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**Jazz at Lincoln Center Radio
Ahmad Jamal: Thinking Orchestrally
Season 16
Program 15, Airdate 01/01/09**

1) Background music: "In Search Of"

2a) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

"I'm still exploring all of my possibilities. That's the wonderful thing about music. If you're not severely injured, you can continue. As Duke Ellington continued, as Horowitz continued, as all the great artists continued until they're put in the grave.

3a) Pierce:

AHMAD JAMAL FIRST GAINED FAME AND FORTUNE FOR HIS TRIO RECORDINGS OF THE LATE 50S. BUT HE DOESN'T CARE TO BE THOUGHT OF AS A TRIO PLAYER.

3B) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

"I don't have a trio. I have a small ensemble and a large ensemble. (laughs pointedly) I never think about it as a trio. That term has outlived its usefulness as far as I'm concerned. You have a small ensemble or a large ensemble."

3c) Pierce:

WHETHER HIS ENSEMBLE IS SMALL OR LARGE, JAMAL THINKS "ORCHESTRALLY." HE OPERATES THROUGH SUBTLE AND CONTINUOUS VARIATIONS IN RHYTHMIC FEEL, SPACING, DYNAMICS, AND MUSICAL FORM. HIS IS AN AESTHETIC OF CONTRAST AND IT HAS MADE HIM ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PIANISTS IN JAZZ HISTORY.

JUST AHEAD, AHMAD JAMAL BRINGS HIS SMALL GROUP TO THE STAGE OF THE ROSE THEATER – AND THEN LEADS OUR ORCHESTRA THROUGH “THE AFTERMATH.” IT’S JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER. IN FOR WYNTON MARSALIS, I’M WENDELL PIERCE, AND WE’RE GLAD YOU’RE HERE.

4a) Pierce:

SINCE HIS DAYS IN CHICAGO’S ‘PERSIAN ROOM’ AND THE LONG PLAYING RECORD THAT MADE HIS NAME, AHMAD JAMAL HAS PLAYED “LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE.” BUT SOMETHING ABOUT THE TUNE KEEPS THIS PIANO MASTER COMING BACK.

4b) Vox: Jamal

“I try to keep things different and interesting – first of all, for me. And if the audience finds it different and interesting, then I am further compensated. But the first thing, and the paramount thing, and the major thing is for it to be interesting and different to me.”

5) Music: “Like Someone In Love” (5:12)

6) Pierce:

LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE – MUSIC BY JIMMY VAN HEUSEN, AS PERFORMED BY AHMAD JAMAL ON PIANO, JAMES CAMMACK ON BASS, AND JAMES JOHNSON ON DRUMS.

7) Background music: Andy Kirk and the 12 Clouds of Joy (featuring M.L. Williams)

8) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

“I owe all of my success to two influences: my Mom, and my beloved city of Pittsburgh.

9) Pierce:

AHMAD JAMAL IS JUST ONE OF A SLEW OF TRULY GREAT JAZZ MUSICIANS WHO EMERGED FROM PITTSBURGH IN THE 1930S AND 40S –

THAT ROLL CALL INCLUDES EARL HINES, MARY LOU WILLIAMS, RAY BROWN, ART BLAKEY, ERROLL GARNER, AND STANLEY TURRENTINE. AHMAD JAMAL BEGAN ON PIANO AT AGE THREE, AND STARTED PLAYING PROFESSIONALLY AT 11. AT WESTINGHOUSE HIGH SCHOOL HIS MUSIC TEACHER WAS CARL MCVICKER, WHO ALSO TAUGHT BILLY STRAYHORN AND ERROLL GARNER. THAT'S A LITTLE SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF.

9b) Background music: Erroll Garner, from "Concert by the Sea"

9c) Pierce:

IN A CITY RIVEN BY PREJUDICE, MCVICKER ENCOURAGED BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS – AND HE HAD THE GIFT MAKING THEM WANT TO GET BETTER.

10) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

"Very very wonderful teacher. And very influential in promoting young talent. @17:37 The ability to recognize and foster and nurture talent. The role of a good teacher should be to... strive to make your students better than you are. And that's a great legacy to leave behind."

11) Pierce:

60 YEARS LATER, THE STUDENT IS WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED AS A MASTER – AND HE'S CHALLENGED AND INSPIRED COUNTLESS YOUNG PIANISTS AS WELL. HERE IS AHMAD JAMAL WITH AN ORCHESTRA OF ONE, -- HIS SOLO PIANO -- ON THE CAHN/STYNE CLASSIC "IT'S MAGIC."

12) Music: "It's Magic," (4:33)

13) Pierce:

“IT’S MAGIC,” BY JULE STYNE AND SAMMY CAHN. SOLO PIANO AT JAZZ AT LINCOLNL CENTER, BY AHMAD JAMAL.

14) Background music: “It’s You or No One”

15) Pierce:

AHMAD JAMAL ATTAINED THE STATUS OF JAZZ LEGEND FOR THE WAY HE RE-CONCEIVED THE PIANO TRIO. RATHER THAN SIMPLY PLAY THE MELODY AND START SOLOING, HIS ENSEMBLES ADDED CATCHY INTROS, RIFFS, AND INTERLUDES TO WELL-KNOWN STANDARDS.

