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Jazz at Lincoln Center Radio
Yes He Did: Irvin Mayfield and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra
Program 29, Airdate 4/16/09

1) Background music: The NOJO, "The Mourning"

2) Pierce:

WHEN HURRICANE KATRINA WASHED OUT NEW ORLEANS, IT SILENCED THE MUSIC. PATRONS WERE GONE, CLUBS WERE SHUTTERED, MUSICIANS DISPERSED, AND IT LOOKED FOR A TIME AS IF THE STORM MIGHT HAVE DROWNED THE CITY'S MUSICAL LIFE. BUT MUSICIANS, MANY OF THEM, HAVE COME BACK, AND THE HEART OF THE CRESCENT CITY MARCHES TO A SYNCOPATED BEAT.

WHEN HE WAS GROWING UP IN NEW ORLEANS, IRVIN MAYFIELD HAD THOUGHT ABOUT BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN. AND HIS DAD HAD URGED HIM TO 'PAY HIS DUES' AND JOIN THE LOCAL BRASS BAND. DESPITE LOSING HIS FATHER TO KATRINA'S WATERS, IRVIN MAYFIELD HAS KEPT PAYING HIS DUES.

SINCE THE 2005 FLOOD HE'S HELD TIGHT TO NEW ORLEANS - AS A TEACHER, COMPOSER, PERFORMER, AND AS THE CITY'S OFFICIAL CULTURAL AMBASSADOR.

HE'S ALSO THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA. JUST AHEAD, THEY'LL MAP NEW ORLEANS MUSIC -- PAST, PRESENT AND PERHAPS FUTURE.

FROM THE HOUSE OF SWING IN NEW YORK AND THE HOME OF SWING IN NEW ORLEANS, IT'S A HEALING, JOYOUS JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER. I'M WENDELL PIERCE.

3) Pierce:

IRVIN MAYFIELD

4) Vox: Irvin Mayfield

So we're here celebrating a tour we're going to be doing called 'New Orleans, Then and Now.' And I guess the irony of that title is that if you were in New Orleans about 100 years ago, and you read anything about New Orleans, and talk to anybody that was familiar with a lot of things going on back in that period, they'll tell you there's not very much difference between New Orleans then and now. (laughter).

5) Music: Begin "Voodoo (For Marie Laveau)" (12:27)

6) Pierce:

THAT MAY BE TRUE, BUT THERE'S DEFINITELY A TRADITION THAT EXTENDS FROM THEN TO NOW -- FROM LOUIS ARMSTRONG TO DR. JOHN--AND THAT'S THE NEW ORLEANS MUSICIANS' AFFINITY FOR VOODOO. A BLEND OF WEST AFRICAN AND ROMAN CATHOLIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES, VOODOO IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD. BUT MUSICIANS HAVE EMBRACED IT TO MARK THEMSELVES AS INSIDERS. IRVIN MAYFIELD IS ONLY THE LATEST TO CELEBRATE IT IN SONG. HERE'S HIS TUNE ABOUT A LEGENDARY 19TH-CENTURY "VOODOO QUEEN." FROM THE ALLEN ROOM ---- "VOODOO (FOR MARIE LAVEAU)".

7) Music: Voodoo (For Marie Laveau)

8) Pierce:

THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA, PERFORMING IRVIN MAYFIELD'S "VOODOO (FOR MARIE LAVEAU)."

CALVIN JOHNSON ON TENOR; REX GREGORY ON FLUTE.

9) Background music: "The Mardi Gras Second Line" Los Hombres Calientes

10) Pierce:

BORN IN NEW ORLEANS IN 1977, TRUMPETER IRVIN MAYFIELD BEGAN PERFORMING AT 12 IN THE ALGIERS BRASS BAND. HE RELEASED HIS FIRST ALBUM WHEN HE WAS 20. HE'S GOT A CRISP TONE THAT SHOWS HIS AFFINITY FOR TRUMPETERS LIKE LEE MORGAN -- BUT ON HIS OWN AND WITH THE HOMETOWN GROUP "LOS HOMBRES CALIENTES" MAYFIELD RANGES FREELY IN THE MUSIC OF THE CRESCENT CITY -- AND THE CARIBBEAN.

IN 2002, HE FOUNDED THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA TO EXPLORE THE CITY'S MUSICAL HERITAGE IN A BIG BAND FORMAT.

