

In My Time

An Interview with Cab Kaye

Augustus Kwamla or *Kwamla Nii-lante Quaye*, better known as *Cab Kaye* (3 September 1921, London - 13 March 2000, Amsterdam). Kaye's father, Caleb Quaye (b. Ghana, 1895 - 1922), performed in London under the name Ernest Mope Desmond and led an ensemble called the Five Musical Dragons, in which *Arthur Briggs*, *Sidney Bechet*, and *George "Bobo" Hines* played. Kaye worked as an assistant to *Billy Cotton* from age 14, and sang with this group on record in 1936. He started on drums the following year, and played with *Ken "Snakehips" Johnson* for a time before working as a merchant marine. His ship was torpedoed in the Pacific Ocean in 1942; he was not injured and was rescued by airplane, but the plane crashed and he was hospitalized in New York City as a result. Upon his return to London late in the year he sang with *Harry Parry*, then formed a group briefly in 1943 which included *Ronnie Scott* among its members. Kaye played with *Jiver Hutchinson's* All-Coloured Band on troop tours in 1946-47, then with *Ted Heath* (1947), *Tito Burns* (1948), and *Jazz at the Town Hall*. He led his own bands from 1948, including the Ministers of Swing, in which *Scott*, *Denis Rose*, and *Johnny Dankworth* played. Other bands he led include The Cabinettes (with *Ronnie Ball*) and his own All-Coloured Band (with *Dave Wilkins* and *Sam Walker*, this ensemble toured Europe). Early in the 1950s Kaye accompanied *Don Byas* in Paris; he recorded copiously as a leader in the 1950s and worked as a sideman with *Keith Bird*, *Ken Moule*, *Gerry Moore*, *Norman Burns*, *Wallace Bishop*, and *Rob Pronk*. He made an appearance in the 1953 film *Blood Orange*. In 1960, he recorded in London with *Humphrey Lyttelton's* ensemble. Soon after this he worked for the Ghanaian government in Accra, Lagos and New York. He moved to Amsterdam in the 1980s, he opened his own club, Cab's Jazz Piano Bar. Cab Kaye is the father of *Terri Quaye*, *Finley Quaye*, and *Caleb Quaye*. (From *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*)

(The Editor conducted this interview with Cab Kaye in his piano bar in the heart of old Amsterdam sometime in the 1980s.)

Question: You are a man of great experience and history ... a musician and public figure of the 20th century with specific reference to Black people. Can we review some of your remembrances, your reminiscences, in relationship to some of the prominents of our time; some who have died already, some who are still alive in old age. Let's go back to your earliest memories. Could you give us a description? When were you born; and could you give a picture of life in those days, and the issues which were burning in those days?

Cab Kaye: Thank you very much. I was born in 1921, I first came into association with prominent members of our African society in the 40s, 1940s. In the 1940s in London, England I met Dr. Du Bois, I met Ras Makonnen, Kwame Nkrumah, Seretse Khama and Freddie the Kabaka of Buganda. These were historical days, because I was a young man that time, ... and I didn't realize, except that I was told by people that these are people that are going to do something for Africa. Well, history has proved that the names I have just mentioned ... made their contributions.

Question: When was this?

Cab Kaye: This was in 1945, 46. At that time, Kwame Nkrumah was studying in England, ... Jomo Kenyatta was the caretaker of WASU, that is the West African Students Union Hostel, at that time, and Seretse Khama, before he married his wife Ruth, used to come and visit me at the Paramount Dance Hall, in London where I was a drummer in the band of Ivor Kirchin, that's in 1947, Seretse Khama, this was before he went home to lead his people. Freddie the Kabaka, I know so very well, I knew his problems, when he went into exile, he was honoured by the British government, given lavish apartments at the Dorchester Hotel, until they decided they were in favour of a future alternative leadership of Uganda, and Freddie was out, and he died in poverty. He was on social relief, welfare, a nobody, but to me, spiritually, the Kabaka of Buganda, this is where the whole issue lies,

Question: Shall we go back a bit?

