranos and the two notes are just a shade different. It's really difficult to sing." Time had to be spent gaining a feel for the flow of a piece. At times, Horace withheld the scores, instead teaching from the piano as the band and choir vocalized the music, a method used by composers like Charles Mingus, renowned for his difficult charts. Fritz Wise reflects, "I'm convinced more and more, I don't care how good you're supposed to be, you just can't come in and play that stuff. . . . When I'm listening to somebody else, I can tell that they don't have a handle or a clue as to what it is or how they should be going about doing that stuff, because they use real conventional approaches toward it. And that shit ain't conventional. You have to come with an open mind."

The sense of community and environment, as well as African American and African tradition and folklore, permeates Horace's writing. Robbie started noticing how special his music was by the 1960s: "Floyd Dixon is a low-down blues man, but it was Floyd who began talking about how great Horace was. I then began to take notice." It was during the 1960s that she became aware of "the blackness, even though his music has always had a kind of universality. If you know some of the chord progressions, I could hear sounds of blackness." To non–African American members, the feel was unmistakable. According to Joshua Spiegelman, "The sense of warmth, of

the continuity of history, of what the African American spiritual is about, the sense of history in terms of African American history, the sense of community, of support, of a moving forward, of an evolution with a great sense of love and respect, nurturing—man, all that was in his playing. Whenever I played with him, my sense of that was much more clear and much more pervasive and wide."

Aside from his focus on African themes in such pieces as "Lumumba," "Thoughts of Dar Es Salaam," and *Ancestral Echoes*, the freedom, range, and expansiveness of Horace's music are in many ways also an expression of African culture. James Newton hears the African elements,

> not only in the polyrhythms that he would use in his grooves, the modes that he would use in the structuring of the songs. When he would use the title Pan Afrikan, that was a very apropos title for him in the sense that he was ahead of the loop, in the sense that he was putting together music of many different elements of the African diaspora long before people had that kind of knowledge. It just wasn't Sun Ra of the West Coast. It's very different and very unique, and it reflected his leadership and his vision.

According to Bob Watt, the more varied and communal aspect of music in African cultures is especially manifest in Horace's conception of an artistic experience, giving it a powerful emotional force.

> Western culture thinks that everything has to be thought, and that which is thought is high art and more technical. In Eastern culture and African thought there is a connection, mind and body in a universal context, instead of this separation and hierarchy. There is so much of a sense of feeling. Horace understood black people and how black people could lock into that, which I think is a wonderful thing as a human trait, to have this feeling, to be able to feel together and have this whole thing together. Luckily, this is not lost, because Western thought believes you have to think everything out in order to do it, that you can't trust the feeling, and that the best way to make sure that you're feeling is to think. It sounds almost insane.

Much of the African feeling came from a large and firm bottom sound, a constant in Horace's writing. From his earliest years he was drawn to the sound of drums. "Since I was a kid, I've had that feeling—expectant, ominous—about drums, and I've built a lot of tunes off that drumbeat."[9] It was not unusual to have an Arkestra performance with two or three drummers, as many as three or four congueros, two to five bassists, and a tuba. Horace wanted to feel the ground move. One can only imagine the result if he had been able to realize his dream of amassing a large Arkestra for a performance in the Grand Canyon. As he told Michael Dett Wilcots, "I just want

to hear that sound. I just want to hear it." Founder and leader of the Vinny Golia Large Ensemble, Vinny was strongly influenced by this aspect of Horace's art.

> I saw him at the Lighthouse with three basses once. I never could fathom why he was doing that. Then when I started writing for the large group, the first thing I added was a tuba, then another bass. It became pretty bottom-heavy. It's indicative of listening to those people who really like bottom stuff. Mingus is one guy, and Horace is the other guy. So I always felt a great affinity to that because he has that really dark, left-hand thing, which is like mystical, like a mystic thing from Egypt. It is remarkable. And that's how you identify him, almost immediately.

