>> From the Library of Congress in Washington DC.
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>> Anne McLean: Good evening. I'm Anne McLean from the library's Concert Office. We are delighted tonight to present a lecture by Dan Morgenstern -- Louis and Lil, a Couple Making Musical History. This lecture opens a wonderful season of great jazz events here at the library. We are tremendously excited and very grateful to the Reva & David Logan Foundation for a new partnership which has made possible three major jazz residencies in our 90th-anniversary year. Dan Logan, the foundation's president, is here tonight with his wife Gloria. And we'd like to take this opportunity to thank them very warmly on behalf of the library and all the jazz lovers who'll be coming to our events.
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[Applause]
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Tonight, Dan Morgenstern inaugurates our Logan-Foundation-supported Jazz Scholars program, which brings imminent scholars, artists, composers and writers to the library to explore our rich jazz holdings. Mr. Morgenstern, 60 years as a jazz activist, have included 36 as Director of the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University, and a decade with Down Beat Magazine (seven of those as Chief Editor). He's produced concerts, radio and TV shows, and annotated hundreds of record albums for which he's won eight Grammy Awards. His books "Jazz People" and "Living with Jazz" won ASCAP's Deems Taylor Award, and the National Endowment for the Arts gave him his distinguished Jazz Master title in 2007. You'll have the chance to hear him again in April as part of a packed month that will feature composer and bandleader Maria Schneider appearing with her orchestra and premiering a new Library of Congress commission. We will also be presenting pianist Abdullah Ibrahim with his Mukashi Trio. These residencies offer multiple events, including performances, conversations, workshops, and more. You won't want to miss any of them. And let me say we're very happy to announce our partnership with the Logan Foundation will be continuing in the 2016/2017 season. Please join me now in welcoming Dan Morgenstern.
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[Applause]
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>> Dan Morgenstern: Thank you, Anne. And good evening, ladies and gentlemen. And thank you very much for brining me here to this marvelous institution which, among tons of other treasures, contains an unbelievable amount of jazz material, and much of it still to be uncovered. I thought that I would talk about Louis Armstrong. But so much has been said about Louis, so I thought I would focus on a little bit on his second wife, Lil Hardin Armstrong, mainly because the two of them deposited copyright music in the Library of Congress in the 1920s when they were married and when they were both initially with King Oliver, and then together on their own with the Hot Five and Hot Seven and all that. It wasn't until maybe -- oh, I would say maybe about 25 years ago that I became aware of these copyright deposits. Because the great jazz scholar Larry Gushee -- how many of you knew Larry? All right. He left us not too long ago. He finally managed to finish. He was one of those people who worked for years and years on something, and he never wanted to let go of it. But he finally did. He came out with a wonderful book about the original Creole band, which is really the first jazz band of them all. Larry discovered these deposits here, and he was kind enough to make copies for the Institute of Jazz Studies. And that's how I first found out about all of this. Anyway, I think most of you know that one of the big moments, one of the key moments, in Louis Armstrong's life was when King Oliver sent for him to come to Chicago and join his band at the Lincoln Gardens. Now Louis had been mentored by King Oliver in New Orleans. And when King Oliver left, he had several jobs, but he turned one of them, which was a significant one, over to a guy who was then known as Little Louis. And that was a job with Kid Ory's band as cornetist, and that was a big step forward in Louis' career. And he idolized King Oliver and was very influenced by him actually. So when King Oliver sent for him in 1922 to come to Chicago and join his band, that was a great moment in Louis' life. And he has himself documented this again and again. Almost every interview that he gave once he became famous always mentions King Oliver. And he was so delighted when he came to Chicago. First, he got lost when he was in the train station and there was nobody there to pick him up. But King Oliver had been there but had to leave. The train was late and he had to go to work. But he had left word with one of the red cabs to take care of Louis when he came in, so he got to the Lincoln Gardens all right. I think we can see here the band as it was when Louis joined it, and we have Lil there on the right. It was unusual for a woman to be in a band of this caliber. She wasn't the only one. There was a lady named Lovie Austin in Chicago at the same time who was an excellent composer and arranger, and supervised recordings with blues singers

and so on. But Lil stood out because she was visible with the band. And she was, as you can see, a very attractive young lady. She was a few years older than Louis. We found out, as what happens with research and stuff, that she was actually a little older than she had said she was.
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[Laughter]
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But that's not unusual. And men do this, too. Anyway, let's try to hear from Louis about joining King Oliver.
>> At the Lincoln Gardens in Chicago in 1922. [Inaudible] was so wonderful, and he planned to let me play my rendition of The Blues. That was heaven. Papa Joe [inaudible] that he played half an hour over time.
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[Laughter]
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I was so happy I did not know what to do. I had hit the big time. I was up north with the greats. I was playing with my idol, the King Joe Oliver. All of my boyhood dreams had come true at last.