Cab Kaye: Yes, okay.

Question: You said you met Du Bois in the mid-40s...?

Cab Kaye: Yes...that is right.

Question: ...how did he strike you, and can you remember the first time you met him and where; what circumstances, do you remember any of the things he said?

Cab Kaye: I do, I do. We had a meeting at the St Pancras Town Hall in London; African unity...

Question: In 1945?

Cab Kaye: 1946. At that time, Dr. Du Bois was the leader of Pan-Africanism, and the other names like Seretse Khama, were all members of this circle. His ideology that he spoke registered to me to say that we are not just symbols of mankind, we are mankind, we Africans are mankind, and he was speaking of the past history of the great empires of Africa that existed many years ago, but they were there. Now, we have to do something about it, and it was from Dr. Du Bois, I'm sure, great inspiration came to Kwame Nkrumah, and came to all those who believed that we should rise above the level of non-existence and be recognized that we do exist predominantly.

Question: Now, in those days there was also some sort of a debate, public private debates between the ideas of Du Bois on one hand and Marcus Garvey on the other hand.

Cab Kaye: Marcus Garvey, from Jamaica, Marcus Garvey, he had revolutionary ambitions, which could not succeed in that period of time. Marcus Garvey, would be today, I would compare Marcus Garvey to Jessie Jackson of today, or Malcolm X of yesterday, but he was way ahead of his time. With regard to the difference between Dr. Du Bois' and Marcus Garvey; ... Dr. Du Bois was intellectual enough to fathom the reasons of all people, Marcus Garvey was only on one point and that was the Black Star.

Question: Did you ever meet Garvey?

Cab Kaye: No. I met his wife, but I never met the man himself. I would love to have met him, but no I never did meet Marcus Garvey, but I still respect his ideals, because he was trying to tell the Black people that was, in America, of West Indian, and originally African descent, your home is Africa, that's what it's all about.

Question: Now, there was also, I remember in one of the books of E.W. Smith, his biography of Aggrey, when I grew up, there are quotations, a sort of triangular discussion at that stage, between Du Bois, Garvey and Aggrey, and apparently Du Bois had criticized some of Aggrey's opinions and he felt that Aggrey was pandying too much to the colonial authorities, and to the Western world. Were you familiar with this discussion too?

Cab Kaye: ...I think I can refer to what you are pointing to, a statement that Professor Aggrey made:

"You can play a sort of tune on the black notes of the piano, you can play a sort of tune on the white notes of the piano, but if you play them simultaneously together they will produce harmony". And to me that is still logical.

Question: So Du Bois came and went...?

Cab Kaye: By the way, Du Bois was buried in Accra, at Christianborg Castle. I was there for his funeral service, I was there, I was in Accra, and before he died, three months before he died, I was in close contact with Dr. Du Bois.

Question: What sort of man was he, I mean could you say something more about his life...?

Cab Kaye: Yes, you know Dr. Du Bois was a light-skinned man, light-skinned. He had a Van Dyck type of beard, grey hair, but he only thought of his origin from the Black race of Africa, conservative, humble, no aggression. The fact that people have said before, that he was branded in America as being a member of the Communist Party, is irrelevant to me, because at that time, the Black people in America, had nobody to turn to, they had no ... authorities they

could turn to, there was nobody. So, if somebody came and said I think we can help you, and we can offer you this and offer you that ... there were a few brave people, pioneers, Black, Du Bois and Paul Robeson who accepted these offers, they were condemned in their own country for doing it, but to me they served a very vital purpose of exposing to the world, that the Black man ... that all he needs is equal education, that is all, and we see who we are. Du Bois was one of these men that fought for it, and he died in Ghana. America has forgotten, but not the militant black people of America, they will never forget Du Bois, and they will not forget Marcus Garvey.

Question: Now, what were the circumstances under which he came to Ghana?

