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Jazz for the Concert Hall: MJQ Jazz at Lincoln Center Radio Season 19 Program 8; Airdate 11/17/11

#### 1) Background music:

#### 2) Pierce:

IN 1952, WITH JAZZ STILL UNDER THE SPELL OF CHARLIE PARKER AND DIZZYGILLESPIE, A NEW KIND OF JAZZ GROUP -- FEATURING NO HORNS AND NO HEADLINING SOLOIST -- WAS BORN.

COMING OUT OF THE DIZZY GILLESPIE BIG BAND, MUSICAL DIRECTOR JOHN LEWIS ADAPTED FORMS AND COUNTERPOINT FROM CLASSICAL COMPOSERS. HIS COMPOSITIONS WERE STATELY, STRUCTURED AND REFINED. AND YET THIS MUSIC – FULL OF SUBTLE INTERPLAY AND DEEP BLUES FEELING -- FELL SQUARELY IN THE JAZZ TRADITION.

JUST AHEAD, DRUMMER LEWIS NASH AND ENSEMBLE LEAD US INTO THE LEGACY OF JOHN LEWIS -- AND THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET.

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

#### 3A) Music:

#### 3b) Pierce:

IT BEGAN WITH THE BLUES. JOHN LEWIS HEARD IT AS A CHILD IN ALBERQUERQUE, WHEN HIS AUNT STARTED BRINGING HOME A TALENTED TRAVELING GUITARIST. GRANDMA MAY HAVE THOUGHT THAT BLUES MAN WAS LOW DOWN, BUT HIS SOUND STAYED WITH LEWIS EVEN AFTER YEARS OF CLASSICAL PIANO STUDY.

#### 3c) John Lewis

If you don't have blues in it, it's not jazz. If it doesn't have swing, it's not jazz, and if it doesn't have surprise in it, it's not great art.

#### 3D) Pierce:

LIKE THE MAN SAYS -IT DON'T MEAN A THING – IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING.

4) Music: "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing" (6:28)

#### 5) Pierce:

IT DON'T MEAN A THING – IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING. – A
MAINSTAY OF THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET'S REPERTOIRE -- AND
PHILOSOPHY.

DRUMMER LEWIS NASH AND THE BAND -- FUSING BLUES, SWING AND SURPRISE -- AT THE ALLEN ROOM. STEVE NELSON ON VIBES AND KENNY BARRON AT THE PIANO.

#### 6) Background music:

#### 7) Pierce:

JOHN LEWIS MIGHT HAVE BECOME AN ANTHROPOLOGIST -- IF WORLD WAR II HADN'T PUSHED HIM TOWARDS MUSIC. HE FOUND HIMSELF IN A MILITARY BAND WITH ONE OF BEBOP'S GREAT DRUM INNOVATORS KENNY CLARKE – NICKNAMED "KLOOK" CLARKE TOOK A LIKING TO THE YOUNG PIANIST, AND AFTER THE WAR, HELPED HIM LAND A BIG BREAK.

#### 8) Vox: John Lewis,

"Kenny Clarke and I were in the 17<sup>th</sup> Special Service Company together. And Kenny took some arrangements, including Two Bass Hit, it wasn't called 2 Bass Hit Yet, and Dizzy hired me as an arranger. I was still in school at the Manhattan School of Music. I couldn't go anyplace, but I could write arrangements for him. But then when school was out, the summer of '46, he hired me to play piano.

#### 9) Pierce:

IN THE RHYTHM SECTION OF THAT DIZZY GILLESPIE BIG BAND,
JOHN LEWIS FOUND THE FIRST LINEUP OF WHAT WOULD BECOME THE M J
Q – THE "MODERN JAZZ QUARTET." KENNY CLARKE ON DRUMS, RAY
BROWN ON BASS, AND MILT JACKSON ON VIBES --

IN THE ALLEN ROOM, LEWIS NASH AND COMPANY BRING ON TWO COMPOSITIONS THAT JOHN LEWIS WROTE FOR DIZZY'S BAND.

