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BIRD WITH STRINGS

Jazz At Lincoln Center Season 19

Program 33; 5/10/2012

1) Background music: “Just Friends” (from 1949 date)

2) Pierce:

IT MIGHT SURPRISE YOU TO KNOW THAT THE ALTO SAXOPHONIST KNOWN AS ONE OF THE CREATORS OF BEBOP WAS A CLASSICAL MUSIC AFFICIANADO.

AND THOUGH SOME JAZZ CRITICS DISAGREED -- CHARLIE PARKER LOVED THE RECORDINGS HE MADE WITH A STRING SECTION, AND THE WAY THEY BROUGHT HIM A CONNECTION WITH A LARGER AUDIENCE. HIS ORCHESTRAL VERSION OF “JUST FRIENDS” BECAME HIS BEST SELLING RECORD.

PARKER DIDN'T CONSIDER SOLOING OVER SWOOPING STRING FIGURES AN AESTHETIC COMPROMISE – BUT RATHER, A PUSHING OF BOUNDARIES BEYOND THE SMALL GROUP BEBOP THAT ORIGINALLY MADE HIM A STAR. THE COMMERCIAL SUCCESS OF HIS “CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS” RECORDS ATTRACTED NEW ORCHESTRAL MUSIC FOR HIM BY SOME THE HIPPEST YOUNG WRITERS OF THE DAY – GERRY MULLIGAN, GEORGE RUSSELL, NEAL HEFTI, AND JOHN LEWIS.

THOUGH SOME OF THE TUNES WERE RECORDED LIVE BY INDIVIDUAL FANS, BIRD DIDN'T LIVE TO BRING ALL OF THE STRINGS MUSIC INTO THE STUDIO. SO, JUST AHEAD, TROMBONIST VINCENT GARDNER LEADS THE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF THE AMERICAS IN PERFORMANCE OF THESE UNHEARD GEMS – ALONG WITH SOME BIRD

CLASSICS. CHARLES MCPHERSON AND WESSELL ANDERSON SHARE THE ALTO SOLOS ON OUR PROGRAM OF “BIRD WITH STRINGS.” IT’S JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER. I’M WENDELL PIERCE.

3A) Music

3b) Pierce:

BIRD WAS AN AVID LISTENER OF CLASSICAL MUSIC, AND HE ASSOCIATED THE ORCHESTRA WITH THAT TRADITION. HE PEPPERED HIS SOLOS WITH QUOTES FROM STRAVINSKY AND CHOPIN.

THE ARRANGEMENTS ON HIS CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS ALBUM – WRITTEN BY POP MUSICIANS JIMMY CARROLL AND JOE LIPPMAN – FALL SIGNIFICANTLY SHORT OF *THAT* MARK. BUT THE ‘STANDARDS’ REPERTOIRE AND THE POP FLOURISHES WERE ALL PART OF BRINGING BIRD TO THE MASSES – TO MAKE HIM “EASY TO LOVE.”

4) Music: “Easy to Love” (3:56)

5) Pierce:

EASY TO LOVE – COLE PORTER’S STANDARD -- FILTERED THROUGH THE SENSIBILITY OF CHARLIE PARKER -- AND ARRANGER JOE LIPPMAN.

WE HEARD CHARLES MCPHERSON ON ALTO – BACKED BY THE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF THE AMERICAS -- AT THE ROSE THEATER.

6) Background music: Bird solo on “Sweet Georgia Brown” from live JATP date.

7) Pierce:

BY 1949, THE KANSAS CITY “YARDBIRD” CHARLIE PARKER HAD EMERGED AS THE MOST BRILLIANT STAR IN THE BURGEONING BEBOP CONSTELLATION. HIS ASSOCIATION WITH THE IMPRESARIO NORMAN GRANZ WOULD LEAD TO ARRANGEMENTS OF INNOVATIVE CHARLIE PARKER MUSIC: CONCERTS WITH THE “*JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC*”

BANDS -- MIND-BLOWING PAIRINGS WITH MACHITO'S AFRO-CUBAN ORCHESTRA, AND BIRD'S FAMOUS SESSIONS WITH STRINGS.