In pieces such as "The Giant Is Awakened," "The Dark Tree," "Thoughts of Dar Es Salaam," and "To the Great House," the drums, basses, and/or low brass carry an ostinato that anchors the compositions. Nate Morgan observes, "Horace's writing, man, he could be as deep as anybody could ever want to go, like in 'Thoughts of Dar es-Salaam,' which is a solemn piece. You have this ostinato rhythm going on underneath that never changes, but then you've got a million things going on top of it that just evolves and evolves and evolves." Even when dealing with older material, such as favored tunes from the bop era, Horace found a way to heavily root the composition, while still exploring unique harmonic extensions. According to Vinny,

> The first time I went to see him in the church [IUCC] with the Arkestra, the bottom of it really stuck out, like a real underpinning, foundation-wise, especially with John Williams, who played with Basie. His anchoring was really something, almost like the pivot, so that even the basses could move around. He always had a guy like Roberto [Miranda] moving around, but he always had this pivot. His music moves like that, in big slabs and I really like that.
>
> The other thing about it is that I liked the melodies. When he played bop things at these breakneck tempos, like "Oleo," these things almost went against the left-hand thing. So you have to open them up. It's too dark on the bottom, so you need to open the tune up for it to really stretch out. If you have too much density in the bottom, then something has to give because the notes aren't clear. So he found a way to extend them, but he didn't extend them up. He seemed to extend them down. So in order to do that, you have to open that tune up more in some manner. And he found a way to do that with those kinds of tunes, rhythm-change tunes and stuff like that.

Horace's melodies have a similarly ominous feel, reinforced occasionally by lower-pitched instruments carrying the melodic line, as with the tuba

and basses in his arrangement of the spiritual "Motherless Child." Jesse Sharps remembers, "I hear a lot of Monk in there, a lot of everything with these melodies, just strange, but they fit and they're real dark, haunting." Horace's unorthodox instrumentation initially posed problems for Will Connell, the Ark's copyist in the late 1960s, but it soon alerted him to broader arranging possibilities:

> Normally when you set up a page, like with a regular symphony, you have the flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, then you have the horns and then the violins. With a jazz score you'd probably put the tuba at the bottom, because it's the lowest instrument. But with Horace, the tuba might have the melody. Then it would be funny to look all the way down the page for the lead. So I evolved a way of writing where I'd always put the lead on top, whoever had it, then whoever had the second melody. . . . That taught me a lot of the fluidity of instruments and broke me out of that stereotypical way of looking at and handling instruments, because Horace's handling of instruments is totally free.

Horace routinely adjusted arrangements as the Arkestra's personnel changed. Butch Morris, who has developed an improvisational approach to conducting known as "conduction," drew some of his ideas from Horace's handling of shifting ensembles. "I think he can challenge anybody else's right to be a great composer, but I think he was a great ensemble player, and that's the way he wrote, like a great ensemble player. He was a great accompanist, too. He knew how to accompany people and support them. And I think that's what I learned most from Horace. How to create an ensemble construction that can help support the composition itself."[10] As the personnel of the Arkestra changed, the sound reflected those changes, giving the band a rejuvenating freshness. Rufus Olivier muses,

> I do new music all the time, and the music we were playing back then was just as good or better than the stuff that's coming out now. It's just amazing. Horace was so far ahead that I'm almost spoiled, because the [San Francisco] Opera has been commissioning a lot of new work. Last year we did a new work and André Previn did the score. To my ear, the score was old. It was just old, but it shouldn't be. This year [2000] we did a production of *Dead Man Walking*. It was a total hit, but the music was old again. . . . [None of this] is as new as the Ark was. It was fresh; it was new; it was experimental.

Even those steeped in earlier musical styles found much to admire. Wilber Morris recalls, "Benny Harris used to love him, little Benny Harris, who wrote 'Ornithology.' We were very good friends . . . and I used to take

him over to listen to the UGMAA band all the time. Now here's a staunch bebopper that loved this music as it was tending toward the outside. He used to say, 'Oh, it feels good.' " For many artists, performing with Horace created that special feeling. Father Amde recalls,

> I have never—and the Watts Prophets have been with some of the greatest musicians in the world, in fact we were making an album with Bob Marley when he died, Quincy Jones, we did things with him—but I've never went to heaven except with Horace. I would take off and be in the music. There was something in Horace that came out in his music, but it was Horace. There was nothing like doing poetry with that Arkestra when Horace was there, and I was doing it in my early years in South Park, in Watts. There was nothing like it. Believe me, nothing like Horace Tapscott, and I do mean that I would get on a music ship to heaven. It was very different, never, never, ever have I got that feeling elsewhere.