HIS SOLOS DEVELOPED THROUGH SUBTLE SHIFTS IN RHYTHM, SPACING, AND DYNAMICS.

IN CONTRAST WITH THE FLASHY OF ART TATUM, ERROLL GARNER, OR OSCAR PETERSEN, JAMAL FOUND THAT HE COULD OFTEN SAY MORE BY PLAYING FEWER NOTES.

IRONICALLY, AHMAD JAMAL NEVER INTENDED TO CREATE A JAZZ TRIO BUT AT THE AGE OF 21, HE MORE OR LESS INHERITED ONE.

16) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

“My career has always been dictated. I haven’t made the choices, the choices have been made for me. And what happened was I was a pianist with a group called the 4 Strings, which consisted of violin, guitar, piano and bass – and when that group broke up, I inherited the bass, guitar, and piano portion because Joe Kennedy, our musical director, the late Professor Joe Kennedy, one of the outstanding musicians of all time, he went back home. And I was chosen to be the leader of the 3 Strings. So that’s how my career as a bandleader started, in 1951. A lot of responsibility, for a young man. (laughs) For an old man, too!” (full-throated laugh)

17) Pierce:

– AHMAD JAMAL’S BODY IS 78 YEARS OLD BUT HIS MIND AND FINGERS ARE QUITE SPRY -- AS WE’LL HEAR ON THIS MUSICAL SIGNATURE. IT’S A 1940’S GLENN MILLER HIT -- THAT HE SO FULLY RE-IMAGINED FOR PIANO BASS AND DRUMS (IN 1958) THAT IT BECAME HIS OWN -- POINCIANA.

18) Music: “Poinciana” (8:54)

19) Pierce:

POINCIANA – BY BUDDY BERNIER AND NAT SIMON. ON STAGE AT THE ROSE THEATER -- AHMAD JAMAL AND HIS “SMALL” ENSEMBLE.

20) Music: Ahmad Jamal at the Alhambra

21) Pierce:

POINCIANA AND THE OTHER TRACKS ON THE 1958 ALBUM “AHMAD JAMAL AT THE PERSHING: BUT NOT FOR ME” WAS A BRILLIANT DISTILLATION OF THE PIANIST’S STYLE. THE RECORD RODE TO NUMBER 3 POSITION ON THE POP CHARTS, AND ALLOWED JAMAL TO START HIS OWN JAZZ CLUB, THE ALHAMBRA.

YET HE’S NEVER BEEN INTERESTED IN TRYING TO RE-CAPTURE LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE. IF YOU ASK HIM WHAT’S HIS FAVORITE AMONG THE ALBUMS HE’S DONE, HE’LL ANSWER: “THE NEXT ONE.”

22) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

“We have to recognize how little we know. The more you know, the more you recognize how little you know. You always have to make new discoveries. You can’t create – you can only reflect creativity. That’s my opinion. You can make discoveries. But you can’t create a snowflake or a drop of water. But you can make discoveries. You can discover the elements of a snowflake, if you try hard. And elements of a raindrop, what they’re composed of. That’s why they say there’s nothing new under the sun. But we discover these things. So I’m always trying to make new discoveries. I hope my next one is a new discovery.”

23) Pierce:

AHMAD JAMAL CONTINUES HIS SEARCH FOR MUSICAL POSSIBILITIES WITH THIS REARRANGEMENT OF HIS 1970 -- “THE AWAKENING.”

24) Music: “The Awakening” (5:54)

25) Pierce:

AHMAD JAMAL, “THE AWAKENING.” WITH JAMES CAMMACK ON BASS, JAMES JOHNSON ON DRUMS, AND MANOLO BADRENA ON PERCUSSION.

26) Background music: “Swahililand,” from It’s Magic

27) Pierce:

JAMAL HAS DEDICATED HIS MOST RECENT CD “IT’S MAGIC,” TO HIS LONGTIME ALBUM PRODUCER JEAN FRANCOIS DEBER. WE ASKED HIM WHY...

28) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

“So I dedicated it to him because he was like a brother to me – we were very, very close. He was a man that was involved in music first, and the business second. And that is so rare – usually, it’s the business first, and music second. (laughs). Deber got me back into Europe after an absence of 20 years. I played a concert in Paris at ORTF with Hampton Hawes, a great pianist...in 1963, and I didn’t go back ‘til 83. I stayed away 20 years, and I went back. I was prodded into going back by Jean-Francois Deber. Not only did I go back because of his constant urging. I started recording for his record company, Birdology. And I’ve been recording ever since – most of my recordings are done in France, with rare exception.”

29) Pierce:

DEBER DIED IN 2005.