NOW, IN THE RECORD BUSINESS IN THE NINETEEN FORTIES, COVENTIONAL WISDOM SAID THAT A STRING SECTION ON A RECORD WAS A SOUND "TOO WHITE" FOR A BEBOP INSTRUMENTALIST.¹

IN 1946, ONE PUBLISHER WENT SO FAR AS TO BLOCK THE RELEASE OF A RECORDING OF JEROME KERN'S MUSIC WITH STRINGS BY DIZZY GILLESPIE.

PRODUCER NORMAN GRANZ -- WHO REFUSED TO BOOK HIS BANDS IN SEGREGATED VENUES -- ALSO HELPED TOPPLE THIS OTHER KIND OF SEGREGATION. IN NOVEMBER OF 1949, 'THE BIRD' GOT HIS DATE WITH STRINGS -- AND RECORDED APRIL *IN PARIS*.

8) Music: "April in Paris" (3:49)

9) Pierce:

VERNON DUKE'S "APRIL IN PARIS" -- ARRANGED FOR *CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS* BY JIMMY CARROLL. OUR ALTO SOLO BY THE VENERABLE MASTER CHARLES MCPHERSON.

13) Background music: "Mule Train," Frankie Laine (a #1 hit and 1.5 million seller, believe it or not)

14) Pierce:

NORMAN GRANZ BROUGHT A NEW SOUND TO CHARLIE PARKER WITH POPULAR MUSIC MASTER MITCH MILLER. AS THE SO CALLED "A & R" MAN" MILLER ESSENTIALLY 'PRODUCED' THE ARTISTS' SESSIONS AND HELPED THEM CHOOSE APPROPRIATE REPERTOIRE.

BETWEEN 1948 AND 1950, MILLER HAD THE MIDAS TOUCH -- HE PRODUCED VERSIONS OF "TENNESSE WALTZ" WITH PATTI PAGE AND

¹ Only black star vocalists such as Nat King Cole, Lena Horne and Billie Holiday were permitted to record with strings at this point...

“MULE TRAIN” WITH FRANKIE LAINE. EACH HIT NUMBER ONE ON THE CHARTS.

FOR LAINE, MILLER LIKED TO USE THE ARRANGERS JIMMY CARROLL AND JOE LIPPMAN. AND THOUGH CRITICS HAVE BEMOANED THAT CHOICE HE COMMISSIONED THEM TO WORK WITH BIRD.

MILLER’S FEEL FOR THE POP MARKET WON OUT AGAIN: CHARLIE PARKER’S STRINGS VERSION OF “*JUST FRIENDS*” BECAME THE BIGGEST SELLING RECORD OF HIS CAREER.

15) Music: “Just Friends” (5:58)

16) Pierce:

“*JUST FRIENDS*” – THE COMPOSITION BY JOHN KLENNER. ARRANGED -- FOR CHARLIE PARKER, BY JIMMY CAROLL. WE’RE HEARING THE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF THE AMERICAS AND THE MASTERFUL CHARLES MCPHERSON ON ALTO SAX.

IN LATE 1949, THE FIRST CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS RECORDING SESSION WAS A BIT OF AN ADVENTURE – AS WAS COMMON WHEN EMPLOYING CHARLIE PARKER TO DO *ANYTHING*. THE ORCHESTRA WAS WARMING UP AT THE STUDIO WHEN PARKER WALKED IN. THE ALTOIST LISTENED BRIEFLY, DECLARED “MAN, THAT’S TOO MUCH,” AND THEN WALKED OUT. IN SPITE OF FRANTIC SEARCHING BY GRANZ, HE WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND,

17) Music: If I Should Lose You

18) Pierce:

THE SESSION HAD TO BE CANCELLED.
CYNICS THINK PARKER REALIZED HE WAS TOO INTOXICATED TO PLAY – A PLAUSIBLE THEORY, GIVEN HIS LIFELONG STRUGGLES WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE. BUT MITCH MILLER AND OTHERS THOUGHT THAT

BIRD, LOVER OF CLASSICAL MUSIC - WAS GENUINELY SHY ABOUT PERFORMING WITH SOME OF THE TOP-NOTCH CLASSICAL PLAYERS FROM ARTURO TOSCANINI'S N.B.C. SYMPHONY.

PARKER TOLD GRANZ HE WAS 'OVERWHELMED' BY THE SOUND AND HAD TO LEAVE. IN ANY CASE, THE ORCHESTRA RECONVENED A FEW DAYS LATER – WITH THAT ERRATIC GENIUS – AND RECORDED SIX CUTS, INCLUDING THIS THEMATICALLY APPROPRIATE TITLE: “*IF I SHOULD LOSE YOU.*”

19) Music: “If I Should Lose You” (3:08)

20) Pierce:

ALTOIST CHARLES MCPHERSON - “*IF I SHOULD LOSE YOU*” – BY LEO ROBIN AND RALPH RAINGER. ARRANGED BY JIMMY CAROLL FOR THE 1949 RECORDING ‘CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS.’

IN DECEMBER OF THAT YEAR, A NEW CLUB OPENED ON BROADWAY NEAR 52ND STREET. IT WAS THE FIRST VENUE NAMED FOR A SPECIFIC BEBOP ARTIST - “BIRDLAND”

21) Pierce:

WE’RE CELEBRATING SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR CHARLIE PARKER MUSIC EVER RECORDED – AS WELL AS SOME ARRANGEMENTS FOR BIRD THAT HAVE NEVER EVEN BEEN RELEASED.

TO HEAR MORE ABOUT THE UPS AND DOWNS OF JAZZ LIFE IN OUR MUSICIANS’ OWN WORDS, SUBSCRIBE TO OUR FREE *JAZZSTORIES* PODCASTS ON I TUNES.

AND HEAR THE SHOWS IN OUR ARCHIVE – AT [AT J A L C \(DOT\) OR. \(SLASH\) JAZZCAST](http://JALC(DOT)OR.(SLASH)JAZZCAST).

LOTS OF WAYS ANYTIME TO BRING HOME THE SWING.

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

22) Midbreak: Temptation (Bird with Strings album)

23) Pierce:

THE TWO VOLUMES OF RECORDINGS OF “*CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS*” WERE ANOTHER SMALL LANDMARK OF 1950’S INTEGRATION.

THEY SHATTERED THE ASSUMPTION THAT A STRING SECTION COULDN'T FIT A JAZZ INSTRUMENTALIST.

THEY ALSO OPENED A DOOR FOR MORE DARING ARRANGEMENTS.

24A) Vox: Vincent Gardner:

So as Charlie Parker's success with "bird with strings" continued to blossom, there became the need for a working band and more arrangements than the ones that were originally released.

24b) Pierce:

THIS CONCERT'S MUSICAL DIRECTOR, VINCENT GARDNER.

24c) Vox: (Gardner, cont)

"So they reached out to a number of composers of the day. But unfortunately, Charlie Parker didn't get a chance to record many these, because also unfortunately, he had a very short life.

So this is one of the ones that he never got to record – and it's a composition by John Lewis...the pianist of the Modern Jazz Quartet. It's much different than the others. It's called "Scootin'."

25) Music: "Scootin'" (3:01)

26) Pierce:

THAT'S *SCOOTIN*... JOHN LEWIS' STRINGS COMPOSITION FOR CHARLIE PARKER – THOUGH THE 'BIRD' WOULDN'T LIVE TO RECORD IT. THE PIANO SOLO WAS BY EHUD ASHERIE.