The Pianist

Horace's first instrument was the piano, and in the early 1960s, it became his sole instrument, as dental problems forced him to put aside the trombone. Having studied with Samuel Browne and then Lloyd Reese, Horace possessed a solid technical foundation but also manifested an adventurous spirit that grew as he matured as a player and came to characterize his unique pianistic voice. The impact of his performing was dramatic. Whenever Horace appeared in public spaces, crowds would gather. As the concert progressed, more and more people would stop and stare, riveted by Horace's playing. Bob Watt recalls one such event:

> I remember Horace played something and in such a way that it was "spoken." And when he finished somebody in the audience went, "God! Oh!" He couldn't help it. Horace stated it so well, it just spoke to you. I have seen him just mesmerize people with solo piano. That was always the thing I enjoyed the most, listening to him sit down and play solo. Ah! It was a type of detail that was just indescribable. If God is in the detail, then there was the touch of God there. It would just reach you, music strong enough to cut through all the stuff that's happening today, all the lies. It was just so profound.

His command of the keyboard was such that even recalcitrant instruments posed little challenge. Pianist Wayne Peet recalls one such piano at System M in Long Beach, California:

> That piano got worse and worse to the point where there were notes missing right around middle C, which is right where you're playing a lot.

> That's one of the biggest drags in the world. It just throws you, and you have to work around it and think about working around it. I've seen him play that same piano that I've played and had a ton of notes missing, and you would have never known those notes were missing. He knew where they were and worked around it.

Even in developing his technique, Horace was unorthodox. Will Connell recalls, "Horace once told me that he didn't think he could really use his left hand at the piano, if he didn't use it in his life. So Horace went through days when he would use his left hand for everything. He'd brush his teeth with his left hand; he'd drive with his left hand; he'd open doors with his left hand. Oh, Horace, man!" As Thelonious Monk evolved an unorthodox playing style that suited his music, much the same could be said of Horace, who shaped his approach to achieve the sounds he wanted, rather than sacrificing sound and vision on the altar of formal piano technique. According to Bobby West,

> Papa could go into cascades of sounds and arpeggios that could be considered Debussy-like, but a classical pianist who would actually play Debussy would probably not use the same kind of fingering that Papa used. His approach to playing the piano was as unique as the sounds you heard come from it. . . . He did what he needed to do with his hands and fingers to create those great sound sculptures that he was able to do in a way that nobody else could.

Horace never had a structured practice regimen, but played continually, wherever and whenever possible. In this sense he was always in the moment and the boundaries that exist for many artists, between practice and performance, formal and informal venues, simply were not there for Horace, who lived and played with the same level of intensity and commitment. As an artist twenty-four/seven, simply being on a stage did not alter his approach. He was spontaneous and expected his fellow artists to be the same, prepared to honestly express themselves at any moment, in any context. Kamau Daáood remembers,

> Musically, I've been in spaces and heard music come from him that basically seems physically impossible and the energy would be so high that everyone in the room would be at the edge of screaming, just from the awesomeness of what would be happening at a given moment. I've literally walked over to the piano afterward and seen Horace's blood on the piano from his fingers, where he gave that much. And no matter where we were or what the occasion was, he could tap into this spirit and give all and then some to a given moment. Whether there would be five people in the audience, or whether it would be some little rinky-dink program,

poorly organized with a bad piano, he approached it like he was approaching the most high in prayer, with that kind of seriousness.

As much as anyone could, Horace lived in the moment, constantly working out new ideas, new voicings, abandoning old approaches, and challenging himself and all those around him. According to Vinny Golia, "You get to a point when you're playing with him, where he can go back and bring more stuff up, and you've got to dig. He's like a bottomless pit, and you've just got to keep coming up with stuff." To James Newton, "His playing was at times very percussive and at other times very rhapsodic. There was a real sense of discovery every time you heard this man play. It wasn't like somebody you'd go to hear play and say, 'Oh yeah, there's that lick I've heard before.' It wasn't lick driven at all. It was compositionally driven and spiritually driven, emotionally driven. It was compelling." According to Charles Owens, "You have to be honest first; you have to know the horn. Then you have to trust your feelings and not be trying to impress anybody. You're just following the spirit. That's when the best things happen, and Horace did that all the time, *every time*."