>> Dan Morgenstern: And that was really the way he felt. Louis was never insincere, and that was really the way he felt. As you will find out, not from me probably [inaudible] romance for King Oliver did not necessarily last, but it was an up and down affair. Now we will hear, for the first time, from Lil herself. Now Lil was born in Memphis, and she came from a good family. She went to Fisk University. It was said that she was the valedictorian there. But when people started checking into that, they couldn't find any proof of it. But there was no question though that she was well-educated, not only in music, but in general. She was much more sophisticated than most of the musicians that she worked with, and she was very charming. And she definitely had a lot to do, as we shall see, with Louis' career. Now let's meet Lil late in life. She was living in Chicago then. I had the great pleasure of meeting her. And actually, I was on a radio show with her, and she was so vivacious and so delightful. So let's see what she talks about meeting Louis for the first time.
>> She was a train musician from Fisk University called Lillian Hardin, and she didn't take at all kindly to the new recruit from the south.
>> All along, I've been hearing from al the musicians about Little Louis and what a great trumpet player he was going to be. Little Louis. So when he brought Little Louis over to the bandstand, Little Louis was 226 pounds. So I said, "Little Louis? How come you call him Little Louis as big as he is?" And they said "Well, he's been following us around since he was a little boy." I wasn't impressed at all. I was very disappointed. He was 226 pounds. I didn't like anything about him. I didn't like the way he was dressed. I didn't like the way he talked. I just didn't like him. I was very disgusted. So he came to bandstand -- I don't know if I should tell this or not [laughter]. Anyway, he came up on the bandstands. And I used to play -- girls wore garters on their stockings. So when I'd sit down to play, I would roll my stocking down so the garters below my knee -- for circulation. You know? And the first thing Louis spied was my knees, and he was looking. And I said, "This guy has got ideas he'd better not put in words."
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[Laughter]
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>> Joe Oliver was [inaudible] --
>> Dan Morgenstern: [chuckles] as it turned out, Louis was not alone. It seems like everybody in the band had eyes for Lil. But there was a relationship. In spite of that first impression, there was a relationship that developed. Actually, you all know probably about his first autobiography, "My Life in New Orleans", which stops exactly when he joins King Oliver in Chicago. But he continued to write autobiographical stuff, and the manuscripts have survived. And actually, finally he got published in an interesting book called "Louis, In His Own Words". It's edited by Thomas Brothers who is presently involved in writing an extensive biography of Louis. Two volumes have been published. There's a third one to come. And this was a remarkable collection of material. But it is wonderful to have Louis describe his relationship with Lil as it grew. And he said, among other things, "Lil and I began to have long chats every day and every night. I did not know that all the fellas in the band were trying to make her, but she would carry me around to Chicago to visit all the big spots. She had a car." That was also a distinction. "It was a second-hand [inaudible]." And she has a very funny description of getting caught in traffic in the beginning because she didn't really know how to drive.
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[Laugther]

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"But she really knew all the places, and we became very chummy. We refused to go any place without each other." They reached a point where they were really a couple. "And it wasn't only going to nightclubs and stuff," Louis says. "Chicago had some of the best picnics in the summer." They did that, too. They went to an automobile race, which almost got them killed [chuckles]. And then Lil's mother unexpectedly showed up from New Orleans unannounced, walked into the Lincoln Gardens, and Louis didn't know where she had come from. She had heard rumors, which were wrong of course, that he was not doing well. And so she showed up there. And at that point, Lil decided that they better find a place for her to stay. And so they went shopping. They found a place, and then they went shopping to furnish it. And so he has a very cute description of what you will see is their first really serious encounter. In his inimitable way, he says, "Anyway, as for Lil to have eyes for me -- Ump -- I just didn't dig it. That's all. But, as I was going to say, on this particular day when we had the furniture brought to this apartment, we spread all of the furniture around the room and its places, et cetera. But when we had fixed the bed, we both looked at the bed at the same time, realizing that we had not bought the first sheets yet. With Lil on one side of the bed and me on the other, our minds ran it seems like the same. Well, sir, we both commenced to thinking [inaudible]. We both thought, 'Hmm, nobody here but the two of us.' And it seemed like we both came to a conclusion at the same time -- that we should play a little tag right this minute. And we did. Yes, we did."
