

# Playing the Changes

## The Life & Legacy of Milt Hinton

*Playing the Changes* provides an unrivaled perspective on the life and legacy of jazz legend Milt Hinton, one of the 20th century's most accomplished bass players.

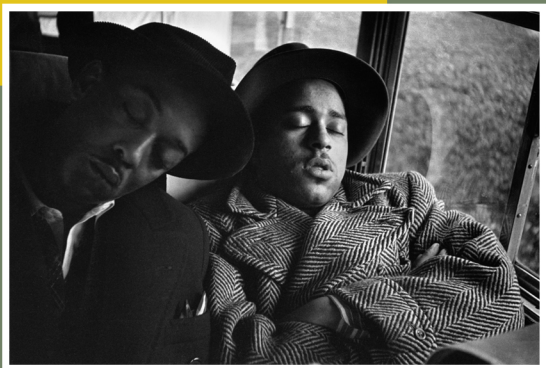
Developed by Oberlin College and the Milton J. Hinton Photographic Collection, the exhibit combines up to fifty of Hinton's most acclaimed original photographs taken between the 1930s–1990s with insightful biographical materials drawn from the Milton J. and Mona C. Hinton Collection in the Oberlin Conservatory Library's special collections.



Exhibition  
Prospectus

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"I've always tried to help young people. If someone wants to improve, if they have a sincere desire to learn, I've always tried to be there to give them whatever I can." - Milt Hinton



Danny Barker and Dizzy Gillespie, train, ca. 1940

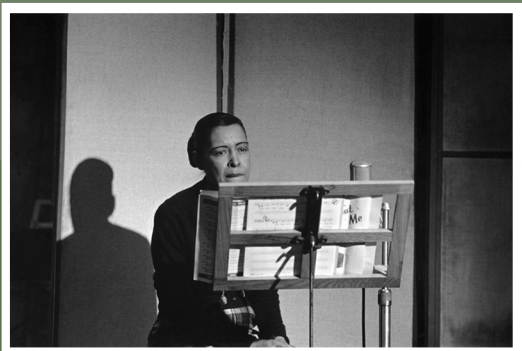
“Milt Hinton is one of those rare people who has lived most of the history of jazz, and he’s been willing to share his experiences with generations of musicians who came after him. Milt is an artist not only with his bass, but with his camera as well. An astute observer of people and a real gentleman, he brings out the best of everyone around him.” - Doc Severinsen

“Milt Hinton’s prowess as a photographer is only topped by his stature as a musician. He seems to know just the right moment to snap a picture. And he also seems to have an inner essence that allows him to say the right things at the right time.”  
- Dizzy Gillespie

Cab Calloway with band members, train station, Atlanta, ca. 1940



Billie Holiday, recording studio, New York City, 1959



“Milt is the standard that all of us try to measure up to. If some of the younger musicians, whatever they play, could follow him around for a week and just see his demeanor, see his personality, see his openness and caring for other music and for other musicians, they’d probably double their growth in a year.” - Ron Carter

## About Milt Hinton

Milton John Hinton (June 23, 1910–December 19, 2000) was a legendary bass player and photographer. Over the course of his seven-decade career, he became one of the most recorded bassists in history. He also took tens of thousands of photographs that capture his behind-the-scenes life in music.

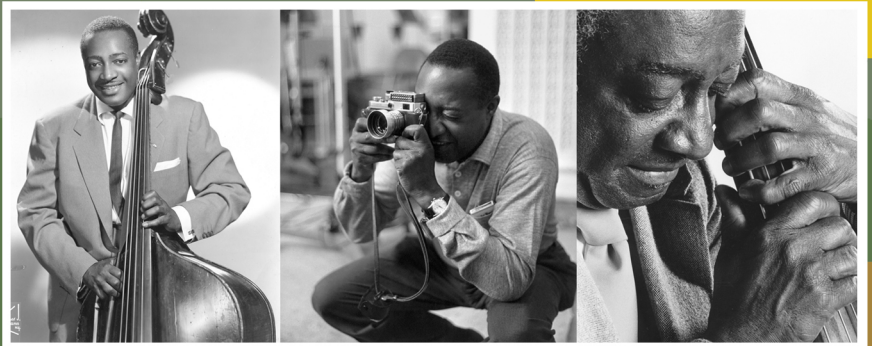
As the grandson of a slave growing up in rural Mississippi, Hinton knew the realities of racism. Discrimination continued during his Jim-Crow-era travels with the Cab Calloway Orchestra in the 1930s–40s. In the 1950s, segregation persisted when Hinton worked to break through the color line in New York recording studios.



