

Jazz at Lincoln Center Radio
Duke of the Songbook

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Duke of the Songbook
Season 17
Program 8; Airdate 11/04/09

1) Background music: Dukelsky ballet

2) PIERCE:

THE COMPOSER WHO MADE HIS MARK AS “VERNON DUKE” WROTE THE MUSIC FOR SOME OF THE BEST AMERICAN STANDARDS. BUT HIS PATH TO SONGWRITING GLORY WAS NEITHER EASY NOR ASSURED.

BORN VLADIMIR DUKELSKY, TRAINED AT THE KIEV CONSERVATORY AND CAUGHT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION, HE WAS FORCED TO FLEE HIS HOMELAND. HE CONTINUED WORKING ABROAD AND HIS MODERNIST COMPOSING WON FAVOR FROM HIS PEERS -- BUT NOT EVERYONE WAS IMPRESSED.

ABOUT THE 1926 MUSICAL CALLED “YVONNE” – WHICH DUKE HELPED WRITE - PLAYWRIGHT NOEL COWARD PUNNED “YVONNE THE TERRIBLE.” AND WHO REMEMBERS THAT SCORE?

BUT VERNON DUKE WOULD ALSO GIVE US SUMPTUOUS MELODIES THAT WOULD BE LOVED FOR GENERATIONS.

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JUST AHEAD, ON STAGE IN THE ALLEN ROOM, PIANIST BILL CHARLAP LEADS THE BAND IN A GUIDED TOUR OF THE VERNON DUKE SONGBOOK. I'M WENDELL PIERCE. THIS IS JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER. AND WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE.

3a) Background music: "Swanee," Al Jolson

3b) PIERCE:

HE WAS WORKING AS A CAFÉ PIANIST IN CONSTANTINOPLE, WHEN VLADIMIR DUKELSKY FELL IN LOVE WITH GEORGE GERSHWIN'S "SWANEE." WHEN HE GOT TO NEW YORK SOON AFTER, DUKELSKY GOT TO MEET HIS HERO. BILL CHARLAP EXPLAINS.

3c) Vox: Bill Charlap

At a concert of new music, where he played some of his new works, he met the 24-year-old George Gershwin. Who took him under his wing and he said to him: 'You know, you really shouldn't think that it's too low-brow to write popular songs. You have the melodic gifts, and I think you should try your hand at writing popular songs. But Vladimir Dukelsky isn't really a good name for a popular songwriter. So from now on your name is Vernon Duke.'

3d) PIERCE:

GERSHWIN WAS ALSO GENEROUS WITH HIS CONNECTIONS. HE CONVINCED LYRICIST YIP HARBURG TO WORK WITH "VERNON DUKE." FOR A 1932 MUSICAL, THEY PRODUCED ONE OF THE GREAT STANDARDS OF ALL TIME: "APRIL IN PARIS."

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4) **Music:** April in Paris

5) **PIERCE:**

THE COMPOSITION BY VERNON DUKE AND YIP HARBURG.

“APRIL IN PARIS,”

6)

7) **PIERCE:**

IT ‘S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT TUNE WAS INITIALLY A BIT OF A FLOP. YIP HARBURG WAS A STAUNCH LEFTIST, WHO DISAPPROVED OF DUKE'S ARISTOCRATIC LINEAGE. HE VENTED HIS FRUSTRATION AT THE SONG'S MODEST SUCCESS -- DESCRIBING THE MELODY AS "ALL RIGHT FOR DECADENT EUROPEANS."

BUT HARBURG KEPT WORKING WITH DUKE AND TWO YEARS LATER THEY SCORED A HIT IN A REVIVAL OF THE ZIEGFELD FOLLIES WITH "I LIKE THE LIKES OF YOU."

8) **Music:** "I Like the Likes of You"

9) **PIERCE:**

"I LIKE THE LIKES OF YOU" – MUSIC BY VERNON DUKE. LYRICS BY YIP HARBURG.

THE SONGWRITERS DIDN'T LIKE THE LIKES OF EACH OTHER THOUGH, AND IN 1934 THEY ENDED THEIR RELATIONSHIP.

LATER THAT, YEAR DUKE WROTE THE MUSIC AND THE WORDS FOR HIS NEXT GREAT SUCCESS.

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10) PIERCE: (continues)

HE SAID HE WAS HOME IN CONNECTICUT WORKING ON A BALLET WHEN HE WAS "SEIZED WITH A LONGING TO BE BACK IN NEW YORK – WHERE THINGS WERE ALWAYS HAPPENING."

THE INSPIRATION GREW INTO A TUNE AND THEN CAME THE LYRICS. ONCE AGAIN IT WASN'T AN IMMEDIATE POPULAR HIT, BUT THIS WISTFUL MELODY OVER DENSE CHORD CHANGES HAS BECOME A FAVORITE FOR GENERATIONS OF SINGERS AND MUSICIANS. IN THE ALLEN ROOM, BILL CHARLAP IS AT THE PIANO, PETER WASHINGTON ON BASS AND KENNY WASHINGTON ON DRUMS.