Cab Kaye: First of all, he was sick, he was ill. He was on his last moments of life. The oppression that he had in America ... he had his difficulties also with the NAACP. As you know, the NAACP of which he was also one of the founding members had difficulties with him. His views were controversial to other members and Du Bois as a Professor said, "I quit", and as you say, he went freelance. Before Dr Du Bois died, Ras Makonnen and George Padmore, were some of the prominent figures in advisory capacity to Kwame Nkrumah. George Padmore, from the West Indies ... he was originally called Malcolm Nurse, right. George Padmore he had a prominent position, but Dr Du Bois, and Ras Makonnen were not altogether in complete total agreement. George Padmore, ...was the man who advocated that it should be put on a statue of Nkrumah in Accra, these words, "Seek he first the political kingdom ..."

Question: Who said this?

Cab Kaye: George Padmore; "Seek he first the political kingdom and all other things will come to pass." And those words to me was the ruin of the nation; of Kwame Nkrumah.

Question: How? Could you expand a little more on that?

Cab Kaye: Well, just imagine yourself as a Westerner, a non-African and look at a newly independent country which puts up a notice to say, "Seek he first the political kingdom and all other things will come to pass." ... In America they say, when you play poker you show your whole hand, and once you showed your whole hand the one you keeping down flat, and once you show it, they know how to deal with you. ... Padmore, I'm quite sure would have been rewarded to be Vice-President of Ghana, or Vice-Premier of Ghana, but Padmore died in Ghana. His wife Betty, I knew very well, and she told me, she said Cab they poisoned him, he was poisoned. Now who poisoned him? Nobody knows, I certainly don't think it was from Nkrumah's side. What has come to light, after when you shift it all around, Nkrumah knew that if you going to do business with the outside world you must know how

to play ball, he learnt that in England, he learnt that in America, if you don't know how to play ball then you not in the game. People who were elected into office as ministers, first and second secretaries, ambassadors, they had ability to present themselves with the personality that says, we represent Ghana, but they did not have the background, they did not have the experience, they did not have the political background, they were careerists. And it was too late for Kwame, to turn the clock back, it was too late.

Question: Do you think people like Du Bois advised him about what to do?

Cab Kaye: Oh yes, oh yes, and Makonnen, Makonnen was, I think, the best adviser Nkrumah had.

Question: In what sense?

Cab Kaye: And I remember one time a meeting of ministers for a financial grant of 5 million pounds for a project.

Question: Which year was this?

Cab Kaye: This was in 1962. Krobo Edusei was the Minister of the Interior. All that Makonnen asked Krobo Edusei was, "can you let us have on paper, where this money was going to be used and spent?", that is all, and there was pandemonium. Krobo didn't want to be defied, he said that this money is necessary, we need it for the country and all Makonnen says is "please just put it in black and white on paper; then we can study it". And of course, the deal didn't go through, it was a contract deal, like a Lockheed, or one of these deals, it didn't go through, so Makonnen in Ghana, when he was in the African Affairs Centre, had to look very, very carefully after himself because he was the man who sincerely, for no monetary gain, and saw things as they should be, could tell Kwame, "no, don't do it." That was Ras Makonnen, and Ras Makonnen, well as I told you ..., yes I knew him, not just as a passing acquaintance, I knew him as a very good friend, I call him a buddy and I am so grieved to hear of his passing, but so happy and proud to say that I knew him, and to me, I repeat, he was a Black saint. There was no evil in that man, there was only goodness, and his advice that he could give to anybody, you should value and treasure it. That was Ras Makonnen.

Question: You new him from his Manchester days or before?

Cab Kaye: From Manchester, well I knew him before. He used to come around when I was playing in bands etc in dance halls.

Question: Where?