**10) Music:** "One Bass Hit, set II" (3:05)

**11) Music:** "Two Bass Hit, set II" (3:28)

#### **12) Pierce:**

"ONE BASS HIT" FEATURING BASSIST PETER WASHINGTON. ON TWO BASS HIT, WE HEARD SOLOS FROM STEVE NELSON ON VIBES, KENNY BARRON ON PIANO, AND LEWIS NASH DRUMS. JOHN LEWIS' CLASSIC COMPOSITIONS FOR THE DIZZY GILLESPIE BIG BAND THAT HE LATER ADAPTED FOR THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET.

#### 13) Background music: (Milt Jackson quartet)

#### 14) Pierce:

IN A CHANGING ECONOMY, DIZZY'S BIG BAND CAME IN FROM THE ROAD IN 1950, AND HIS TALENTED YOUNG RHYTHM SECTION STRUCK OUT IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

MILT JACKSON RECORDED FOR DIZZY'S OWN 'D-G' LABEL,
BUILDING ON THE WORK OF LIONEL HAMPTON AS VIRTUOSO OF THE
VIBRAPHONE.

#### 15) Vox: John Lewis

He created a unique sound on that instrument.

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#### 16) Pierce:

JOHN LEWIS.

#### 17) Vox: John Lewis

Because he made the instrument sing more...than used as a percussion instrument. Lionel uses it as a percussion instrument. Milt used it as a singing instrument, even when he's playing fast, it's still beautiful.

#### 18) Pierce:

FROM THE STAGE OF THE ALLEN ROOM, STEVE NELSON GIVES US THE SIGNATURE MILT JACKSON BALLAD: "ANGEL EYES."

**19**) **Music:** "Angel Eyes" (5:51)

#### 20A) Pierce:

STEVE NELSON ON VIBES ON MATT DENNIS' "ANGEL EYES" -- CHANNELING THE ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT OF MILT JACKSON. THE ARRANGEMENT BY JOHN LEWIS.

AFTER THEIR FIRST RECORD DATE IN 1952, BASSIST RAY BROWN
QUIT THE UP-AND-COMING QUARTET TO WORK IN SUPPORT OF HIS WIFE –
A SINGER BY THE NAME OF ELLA FITZGERALD.

THIS MEANT A PLUM JOB FOR A YOUNG BASSIST, FROM
PHILADELPHIA,. BUT THIS OVERNIGHT SUCCESS WAS MANY YEARS IN
THE MAKING.

#### **20b) Vox:** Percy Heath

"I met John Lewis, Milt Jackson, Ray Brown, and the other members of the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra when they came through Philadelphia.

#### 20C) Pierce:

PERCY HEATH

#### **20D)** Vox: Percy Heath

My brother Jimmie brought 'em down to the house for Momma to cook a meal, a home-cooked meal for them. And I just bought a bass, I just got out of the Air Force. And I told Ray Brown, yeah, man, I just got a bass. And he showed me how to hold positions whatnot on it. That was in spring of '46.

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#### **21) Percy Heath** 10:15

I was in, the house bass player in the Downbeat in Philly. And Kenny Clarke had come by after one of the Jazz at the Philharmonic things. And he scared me to death. The way he played, and my role -- I was just frightened by him.

#### **22) Pierce:**

DURING THE SWING ERA, DRUMMERS MAINTAINED THE PULSE BY HITTING ALL FOUR BEATS WITH THE BASS DRUM. KENNY CLARKE DEVELOPED A NEW WAY OF PLAYING. ,HE KEPT TIME WITH THE RIDE CYMBAL, AND USED THE BASS DRUM AND THE SNARE TO ACCENT THE SOLOS. AGAIN, BASSIST PERCY HEATH.

#### 23) Vox: Percy Heath

In...the spring of '48, I had a matinee with John Lewis on piano, Kenny Clarke, John Collins on guitar was the rhythm section. And Coleman Hawkins. All of a sudden I had a matinee with these people that I had admired all these years. And right after the statement of the theme, and we started into the improvisation -- and I finally learned how to play with Kenny Clarke. You had to listen to the cymbal, never mind the accents. And 'Bean' turned around and said 'YEAH!' It was the thrill of my life.