Milt Hinton, Brooke Benton, and Dinah Washington, recording studio, New York City

But as this exhibit shows, Hinton knew how to play the changes. Musically, he worked with performers across the spectrum of styles, from Cab Calloway to Louis Armstrong to Bing Crosby to Barbra Streisand to Paul McCartney. Socially, he navigated the evolving expectations of what it meant to be an African American in the U.S. Through it all, he combined talent with perseverance to overcome life's adversities, leaving behind a legacy that Oberlin College is proud to share.

Milt Hinton in 1953, 1959, and 1979



## Exhibition at a Glance

**Contents:** up to 50 framed black-and-white pigment prints (framed to 16" x 20") and 10 freestanding biographical panels (each 27" x 70")

**Size:** a variety of options are available, requiring a minimum of 30 running feet and a maximum of 150 running feet.

**Crates:** exhibit ships in up to 7 crates (depending on number of photographs selected), each weighing ca. 50 lbs.

**Costs:** host institution pays round-trip shipping costs along with a rental fee for a ten-week booking period

For more information, including a complete illustrated checklist, email: [con.special@oberlin.edu](mailto:con.special@oberlin.edu)  
phone: 440.775.8280

## Additional Materials

In addition to the exhibition itself, hosts will receive:

- curatorial and registration information
- shipping, handling, and installation instructions
- public relations support, including a sample press release, sample images, and advice on promoting the exhibition
- information on related programming opportunities, including a screening of the award-winning documentary film *Keeping Time: The Life, Music, and Photographs of Milt Hinton* (prod. by David G. Berger and Holly Maxson), and a concert featuring Oberlin Professor of Jazz Studies Peter Dominguez performing on Milt Hinton's bass

a special message from "The Judge"

Never B#  
Never Bb  
Just Bb  
Milton J. Hinton

*Front cover:* Milt Hinton with Cab Calloway, Havana, 1951

*Above:* One of the exhibition's ten freestanding biographical panels

*Left:* Milt Hinton's signature



### In the Studios 1

It was a chance encounter with the entertainer Jackie Gleason—someone Milt worked with when he was just starting out—that gave Milt his first big break in the New York studios. As a result, he became one of the few African Americans to play in the studios on a regular basis. His exceptional professionalism, musicianship, and reliability made him a trusted resource, and soon he helped other aspiring musicians like George Duvivier, Clark Terry, and Richard Davis follow in his path.



Milt is featured for March 4-7, 1951 on News 4, in addition to a 20-minute weekly New York radio show recorded in the city and on the radio and on TV. Milt is recorded at 11 pm with Milt Hinton—one of the first recordings before his primary death in July 1962.



MILTON HINTON (BASS)  
MILT HINTON

Of course Milt Hinton recorded with Milt in March 1951.



Milt Hinton, c. 1951, and George Duvivier, c. 1951. New York City recording studio, photo by Milt Hinton.



Milt Hinton, c. 1951, and George Duvivier, c. 1951. New York City recording studio, photo by Milt Hinton.

### Seeing Sound

One of Milt's favorite times to take photographs in the studio was during playbacks since he could put his bass down and think about framing the shots. Many of his most revealing photographs were taken during these breaks, where Milt created insightful portraits of performers hearing and thinking about their own music.

Selections from the Milton J. and Mona C. Hinton Collection  
Oberlin Conservatory Library Special Collections

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