Cab Kaye: In London, in London, the Paramount Dance Hall, in London, oh yes it has a big history itself, because when I first went there, no member of the Black race was allowed into that Paramount Dance Hall at Tottenham Court Road. I went there with Ivor Kirchin's band, after I was there, two or three months, some friends of mine came to see me there, and they were refused

entry and I told the manager of the Dance Hall, if they can't come in I'm finished right now, I don't play, this was 1947. He allowed them in...by 1949, the Paramount Dance Hall was the Harlem of London, oh yes, that's where all the jazz started, right from there, and 75 per cent of the customers were Black, from 1947 to 1949, ... I think somewhere round about 1949 or 1950, because residents in that area started to complain to the police that they were afraid to go on the streets after ten o'clock at night because of these Black people who were coming out of the dance hall. And this is the same dance hall where Seretse Khama, that's where he met his wife, that's how I know him so well. He always used to come there, Lamptey, my nephew from Ghana, he was a student, a law student, at that time used to come there, they were days, unforgettable days, I was a drummer in the band, drummer, singer, comedian, everything else, but it was during the war years when I became a seaman, and I met a man a crewman together with me on the sea, his name was Kari Kari, Prince Kari Kari from Ghana, and he told me, Quaye, your father's house is in Bannerman Road at Jamestown, opposite my own house, this was in 1941, when I was a fireman and trimmer, down below, a coal burning ship, and Kari Kari and I were on watch together, he said, you have to come home, and through Kari Kari, when he eventually made his connections, then my family and me were reunited, but it took me another 20 years until 1960, before I could return.

Question: Now let's go back a bit. So you said it was in the Paramount that you first met Makonnen...

Cab Kaye: Oh yes, in the West End of London, I was very popular in the Paramount, so everybody came there, but we met afterwards in the other clubs, the Sunset Club, the Caribbean Club, the Sugarhill Club and the Westhill Club, but everybody was thinking of, the future ahead; for our independence.

Question: Who are the leaders of Black opinion at that stage in Britain?

Cab Kaye: Now, well, apart from the names I just mentioned there was the League of Coloured People which was headed by a Dr Moody from Guyana, West Indies, they had foundation grants from the British Council, supposedly for the assistance and help of Black people of African descent in the United Kingdom, but, there is not one Black family, ever, which could say that they ever received any help, whatsoever, from the League of Coloured People, that was the first corrupt thing that thing that was ever issued, put down, amongst the people there, and it was only referred to by the British Council "or go and contact the League for Coloured People," ... it had no progressive ideas for the people, it had no political ideas for the people, it was just money come, money go for them, that's all.

Question: Were there lots of Blacks in Britain at this stage?

Cab Kaye: There were no leaders, really, ...there were no leaders, there was nobody that you could say, "turn to this man, and follow his leadership", there was nobody, everybody was divided, it was divided because of the legacy of colonial rule that we should be divided, you know, it was no question of just Africans alone been in the United Kingdom. There was the West Indians, who are divided in their own hemisphere, the Trinidadian, he doesn't trust the Jamaican, Jamaican says a Barbadian is a thief. But he didn't learn that from the indigenous people, he was only told that by the former colonial rulers Don't trust that man, and they did the same thing in Africa, and they do it in Africa, and in America, and they tell the American that the African is not ready yet, he is a 100 years behind time, he just came down from the trees with a tail between his legs; and they told the African watch for the American, because if they come to Africa, one day, they will take over. But, the good, the happiness that I have inside of me is that we are now in 1983, we only became independent in Ghana in the 50s. We had, in the nation of Ghana, practically 90 per cent illiteracy amongst our people, but today, 1983, we have many learned scholars of all forms in education, and all I'm praying for, that we can find the right leader to use the potential, educational value that we have now, that we didn't have on the days of our independence, and use it now to build up Ghana again, and it will only be through our people, not outside help.

Question: What was Makonnen doing in Manchester in those days?

Cab Kaye: Well, Makonnen..., was a man who opened a restaurant and a bar as a social club for people of African descent, in Manchester, it became very popular, but on the week of the opening, I was appearing at the Hippodrome theatre, there was a show production called that was called ...

Question: Which theatre was it?