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[Laughter]
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Which is a really sweet way to describe their first serious encounter. And not too long after that, they got married. And in this book that I mentioned by Tom Brothers, the second volume of the biography, which is called "Louis Armstrong - Master of Modernism", there's a photo which I and most of my friends had never seen before of the newlyweds. And there they are, looking quite serious. And it's an unusual expression on Louis' face. It's a very sweet smile. And he doesn't show his teeth, which usually 9 out of 10 photos will have that. And she also looks very serious. Then there's a newspaper clipping from that period there. So it was quite something. I mean, the musicians in Chicago at the time were very important in the African-American community, and they really mattered. Lil and Louis wound up buying a house. It was a house that remained her home for the rest of her life. She and Louis, as we can see, split up eventually. Now I mentioned there was copyright submissions that came to the Library of Congress, so let's look at some of them. It's interesting. This one is called "When You Leave Me Alone to Pine", and it is music by Louis Armstrong and Lillian Hardin. The words are by Lillian Hardin. This was recorded by the Oliver band, but never issued. And there are no [inaudible] pressings. Nothing has survived. Nothing has survived except this. The next one is "The Gully Low Blues". And this is actually in Louis' hand. And that was one that was recorded quite a bit later by the Hot Five, and the lyrics are there as well. This is "Drop That Sack", which was an interesting piece because it was recorded by a band that went on the record label as Lil's Hot Shots. And it was actually the Hot Five, but they recorded for another label while demand was on the contract to Okeh. So Louis tells the story about how the head of Okeh Records called him in and played this thing. He said, "Who is that?" [chuckles] It was so obviously Louis. Louis said, "All right, Mr. so-and-so, I won't do it again." Here it is. Now this is in Louis' hand, and you will see that he is -- we don't know exactly when he learned to write music. We know that he learned to read music when he was in the band led by Fate Marable on the Streckfus Line Steamers that went out of New Orleans all the way up to Davenport, Idaho. And that was really Louis' first impression of the outside world, of the world outside New Orleans, because they docked in various big cities. And he would go and meet musicians, and look at things, and so on. That was really his opening. And actually, going up as far as Davenport, a very young Bix Beiderbecke saw Louis for the first time there on one of those riverboats. So that was where he learned to read music because the Marable band -- we tend to think sometimes that jazz at the time was based on it. And some critics and historians have furthered that impression that it was authentic, that jazz had its own stock of music which was not related to what -- this is '30s/'40s stuff, when there was a lot of -- I'm not against them. I'm an old left-winger myself. But that was like a left-wing prejudice against Tin Pan Alley and all that. It turns out that even a piece like "High Society", which most of you, if you know that music, High Society is one of the standards of New Orleans jazz, and it has that famous clarinet solo. It turns out that that piece was written by a couple of Yale students for a string band at Yale University. And then, because it was a good piece, it was published by a music publisher in an arrangement for brass band. And in that, the arranger, whose name escapes me at the moment, wrote out a piccolo solo. And that piccolo solo was read by a New Orleans clarinetist named Alphonse Picou who, by the way, could not improvise, but he was a very good reader. And he introduced

that solo into the piece, and that's how that piece of traditional jazz actually [inaudible]. Now not everything is like that. And there were a lot of very good pieces, including stuff that we see that Louis wrote himself. But the repertory on the Streckfus Line was mostly hits of the day, so that's how Louis had to learn to sight read music. Because every week almost, they came in with new sheet music and played everything from waltzes and tangoes to foxtrot and so on. So what we'll see in a minute, Louis got even more exposure. But we don't know when he learned to write music, and he actually has a very good hand. His hand is really better than Lil's. Let's see another thing here. This is also Louis. We know that he studied with a teacher in Chicago who taught music. He taught instrumental playing, and he also taught theory, and reading, and so on. We don't know how long. Lil was already well-educated, but Louis was not. And she is probably the one who made him do that. Anyhow, by 1922 or 1923, he knew how to write. So let's look at another one. This is "King of the Zulus", and this is Lil. And Lil's hand is, oddly enough, not as good as Louis'. It's not as neat. Okay, next case. This one is not really relevant to us, but it's not a piece that was recorded. And it's [inaudible] 1923. It's early. The next case -- this one is important, and we're going to linger on this for a while. This is called "Tears", and it's by Armstrong and Hardin. And this was copyrighted. This was deposited on October 20, 1923, and it was recorded by the Oliver band. And what we will do now is we will hear the Oliver recording. How many of you are familiar with acoustic recordings? All right, those of you who are not will be somewhat -- I don't know -- [laughter] discombobulated by the sound. Acoustic recording prior to electric, which came in in 1924, it was recorded into a horn. There was no electrical amplification. The amplification came from the horn itself. And the way bands had to be situated in the studio sometimes did not really reflect the balance of the instruments as you would have heard it in a natural environment. In this particular case, the trombone part is seriously over-recorded. But the point of the piece -- aside from the fact that it was written by Louis and Lil, and it's a nice piece of music with several strings as was common in those days -- it has a marvelous stop time sequence by Louis. Stop time meaning that the rest of the band [inaudible] drops out and the trumpet plays solo alone for a few bars. Stop time breaks, as they were called, they're really the beginning of the solo in jazz, and they're important. But you'll listen to what Louis does when he gets a break there and breaks through. And those breaks are not in the sheet music, but they were obviously created on the spot -- not necessarily right on the spot in the studio, but in performance. So we will hear "Tears" recorded in 1923.
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[Music]
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So that's "Tears". And actually, it sounds better than it ever has sounded before because it is from a recent rerecording of the Oliver material. The Oliver band only recorded in 1923. They recorded for three labels -- Okeh, Gennett, and Columbia. And the recordings vary between those three in quality. But they would [inaudible] who is here. And his friend who is an acoustic engineer, they redid King Oliver's music, and it sounds better than it ever has. It's on a label called --
>> "Off the Record"
>> Dan Morgenstern: That's it.
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[Laughter]
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And truly, for one thing, they managed to bring out the two cornet lead, which is obscured in the previous attempts to do a job on. And Louis himself said, when he listened to [inaudible] the cornets are too far back. They were powerful. And interestingly enough, Louis had to be about 10 feet behind Oliver because he was so much more powerful. Anyway, now I want to play for you an excerpt from something that was recorded. Now we're in the electric era, more than three years later by the Hot Five -- in this case, actually the Hot Seven, I think. It's a piece called "Potato Head Blues". Somebody once asked Louis what the meaning of the title was, and he said it's about a cat who has a head shaped like a potato.