11) Music: "Autumn in New York"

12) PIERCE: 122

"AUTUMN IN NEW YORK," VERNON DUKE'S EVOCATIVE LAMENT.

13) Background music: "I Can't Get Started," Bunny Berrigan

12) PIERCE: (continues)

THOUGH HIS STAR WAS RISING BY 1936, VERNON DUKE FOUND HIMSELF STUCK ON A SONG CALLED "FACE THE MUSIC WITH ME"

HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT AND IT SEEMED HEADED FOR THE FILE THAT ALMOST EVERY WRITER HAS - LABELED "OBLIVION."

ENTER IRA GERSHWIN.

THE WELL-KNOWN LYRICIST MARRIED THAT THEME OF "STUCKNESS" TO THE MELANCHOLY TUNE, CHANGED THE TITLE – AND

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VOILA. ANOTHER VERNON DUKE MASTERPIECE WAS BORN. SINGER BOB HOPE MADE THIS TUNE THE TALK OF THE 1936 ZIEGFELD FOLLIES:

12) Music: "I Can't Get Started With You"

13) PIERCE:

"I CAN'T GET STARTED WITH YOU." ETHEL ENNIS WITH THE VOCAL. SOLOS BY HOUSTON PERSON ON TENOR AND BILL CHARLAP AT THE PIANO.

AND HERE AT THE HOUSE OF SWING, WE'VE GOTTEN STARTED, BUT THERE'S LOTS MORE TO GO, AS WE DIG INTO THE VERNON DUKE SONGBOOK, WITH BILL CHARLAP AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE ALLEN ROOM IN FREDERICK P. ROSE HALL.

IF YOU MISSED ANY PART OF OUR SHOW YOU CAN GET IT RE-STARTED ANYTIME AT J-A-L-C DOT ORG.

YOU CAN ALSO WRITE TO US – VIA –“RADIO AT J-A-L-C (DOT) ORG” THAT WILL GET YOU TO ME, WENDELL PIERCE, BRINGING YOU JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER.

15) Mid-break: Charlie Parker

16) Background music: "Taking a Chance on Love," Ethel Waters

17) PIERCE:

VERNON DUKE'S GREATEST BROADWAY SUCCESS CAME AT THE BEHEST OF ANOTHER MAJOR RUSSIAN ARTIST. BALLET CHOREOGRAPHER GEORGE BALANCHINE ASKED DUKE TO WRITE THE SONGS FOR AN ALL-

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BLACK MUSICAL ABOUT A LOVE TRIANGLE OVERSEEN BY BOTH THE DEVIL AND A HEAVENLY GENERAL.

DUKE AND LYRICIST JOHN LATOUCHE PRODUCED A SCORE GOOD ENOUGH TO LURE ETHEL WATERS - ONE OF THE LEADING SINGERS AND STAGE PERFORMERS OF THE DAY.

THAT 1940 MUSICAL, "CABIN IN THE SKY," WAS SUCH A SUCCESS THAT IT WAS MADE INTO A FILM WITH SOME OF THE TRUE GIANTS OF JAZZ - LENA HORNE, DUKE ELLINGTON, AND LOUIS ARMSTRONG.

BUT, AS BILL CHARLAP RECOUNTS, ETHEL WATERS WAS THE STAR.

18) Vox: Bill Charlap

This next song was such a big hit, that when it was first introduced, by Waters, there were 3 different stanzas, full choruses of the tune, but by the time she was finished, the audience wouldn't let her leave – so she had to make up another set of lyrics – about how there weren't anymore lyrics. Anyhow, this is "Taking a Chance on Love" – lyrics by Ted Fetter and John LaTouche.

19) Music: "Taking a Chance on Love"

21) PIERCE:

VERNON DUKE'S "TAKING A CHANCE ON LOVE" – SUNG BY ETHEL ENNIS. BILL CHARLAP IS AT THE PIANO.

HOUSTON PERSON DID THE HONORS ON TENOR.

YOU CAN FIND A LINK TO THE ETHEL WATERS FILM PERFORMANCE OF THAT TUNE -- AT J A L C DOT ORG.

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23) Background music: "You're a Sweetheart," Houston Person

24) PIERCE:

SAXOPHONIST HOUSTON PERSON HAS ALWAYS HAD A BOLD TENOR STYLE. WHETHER SWINGING ON A STANDARD, BURNING ON A BLUES, OR IMPECCABLY ACCOMPANYING A VOCALIST, PIANIST CEDAR WALTON REMEMBERS THAT DISTINCTIVE SOUND AS FAR BACK AS 1955, WHEN THE TWO WERE YOUNG SERVICEMEN STATIONED IN GERMANY.

25) Vox: Cedar Walton

He was in the Air Force, and I was in the Army, so we would meet on weekends and play in Heidelberg...We would play literally all weekend – I don't remember ever sleeping during those weekends – it was great fun. Houston is a master of the big sound on tenor saxophone. Very engaging sound, always, since I met him in those days. I feel it's that combination of delicate and big sound – delicate and big, if there is such a thing.

