

Hey, my name is Marcus Elliott. I am a saxophonist, composer, educator and producer in Detroit, Michigan. So there's a program here at the *DSO (Detroit Symphony Orchestra)*, called the *Civic Youth Ensembles*, and this is actually a program that I came up through when I was in high school. When I was here, it was run by the great Rodney Whittaker, amazing Detroit bass player. Now, I am the director of the program.

At a young age at about four years old, I really started getting into music and playing stuff on piano and trying to make up my own songs and do that... and then I was given a saxophone when I was about 11 years old and fell in love with it... and my father would take me out to jazz clubs. He would take me to *Baker's Keyboard Lounge*, to *Bert's Marketplace*, to *Cliff Bill's*. It was really what kind of got me into the music. The first club I went to was *Bert's Marketplace*, which is in the Eastern Market. I remember getting there and I remember, just the feeling of just being amazed, of watching these musicians on stage communicate with one another. There was no music in front of them, but they were so in tune with one another... and it was the first time I had ever really seen that. And I was just starting to play the saxophone at the time... and there was a saxophonist that was playing, his name was Steve Wood. I just remember being like, Wow, I think I can actually do this. Like, I think this is what I want to do... I want to be able to do that.

When I was in middle school, we were given the option to play different instruments. I decided I want to play the saxophone when it was the day that we were supposed to pick up the rented instruments. My guess my parents misunderstood what the price was, so they got there and it was more than what they could afford at the time. So they were talking about it while they were in line and they basically turned to me and told me, "Unfortunately, Marcus, I don't think we're gonna be able to get this saxophone, it's just too much money..." and then a good friend of mine, his mother overheard my parents saying

this... and she said, "Well, wait a second. My oldest son played the saxophone. There's one in our closet, has been sitting there for years. Marcus can just have that". It's just a constant reminder how this music is really a gift. I'll always remember that. And I try and share that gift as much as I possibly can.