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[Laughter]
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But this is an excerpt. And now you listen to those breaks Louis played on "Tears". And there's one that's particularly beautiful, and you will hear that again in this break sequence. This is an excerpt from the end of the piece, and it's wonderful stuff.
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[Music]
^M00:33:38
[Laughter]

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That break sequence -- that comes straight from "Tears", but it's a bit advanced there. But there's one that is a repeat, and it's maybe the most beautiful one.
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[Humming Tune]
^M00:33:56
It's lovely, and it has Louis' imprint all over it. And now when the Armstrong house (Louis' house in Queens) was taken over by Queen's College, people finally really started looking into what was there. Of course, Louis had a den while he was alive. The most remarkable part of the house was his den where he had his tape recorders and his phonograph, and all his records and his tapes, and everything. And as soon as he passed, not very long after then his fourth wife Lucille redid the house, and she destroyed the den. She made it into some kind of sitting room for guests. It's a small house, so you can see why she wanted to do that, but it was wrong. Anyway, they managed --
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[Laughter]
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Lil would never have done that. But anyway, on the basis of photographs and other things, they reconstructed it and made it -- I was there while Louis was [inaudible]. I know what it looked like then, and they made it look very much like it was. Anyway, among the many things that were found there -- Louis taped lots of stuff. He used to take tapes with him on the road, and he taped some of his own things and other people's, and made lists and all kinds of things. Anyway, here is at home in his den doing something which is unique. It's absolutely unique. He never did this with any other Oliver record, but here he is. And he'll tell you what he's going to do.
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>> You are now about to hear some of the finest [inaudible] that'll take you way back -- way back as far as the year 1922 when I, Louis Armstrong --
>> Dan Morgenstern: Actually '23
>> Joe Oliver at Lincoln Garden in Chicago, and also used to write a lot of tunes. Here's one that's a beautiful thing called "Tears". We made that one for the Okeh recordings. As this record plays along, I think I'm going to noodle a little with it for old times' sake -- show you how the [inaudible] recording and everything has changed. But you'll get a good idea of this record. It's a pretty thing.
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[Music]
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[Applause]
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>> Dan Morgenstern: It's an amazing thing. It's so beautiful that he did this, and you can tell how much he loves that piece. And he puts himself into something from 40 years before and then he plays a little duet with himself. He keeps the [inaudible]. It's marvelous. And it's not high fidelity, but it's high music. Now at the time when Louis and Lil first really got together and they started living together, she would hear him doing something that he apparently was not doing on the bandstand, and we'll have her tell you about what that was.
>> And I may be, deep down in my heart, all [inaudible] when I got the idea that he should play by himself because he's still working with Joe. I don't say I thought it up, but the idea came to me somewhere that as long as he's with Joe, he would never bring himself out. I could hear Louis coming home whistling for all much more than a block away. He had the most beautiful shrill whistle. And all those riffs that he later made in his music, he used to whistle them. You ask him sometimes how he used to whistle. Such beautiful riffs and runs, and trios and things. You know? And I said, "Maybe someday that guy will play like that." Just crazy thoughts. But it turned out all right. You never know when you're crazy the right way, huh?
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[Laughter]
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>> Dan Morgenstern: Lil was a great, positive influence on Louis because she gave him confidence. He still was, in a way, under Joe Oliver's wing. And Joe was the guy who -- he never had a father really. I mean, he had a father, but he paid no attention to him. And so Oliver was his father figure. And it was Lil who really got him to finally break away from that. But let's look at something here which is one of the most interesting things among

those discoveries here at the library of lead sheets. And that is a thing called "Cornet Chop Suey". And it says "Cornet Chop Suey" by Louis Armstrong, so it's just by him alone. Now why do you think he called it "Cornet Chop Suey"?
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It has something to do with a piece that was quite famous in the jazz repertory. It was one of the things recorded by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. It's called "Clarinet Marmalade". So "Clarinet Marmalade", "Cornet Chop Suey".
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[Laughter]
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Chop suey happened to be -- at that time, it really was an enormously popular dish on the south side of Chicago. We all know there's many jokes about how much Jewish people love Chinese food. You know all those. But believe me, African-Americans also did. So the Chinese food was very popular, so chop suey was something that everybody knew. However, when this record was first issued -- and every time it's been issued since in whatever form -- in France, what did they call it? They called it "Cornet Shop Suey" because they don't know chop suey. So they turned it into Suey may be a girl who works in a cornet shop.
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[Laughter]
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Anyway, the piece is a wonderful piece, and it is so remarkable that this thing, which was first recorded in 1926, was actually deposited here almost three years earlier. And it's remarkable that, at that early stage already, Louis' ideas and his approach to the instrument were that well developed. So what we're going to hear is now we will hear "Cornet Chop Suey". And you'll see that some of the things that he does are not in the lead sheet, but a lot of it is. And it's a piece, like many pieces in the jazz repertory, that has more than one string. And it is a really wonderful piece.