AHMAD JAMAL HONORS THE MEMORY OF HIS FRIEND BY BLENDING THE OSCAR-NOMINATED MOVIE THEME “WILD IS THE WIND,” AND “SING,” -- WRITTEN FOR CHILDREN’S TELEVISION -- THAT REMIND HIM OF DEBER

30) Music: Wild Is the Wind/Sing (9:04)

31) Pierce:

“WILD IS THE WIND,” (BY NED WASHINGTON AND DIMITRI TIOMKINE,) AND “SING,” (BY JOE RAPOSO). PLAYED ON THE ROSE THEATER STAGE BY PIANIST AHMAD JAMAL, BASSIST JAMES CAMMACK ON BASS, THE DRUMMER JAMES JOHNSON ON DRUMS, AND MANOLO BADRENA ON PERCUSSION.

YOU CAN BRING HOME THE SWING – TO SEE PERFORMANCES OF AHMAD JAMAL DURING HIS DAYS AT THE PERSHING AND PLAYING LIVE WITH GEORGOE COLEMAN , OR TO HEAR THIS PROGRAM AGAIN AND CHECK OUT ARCHIVE SHOWS FROM OUR WEEKLY SERIES – GO TO J A L C (DOT) ORG (SLASH) JAZZCAST. THEN CLICK ON ‘MORE RESOURCES.’ LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK. SEND US AN EMAIL AT JAZZ RADIO (AT) J A L C (DOT) ORG.

31a) Vox: Jamal

I only think orchestrally. I don’t think ‘small ensemble,’ I think orchestrally, in such a manner that can be adapted to any configuration” –

31b) Pierce:

EVEN THOUGH AHMAD JAMAL PLAYS WITH A SMALL ENSEMBLE, HE’S ALWAYS THINKING – ORCHESTRA. JUST AHEAD WE’LL HEAR WHAT HE DOES WITH OUR BIG BAND.

I’M WENDELL PIERCE IN FOR WYNTON MARSALIS. THIS IS JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER.

32) Midbreak: “Ahmad’s Blues”

33) Background music:

34A) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

“I grew up in big orchestras. Not commonly known fact, but you in Pittsburgh you are surrounded by all sorts of configurations, small groups, duos, playing by oneself.”

35b) Pierce:

AHMAD JAMAL MAY HAVE BECOME FAMOUS FOR HIS TRIO PLAYING –
BUT HE LOVES JAZZ CONFIGURATIONS OF ALL KINDS.

36) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

“In high school I was in the junior orchestra, beginners orchestra, senior orchestra. And then we had a group called the Cadets, which was our swing orchestra, in ...Westinghouse high school.”

37) Pierce:

JAMAL DOESN'T LIKE TO BE PIGEONHOLED AS A TRIO PLAYER IN PART
BECAUSE EVEN IN A 3-PIECE COMBO HE THINKS OF HIS GROUP AS A
SMALL-SCALE ORCHESTRA.

37b) Background music: “New Rhumba” from Miles Ahead

38) Vox: Ahmad Jamal

“So I grew up in a lot of configurations, including big orchestras.”
“All of my compositions can be adapted to big band. That's why Gil Evans found it so easy to take my 'New Rhumba' and just take it note for note and transfer it to big band: Miles + 19. So, all my things, I only think orchestrally. I don't think 'small ensemble,' I think orchestrally- 16 pieces, 5 pieces – I've also written for the oldest instrument in the world: the human voice.”

39) Pierce:

FOR THIS DATE AT THE HOUSE OF SWING, AHMAD JAMAL WAS HAPPY TO ARRANGE ANOTHER ORIGINAL COMPOSITION “THE AFTERMATH” FOR THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA.

40) Music: “The Aftermath”

41) Pierce:

AHMAD JAMAL’S “THE AFTERMATH.” WITH SOLOS BY THE COMPOSER ON PIANO, WYNTON MARSALIS ON TRUMPET, AND SHERMAN IRBY ON ALTO, WITH A TROMBONE SOLO BY ELIOT MASON.

SOME INSPIRED SOLOING UNDER THE BATON OF AHMAD JAMAL –
THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA.

OUR SAXOPHONES TED NASH, VICTOR GOINES, WALTER BLANDING,
SHERMAN IRBY AND JOE TEMPERLEY

VINCENT GARDNER, ELLIOT MASON, DAVID TAYLOR AND CHRIS
CRENSHAW ON TROMBONES.

IN THE TRUMPET SECTION MARCUS PRINTUP, SEAN JONES, RYAN
KISOR AND JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR WYNTON
MARSALIS.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER RADIO IS PRODUCED AT MURRAY
STREET. THIS SHOW WAS WRITTEN BY ANDREW ROSENBLUM (Rosen-
Blum). THE INTERVIEW WITH AHMAD JAMAL WAS BY ALEXA LIM. OUR
PRODUCERS ARE DAVID GOREN AND STEVE RATHE WITH ALEXA LIM.
RECORDINGS BY SANDY PALMER GRASSI AND JEFF ROTHMAN AT XM
STUDIOS . THANKS TO GREG WELLS, MATTHEW LONG-MIDDLETON AND
MUSICOLOGIST JOHN WRIGGLE.

CAT HENRY SUPERVISES OUR RECORDINGS AND BROADCASTS. THE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER IS ADRIAN ELLIS. IN
FOR WYNTON MARSALIS, I'M WENDELL PIERCE. THANKS FOR JOINING US.