11) Background music: James Booker: Three Keys from Rounder LP

12) Pierce:

MAYFIELD ALSO WANTS TO FEATURE SOME OF THE UNSUNG HEROES OF NEW ORLEANS MUSIC -- LIKE the LATE PIANO GIANT JAMES BOOKER.

BOOKER PLAYED EVERYTHING FROM CLASSICAL TO JAZZ AND ROCK. HE WAS A MAJOR INNOVATOR IN NEW ORLEANS' STYLE OF R&B PIANO. WITH A ROLLICKING LEFT HAND AND A WHIMSICAL SPIRIT, HE COULD MAKE HIS KEYS SING LIKE A GOSPEL CHOIR -- OR MOURN LIKE A MAN DOWN TO HIS LAST DOLLAR.

ON THE ALLEN ROOM STAGE IN NEW YORK, IRVIN MAYFIELD INVOKES THE SPIRIT OF JAMES BOOKER AND ALONG WITH IT, THE NEW ORLEANS MARDI GRAS "INDIAN" TRADITION. –

THIS IS "INDIANS"

13) Music: "Indians" (12:26)

14) Pierce:

THE MARDI GRAS SPIRIT IN THE HOUSE OF SWING WITH A TRUMPET SOLO BY THE COMPOSER IRVIN MAYFIELD.

ERNEST TURNER AT THE PIANO; STEPHEN SUTER ON TROMBONE, CALVIN JOHNSON TENOR SAX, AND REX GREGORY ON ALTO. THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA ON STAGE IN NEW YORK.

15) Pierce:

YOU CAN FIND MORE ABOUT THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA AND A LINK TO AMERICAN ROOTS' INTERVIEW WITH IRVIN MAYFIELD" AT -- J-A-L-C (DOT) ORG (SLASH) JAZZCAST. AND WHILE YOU'RE THERE, YOU CAN HEAR ANY OF OUR ARCHIVE PROGRAMS -- CHECK OUT THE UPCOMING YOUNG BANDS AT ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON, AND LEARN MORE AT SWING U. IT'S ALL AT -- J-A-L-C DOT ORG. SO BRING HOME THE SWING.

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

16) Midbreak: "Just a Little While to Stay" Rebirth Brass Band

17) Vox: Mayfield

"So everybody got something to drink? The more you drink, the better we sound. All right.

"So for the second set, we all play naked."

18) Pierce:

IRVIN MAYFIELD'S COMIC AND SELF-EFFACING STAGE MANNER MASKS PRODIGIOUS ENERGY – MUSICAL AND CIVIC.

AT THE AGE OF 31, HE'S SERVED ON NEW ORLEANS' ARTS COUNCIL AND ON THE BOARDS OF A HALF DOZEN COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS. BY CONGRESSIONAL PROCLAMATION, HE'S ALSO NEW ORLEAN'S OFFICIAL CULTURAL AMBASSADOR . AND HE KNOWS HOW TO CELEBRATE THE CITY'S UNIQUE TRADITIONS. ONE OF THESE IS THE "SECOND LINE."

19) Background music: Brass band playing funeral march

20) Pierce:

THE PRACTICE COMES FROM JAZZ FUNERALS, WITH MOURNERS FOLLOWING A SOMBER MARCHING BAND ON THE WAY TO THE CEMETARY. ON THE WAY BACK, THE BAND STRIKES UP A STRUTTING HYMN -- AND THE SECOND LINE, THE MOURNERS, DANCE EXUBERANTLY BEHIND.

DUKE ELLINGTON CELEBRATES THIS TRADITION IN HIS 1970 "NEW ORLEANS SUITE". ON THE ALLEN ROOM STAGE, IRVIN MAYFIELD AND THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA BRING US ELLINGTON'S "SECOND LINE."

21) Music: "Second Line" (5:51)

22) Pierce:

THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA. DUKE ELLINGTON'S "SECOND LINE."

23) Background Music: "Final Words" @1:28 from Strange Fruit

24) Pierce:

IN 2003, NEW ORLEANS' DILLARD UNIVERSITY COMMISSIONED IRVIN MAYFIELD TO WRITE WHAT WOULD BECOME THE COMPOSITION "STRANGE FRUIT." THE NINE MOVEMENT WORK PERFORMED BY THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA AND THE DILLARD UNIVERSITY CHOIR (WHICH I – BEING A NEW ORLEANIAN, HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF NARRATING) TOOK ITS NAME FROM THE BILLIE HOLIDAY SONG, "STRANGE FRUIT."