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^M00:45:38
[Music]
^M00:46:12
It breaks again.
^M00:46:13
[Music]
^M00:46:46
There's Lil.
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[Music]
^M00:48:32
That is quite a display of virtuosity, and it's really a display piece for Louis -- the first one actually that he recorded and wrote. And unquestionably, when he conceived something like this and put it on paper, he would have had assistance from Lil. He talks about it -- he and Lil sitting on the back steps of their house together and composing. And she plays a really nice piano solo there. She was not a very sophisticated pianist, but she had a terrific beat. And that was what everybody talked about before she became -- even before King Oliver playing with bands made up mostly of New-Orleans musicians -- that she had that beat, which most non-New-Orleans musicians didn't catch on to. So she really had that in her favor. Now there's another piece that comes out of the Oliver repertory, and that is a piece called "Weather Bird". And it's interesting. It was recorded twice by Oliver's band for two different labels. And on the first one, the composer credit is to Oliver. In the second one, the credit is to Oliver and Armstrong. It is definitely Louis' tune. But in those days, like later and well into the swing era and beyond, bandleaders very often claimed authorship and thus copyright and income from pieces which were actually written by their sidemen. And even the great Duke Ellington would do stuff like that. But Ellington always -- when he took something from one of his sidemen, he paid them. Oliver did not. Oliver lied in the first place [chuckles]. And in the second place, Louis put him straight, I guess. So anyway, this piece is still, in a sense -- it was called "Weather Bird Rag" really on the label. It's really still, with one foot at least, in the ragtime era, and also the way it is structured. But it's really a wonderful piece. And again, it displays Louis' melodic imagination. And we will hear it -- well, yeah, let's just hear it by the Oliver band.
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[Music]
^M00:53:36
Two cornet players.

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[Music]
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We've got to remember that this was dance music [inaudible]. The Oliver Band was not playing for intellectual jazz listeners. That didn't exist at the time, although a bunch of white musicians came to the Lincoln Garden so regularly that the doorman there eventually started greeting them as young men came for their music lessons.
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[Laughter]
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They included Bix Beiderbecke and Hoagy Carmichael, Eddie Condon. So they were taking that seriously, and so were of course the fellow African-American musicians. "Hot Lips" Page, who became one of the greatest blues singers and hot trumpet players, was featured with Artie Shaw's band as one of the guys who broke through the collar barrier. He came to Lincoln Gardens. And he was a Texas boy and he was pretty poor. He had his horn in a paper bag [chuckles]. And he took it out and started playing with the band, and they almost -- the security guys were going to throw him out, but then Louis and King Oliver said let him stay. But "Weather Bird" is still, as I said, a little bit of a throwback. Also, we have to remember that drums could not be recorded at the time in the acoustic process. You could do woodblocks and playing on the rim of the snare and so on. Although, peculiarly, the very first so-called jazz recordings made by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band when they recorded for Victor, they had an engineer. His name was not Cornet Chop Suey, but his name was Mr. Suey.
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[Laughter]
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He, for some reason, understood how to record a full drum set. So Tony Spargo -- Sbarbaro as he was known -- you can actually hear that on those Victor recordings by the ODJ, but that's the only one that's an exception for acoustic recording. So we never really got to hear how [inaudible] impacted that band. Now the reason why I played "Weather Bird" just to show another Armstrong composition was that about four or five years later, when we came near the end of Louis' Chicago period -- as we learn very quickly, he had been to New York -- but this was the end of his Chicago days really, and also the end of the Hot Five/ Hot Seven recordings. He and Earl Hines, who is a marvelous piano player, was really the first musician to kind of be Louis' equal in terms of his imagination. They were very good friends at the time and hung out together. And they recorded a duet on "Weather Bird". And this was praised to the skies by the great composer and writer Gunther Schuller -- you know who Gunther Schuller was -- in a very important book that he wrote called "Early Jazz". But for some reason or other, Gunther must have not been familiar with "Weather Bird" because he thinks that the whole thing was spontaneously improvised. But actually, they stick to the composition and its various ingredients, but they do it in such a free form and with so much panache. It turns into a marvelous piece of collective improvisation. And it was oddly enough, or maybe not, Okeh Records -- they recorded this in 1928. They did not issue it until 1930 when they had Louis record another duet of "Dear Old Southland" with another piano player, and they put those back to back. But they waited almost two years to bring this out. Maybe it was too advanced. Anyway, let's hear it.
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[Music]
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Now that's something, isn't it? Now Earl Hines eclipsed Lil from what we can call the second Hot Five/second Hot Seven. Earl was on piano. But Lil was still in the picture. And one of the things that Louis and Earl recorded together was a thing called "Two Deuces", which is a beautiful composition by Lil. So she was still in there. And she had had a tremendous effect on Louis because she's the one who convinced him, persuaded him, pressured him to leave King Oliver. She found out that Oliver had collected more money for the band than he let his musicians know. He kept about $20 a week. In those days, that's a lot of money in 1924 -- a ton of money. Anyway, he kept $20 from each musicians' pay and put it in his own pocket. So anyway, she talked Louis into leaving. He got a telegram from Fletcher Henderson, who was by then the most established big bandleader in New York to join his band. But even though Louis thought that the telegram came spontaneously from Henderson, Lil was behind it.