Cab Kaye: The Hippodrome, in Manchester. The show was Memories of Jolson (1953), in that show Shirley Bassey was a chorus girl, and fortunately I was one of the stars in there, and Mr Makonnen appeared at the theatre, and asked me, would I come with him, I said okay, because I knew him already, and he took me to a place, the place wasn't open, the people were hammering things on the wall, carpenters etcetera, etcetera, etcetera; so he asked me, "Cab can you play for me for the opening of the place for African people and all of that community of Manchester," and I said, "wait a minute, hold on, when?" It was two days ahead, and I said to him, "oh my goodness, okay", I cancelled other engagements. I opened Makonnen's place for him, and I stayed with him for two weeks. And that is how, I learnt to know from the people, from the local community, how they regarded him.

Question: Was he living on the premises?

- Cab Kaye:** Yes. ... he slept in the premises, and I slept in his apartment. That's right, I don't forget. And then I learnt from the local people, that this is the only man they could turn to when they had any kind of trouble; when they were harassed by the police or anything like that ... he had no office, no portfolio of who he was, but he was a saint. He went out of his way, anytime...
- Question:** Now lets just for a few minutes follow some of these ideas through. Yes. So who were there, who do you remember came to the opening of this place in Manchester. What is the name of the place?
- Cab Kaye:** Ah, the name of the place, that I can't remember, no I can't.
- Question:** Do you remember some of the people who came to the opening.
- Cab Kaye:** Not really, not really because it was just a happy party time, everybody enjoying themselves, in those days, no I can't remember any faces there. I didn't meet Ras Makonnen again, until in Accra, in 1960. And then, when I arrived I was appointed as Entertainments Manager for the Ghana Hotel and Tourists Corporation, and that is when I met Makonnen, I said, "my goodness you are here, yes", by then he was at the Flagstaff House, adviser to the president, and we became as old buddies, old friends again, and he showed me his work that he did for people, for the freedom fighters, that their only place of hope was Ghana in those years, that was the only place, and they came there. But Makonnen's position was so precarious, because he was only concerned fundamentally in the foundation of Ghana to pivot for United Africa, that's what he was talking about, and we spent many nights up to three, four, five o'clock in the morning talking about these things, and he was aware of all the dangers, all the dangers, and he had to walk with a pistol on him, in case he had to defend himself. I've never carried a pistol, I've never carried nothing, I wouldn't wish to, it's not in my blood to do so.
- Question:** Well, were there people who were sort of working on the inside?
- Cab Kaye:** Oh yes, there were infiltrators, you know, who came in under disguise as freedom fighters, and there were people in other African countries who were being made aware by some sources that a single voice, a single power, would diminish their own powers in their independence, but one of the most admired things that I respect from Kwame Nkrumah is his declaration at the United Nations, in New York, he told the world that he was prepared to give up his own leadership, and serve under an elected president of the United Africa, so to me, that is golden words to me, and when I think and look of how the misrepresentation was presented by the Western world to say, this man he wants to be King of Africa. He never did wish to be King of Africa, he never did. What his dream was to see was a United Africa, and a United Africa as a continent would bring us into focus on an equal level of

power to anybody in the world, and up until today, this jigsaw that is going on with South Africa, which is supported by America, supported by the Western powers, and everybody, no its a joke, but why, only because everybody in their own individual right, say if Africa should become united, we will have to now deal with them on their level, but, this could be the salvation of the world, this could be the salvation, the other side of the world is destruction.

Question: You knew Jomo Kenyatta too?

Cab Kaye: I did.

Question: When did you meet him first, and what was he doing?

Cab Kaye: In London, I met him, at the time when I met Jomo, he was Caretaker and Secretary for the Social Welfare Club for West African students, WASU (West African Students Union) in London.

Question: Which year was this?

Cab Kaye: In the 1940s. He was a student at that time, a very humorous man, loud voice, very – nothing pretentious about him, very down-to-earth man. Nobody, and I'm one of the people who never dreamed that this man would one day become the first prime minister of Kenya. Never dreamed it ... at that time, I was running an agency for film, pictures, and – for making movies where I recruit the crowd artists, Black artists for movies, and Jomo Kenyatta with the students there, I used – “students come on you can earn some extra money, just be in the camera”, and I remember going at five o'clock in the morning to Russell House, and Jomo coming down in his pyjamas, and asked me, “why do you come at this time to bother me”, and I asked, “please Jomo, I am sorry, but I want these people at the studio by eight o'clock in the morning”, and they were there ...