MAYFIELD'S WORK GIVES US A POWERFUL PORTRAIT OF INTER-RACIAL LOVE IN THE JIM CROW SOUTH.

THE FICTIONAL STORY IS SET IN 1920S LOUISIANA, AS A WHITE WOMAN, MARY ANNE, FALLS IN LOVE WITH LEROI ,HER AFRICAN-AMERICAN GARDENER.

IN THIS FORTH MOVEMENT, WOODWINDS AND BRASS DRAMATIZE THEIR GROWING LOVE.

FROM THE STAGE OF THE ALLEN ROOM, IRVIN MAYFIELD'S "BALLAD OF THE LONG HOT NIGHT."

25) Music: The Ballad of the Long Hot Night (8:31)

26) Pierce:

"THE BALLAD OF THE LONG HOT NIGHT." MOVEMENT FOUR FROM IRVIN MAYFIELD'S "STRANGE FRUIT." THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA ON STAGE AT THE HOUSE OF SWING.

27) Background music: "Oral Traditions of the South" from Strange Fruit

28) Pierce:

STRANGE FRUIT IS NOT JUST A LAMENT OR A NARRATIVE. IT REMINDS US OF THE COMPOSER'S LOVE OF CARRIBEAN MUSIC---AND NEW ORLEAN'S LONG CONNECTION TO IT (AS MAYFIELD EXPLAINED FROM THE STAGE.

29) Vox: Irvin Mayfield

"This next song we're going to do talks about how New Orleans may not be geographically North of the Carribbean – but culturally, it is. One of the places we've had a great collaboration with over the years, is the island of Cuba. Cuba used to be the archdiocese for New Orleans. As well as. Very true. As well as, many slaves were actually shipped up to work the cane fields in Louisiana, and they would go back to Cuba, back and forth. We've always had a strong influence on Cuba and vice versa. Jelly Roll Morton always used to talk about that thing in the music, that New Orleans beat, that they call the Latin tinge."

30) Pierce:

BEAT BEGINS WITH A LAID-BACK LATIN GROOVE. THE LOVERS – MARY ANN AND LEROI ARE TOGETHER, WHEN A LANGUID BARITONE SAX APPEARS -- AS MARY ANNE'S WHITE SUITOR DISCOVERS THEM.

HIS ANGER BUILDS AND ERUPTS INTO VIOLENCE WITH THE SOUND OF FIERY LATIN PIANO AND DRUMS. ON THE STAGE OF THE ALLEN ROOM, THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA PLAYS "BEAT."

31) Music: "Beat" (11:05)

32) Pierce:

"BEAT" – MOVEMENT FIVE OF IRVIN MAYFIELD'S "STRANGE FRUIT." THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA— AT THE HOUSE OF SWING.

BARNEY FLOYD, LEON BROWN, ERIC LUCERO, JAMELLE WILLIAMS, AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR IRVIN MAYFIELD ON TRUMPETS.

STEVE SUTER, STEPHEN WALKER, TERRANCE TAPLIN, TROMBONES.

CLARENCE JOHNSON III, REX GREGORY, CALVIN JOHNSON, EDWARD PETERSEN, DANIEL OESTRICHER ON REEDS.

ERNEST TURNER PLAYING PIANO, DAVID PULPHUS, BASS, AND ADONIS ROSE, AT THE DRUMS.

33) Pierce:

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER RADIO IS PRODUCED AT MURRAY STREET. THIS EDITION WAS WRITTEN BY ANDREW ROSENBLUM (Rosen-Blum) AND EDITED BY LAUREN KRENZEL. OUR PRODUCERS ARE STEPHEN RATHE AND DAVID GOREN WITH ALEXA LIM.

THE RECORDINGS WERE BY ROB MACOMBER AND JEFF ROTHMAN AT XM PRODUCTIONS. AND ADDITIONAL RECORDINGS AT NPR WEST BY CARLOS ASCENCIO.

YOU CAN HEAR THIS SHOW AGAIN AND FIND LINKS TO THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA AS WELL AS THE INTERVIEW WITH IRVIN MAYFIELD AT JALC.ORG (SLASH) JAZZCAST.

THANKS TO CAT HENRY WHO SUPERVISES OUR RECORDINGS AND BROADCASTS, TO OUR MARKETING MANAGERS TERRY MEDINA AND MATTHEW LONG-MIDDLETON

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER IS ADRIAN ELLIS. THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR IS WYNTON MARSALIS.

I'M WENDELL PIERCE. THANKS FOR JOINING US.