

The following is a working script for the Jazz at Lincoln Center radio program. Because of improvisations or corrections it may differ slightly from the final program as produced. The script is provided here for educational and research purposes only and any other use or exploitation shall require Jazz at Lincoln Center's prior approval. We hope you find these scripts valuable. All rights are reserved (c) & (p) Jazz at Lincoln Center 2009.

Jazz at Lincoln Center
The Music of Thelonious Monk
Season 17
Program 2; Airdate: 10/08/2009

MUSIC: MONK solo piano

1. PIERCE:

FOLKS MAY HAVE TOLD YOU THAT THELONIOUS MONK WAS ONE OF THE FATHERS OF BEBOP. THEY MIGHT HAVE TOLD YOU THAT HE'S THE MOST MODERN OF THE MODERN JAZZ MUSICIANS. THEY MAY HAVE SAID THAT HIS COMPOSITIONS ARE AMONG THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND ENIGMATIC WORKS IN THE HISTORY OF JAZZ.

BUT JUST AS LIKELY THEY PAINTED WILD STORIES OF CHINESE PEASANT HATS, BAMBOO GLASSES, ARTLESS DANCING IN JAGGED CIRCLES, ATTACKS ON THE PIANO WITH SPLAYED FINGERS AND ELBOWS AND HERKY-JERKY GESTICULATIONS PUNCTUATED BY A STOMPING RIGHT FOOT.

AND, FRANKLY, THOSE THINGS TEND TO COLOR ONE'S JUDGMENT, AS THEY DID FOR MUCH OF MONK'S CAREER.

1B) [PLAY MONK'S "WE SEE" FROM *STRAIGHT, NO CHASER*]

1c. PIERCE:

IT IS 27 YEARS SINCE THELONIOUS MONK'S DEATH. IT'S 50 YEARS SINCE MONK'S HISTORIC CONCERT AT MANHATTAN'S TOWN HALL THAT WE'RE ABOUT TO CELEBRATE.

TIME HAS GIVEN US PERSPECTIVE -- AND PERSPECTIVE ALLOWS US TO EMBRACE BOTH SIDES OF THE MAN AS ONE SEAMLESS TRUE GENIUS. JUST AHEAD THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA TAKE TO THE STAGE WITH MARCUS ROBERTS TO REIMAGINE MONK'S MUSIC FOR BIG BAND.

I'M WENDELL PIERCE. THIS IS JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER.

["WE SEE" CONTINUES]

2) [INTRO TO "WE SEE"]

2a) PIERCE:

IN THE FEBRUARY CHILL OF 1959, THELONIOUS MONK TOOK A BIG BAND TO TOWN HALL. FOR MONK THIS WAS UNPRECEDENTED—THE SMALL COMBO WAS HIS SCENE. AT THE TIME, THE PERFORMANCE WAS GREATLY ANTICIPATED. TODAY IT IS LEGEND.

ON THIS 50TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF MONK'S LANDMARK TOWN HALL CONCERT, THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA SWINGS THE MUSIC OF MONK IN THAT RARE BIG BAND SETTING. TO SHOW YOU WHAT WE MEAN, THAT'S A TUNE CALLED *WE SEE* PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND, THE WAY IT'S USUALLY HEARD. WE'LL OPEN OUR CONCERT WITH BIG BAND VERSION OF "WE SEE."

3) MUSIC: We See

4) PIERCE:

MONKS COMPOSITION *WE SEE*. MARCUS ROBERTS, THE J-MASTER ON PIANO. WYNTON MARSALIS, TRUMPET. ARRANGED BY SHERMAN IRBY.

4A) [INTRO TO “BLUE MONK”]

4B) PIERCE: (con’t)

THELONIOUS SPHERE MONK WAS BORN ON OCTOBER 10, 1917 IN ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA. AFTER FIVE YEARS OF ABSORBING THAT DEEP COUNTRY SOUL, THELONIOUS’ FAMILY MOVED TO THE BIG APPLE, WHERE HE WOULD GROW UP AND SPEND MOST OF HIS LIFE.