#### 24) Pierce:

BY 1955, A HARD-SWINGING PERCY HEATH WAS THRIVING IN THE GROUP –NOW PLAYING AS THE 'MODERN JAZZ QUARTET' BUT HIS ONE-TIME HERO KENNY CLARKE REBELLED AGAINST JOHN LEWIS' CLASSICAL INFLUENCES AND COMPOSED DRUM PARTS, AND QUIT THE BAND DRUMMER CONNIE KAY TOOK HIS SPOT, AND THE MJQ STARTED PUTTING OUT ELEGANT JAZZ CLASSICS.

JOHN LEWIS WROTE THIS ONE FOR THE MOVIE "ODDS AGAINST TOMORROW."

**25) Music:** "Skating in Central Park" (6:32)

#### 26) Pierce:

THE MASTERFUL KENNY BARRON ON PIANO AND STEVE NELSON ON VIBES – LED BY DRUMMER LEWIS NASH ON THE ALLEN ROOM STAGE.

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THE JOHN LEWIS COMPOSITION WRITTEN FOR A FILM IN 1959: "SKATING IN
CENTRAL PARK." AND WE'RE SKATING ACROSS THE LEGACY OF THE
MODERN JAZZ QUARTET.

YOU CAN DOWNLOAD OUR INTERVIEWS WITH PERCY HEATH AND JOHN LEWIS FROM OUR FREE *JAZZSTORIES PODCASTS ON I TUNES*AND HEAR THIS SHOW AGAIN AT *J A L C (DOT) OR. (SLASH) JAZZCAST*BRING HOME THE SWING ANYTIME YOU WANT IT.

IT'S JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER. I'M WENDELL PIERCE.

#### 27) Midbreak: music:

#### 28) Pierce:

LIKE THE RELENTLESS MOTORS ON HIS VIBRAHARP, MILT JACKSON WOULD FILL A TUNE WITH HIGH-VELOCITY BEBOP IDEAS ---WHILE JOHN LEWIS' PIANO SOLOS WERE SPARE.

**29A) Vox:** Percy Heath That's my man. (laughs)

#### 29B) Pierce:

MODERN JAZZ QUARTET BASSIST PERCY HEATH.

#### **30) Vox:**

He and Bill Basie are the most economical pianists of our time. And I love him for that But what John Lewis did, and what Jackson did, suggested the counterplay between them. One phrase from Lewis might set up a whole course of what Jackson might do. It was a beautiful thing, man, I was just lucky to be there all those years.

#### 31A) Pierce:

GROWING UP, LEWIS DEVELOPED HIS PIANO SOUND BY *IGNORING* OTHER PIANISTS.

#### **31B) Vox:** John Lewis

"No pianists. I was much more interested in the playing of Lester Young, with whom I had a nice close personal relationship with, because Lester spent time in

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Albequerque when I was growing up... Lester Young, Roy Eldridge. But horn players, not pianists.

#### 31C) Pierce:

HE DIDN'T THINK OF HIS SOUND AS TERSE, SO MUCH AS CONCISE.

#### **32) Vox:** John Lewis

For me, clarity...in *anything* is kind of paramount. I want to hear or see, uh...to have a perfect understanding of what I'm supposed to looking at or listening to. And if you clutter it up...with a lot of things that are not necessary, the main object of what you're supposed to be doing probably disappears. And all you've done is waste a lot of time.

#### 33) Pierce:

IN THE ALLEN ROOM, ANOTHER MASTER OF CLARITY, GUITARIST JIM HALL JOINS LEWIS NASH AND COMPANY TO REPRISE HIS ROLE ON A 1956 RECORDING.

"2 DEGREES EAST, 3 DEGREES WEST."

**34) Music:** "2 Degrees East, 3 Degrees West" (6:41)

#### 35) Pierce:

A JOHN LEWIS BLUES -- "2 DEGREES EAST, 3 DEGREES WEST." WITH JIM HALL ON GUITAR, STEVE NELSON PLAYING VIBES, AND KENNY BARRON ON PIANO --- AT THE HOUSE OF SWING.