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[Laughter]
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So he went to New York and he joined Henderson's band and stayed for well over a year and did quite a bit of recording with them and a lot of touring. And it was an important period for

him also to broaden his professional knowledge and experience. But Henderson was very strange about Louis. If you look at the many recordings that he made with the Henderson band, except for maybe three or four, he's not well-featured. Louis was always very nice in what he said about Henderson, including that he -- well, I won't get into it. I have too much in my head and I can't share it all.
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[Laughter]
^M01:04:08
We'd be here forever. But what happened was that Louis left. And some of the best recording he did in that period when he was in New York was outside the Henderson band. And that also had to do with Lil because she came to New York and she recorded with him and the great Sidney Bechet, who was somebody who was a couple years older than Louis, and they knew each other. They were never great friends because they were too competitive, but they were sensational together. And there are two different versions of a song called "Cake Walking Babies from Home" where they almost have a duel. And it's terrific -- better than anything really that he did with Henderson. As I said, he always spoke well of Henderson. And I'm sure that he didn't mean to -- he tells the story about how they had a party for him when he left the band and he had too much to drink. And when he went to say goodbye to Fletcher, he had a little problem and he regurgitated onto Fletcher's -- he calls it Fletcher's bosom -- tuxedo. He says Henderson forgave him. I'm pretty sure it was an accident.
^M01:05:35
[Laughter]
^M01:05:39
But many years later -- I remember exactly when it was -- it was on December 18, 1969 because it's a birthday of a friend of mine. And we had Louis make a tape, which the guy who made the tape managed to lose.
^M01:05:59
[Laugther]
^M01:06:02
Louis got to talking about Fletcher. I think I had asked him something, and he suddenly -- because Louis was always very generous in the way he spoke about people. But in private, he could be more outspoken. And he suddenly became quite vehement about Henderson -- saying that Henderson was dicty, which was a word that meant class prejudice, upper class, and that he wouldn't let him sing. He didn't sing, but sort half-spoke on one Henderson record of "Everybody Loves My Baby". But Henderson wouldn't really let him sing. Only he would let him sing sometimes when they were playing for black audiences. But Louis did win a couple of contests at the Roseland Ballroom where they had these contests once a week where everybody, including the musicians and the band, could compete. But anyway, Henderson just really didn't understand what Louis was all about. And he said, "He didn't give me anymore solos than Elmer Chambers," who was the lead trumpet player. And then he said, "Elmer Chambers with his nanny goat tone," and he did an imitation.
^M01:07:25
[Imitating Tone]
^M01:07:26
He made an imitation like that. That's some of those moments I was lucky to have with Louis where he did things that were out of the ordinary. But he really still felt bitter about what Henderson had done or not done with him. Anyway, he came back to -- Lil made him come back. She made him leave Henderson. And she had a band of her own down in Chicago. And she created a big banner for Louis' comeback which said, "Louis Armstrong, the world's greatest trumpeter." And when Louis saw that, he said, "Take it down." [inaudible] But she said, "No," [chuckles] and it stayed up. And that was really the beginning of Louis coming into his own. That's when the Hot Five started and all that, and he played with a lot of great bands in Chicago. She was really a mover and shaker and did a lot for Louis, and he did appreciate that. Although he did, even while still in Chicago, got involved with another younger woman who really went out to get him. Her name was Alpha Smith. He left Lil, and their divorce did not come through until 1938. But in the meantime, he was living with Alpha. He says about Alpha that she was wonderful when they first met [inaudible] but then he said she turned into a bitch or something. [laughter] He said all she wanted was clothes and jewelry. But she left him with a drummer who, I won't mention his name, but Louis congratulated him later on.