AT THE CENTER OF THAT LIFE WAS THE PIANO. LARGELY SELF-TAUGHT, MONK’S TEEN YEARS WERE FILLED WITH RENT PARTIES, AMATEUR NIGHTS AT THE APOLLO AND FORAYS INTO THE DIVINE WITH THE “TEXAS WAR HORSE,” A TENT SHOW EVANGELIST. HIS MUSICAL WORLD BRIMMED WITH HARLEM STRIDE PIANO, DOWN-HOME GOSPEL AND, OF COURSE, THE BLUES.

NEXT UP, A B FLAT BLUES BASED ON THE JAZZ TUNE CALLED *PASTEL BLUE*.

THIS IS *BLUE MONK*.

5) MUSIC: Blue Monk (11:30)

5A) PIERCE:

“BLUE MONK.” SHERMAN IRBY ON THE ALTO SAXOPHONE;
VINCENT GARDNER, TROMBONE; RYAN KISOR, TRUMPET; MARCUS
ROBERTS PLAYED PIANO WITH AN ARRANGEMENT BY DAVID
BERGER. AT THE HOUSE OF SWING, THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
ORCHESTRA.

6) [INTRO TO “EVIDENCE”]

6) PIERCE:

IN 1940, THELONIOUS MONK LANDED A DREAM GIG AS THE
HOUSE PIANIST AT MINTON’S PLAYHOUSE. HE WOULD SAY LATER
“WE WAS JUST THERE *PLAYING*. THEY WASN’T GIVIN’ ANY
LECTURES,” MINTON’S BECAME A UNIVERSITY OF NEW JAZZ IDEAS.
OFTEN THESE WERE BORN IN THE HEAT OF 3AM CUTTING CONTESTS
THAT INCLUDED PROFESSORS CHARLIE PARKER, DIZZY GILLESPIE,
AND CHARLIE CHRISTIAN. IT WAS HERE THAT MONK PENNED HIS
FIRST CLASSICS: ‘*ROUND MIDNIGHT*, *RUBY MY DEAR*, AND THE TUNE
WE’RE ABOUT TO HEAR CALLED *EVIDENCE*.

7) MUSIC: Evidence

“EVIDENCE” WITH MARCUS PRINTUP ON TRUMPET, ALI
JACKSON ON DRUMS. ARRANGED BY WYNTON MARSALIS.

8) PIERCE:

THIS NEXT PIECE IS ALSO FROM THE LEGENDARY MINTONS YEARS.
IT EMERGED FROM A COLLABORATION BETWEEN MONK AND DRUMMER
KENNY CLARKE. HERE’S *EPISTROPHY*.

9) MUSIC: Epistrophy

9A) PIERCE:

TED NASH ALTO SAXOPHONE, WYNTON MARSALIS TRUMPET. MARCUS ROBERTS PIANO. OUR BIG BAND INTERPRETATION WAS PENNED BY ONE OF THE YOUNGEST MEMBERS OF THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA, TROMBONIST CHRIS CRENSHAW.

APPROPRIATELY ENOUGH, ON THIS 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MONK'S TOWN HALL CONCERT, OUR PIANIST MARCUS ROBERTS WAS THE FIRST WINNER OF THE MONK INSTITUTE'S INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION, DRUMMER ALI JACKSON IS A MONK INSTITUTE ALUM AND TRUMPETER RYAN KISOR WAS THE FIRST WINNER OF THE INSTITUTE'S TRUMPET COMPETITION.

JUST AHEAD, WE'LL TALK ABOUT MONK'S SUPPORTING CAST, HIS RHYTHM SECTION AWAY FROM THE BAND STAND, SO TO SPEAK.

MEANWHILE, YOU CAN FIND LOTS MORE ABOUT THELONIOUS SPHERE MONK IN THE JAZZ HALL OF FAME AT JALC (DOT) ORG -- AND ALSO LINK TO VIDEO OF MONK'S OWN PERFORMANCES.