YOU CAN ALSO CHECK OUT JIM HALL'S WORK ON THE ORIGINAL 1956 SESSION – FIND THE LINK AT J A L C DOT ORG SLASH JAZZCAST.

#### 36) Background music: "Vendome"

#### 37A) Pierce:

THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET FUNCTIONED AS A UNIT -- NOT JUST A SHOWCASE FOR A SINGLE BRILLIANT SOLOIST. EACH MEMBER WOULD IMPROVISE WITHIN THE ARRANGEMENTS -- BUT SELDOM IN A WAY THAT

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WOULD OVERSHADOW OTHERS IN THE GROUP. —-- BACH'S POLYPHONY
BY WAY OF NEW ORLEANS AND HARLEM.

#### 37B) Vox: Percy Heath

Behind Milt Jackson's so-called solo, John Lewis was composing all the time. The way the quartet was constructed, the music, he being the musical director, it was like 4 lines going along simultaneously....One person was improvising, at certain times, but it was equal.

#### **38) Pierce:**

LEWIS' ELABORATE COUNTERPOINT WAS A CHALLENGE, EVEN FOR A BRILLIANT YOUNG BASS PLAYER LIKE PERCY HEATH.

PLAYING THOSE LINES WAS A LOT MORE THAN JUST IMPROVISING BASS LINE CHORD CHANGES.

#### **39) Vox:** Percy Heath

John said I needed to learn some more in order to learn to play other than what we had been playing with uh, Milt's quartet. And I took a few lessons from Mingus. And he said to me at the beginning, "huh, Percy Heath you putting me on, man." Said 'no, Charles, I need some lessons from you.' 'Man, if I could play the blues like you, I wouldn't want no lessons.' You know, so: 'no Charles, I'm serious." So he gave me some finger exercises and stuff.

#### 40) Pierce:

THE DISTINCTIVE SOUNDS OF PIANO, VIBES, BASS, AND DRUMS MEANT THAT THE AUDIENCE COULD HEAR EVERY NOTE EACH MUSICIAN PLAYED.

#### **41) Vox:** John Lewis

There's no *blending* of a vibraharp, piano, and a bass, drums. You can hear every note each one plays, because the timbre's *different*. There's no hiding, or 'let's have an ensemble of, of...homophonic music.' It's not possible.

#### **42) Begin music under**: The Golden Striker ()

#### 43) Pierce:

THIS IS JOHN LEWIS' COMPOSITION "THE GOLDEN STRIKER."

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**44) Music (cont):** "The Golden Striker" (5:08)

#### **45) Pierce:**

JOHN LEWIS' "THE GOLDEN STRIKER" -- INSPIRED BY THOSE GOLDEN-FIGURES IN THE CLOCK TOWER OF PIAZZA SAN MARCO, AND COMPOSED FOR THE 1957 FILM NO SUN IN VENICE.

STEVE NELSON ON VIBES AND KENNY BARRON ON PIANO IN THE ALLEN ROOM AT THE HOUSE OF SWING.

46) MUSIC: Background: "Cottontail," Modern Jazz Quartet, featuring Ben Webster

#### **47) Pierce:**

IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT WITH HIS INTEREST IN LONG-FORM JAZZ COMPOSITION, JOHN LEWIS FOUND A PROFOUND INFLUENCE IN DUKE ELLINGTON -- AND HIS BRILLIANT COLLABORATOR BILLY STRAYHORN.

#### **48) Vox:** John Lewis

Yes, he's my role model. He brought the music to a peak that I still can't get over. And that peak took place in 39, 40, and 41. And I haven't heard anything to surpass that. That band he had, he had a perfect band.

#### **49) Pierce:**

THE LATE JOHN LEWIS TALKING ABOUT THE BAND THAT FEATURED THE POWERFUL BASS OF JIMMY BLANTON, THE DISTINCTIVE TENOR SAX OF BEN WEBSTER AND THE WRITING OF BILLY STRAYHORN.