^M01:09:23
[Laughter]
^M01:09:26
"Thanks for taking off with Alpha." [chuckles] Anyway, Lil and Louis -- when Louis was in California where he made some of his greatest records at a place called Frank Sebastian's Cotton Club, and Lionel Hampton was the young drummer in the band, Lil came to try to patch

up things. But Louis said she had a guy with her. She told Louis that he was her masseur and she needed him for back problems. And he said, "Nonsense." Anyway, here they are together. I love that hat. [inaudible]. But what they did there, remarkably the two of them recorded with Jimmie Rodgers, the father of country music who invited Louis to play. And for a long time, it wasn't known who the pianist was, but it was Lil, and they did that together. So they actually remained on fairly friendly terms, except that Lil tried to sue Louis for the rights to a piece that they actually had written together, and which Louis really claims that he wrote -- a very famous piece called "Struttin' with Some Barbecue". And, well, Louis' manager Joe Glaser, who is a whole topic in himself -- I won't get into -- wanted to sue because Lil wanted the rights. Louis said, "Let her have it. She needs the money more than I do." But he never stopped claiming that it was his, but he let her have the copyright. So I think I'll finish because we have come very close to the end of the hour. I want to finish with two versions of "Struttin' with Some Barbecue", which may be the greatest thing they did together. And one is with the Hot Five, and I'm sure that the arrangement is by Lil, and it's a very nice one. And I'll follow that with something Louis recorded with his own big band about 10 years later. And the band was -- it was an okay band. The clarinet soloist is a little flat, or more than a little flat. He was the straw boss in the band -- a guy named Bingie Madison. So he got the solo even though he was flat. It's all right. Anyway, it does nothing to -- Louis is spectacular on that. And Down Beat Magazine in the late '50s or early '60s -- there was a panel of trumpet players. It was Maynard Ferguson, Bobby Hackett, and Quincy Jones who started off his career as a trumpet player. Now you can't think of two more disparate trumpeters aesthetically than Maynard Ferguson and Bobby Hackett. I mean, they're poles apart. But they both agree that this 1938 recording of "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" was their favorite Louis record. And it's certainly one of mine, too. It is exceptional what he does there. So two versions of -- oh, incidentally, "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" Louis said he got the idea, and he and his friend, the drummer Zutty Singleton, used to go to a barbecue place in Chicago every night after they stopped playing at the Savoy Ballroom and eat too much barbecue. And he wanted to commemorate it with this tune. So here we go.
^M01:13:40
[Music]
^M01:14:41
Johnny Dodds.
^M01:14:42
[Music]
^M01:16:42
Cute ending, right? That's Lil.
^M01:16:44
[Music]
^M01:18:02
[Imitating Tune]
^M01:18:03
[Music]
^M01:18:58
[Inaudible]
^M01:18:59
[Music]
^M01:19:41
[Laughter]
^M01:19:43
[Applause]
^M01:19:48
I love bebop. But nobody ever played a trumpet like that again.
^M01:19:51
[Laughter]
^M01:19:53
Lil had a life of her own after Louis. She had her own big band for a while. She discovered a young trumpeter named Jonah Jones who later became very famous. And she built him as the second Louis Armstrong [laughter], so there was still something there. Then she recorded with her own small group. She made quite a few recordings for Decca in the '30s and early '40s. She was also an accompanist employed by Decca for their so-called Sepia Series, also known as Race Records, which were recordings made specifically for a black audience. And she was very good at that. And then one of the pieces that she wrote and recorded at that time was many years, many decades later -- recorded by Ray Charles, which was a very welcomed source of income for Lil in her last years, and that was "Just for a Thrill", which many of you may remember. So that was Lil Armstrong. And she is certainly a major contributor to Louis'

career. A very vibrant, charming personality and a considerable musician, and she should be better known. Thank you.
^M01:21:24
[Applause]
^M01:21:48
If you have any questions, I'll be glad to try to answer.
^M01:21:53
^M01:21:57
>> Was there a specific time when he switched from cornet to trumpet?
>> Dan Morgenstern: Yeah, there was, and he talks about that. Although I think there may have been an additional reason, which was simply that as he became more powerful as a soloist, the trumpet has more brilliance. But he was in one of the jobs that Lil persuaded him take -- and at first, he said, "I can't do this," but she said, "Go ahead and do it," -- was with a band led by Erskine Tate, which was the Hoss band at the major movie theater on the south side. And they were a pit band. Silent pictures had their own scores, and they played that. And then they also did a concert of their own. Louis refers to them as a symphony orchestra. They were hardly that. But there were two other trumpet players. And when he was there with his short cornet sitting next to them, the bandleader Erskine Tate said, "It's okay with me if you want to play the cornet." It looks a little funny. And they were on a big stage. And so that's when Louis said he adopted the trumpet, but I have a notion that he would have done it anyway. Incidentally, his feature with the taped band was the [inaudible]. Louis was very fond of opera. He says in an interview he did -- he talks about the first phonograph he got, which was still in New Orleans. At that time when you brought a Victrola, which was made by Victor, you got some free records. And at least one or two of them were Caruso Records because Caruso was the biggest -- he was the first million-record seller in any field. He was enormously popular. So that's what started Louis in opera. But then he says that he had recordings by Galli-Curci and by Tetrazzini, both coloratura sopranos. And I think that that's where he got the high note idea because that's what they're doing. Galli-Curci is better known, and Tetrazzini was wonderful though. She had more body to her voice and she could really go up there. And there's a dish named for her, I think.
^M01:24:40
[Laughter]
^M01:24:45
>> Could I ask a question -- really two? I'm here in the back. One -- what is your opinion of the opening solo to "West End Blues"? Number two -- did Louis ever talk to you about Bix Beiderbecke, and did he admit which one did he consider was better -- him or Bix?