His stylistic and technical range made it difficult to pigeonhole Horace and truly placed him beyond category, as he drew from the music and ideas of many periods and cultures, harmonizing them into persuasive musical expressions. According to Bobby West, Horace incorporated "the entire history of the black experience in one single performance. By that I mean you could hear everything from field hollers to tin roof church revivals, to the earliest origins of the blues, to stride piano and back to church again, but this time to a sanctified church, which is a little bit different. And he will always throw hints of Duke Ellington. Duke is never far away from anything Horace has ever done." From African percussiveness and polyrhythms to minor blues and vamps, dense bebop extensions, sparse dissonances, and chromatic runs, the music's full range was present. Though at times introspective, particularly in his solo sessions, and frequently dark, his music was open and broad in an orchestral sense. In Horace's playing one heard not just the piano but an orchestra.

His playing was also characterized by an organic quality that blended "inside" and "outside" elements in a coherent unity, rendering the distinction irrelevant. According to Sonship, "I can't even describe how Horace plays. It's almost surreal. I don't know what it is. I've never heard anybody play like that. It reminded me somewhat of the avant-garde thing, but Horace's playing was powerful and rhythmic, and it was musical also." To James Newton, Horace "had the ability to have that kind of range where some-

times the playing was not only either inside or outside, but both at the same time. The only two people I've heard do this, to where they're playing changes in the left hand and playing out in the right, are Horace and Don Pullen." In Wayne Peet's judgment,

> His outside stuff was always very organic to the music. It was never some pasted on kind of thing, like "now we're going to be free form." It was just very developmental to the point where he could play a Parker tune or some straight ahead tune, and play in clusters and play in textures, and it wouldn't seem like "What's he doing that for?" It would be very developmental, and then he'd come back. That was influential, the fact that it was very organic to what was going on, just developing into these thicker textures.

Seeing Horace at the piano was an unforgettable experience. He admired Vladimir Horowitz for the way he embraced a piano and just "played the motherfucker."[11] So it was with Horace, exploring the expressive features of the piano, using everything from strings to keys, pedals to wood. His long arms, spread to their full extension, seized a piano, seemingly enveloping the instrument, and then standing, his lanky frame craned forward, extending into the instrument's inner workings to play upon the strings and wood. He might play a melody on the strings or simply relish the sounds of microtones and glissandi. His approach could be exquisitely gentle and lyrical but also full of thunder, stretching the physical limits of the piano, drawing as much as possible from the instrument, keeping the pedals depressed to sustain the sound and pounding every emotion from the keys. It was not unusual for the force of his playing to raise the piano off the floor, and there were instances of keys flying from the keyboard. At Horace's sixty-third birthday party at the Shabazz Restaurant in Leimert Park, pianist Rose Gales's band took a break. When Rose saw Horace moving toward her electric keyboard, resting lightly on aluminum supports, she dashed toward the instrument, imploring Horace to go easy on it. Fundi Legohn recalls, "Soft-spoken as he was, but just such a driving force, man. I've heard of people breaking piano strings and playing hard, but seeing somebody do it . . . and on a good piano . . . and just playing with emotion, from somber and sweet, lush and pretty and sublime, to forceful and passionate, all energy and anger in the music, the full spectrum—an unmistakable sound. You know it's Horace. A giant. A giant."

The Bandleader

Given Horace's musical talents and personal charisma, he would have been able to maintain a loyal cadre of artists to perform his work, a group com-

mitted solely to furthering his artistic vision, had that been his preference. That he never seems to have entertained such a course reflects how deeply engrained was his attitude toward his fellow artists and the creation of community art. This was exemplified in his role as the leader of the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra, in a pedagogic, organizing, and performing style that elicited, encouraged, and celebrated artistic achievement in all those around him.

The Arkestra was open to anyone in the community with the desire to learn and play, and over the course of forty years some three hundred artists became part of the ensemble. Horace did have certain criteria, though not necessarily based on the level of one's musical development or experience but rather on the person's core. Kaeef Ali emphasizes that Horace wanted "to see what was in a person and if they were sincere with what they wanted to do with their music. It wasn't just about his music. Who else is like that?" Given the sincerity, Horace was nonjudgmental in dealing with a wide range of personalities. Gary Bias remembers, "It was a situation where he was at the helm, but he had a very open attitude, and it seems like he really had an appreciation for whatever your efforts were. Whether you were playing well or not, the fact that you were there and involved seemed as though that was enough for him." Just before recording *The Giant Is Awakened*, an uncertain Walter Savage approached Horace. "At the last minute I told him, 'I don't want to do this. I don't want to mess this thing up.' He said, 'Aw, don't worry. You can't mess it up. All you can do is add to it.' "

Whatever level of expertise one possessed on entering, Horace sought to develop that, challenging his fellow artists to reach further. Bob Watt remembers Horace once saying,

> "I know it's out of your range, but that's where we have to go, because there's nowhere else to go. So why not? Why can't we go there?"
> I said, "Wow, that's high."
> "Yeah, but that's where we have to go."
> "Okay." That was very liberating.