27) Vox: Vincent Gardner

Right now, we're about to hear another one that was unrecorded by Charlie Parker, but commissioned. It was written by the pianist and composer George Russell, and called it 'Ezz-thetic.' And he wrote it in the bebop tradition on the chord changes to another tune "Love for Sale." And he dedicated it to the boxer Ezzard Charles."

28) Music: Ezz-thetic (6:44)

29) Pierce:

GEORGE RUSSELL'S "EZZ-THETIC" – ARRANGED BY THE COMPOSER AT THE REQUEST OF CHARLIE PARKER .

THE MUSIC SCHOLAR JEFF SULTANOF WRITES THAT GEORGE RUSSELL PASSED AWAY IN 2009, STILL OWED THE TWENTY FIVE BUCKS CHARLIE PARKER HAD PROMISED HIM AS PAYMENT.

OUR ROSE THEATER PERFORMANCE WAS BY WESSELL ANDERSON AND THE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF THE AMERICAS. DRUM SOLO BY VICTOR LEWIS. TROMBONE SOLO BY OUR MUSICAL DIRECTOR, VINCENT GARDNER.

30) Music: “*Birth of the Cool*”**31) Pierce:**

IN THE LATE 40S, AS BEBOP WAS AT ITS PEAK, CHARLIE PARKER WAS A FREQUENT VISITOR TO THE TIMES SQUARE APARTMENT OF COMPOSER GIL EVANS -- A GRAND CENTRAL STATION OF YOUNG BEBOP TALENT. AS MILES DAVIS PUT IT, EVANS WAS THE “MOTHER HEN” TO BRILLIANT BUT STRUGGLING YOUNG MUSICIANS LIKE GEORGE RUSSELL, JOHN LEWIS, MILES HIMSELF, AND GERRY MULLIGAN,.

PARKER ALSO TAPPED MULLIGAN TO ARRANGE SOME OF HIS COMPOSITIONS FOR STRINGS -- AND RECORDED THIS NEXT MULLIGAN ARRANGEMENT AT CARNEGIE HALL: THIS IS “*ROCKER*”

32) Music: "Rocker" (5:35)

32A) PIERCE:

GERRY MULLIGAN'S "ROCKER" – MADE FAMOUS ON MILES DAVIS' "BIRTH OF THE COOL" – BUT HEARD HERE IN MULLIGAN'S ARRANGEMENT AS RECORDED BY PARKER IN 1950 AT CARNEGIE HALL.

OUR PERFORMANCE FEATURED WESS ANDERSON ON ALTO, EHUD ASHERIE ON PIANO -- WITH THE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF THE AMERICAS – UNDER THE MUSICAL DIRECTION OF VINCENT GARDNER.

ANOTHER MULLIGAN STRINGS ARRANGEMENT THAT BIRD NEVER GOT TO TAKE INTO THE STUDIO IS CALLED "GOLD RUSH."

BUT HE DID PERFORM IT WITH HIS TOURING STRINGS BAND. AND SOME FANS MADE BOOTLEG RECORDINGS AT THE ROCKLAND PALACE BALLROOM IN 1952. IN THE ROSE THEATER, OUR MUSICAL DIRECTOR VINCENT GARDNER HAS MINED THOSE RECORDING FOR A PROPER HEARING: *GOLD RUSH*.

33) Music: "Gold Rush" (5:59)**34) Pierce:**

"GOLD RUSH" BY GERRY MULLIGAN AS ARRANGED FOR CHARLIE PARKER – LED BY VINCENT GARDNER WITH SOLOS BY WESS ANDERSON ON ALTO AND EHUD ASHERIE ON PIANO.

35) Pierce:

CHARLIE PARKER SAW WORKING WITH STRINGS AS A GENUINELY CREATIVE WAY TO FUSE THE BEBOP AND MODERN CLASSICAL TRADITIONS -- AS THE DARING ARRANGEMENTS HE COMMISSIONED FROM JOHN LEWIS, GERRY MULLIGAN AND GEORGE RUSSELL SHOW.

