

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When performing within his South Central Los Angeles community, Horace Tapscott would occasionally forego introducing a particular composition by title and simply announce to the audience, “This is one more you wrote through us.” I offer this book as one written through me by dozens of artists and supporters of the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra and UGMAA. Approximately one hundred members generously spent hours with me telling their story of this history. To them, my profound thanks. I stand in awe not only of their accomplishments but also of the fire that still burns, fueled by passions and values of the noblest kind.

Undoubtedly, I have missed many others and to them I can only offer my sincerest apologies. I have tried to discover and contact as many people as I’ve learned of, but I also realize the difficulty, if not impossibility, of trying to locate everyone involved in a movement of this magnitude over a forty-year period. I only hope that they see in this history an accurate reflection of what they experienced.

This project could not have been carried out without the support of Horace Tapscott and his family. Horace set the research in motion and since his passing the family has been an essential support in bringing this work to a conclusion. Cecilia Tapscott, Michael Dett Wilcots, Renée Tapscott Wilcots, and Raisha Wilcots not only embraced this project, providing guidance and support at every stage, but insisted, without reservation, that I tell the story as I found it. They also welcomed my partner Jeannette Lindsay and me into their family, an honor we shall always cherish.

The first time I saw Roberto Miranda he was on a bandstand with Horace. Witnessing the two of them in full cry was an experience I’ll never forget,

one that altered my understanding of and reinforced my awe for this music when it achieves such a level of consummate artistry. My lengthy interview with Roberto was key in understanding much of this history. His willingness to then write an analysis of the music of the Arkestra and Horace in an appendix was an added bonus. To you, my brother, a thousand thanks.

I am indebted to the corps of readers, who spent time on various drafts and who will recognize their handprints throughout this text. This project benefited enormously from their knowledge and willingness to assist in my journey through this history. For their time and effort, I thank Chris Abani, Fuasi Abdul-Khaliq, Adam Bush, Kamau Daáood, Larry Dilg, Ron Gottesman, Robin D. G. Kelley, Steven McCall, Mimi Melnick, Roberto Miranda, Cecilia Tapscott, Michael Dett Wilcots, Renée Tapscott Wilcots, and three anonymous readers. The research assistance of my former student Adam Bush was an important support. Mimi Melnick contributed the index to the first edition, a Herculean effort, while I modified it for this edition. Errors and omissions are solely mine.

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My fourteen-year association with the UCLA Oral History Program (now the Center for Oral History Research) from 1989 to 2003 yielded forty-seven life-history interviews documenting Los Angeles's African American community through its secular music history. Organized into two projects, "Central Avenue Sounds" and "Beyond Central," they have been an important aspect of my continuing education on this vibrant community and have been essential in writing this book. My thanks to former director, Dale Treleven, my mentor of many years, who first shaped these projects with me in 1989;

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The Horace Tapscott Archive is now securely ensconced in the Performing Arts Special Collections at UCLA. Due to the original efforts of Music Librarians Gordon Theil, Stephen Davison, and Tim Edwards, the collection was preserved and made available to researchers. I am grateful to them for their awareness of the importance of this material, providing such an exceptional home for the Archive, and also for their readiness to pack their already overworked schedules with my requests for digital transfers of old reel-to-reel tapes.

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It was a very pleasant surprise when Ken Wissoker of Duke University Press expressed immediate enthusiasm at the prospect of publishing a second edition of *The Dark Tree*. Ken had signed Horace Tapscott's autobiography, *Songs of the Unsung*, to Duke over twenty years ago and our work together was a completely satisfying experience. To collaborate again with him and the excellent staff at Duke couldn't have been more professional and satisfying. Thanks to Ken, Ryan Kendall, Kate Mullen, Jessica Ryan, and Courtney Leigh Richardson.

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