^M01:25:06
[Laughter]
^M01:25:08
>> Dan Morgenstern: Well, as for as "West End Blues" goes, it is said that both Louis and Earl Hines, when they heard the record -- in those days, you didn't hear a playback in the studio because the recording process -- there were waxes. And before a stamper was made, you couldn't play it. So he didn't hear it back. They were really surprised when they heard it. But there is actually a [inaudible] colleague of mine, Lewis Porter. Actually, he wrote a biography of John Coltrane. This is a little different. He discovered a Louis record made during his New York period when he was with Henderson, one of the many recordings he made back in Blues Singers. And this is an obscure recording. But in it, Louis takes a break, which prefigures -- it's in a different key, but it's already almost the whole "West End Blues" opening cadenza. It's remarkable. So this thing was sitting in his head. This is recorded in 1924. So four years later, he comes up with that. It's a lot more elaborate, but that's it. About Bix, Louis always spoke very warmly of Bix. He said that they played together in those days in public. It was not common that there was integrated -- there were musicians who were passing, and there was all kinds of stuff going on. But mostly, it was like an underground thing. So he said that they played jam sessions together. Louis did a lot of tapping at home, and we heard him playing "Tears". But he also tapped conversations with friends, and sometimes when they had parties. And there's one where he plays some Bix records and talks about them. It's an album that does not contain Bix's very best stuff unfortunately. But what he plays, he speaks very well of. He always spoke well of him. As far as any comparison between the two of them would be -- first of all, there's only one Louis Armstrong. He's untouchable when it comes to -- there's no competition. But Bix died much too young to have a chance to even register in that respect.
^M01:28:04
^M01:28:08
>> What would you say was -- I'll start over again. Louis seems to have been very, very generous in giving away the rights to things that he created -- like "Sister Kate", which he

claimed to have written. And I think "Muskrat Ramble" is another one that he let go of very, very easily, or so he said. And it always surprised me that "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" -- that Lil would have claimed it being melodically so obviously something that Louis Armstrong would have been playing. Like she said, there's things he used to whistle. But I'm wondering what were Lil's musical contributions aside from her abilities as a pianist and to be able to assist with the writing and the arranging. I'm wondering what kind of melodic things that she would have contributed.
>> Dan Morgenstern: Well, that's a good question. And that of course is hard to say. I mean, she really had been trying to show him, and she had a big influence. She's the one who made him go study with the teacher in Chicago. She's the one who gave him confidence to do things on his own and all that. Strictly, musically, they collaborated. We saw some of them say Louis Armstrong and Lil Hardin. She undoubtedly polished his writing chops. I think with "Struttin' with Some Barbecue", she may have felt that she -- because I think that little arrangement is definitely hers -- that she made a major contribution to it. But on the other hand, I think probably the bottom line is that she could use some money at the time. As far as his generosity with those early things, "Sister Kate", which became a big hit. "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate." Louis composed that. He was only about 19 years old; he was not experienced. He called it "Get Off Katie's Head". He sold it to a man named AJ Piron who was a Creole bandleader. He was a partner at the time of Clarence Williams who became one of the most successful and also, in a way, notorious music publishers, recording. He almost singlehandedly started what we know as Race Records. There was some other people like Perry Bradford who went up. Clarence Williams was the king of that. They gave Louis 50 bucks. Now this is 1919. Remember how much $50 was then? How much is anybody here up on that kind of transposition? I'm sure it's as much as $500. $50 is a minor fortune. Louis probably never had $50 before at that time. So he sold it out. What did he know then about publishing? So as far as "Muskrat Ramble" is concerned, he always suspected that he had something, but it was -- not to claim anything for myself, but when I was with Down Beat on Louis' 65th birthday, we decided to do a big Louis issue. And I interviewed him with my friend Jack Bradley. It was a good time because he had just come back from a long European tour, and he had a little time to himself there. So even though Lucille tried to get us to leave after about an hour and a half, we stayed for about four hours and had a great time. He came back from Yugoslavia among other places. He had a bottle of slivovitz. He asked us if we wanted to try that because it's slivovitz. And we were game, so we had slivovitz. Anyway, it was a wonderful interview. Actually, it was taped, recorded, and it came out in England a few years ago in a big Louis box. But in it, he mentions that "Muskrat Ramble" -- he says, "'Muskrat Ramble' was mine. It was my tune. But Ory named it, so I let him have it." So again, this is in the mid-20s, and there's still no real idea that these things might make a tremendous amount of money over time. Nobody was thinking like that. And, Louis, yes, he was generous. And Ory was considerably older than Louis, and he had a great deal of respect for older people. That was something that was inbred in him in that New Orleans upbringing. It was very touching, but that was there. So anyway, Ory had been his bandleader at one time, so he let him have it. Why not?
>> Anne McLean: I think we have time just for one more question to round off the evening.
>> [Inaudible] instructor was Walter Weed. And Walter came from a family of hardware stores called Weeds Seeds. And when he was giving the instruction, he would play recordings of Louis Armstrong when he was teaching me. And he recorded those live because he had the means to do so. I'm wondering if the name ever made it to the annals of trumpeters because Walter was a trumpeter and played with Louis Armstrong in western New York on some of his tours.
>> Dan Morgenstern: Really? What was his last name?
>> Weed. W-E-E-D. Walter Weed.
>> Dan Morgenstern: Hmm. Well, that's interesting. Weed meant a lot to Louis, but in a different sense.
^M01:34:39
[Laughter]
^M01:34:46
But I've never heard of him, no. Should we finish on that note? Okay.
^M01:34:53
[Applause]
^M01:35:01
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