Sonship recalls, "It's different than the way I would think when I play with Charles Lloyd, than when I play with Freddie Hubbard. His thing challenged you to the end of it, the end of your wits as far as creativity." As with others, for Sonship every performance became an exploration: "I enjoyed the most stretching with him as an adventurer. As far as you wanted to go, he would say, 'Okay, come on. You want to go a little further? Yeah, I can go there.' He'd take you to the fullest of what you could go to. I really appreciated that about him. If nothing else, I appreciated that *the most*. Some of

those times I'll never forget them in my life. That powerful, that powerful." One of Horace's techniques involved turning off all the lights and playing in darkness. Al Hines was present on one such occasion: "The first time was at Eighty-fourth and Vermont [the Shop], just Sonship, Horace, and myself. Horace turned all the lights off, and we played one tune for one hour and fifteen minutes. We couldn't even see each other. It was just so beautiful and so spiritual." He continually pushed guitarist Avotcja to stretch for new sounds, even thirteenths with her small hands.

> He would have me playing some stuff that I never thought that I would do. And he always sort of knew what would make a person go a little bit further. . . . Well, I think Horace, his band, his Arkestra was sort of put together based on the sounds that he knew that he could get out of it. Not so much of what we already knew we had or other people thought we had or what have you, but what he knew we had, sometimes when we didn't know we had. And for me it was like he was putting together a puzzle from the places we could go, rather than where we were going already.

For Avotcja there was no going back: "[Horace] was the thing that charges the battery that makes the car run. He turned the motor on. . . . Whatever was speaking through him, I'm grateful that I had a chance to walk that way, because he sure opened my mind to a lot of things, and it'll never be shut again."

As well as stretching for new sounds, Horace encouraged everyone in the Arkestra to compose their own music, and the band book reflected the variety of musical voices. The Arkestra Nimbus recordings contain contributions from almost a dozen members. This was not only a matter of fostering the development of individual artists but was essential to Horace's idea of expressing, preserving, and passing on the culture of the community, something which could not be accomplished by any one artist. Horace's constant refrain, according to Abdul-Salaam Muhammad, was "What are you hearing? Write!" Fuasi recalls the effect of Horace's encouragement upon the members:

> One time he had a huge chest. He called it the treasure chest, because you open that sucker up, man, and there was so much music—scores, scores, scores—all over from everybody from the beginning, when it was called the Underground Musicians Association. So everybody was like, "Yeah, man, I want my chart to go in there." Everybody's writing and throwing their chart into the treasure chest to be a part of the archive. That's what we wanted to do. And then he would play it. We'd play everybody's chart and everybody had something to say. So in that sense, he was an even greater icon than Sun Ra. He was really preserving the music and not just his music, his way, but our music, our way. It was the community's way.

Whether composing, arranging, or performing, Horace encouraged self-discovery. Arthur Blythe recalls the freedom he felt when he first came around: "One of the main experiences with Horace that helped me focus was that I had the opportunity to be free playing with him. If I had played with some other people, there would have been some restrictions and would have hampered my growth." It wasn't a requirement that one play free jazz, but that one play freely, whatever one's stylistic preference. Encouraging individual expression, exploration, and honesty in artistic statement was a sine qua non under Horace's leadership. Fuasi explains that "it was like whatever you have to say, however you want to say it, however you can do it, if you have to squeak, honk, blow, play arpeggios, or whatever, just get it out, say it." According to Charles Owens, "I could play with the Ark and do anything I could possibly imagine, and the stuff I couldn't even imagine that I could imagine. That's what it was about, an experimental place where you could really stretch to the limit and not have to feel guilty when you walked off the bandstand." No matter how different the music became, or what the reaction might be, Horace relentlessly encouraged every player without imposing a particular style. For Sabir Mateen, this approach contained a life lesson as well. "I learned, basically, life, which is music, and he showed us how to be ourselves and how to really reach the boundaries, go to the limit, not be afraid of anything, just do what we do and what we believe in, and stick to what we believe in, and just do it."