IF YOU'VE MISSED ANY PART OF THIS SHOW YOU'LL FIND IT THERE -- ALONG WITH OTHERS FROM OUR ARCHIVE. SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAILS, AND BRING HOME THE SWING FROM J A L C DOT ORG. I'M WENDELL PIERCE. IT'S JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER.

MID-BREAK:

10) [INTRO TO “CREPUSCULE WITH NELLIE”] MONK’S

CREPUSCULE

10A) PIERCE:

LIFE’S EVERYDAY RHYTHMS, ITS EBBS & FLOWS, THE TEDIOUS DETAILS THE COMPETED WITH THE MUSIC AND OTHER THINGS IN MONK’S SINGULAR BRAIN, MIGHT WELL HAVE OVERWHELMED HIM HAD NELLIE SMITH NOT ENTERED HIS LIFE. NELLIE MARRIED THELONIOUS IN 1947, AND WAS, SIMPLY PUT, HIS HEART AND SOUL. SHE WAS ALSO HIS CONNECTION TO A WORLD THAT SEEMED, TO THAT MAD GENIUS MONK, INCREASINGLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE. SHE PAID HIS BILLS. SHE WORKED AS A SEAMSTRESS TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY WHEN HIS MUSIC COULD NOT. SHE GUIDED HIM THROUGH AIRPORTS, TRAIN TERMINALS, BUS DEPOTS, DOWN THE STREET AND AROUND THE CORNER. AND SHE DELIVERED HIM TO GIGS IN THE CLOTHES SHE SELECTED—AND FREQUENTLY MADE—FOR HIM.

WHEN NELLIE UNDERWENT THYROID SURGERY IN 1956, MONK WROTE THIS BALLAD. “CREPUSCULE (or TWILIGHT) WITH NELLIE,” WAS SO SACRED AN OFFERING TO HIS BELOVED THAT HE NEVER ALLOWED HIS MUSICIANS TO IMPROVISE WHILE PLAYING IT.

ON STAGE AT THE ROSE THEATER, “**CREPUSCULE WITH NELLIE.**”

11) MUSIC: Crepuscule with Nellie

“CREPUSCULE WITH NELLIE,” ARRANGED BY WYNTON MARSALIS.

12) [INTRO TO “BA-LUE BOLIVAR BA-LUES ARE”]

12A) PIERCE:

ANOTHER WOMAN IN THELONIOUS MONK’S LIFE WHO PLAYED A VERY DIFFERENT KIND OF ROLE, WAS THE BARONESS PANNONICA DE KOENIGSWARTER, AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS “NICA.”

NICA LOVED BEBOP. NICA ALSO LOVED THE MEN WHO MADE BEBOP. AND SHE LOVED THELONIOUS MOST OF ALL. THEY MET IN PARIS IN 1954 AND THE TWO WOULD REMAIN CLOSE FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE.

THIS NEXT PIECE WAS WRITTEN AT NICA’S SUITE AT NEW YORK’S BOLIVAR HOTEL ON CENTRAL PARK WEST.

THE BOLIVAR WAS THE SECOND LUXURY HOTEL THAT THE ROTHSCHILD HEIRESS WAS ASKED TO LEAVE AS A RESULT OF, LET US SAY, JAZZ-RELATED COMPLICATIONS. CHARLIE PARKER DIED IN ONE HOTEL, AND MUSICIANS JAMMED UNTIL 8 IN THE MORNING IN THE OTHER. GO FIGURE.

“BA-LUE BOLIVAR BA-LUES ARE.

13) MUSIC: Ba-Lue Bolivar Ba-Lues Are

14) PIERCE:

“BA-LUE BOLIVAR BA-LUES ARE.” MARCUS ROBERTS, PIANO; JOE TEMPERLEY, BARITONE SAX; FREDDIE HENDRIX, TRUMPET. ARRANGED BY WALTER BLANDING. THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA.