BUT THE IDEAS FOR THOSE CLASSIC ALBUMS WERE JUST A TWINKLE IN BIRD'S EYE WHEN THE BIG BAND COMPOSER NEAL HEFTI GAVE PARKER HIS FIRST PLACE TO SOLO WITH STRINGS -- THAT WAS IN 1947 -- DURING A FRENZY OF RECORDING BEFORE A MUSICIAN'S STRIKE WAS TO GO IN EFFECT.

PARKER VISITED A HEFTI SESSION AT CARNEGIE HALL AND WOUND UP SITTING IN WITH THE ORCHESTRA. HE IMPROVISED AN ALTO PART BY GLANCING AT THE COMPOSER'S SCORE FOR A TUNE CALLED "REPETITION."

3 YEARS LATER, AGAIN AT CARNEGIE HALL, BIRD AND HIS OWN STRING ORCHESTRA LAID DOWN A FAR MORE POLISHED VERSION.

WESSELL ANDERSON BRINGS US THE LANGUID LATIN FEEL OF "REPETITION"

36) Music: "Repetition" (6:40)

37) Pierce:

WESSELL ANDERSON AND CHARLES MCPHERSON PLAYING A BEAUTIFUL VERSION OF NEAL HEFTI'S "REPETITION."

THINKING ABOUT WHERE CHARLIE PARKER MIGHT HAVE GONE MUSICALLY, HAD HE LIVED, IS BOTH POIGNANT AND INTRIGUING:

- GUNTHER SCHULLER'S "THIRD STREAM,"
- GEORGE RUSSELL'S LONG-FORM COMPOSITIONS,
- JOHN LEWIS' MODERN JAZZ QUARTET,
- EVEN ORNETTE COLEMAN'S "SKIES OF AMERICA"

THEY ALL SUGGEST POSSIBLE ORCHESTRAL DIRECTIONS.

BUT WE'LL HAVE TO SETTLE FOR THE BIRD WITH STRINGS THAT WE DO HAVE.

37) Pierce: (continues)

WE'LL CLOSE OUR PROGRAM WITH THE VERSION OF "WHAT IS *THIS THING CALLED LOVE*," ARRANGED FOR JAZZ ENSEMBLE AND STRINGS BY JIMMY CARROLL.

38) Music: "What is This Thing Called Love," (8:37)

39) Pierce:

OUR CELEBRATION OF THE BOLD, INNOVATIVE STRING MUSIC OF CHARLIE PARKER WAS DIRECTED BY JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA TROMBONIST, VINCENT GARDNER.

WE FEATURED WESSELL ANDERSON AND CHARLES MCPHERSON, ON ALTO SAXOPHONE, VICTOR LEWIS ON DRUMS, BEN WOLFE ON THE BASS, AND EHUD ASHERIE ON PIANO. THEY WERE BACKED BY THE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF THE AMERICAS AND ITS CONDUCTOR BEN WENDELL.

YOU CAN HEAR OUR JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ARCHIVE PROGRAMS AT JALC (DOT) ORG AND FIND OUR *JAZZSTORIES* PODCASTS ON I TUNES. ALL FOR FREE AT J A L C (DOT) ORG.

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

OUR PRODUCERS ARE DAVID GOREN, ALEXA LIM AND STEPHEN RATHE. THESE RECORDINGS WERE BY ROB MACOMBER AT THE XM SIRIUS STUDIO IN THE HOUSE OF SWING. ADDITIONAL RECORDING BY JENNI LAWSON AT WWNO NEW OLREANS. CAT HENRY SUPERVISES THESE BROADCASTS AND RECORDINGS THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER IS WYNTON MARSALIS. I'M WENDELL PIERCE.

THANKS FOR JOINING US – COME BACK NEXT WEEK.