Along with composing, Horace encouraged everyone to solo as a vehicle of personal, musical exploration and expression. Rarely were compositions performed under ten minutes because of the number and length of solos. Billie Harris recalls, "He was an excellent leader because he knew how to pull out of you what was in you, rather than have you lean on him to carry you through your musical experience. He would nurture you, but as soon as you stood on the edge of the nest, he would push you off and make you try your wings. . . . He did that to me . . . almost every time. He knew what kind of hang-up I had, but he wouldn't buy it." Fuasi remembers the first solo he took with the Arkestra, on "Lino's Pad" at the IUCC one month after he joined:

> I was playing and whatever I was playing wasn't working, but Horace didn't care. He was like, "Play!" I thought I was finishing my solo, and he jumped up and said, "Play! Play!" I kept going and, man, I must have taken one hundred choruses before he let me sit down. . . . I think he was trying to get me to forget my inhibitions, my fears, and just to play what you have to say, say what you want to play. And he was going to make me stay up there until I said what I wanted to say, until I had worked through

> my fears and inhibitions. By the time I was finished playing, I had released whatever I had to release. He had already foresaw this, and he knew that's what I needed. After that, there was nothing to be afraid of.

Horace's search for authentic expression also was manifested in the way he put bands and performances together, frequently a spontaneous response to each situation, shaped by the mood and scene. Artists were never sure what was going to be performed, nor when they might be called upon. "Horace would rehearse maybe three or four tunes to perform for the event," Fritz Wise explains, "and then get to the event and do something totally different, do one tune. He did that on several occasions." He had a knack for picking those pieces that fit the mood and temper of the time and place. "You'd never know what he was going to do," states Donald Dean. "You had to be ready. And the response from the people was just tremendous. It seemed like he had a feel for what the people wanted. He could really excite a crowd. I've seen times that they would be just screaming and hollering."

There was also uncertainty about who might be performing on any particular day. Donald remembers, "I'd come, set up my drums, and maybe two, three other drummers would come up. Or he'd have five and six bass players, two pianos players, tubas. Horace would always come up with something different, and he made it work." Choir member Amina recalls, "The Voice wasn't always on the program. You were always ready and would go to the concert, but Horace was the only one who knew if you were going to perform that day." Similarly, no one knew ahead of time who would be soloing or when. They had to be prepared when Horace pointed at them. Fundi notes, "It really tripped me out, how when it was your turn to play a solo, Horace would be playing, burning, and he'd just look up at you, just a little. If you missed it, he wouldn't say anything, but later he'd say something like, 'Why didn't you play?' " The dancers and poets or word musicians also had to be ready when Horace nodded. Since they didn't know what pieces the Arkestra would be playing, most poets brought a sheaf of pieces to choose from or improvised. According to Kamau Daáood, "At any given time, and most times without warning, he would call me up to read. So it wasn't like 'we've got a concert this Sunday and we're gonna do this piece and I want you to read this piece.' It was more like a soloist. That sharpened me. Every time something was played, I immediately had to think what would fit with this, what would work with this, in case I got called." From Horace's standpoint, you were always an artist and should be ready to contribute, when the mood dictated. It was a part of everyday life, not something apart.

Horace alternately occupied the piano chair, conducted, or danced around

the bandstand as the music moved him. Over the years, he evolved an informal approach to conducting using hand signals, gestures, and body movements that enabled him to restructure compositions in the middle of performances or to direct group improvisations. French horn player Wendell C. Williams recalls, "We'd play avant-garde, and he could direct that and just take it up and out. We'd sound like birds all of a sudden. We didn't rehearse that; he'd just direct it. He'd stick his hands up in the air, and we knew to take it out. He'd wiggle his fingers, and we'd start sounding like rain. We knew what he meant. We knew the hand signals." Butch Morris explains, "Horace had certain signs and everybody knew what those signs were just from having been in his band and playing with him. Those signs were sort of intuitive."[12]

Rehearsals under Horace were never routine, and there was little separating them from gigs. According to Fundi, "Once he sat down, it was like a concert, man, even in rehearsal. Gone! Count it off—gone! I had never been with cats sweating so profusely soloing." Rehearsals concluded whenever Horace and the band felt it was time to stop. According to Edwin Pleasant, "We'd rehearse and rehearse and rehearse and never grumble about how long we've been rehearsing. Anybody else's band we'd be saying, 'Man, when are we going to end? We've been rehearsing for three hours already.' Not with Horace. I never heard anybody complain about how long his rehearsals were or how long we'd been playing one tune." Sometimes rehearsals would pass without any music being played. With Horace there was no separation between performance, rehearsal, and socializing with musicians. They all fed the same process. William Roper, a stickler for times and structure, recalls,