Question: Oh, yes?

Cab Kaye: But, I never saw him in his presidential days. I know that, Makonnen was there for the Independence Day celebration, I was in America at the time, but I never saw him, but I've looked, I've watched to see what is happening for the country, and it still has a long way to go, because that legacy is still there. That colonial legacy is still there, and for me, what I want to see is a Black African man, a leader, to reveal the truth of our, of our suffering, and all it takes is to take down that white Jesus from the cross, and if you still wish to believe in the life of one, Jesus Christ, then please put him in your own image. When that white Jesus is taken down from the cross in Africa, Africa will come into their own and know who they are.

Question: Let's briefly look at Seretse Khama also, what do you remember of him?

Cab Kaye: Seretse, who was educated in England, in Oxford or Cambridge or Trinity, and he was, on the face of it, strictly brainwashed to the English way of life,

he carried his tradition back to his country, but after his uncle, who was then the ruling leader ... yes in his absence, he took over, he had to gamble because his territory is bordered on South Africa, Rhodesia, is on the other side. He carried forward is principles, not as an Englishman, as an African, and his people, under him survived.

Question: What was he like in his young days? What do you remember? What sort of man was he?

Cab Kaye: He was flamboyant, ... he was a show boy, he enjoyed life, but he knew what his inheritance was to be. I knew, before he returned home, I knew all about him, got to know him very well, and he always used to wear a carnation, red carnation in his buttonhole of his suit, immaculately dressed. But at Oxford, he was educated at Oxford, I think. But, in his own traditional way, he had to come into his own when he would return to his people, with his wife.

Question: Ruth?

Cab Kaye: Yes Ruth, I know Ruth, she was a secretary, she used to come to the Paramount Dance Hall, I even danced with her long time before Seretse and me got together, but not – nothing bad to talk about anybody, no, no, no, this was living with people, ...he went back as ruler to rule his people, but still under British protectorate, and that is why South Africa just couldn't take over his country like that. But now, Seretse is gone, look at – what is happening now in South Africa, into Angola, unto the surrounding areas.

Question: Mozambique?

Cab Kaye: Yes, look what is happening, and they take it in a sense, that they are protecting the innocent people of those countries. Now, who the hell is going to believe that?

Question: Okay, lets get to some of the musicians too. Who are some of the people you have met, who in your very early days inspired you. Well, you knew Robeson too?

Cab Kaye: Yes, Paul Robeson, yes Paul Robeson came to England, with the revue called Showboat, ... a tall man, immaculate shining figure, and in the theatre, that's when I first heard the song "Old Man River", "Old Man River", that is the song that came from that show...But, I met Paul Robeson in New York, this is after he had returned from Russia, where he had been in exile, in Russia, and when I met him in New York, Paul Robeson then was an aging man, still had charm and personality, but the tragedy was, that on returning to New York in Harlem, in a misused – used car spot where you parked your cars, he was mugged by fellow Black men, and beaten nearly to death, that's Paul Robeson, returned from Russia, came to America, as they say back in your own backyard, and his own Black people beat him just to

rob him for money, junkies, winos, just to rob, Paul Robeson, he had been such a man for them, but this brought on his first stroke ... I met Malcolm X, I have a programme, I could show you a programme, I have here, where I am on a programme to raise funds for an open air theatre in Harlem, in New York, this is 1964, 1964, 65 in Harlem. Max Roach, the drummer, Abbey Lincoln, his wife at that time, myself, Malcolm X, oh, lot of stars were there, it was a charity concert for them, but Malcolm introduced me as one of Africa's great musicians. Now Malcolm I got to know intimately, and one day I had a phone call from him and he said Cab, "I have something I want you take care of," and it was a tape recording of FBI agents in his office who were trying to buy him off, to quit his Islamic movement which he founded when he broke away from Elijah Mohammed, and those recordings were delivered to me, and it was sent to Accra, this was only two weeks before he was shot.