15) [INTRO TO “UGLY BEAUTY”]

15A) PIERCE:

IF YOU HAD TO GIVE A TITLE TO MONK’S CREATIVE LEGACY, THIS NEXT PIECE MIGHT SERVE. MONK’S MELODIES ARE WONDERFULLY MUSICAL AND DEFINITELY SWINGIN’, BUT HIS APPROACH TO THEM IS NOT PRETTY. HE PLAYS WITH ODD HESITATIONS, DISSONANT CHORDS, UNCONVENTIONAL RHYTHMS AND COMPLETELY UNFOREHEARD VOICINGS. NO. NOT PRETTY. BUT BEAUTIFUL. NOT IN THAT EASY WAY OF BEING BEAUTIFUL, BUT BEAUTIFUL LIKE PICASSO’S “GUERNICA” IS BEAUTIFUL, LIKE SOPHIA LOREN IS BEAUTIFUL, LIKE “UGLY BEAUTY” IS BEAUTIFUL.

HERE IS “**UGLY BEAUTY.**”

16) MUSIC: Ugly Beauty

17) PIERCE:

“UGLY BEAUTY.” MARCUS ROBERTS, PIANO. OUR SAXOPHONE SECTION FEATURED SHERMAN IRBY, TED NASH, WALTER BLANDING, DAN BLOCK AND JOE TEMPERLEY. THE JAZZ AT LNCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA ON STAGE AT ROSE HALL WITH MUSICAL DIRECTOR, WYNTON MARSALIS.

18) [INTRO TO “FOUR IN ONE”]

18A) PIERCE:

WE CLOSE ON A BRIGHT NOTE, THOUGH WE CELEBRATE A LIFE THAT ENDED IN THE DARK. ALWAYS INACCESSIBLE ON SOME LEVELS, IN THE 1970's THELONIOUS MONK RETREATED FROM THE WORLD COMPLETELY. FOR YEARS HE SAT SILENTLY HOLED UP IN THE WEEHAWKEN HOME OF THE BARONESS, EATING THE FOOD THAT NELLIE WOULD MAKE DAILY PILGRIMAGES TO COOK FOR HIM.

HE NEVER PLAYED MUSIC AGAIN. HE DIED THERE IN WEEHAWKEN IN 1982.

BUT, THE MUSIC HE LEFT BEHIND MARKS HIM AS ONE OF THE GREATEST COMPOSERS IN THE HISTORY OF JAZZ. THE WAY HE APPROACHED THE PIANO MARKS HIM AS AN ABSOLUTE ORIGINAL.

HE WOULD SAY "A GENIUS IS THE ONE MOST LIKE HIMSELF." BY THAT MEASURE, THERE IS NO GREATER GENIUS IN THIS MUSIC THAN THELONIOUS SPHERE MONK.

19) MUSIC: Four In One

"FOUR IN ONE" ARRANGED BY CHUCK ISRAELS, FEATURING SOLOS BY WYNTON MARSALIS, JOE TEMPERLEY AND MARCUS ROBERTS AS WE CLOSE OUR PROGRAM HERE AT THE HOUSE OF SWING. 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF HIS GREAT 1959 TOWN HALL

19A) PIERCE: (con't)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER RADIO IS PRODUCED AT MURRAY STREET. THIS EDITION WRITTEN BY DARYL N. LONG WITH THANKS TO JEFF WARD FOR CUES SUGGESTED IN HIS SCRIPT FOR THE LIVE PERFORMANCE. OUR PRODUCERS ARE DAVID GOREN AND STEPHEN RATHE WITH ALEXA LIM.

OUR RECORDINGS WERE MADE BY SAUNDRA PALMER GRASSI AT XM STUDIOS IN ROSE HALL WITH ADDITIONAL RECORDING BY ETHAN DONALDSON AT CDM STUDIOS.

THANKS TO MATTHEW LONG MIDDLETON, KAY NIEWOOD AND OMAR LITTLE.

THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER IS WYNTON MARSALIS. CAT HENRY SUPERVISES OUR BROADCASTS AND RECORDINGS. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IS ADRIAN ELLIS.

I'M WENDELL PIERCE. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT WEEK FOR MORE GREAT PERFORMANCE FROM THE HOUSE OF SWING.