> I remember one rehearsal, we didn't play anything. There was the waiting for people to show up. The joints came out; that's going around, but I'm not smoking that. Then whatever the time was that the rehearsal was supposed to go until, three o'clock or whatever, I said to Horace, "Okay, Horace, I got to go."
>
> "Alright, Rope. We didn't play, did we?"
>
> "No, we didn't play."
>
> "Sometimes those are the best rehearsals."
>
> And that's true. That's the time to get to know Horace and the band.

The spirit of the band and its music grew out of the close personal relationships within the Ark, bonds forged outside the rehearsal room and performance stage. On many occasions Horace would just sit with people and converse. "We'd have these great meetings in the back room of his house," according to Fuasi. "That was the room where we would do our thing. We'd

smoke, and talk, and listen to tapes of what we just did." Ali Jihad learned of the early music history of African American Los Angeles from conversations with Horace: "I knew nothing about the history of Central Avenue, until I talked to Horace myself. We'd sit there and he'd get to talking. He was a talker, always conversation." At times he would round people up, according to Michael Dett, day or night:

> Sometimes, very early in the morning, he would come by my house and say, "Get up!" I'd come outside and there would be a couple of carloads of other people he had got up, and we would go to a park, like La Tijera, and sit on the side. Now what? "Well, we just gonna talk." He hadn't been to sleep, but he would always gather all of his comrades and talk about any and everything in the world. It was that closeness and that caring that made us work, made us do our craft with no pay, because there wasn't no pay, but it really made the music flourish and it also preserved what he was trying to preserve.

The Community Artist

The family man, committed to his wife and an everyday presence in the lives of his children, and the bohemian, who single-mindedly pursued his art, indulged his appetites, and drove the streets at night visiting his extended family of artists, were reconciled in the community artist, which provided Horace with an aesthetic and ethos. By inextricably tying his family with his fellow artists and the community at large, he evolved an ethic of community activism and cultural practice that would focus his artistic and social energy and provide a unifying force in his life.

To Horace, the community was an extension of the family. Kamau recalls, "Horace taught me so much and made the connection about family and the community and how they're really both the same, how they're really supposed to be the same." Perhaps what exemplifies this most is what Horace once told Kafi Roberts: " 'Man, I don't get comfortable playing until I hear a baby cry.' He was saying that he likes the family venue, and he knows that when you hear a baby cry, that's the perfect setting. He told me his fondest memories were always when the kids were part of it." Horace always encouraged that involvement, no matter the setting. "Whenever Horace walked into a room," Dadisi Komolafe relates, "if there was a child there, he would acknowledge the child before he would acknowledge anybody else, whether he knew the child or not. He'd make eye contact, and he'd go up, 'Heeey!' He loved children, loved children." Denise Tribble tells of a performance Horace and Dwight gave at an elementary school: "Horace got

up off the piano and started skipping around the room and all the little kids were following behind him."

For many members, Horace was a brother or surrogate father as well as a peer. To Azar Lawrence, "Horace was a very beautiful, big brother kind of image, very guiding. His calling was to shape us young people." Shunned by his family because of his involvement with UGMAA, Fuasi came to rely on Horace for familial, emotional support as well. "I kind of replaced my father with him, because in my eyes he was everything I needed, not only as a big brother but as a father figure." Similarly, Denise Tribble recalls, "When he passed, it was as if my father had passed and I felt more about him than I did my own dad." For Kafi Roberts, "It was like he didn't touch me; he touched my whole family. My wife, my kids, that's their Papa. Horace had a real deep and profound and lasting effect, not just on the guys in the band, but Nate [Morgan]'s kids. That's their grandpapa, and the same with my kids. It went past that boundary of just playing the music."