ON STAGE IN THE ALLEN ROOM, JIM HALL AND LEWIS NASH PLAY A NOD TO DUKE AND THE BLANTON-WEBSTER BAND. THIS IS BILLY STRAYHORN'S ENDURING -"CHELSEA BRIDGE."

**50) Music:** "Chelsea Bridge" (7:07)

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#### 51) Pierce:

BILLY STRAYHORN'S "CHELSEA BRIDGE."

JIM HALL ON GUITAR, STEVE NELSON ON VIBES, AND KENNY BARRON ON PIANO.

#### 52) Pierce:

THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET PLAYED TOGETHER FROM 1952 UNTIL 1974. IN EACH OF THOSE DECADES, JAZZ WAS TUMULTUOUS AND FULL OF MUSICAL ICONS.

WHAT SEPARATES JOHN LEWIS AND THE MJQ FROM THE LEGIONS OF GOOD. BUT NOT GREAT JAZZ MUSICIANS?

SURELY THE FORMAL INVENTIVENESS AND CONSISTENT SWING -- BUT ALSO A PROFOUND GROUP CONNECTION.

#### 53) Vox: Percy Heath

Every now and then -- not every night -- there comes a point when the collective sound of that moment, you reach that pinnacle, oh man, you kind of tingle.

#### 54) Pierce:

PERCY HEATH.

#### 55) Vox: Percy Heath (cont)

Klook used to say 'Uh-uh, don't go in there!' So tight, at that moment. You can't really maintain it...Those moments came, they evoke laughter, they evoke all the emotions...mournful, you well up, tearfully, and -- eh, that's music man. Jazz is supposed to be like that.

#### 56) Pierce:

IN THE ALLEN ROOM, LEWIS NASH LEADS OUR BAND TOWARDS THOSE LOFTY HEIGHTS - ON WHAT IS PROBABLY JOHN LEWIS MOST FAMOUS COMPOSITION:

#### **57) Vox:** John Lewis

55:03 I had ...developed a passion for Django Reinhardt, who I heard during the war in France, when I was there. Paris. You were *forced* to play, if you were playing with him. His energy (laughs) was enormous., and he *wanted* to play, he loved this music, he *wanted* to play this music.

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I was really kind of broken-hearted when he passed away. So that was written as a tribute to him. As best I could do.

#### 58 A) Pierce

THIS IS "DJANGO."

**58B**) **Music**: "Django," (5:47)

#### **59) Pierce:**

A MUSICAL TRIBUTE TO DJANGO REINHARDT – A SIGNATURE FOR THE MODERN JAZZ QUARET AND ITS MUSICAL DIRECTOR, PIANIST JOHN LEWIS.

#### 60) Pierce:

OUR BOW TO THE LATE JOHN LEWIS AND THE MJQ FEATURED PETER WASHINGTON ON BASS, KENNY BARRON PLAYING PIANO, STEVE NELSON ON VIBES AND SPECIAL GUEST JIM HALL ON GUITAR. AND OUR DRUMMER AND MUSICAL DIRECTOR -- LEWIS NASH.

YOU CAN DOWNLOAD OR STREAM FREE *JAZZSTORIES* PODCASTS WITH JOHN LEWIS AND JIMMY HEATH ON I TUNES.

AND HEAR THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THE MUSIC ONLINE – AT J A L C (DOT) ORG.

#### **61) Pierce**: continues

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER RADIO IS PRODUCED AT MURRAY STREET. THIS EDITION WAS WRITTEN BY ANDREW ROSENBLUM <RO-senblum).

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

THE RECORDINGS - WERE\_MIXED BY MICHAEL TAYLOR. THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER IS WYNTON MARSALIS.

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# MODERN JAZZ QUARTET Season 19 THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IS ADRIAN ELLIS. CAT HENRY SUPERVISES THESE BROADCASTS. I'M WENDELL PIERCE.

THANKS FOR JOINING US – COME BACK NEXT WEEK.