Question: Sent to whom in Accra?

Cab Kaye: To Kwame, ...

Question: So it should be in the archives now?

Cab Kaye: Yes. Oh yes. Oh yes. And it went by diplomatic pouch, I said don't worry about it. This is Malcolm, and now, I met Dr Martin Luther King, and that was a surprise of my life, because he was such a small man in stature. I met him on the street, Broadway, introduced to him by Malcolm. I said, "You are Dr Martin Luther King, I am happy to meet you, you've done beautiful work...". But look, two leaders, they are dead, they are gone. Malcolm, his arrogance was too much for the outside, he had to go. Martin Luther King, his humbleness, was still too much, because the poor white people of America started to join his movement, and when the white people joined his movement and supported him, then it became a national threat to the other people, you know who I am talking about. There is of course, Jessie Jackson. Have you done any research on his case history?

Question: No.

Cab Kaye: (laughter) Oh, he is beautiful. He is beautiful. He conducted a church service by flying in with a jet onto campuses and colleges, this was years ago and told everybody in the universities and in the ghetto, "You want to have a jet like this, man, go out and get one, just make up your mind that you want it, I have got it, why can't you get it, its is there for everybody", look today what he has done, and the black voters in America they are having heart attacks. What he did to get that Goodwin released, the airman, which we could not do, so they told him until you take all your troops out, he remains in, but he got him out....

Question: You knew Charlie Parker too?

Cab Kaye: Charlie Parker. I certainly did. Very well from – 41, 42. First of all Charlie Parker, we talk about New York, you know, Monk, Dizzy, Max Roach, Curley Russell, at the back of the Apollo theatre was a little club, even smaller than what I have downstairs, its called Mintons’s Playhouse, and few people understood what they were doing, but to me, when I heard this music, on the first instance it was, part of me, there was something that said this is your language it was called Bebop. Now today, of course, that musical experience from Charlie Parker has gone right up until today through musicians, if you want to know what they say on the horn, it’s Charlie Parker. He’s an intellectual man, a man of taste, of good character, his drug habits and problems started when he was a very young boy of 15 years of age, you can’t give him any personal conviction for that, no, this was forced on him by people who abused his youth, that is all, but in his 36 years of living, Charlie Parker has given the world a generation of beautiful music, and he was a buddy. I remember him not only from Mintons, in Stockholm, in Sweden, I am playing with my group with Dizzy Reece, who is now also playing big in New York now, Dizzy Reece, Sammy Walker, Georgie Tyndale, Cyril Jones, Cliff on drums, he became a boxer, yeah. But, it was a swinging jump-up band, all Black band, we played in Stockholm, opposite the biggest Swedish band, the Arne Domnerus Orchestra, and in comes Charlie Parker and he walks straight up to my band stand ... looks at Sammy and says, “Can I borrow your horn?”. “Yeah”. We played “Cool Blues” at the time which was one of his compositions, and that is when Charlie Parker played in my band in Stockholm. He had a hotel arranged for him, but he stayed in my apartment, and I was there for two months in ... I had an apartment, I cooked for him, I cooked rice, I cooked African food for him and people came knocking at the door. “Oh Bird we’ve got a party for you”, so he just looked at them and told them, “if you can’t show me something like this roll of bills”, and he always carried about 500 or 600 dollar roll of bills in his hand, he would say, “if you show me ... something like this I would know what you talking about.” Yes, and he told me, “they invite you to a party and have a microphone hidden somewhere to record you, and after that they ...” after he died records are now released for Charlie Parker’s concert in Stockholm.

Question: Did he have any ideas about people of African descent and Africa and so on?....

Cab Kaye: Very much.

Question: What were his views?