Being part of this community family meant being a resident, someone who not only performs there but who is an everyday presence on the streets, in the stores, interacting with those around. To understand, influence, and become part of the community meant being there, in good times and bad. Horace explains in his memoir:

> That's one real convincing way for a youngster to take note of someone, is if they see them all the time. That person might be known throughout the United States or all over the world, but in this neighborhood they're one of the people, one of the community. And that's how kids, young folks, gain confidence. "If you want to teach me something, now I can listen to you, because I believe you. I believe you, because you're here." They won't say, "Oh, well, he's going to Beverly Hills. He ain't thinking about us now." So we were where it was important to be. If you're really thinking of trying to help the community, you can't just jump into it. You have to really figure it out and it's not easy.[13]

Watts Prophet Otis O'Solomon draws deeply from this teaching: "The arts belong to the people, and they need to see art in their community; not just the people on TV, the people who are famous and such, but people who they see every day, on a daily basis." And there Horace remained until the end of his life. "Horace never wanted to move from that area," Elaine Brown explains. "The Crips could come; the Crips could go. He didn't care."

During the bad times, Horace was always there, from performing in prisons to offering a shoulder in times of tragedy. When Bill Madison's wife died, at his daughter's request Horace performed Stevie Wonder's "Ribbon in the Sky" at the services. Bill remembers: "I told Horace, 'It seems that

whenever tragedy strikes me, you're always around, and I appreciate that.' And that was one of the things I told him . . . the week before he passed. 'You've always been there; you had faith in me. You were willing to go along with me and trust me and help me grow, when a lot of people were not. And that's worth more than life to me.' " In the 1990s, gang violence brutally intruded on Steve Smith's family, when his nineteen-year-old son was shot and paralyzed in a drive-by shooting:

> When something like that happens, you just have no idea the depression or the pain that you can feel, even more so than if something had happened to yourself, but you just find a way to go on. Especially in the first days, it's real hard. I've always played music to help myself feel better, to heal, be around that healing energy. I was playing with Michael [Session]'s band, and we were rehearsing at the World Stage. And I remember Horace walking in—he had heard—walked straight up to me and hugged me. He had just come up there to do that. Then he walked out and left.

Kamau Daáood and his family went through the torment of having a young son diagnosed with a brain tumor and then undergoing five surgeries. "We were blessed because he ended up playing football at Westchester High School, but an eight-year-old, finding a brain tumor, all this kind of stuff, me and my wife living at the hospital for over a month. There were several times when I would go to Horace and just break and be crying and talk to him. He'd be there for us. You know when you love somebody so much—*[cries]*—I guess that said it, man."

As a community leader and artist, Horace was less concerned with the requirements of particular styles and more with music as a vehicle for transmitting African American culture. According to Bobby West,

> Papa's approach was that his music was going to encapture, and his music was always going to exemplify his cause. And his cause was struggle. It was always that. That's the reason that he lived the life he lived. If he could have changed up his style, he certainly possessed the skill, the technical ability to play any kind of piano for any kind of person. No, Papa's thing was, "This is my gift from God, but this is also my shield and my sword to carve into everyone's consciousness what is going on with the black experience."

In so doing, he became an exemplar of that experience, reflecting the social and cultural forces of his time and providing a voice for those forces, awakened and unleashed within the community that, in part, came together as UGMA and then the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra. "Horace Tapscott was ahead of his time. He never got caught in the bullshit. He couldn't be

bought. He did it his way, all the way, forever," eulogizes Tommy Trujillo. "He was like the Muhammad Ali of that scene. He lasted a long time, and he inspired these motherfuckers and all these people in L.A. and in the world who knew about him. Anybody that was a part of that scene was heavy. I don't care what they say. You had to be heavy even to be hanging out. Maybe you didn't play, but you had to have that consciousness."

He was the inspirer, instigator, creative center, and facilitator through his quiet example and the force of his consciousness and music. To Jesse Sharps, "Like Kamau said, he made being a community musician respectable. . . . You've got to really believe in that, and that was his thing. He made it; he conceived it; got it started; got it rolling, and he never wanted it to end." Danyel Romero puts it succinctly: "Once we start helping people, like Horace helped others, that's when the true blessings come, that's when you can blow the notes and play the phrases that Horace could play." Ultimately, that's where his legacy lies. According to Kamau Daáood,

> I think that Horace's impact on the community is that of a leader, a natural leader, one that arises from the people and takes on the responsibilities of leadership unflinchingly. That's a rare quality, to be able to bring people together in that way and to hold people together, to where your power is based not necessarily in an organizing skill or from some source of force, but power that basically is generated from people believing in the vision that your being radiates. Horace's being represented something that was very, very old, ancient perhaps, this spirit of connectedness, a wholesome spirit of connectedness. And that's what the music did. It connected us together. It connected the players of the music together. The music connected the community together.