26) PIERCE:

PERSON GETS PLENTY OF SPACE FOR HIS FULL-BODIED TENOR ON THIS NEXT VERNON DUKE TUNE – IT'S ONE OF DUKE'S LESSER-KNOWN COMPOSITIONS CREATED FOR THE 1936 MUSICAL "THE SHOW IS ON."

THIS IS CALLED "NOW."

27) Music: "Now"

28) PIERCE:

"NOW," A MELODY BY VERNON DUKE FEATURING TENOR SAXOPHONIST HOUSTON PERSON WITH BILL CHARLAP ON PIANO.

29) Background music: Andre Previn's

30) PIERCE:

THOUGH HE DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME, VERNON DUKE HAD REACHED HIS COMMERCIAL PEAK IN THE EARLY 40S WITH "CABIN IN THE SKY."

HE WOULD WRITE AT LEAST 7 MORE MUSICALS AND REVUES IN THE ENUSING DECADES – AND THEY WOULD ALL FLOP.

BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT ALL HIS EFFORT WAS FOR NAUGHT. HIS LATER WORKS ARE DOTTED WITH GEMS -- LIKE THIS ONE THAT DUKE WROTE WITH OGDEN NASH FOR A FORGOTTEN 1946 MUSICAL CALLED "SWEET BYE AND BYE." THE TUNE IS “ROUNDABOUT”

31) Music: "Round About"

32) PIERCE:

IN THE ALLEN ROOM, BILL CHARLAP FEATURED ON PIANO, PLAYING VERNON DUKE'S “ROUNDABOUT.”

LIKE SOME OF DUKE’S LATER WORKS, BALTIMORE VOCALIST ETHEL ENNIS IS IN THAT CLASS OF THE BEST YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF.

SHE HAS SUNG WITH ELLINGTON, BASIE, ARMSTRONG, AND GOODMAN – AND WON PRAISE FROM NO LESS THAN FRANK SINATRA, AND ELLA FITZGERALD,

DESPITE THE ADMIRATION OF HER PEERS, ENNIS HAS RECORDED INFREQUENTLY – AND SHE LIKES IT THAT WAY – GENERALLY AVOIDING.

THE MUSIC BUSINESS, THE ENDLESS TOURING, AND THE IMAGE
MANAGEMENT.

ENNIS ARGUES THAT BY STAYING HOME IN BALTIMORE, SHE HAS
MORE LIFE EXPERIENCE TO SING ABOUT AS AN ARTIST. AND HERE IN THE
ALLEN ROOM HER 73-YEAR-OLD VOICE SOUNDS SO FRESH AND POWERFUL
ON THESE VERNON DUKE TUNES – IT'S TOUGH TO CONTEST HER POINT.

THIS ONE WAS WRITTEN FOR A 1944 MUSICAL (CALLED "SADIE
THOMPSON"). "THE LOVE I LONG FOR."

33) Music: "The Love I Long For"

34) PIERCE:

"THE LOVE I LONG FOR," MUSIC BY VERNON DUKE. LYRICS BY
HOWARD DIETZ. OUR SINGER IS ETHEL ENNIS, WITH HOUSTON PERSON ON
SAXOPHONE. PETER WASHINGTON ON BASS. KENNY WASHINGTON AT
THE DRUMS AND MUSICAL DIRECTOR BILL CHARLAP AT THE PIANO. IN
THE ALLEN ROOM – AT FREDERICK P. ROSE HALL

35: Music: Charlap Solo

36) PIERCE:

CHARLAP TAKES US OUT NOW WITH VERNON DUKE'S THEME FROM
"CABIN IN THE SKY" -- HERE AT OUR CONCERT HALL IN THE SKY, HIGH
OVER COLUMBUS CIRCLE... ... JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER.

YOU'LL FIND LOTS MORE MUSIC FROM THE HOUSE OF SWING AT
J-A-L-C (DOT) ORG. YOU CAN LINK THERE TO CLIPS OF THE ORIGINAL
FILM 'CABIN IN THE SKY' AND ETHEL WATERS PERFORMANCE OF 'TAKING

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A CHANCE ON LOVE. CHECK INTO THE NESUI ERTEGUN JAZZ HALL OF FAME, OR CHECK OUT THE STORIES FROM THE RHYTHM ROAD, AMERICAN MUSIC ABROAD

JUST CLICK ON OVER -- J A L C DOT ORG -- BRING HOME THE SWING. RIGHT NOW.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER RADIO IS PRODUCED AT MURRAY STREET. THIS EDITION WAS WRITTEN BY ANDREW ROSENBLUM

OUR PRODUCERS ARE STEVE RATHE, DAVID GOREN AND ALEXA LIM.

THE RECORDINGS WERE BY ROB MACOMBER AND JEFF ROTHMAN AT XM PRODUCTIONS. ADDITIONAL RECORDING AT CDM STUDIOS BY CHARLES DE MONTEBELLO_

THANKS TO MATTHEW LONG-MIDDLETON AND OUR NOBLE PHOTOGRAPHER FRANK STEWART..

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

I'M WENDELL PIERCE. THANK YOU FOR JOINING US. COME BACK SOON.