Cab Kaye: You know Charlie Parker, he looked upon Africa as his source of inspiration for his music. He was only waiting for the time to transport him to Africa,

he wasn't a man to say I am first an American, no not Charlie Parker. Charlie Parker was always searching for his roots. You know if say for instance when, Alex Haley wrote his book *Roots*, and I knew Alex Haley very well, when he was a commercial writer for newspapers, and he's got his subject right, but if he had written his book 30 years ago, people like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, they would have been back to Africa long time ago, but you must remember that in America, Americans are very nationalistically proud to be American, whether they are Black or White, if you speak to an American, if you speak to Black Americans and you tell him that you are an African, and he will shake your hand, happy to meet you, and he will socialize and do everything else, and if you start to tell him that "you know that your roots are from Africa" he will quickly remind you, "Yeah man I know that, but I am an American Negro". So to me, it is only musicians who really get under the skin to let the people really know where it's from. If musicians like Charlie Parker, and Dizzy Gillespie, had been politicians, to lead the people, not with music, but if they had the same following in that world of living, different story, different story.

Question: Who are the others you know from the early years?

Cab Kaye: Well, let's say Fats Waller.

Question: You knew Thomas Fats Waller?

Cab Kaye: Fats Waller, I played drums with Fats Waller...

Question: Where?

Cab Kaye: In London... this is 1938, Fats Waller, we did a tour of the Mecca Dance Halls of England, I was a drummer with the trio with Fats Waller, I went everywhere with him...

Question: Who else was with him?

Cab Kaye: Oh, Lennie Harris was the bassist and myself drums, and Fats Waller piano. We went everywhere together, I remember one time, waking up, in bed, next to this mountain of a man, and his wife, Ethel, she was asleep on the floor, this was all after the show, we got out to nightclubs, and then Fats one day, we were running through some things, we were playing, and I was introducing him to some African, West African rhythms and drums, and he said to me, in his most unforgettable voice, he said; "Cabby, if you could use your feet, like you use your hands, one day you gonna be a mess of a drummer". That's Thomas Fats Waller; served the world, with beauty in music, and as you know his recent Broadway production, *Ain't Misbehaving*, was sold out on all occasions, and a new generation of people, who had never heard of Fats Waller before, are now aware of Fats Waller.

Question: What sort of man was he? Was he humorous, I mean what was his character?

Cab Kaye: Humorous, completely humorous, careless, live today, and forget about tomorrow, that was Fats, he died at the age of 39, heart attack, on the train near Kansas City, Missouri, Sante Fe Railway.

Question: Did he also have views on African, Black people?

Cab Kaye: No, no, no, not Fats Waller, actually at the stage, I'm talking about 1937/38, at that stage, I wasn't really myself, conscious of my own belongings, it took sometime to grow up as a man, and then to realize where you are, and who you are. Louis Armstrong, if you take Louis Armstrong, I met Louis Armstrong also, but look at Louis, he went home, he went to Ghana. He was feted by the people, he was given land from the chiefs, he didn't do anything with the land. He went back to America, and he was strictly an American boy.

Question: You knew him also well?

Cab Kaye: Not as a fond friend, but as an acquaintance, musical acquaintance. I met him maybe on three occasions, but when he came to Ghana, and looked in the Makola Market and he told one woman, "oh, you remind me of my mother", everybody loved him, but he could have done something for Ghana, but he didn't do nothing, he went back to America.

Question: Who are the others?

Cab Kaye: Well, Dizzy Gillespie, I would say as a Black American, he is one of the most Afro-American that we have, that is Dizzy. He is from South Carolina, we know that, but he strictly knows who he is, and from where he comes, and to respect Africa. He doesn't commercialize on Africa. Randy Weston, another great example, who has been living Tanzania for a long time, his gone back to America now, but he has a home and a school, a music school in Tennessee, but his music is strictly back to the roots, and his roots are New York, West Indies, Africa. His father born in the West Indies, his grandfather from Africa, but he recognizes it ... many of the others have names – not corresponding with African connections, they are names of plantation owners, so they don't – have any idea of which part of Africa they maybe came from, that's the trouble.