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**Monty Alexander: The Music of Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra
Jazz at Lincoln Center Radio, Season 19
Program 38; Airdate: 6/14/12**

1) MUSIC

2) PIERCE:

PERFECT PITCH, IMMEPECIBLE TIMING, AND A UNIQUE VOICE – THESE ARE THE QUALITIES OF A GREAT VOCALIST. BUT WHAT ELEVATES A SINGER FROM GREAT TO *UNFORGETTABLE*? IT'S THE ABILITY TO CONVEY A STORY THAT MOVES BEYOND WORDS -- TO CONVINC US THAT THEIR WORLD IS OUR OWN.

WE'RE CELEBRATING TWO TRULY UNFORGETTABLE SINGERS WHO DEFINED THE SOUND OF A GENERATION -- NAT "KING" COLE AND FRANK SINATRA.

TO SUMMON THEIR SPIRITS, PIANIST MONTY ALEXANDER HAS INVITED TWO DISTINCTIVE SINGERS – VETERAN ALLEN HARRIS AND THE NEWCOMER JAMES DE FRANCES.

FROM THE ALLEN ROOM AT FREDERICK P ROSE HALL, THIS IS *JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER*. I'M WENDELL PIERCE.

3) MUSIC

4) PIERCE:

NAT 'KING' COLE'S MUSKY BARITONE AND FRANK SINATRA THE MASTER OF TEMPO, BREATH AND WORD – SET THE STANDARD FOR A GENERATION OF DEBONAIR CROONERS, TENDER BALLADS AND IRRESISTABLE SWING.

IN THE ALLEN ROOM AT THE '*HOUSE OF SWING*,' PIANIST MONTY ALEXANDER LEADS OUR CELEBRATION – SINGER ALAN HARRIS KICKS OFF THE SET.

5) MUSIC: L-O-V-E (2:30)

6) MUSIC: I Got You Under My Skin (2:17)

6a) MUSIC: FUNNY (NOT MUCH) (Set 2)

7) PIERCE:

FUNNY (NOT MUCH) – RECORDED BY NAT KING COLE IN 1952 AND SUNG HERE BY ALLAN HARRIS.

BEFORE THAT, JAMES DEFRANCES ON '*I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN*.' THE COLE PORTER TUNE THAT BECAME A SIGNATURE IN 1956 FOR FRANCIS ALBERT SINATRA.

AND WE LED OFF WITH ALLEN HARRIS ON RALPH CARMICHAEL'S TUNE "*L-O-V-E*" -- A HIT FROM NAT 'KING' COLE'S LAST ALBUM IN HIS THREE DECADE CAREER.

PIANIST MONTY ALEXANDER IS OUR MUSICAL DIRECTOR FOR THIS CONCERT, AND HE BRINGS SOME UNIQUE QUALIFICATIONS:

8) VOX: ALEXANDER

I'm from Jamaica, I don't mean Long Island. Down there in Jamaica this is how we used to talk (heavy Jamaican accent)

In my home in Kingston Jamaica back in 1940 --something, my mother and father had an old record player, you understand, and on the record player they played nice music from America, one of the nicest music I would hear as a little boy was a man singing songs. His name was Nat King Cole.

So then Nat King Cole came to Jamaica when I was 12 yrs old in 1956 and I saw him on the stage with his trio, with his quartet..woo boy...boy this man could play the piano, so I said I want to try to do that. I don't want to work for a living...audience laughing...then my mother and father said we're moving to..Miami, FL. And indeed I went to Miami, FL and while I was there. and while I was there at 17 yrs old I got a job playing in a bar, playing the piano making my first two dollars. And I start playing all around Miami, FL. One night about 1962, who walk in the club, but a man named Jilly. Jilly came with his best friend, his name was Mr. Frank Sinatra.

Frank Sinatra called me over to the table. And Frank said 'Hey kid. Where you from kid.' I said Jamaica. He said 'the racetrack?'...audience laughing...I said no sir, I'm here playing. He said 'well, I like how you play that piano.' We want you to come to New York.

So 1963 the barroom piano player came to new york. And that's how I got here.

9) PIERCE:

MONTY ALEXANDER BECAME THE HOUSE PIANIST FOR JILLY'S CLUB IN NEW YORK CITY. HE WOULD GO ON TO WORK WITH BASSIST RAY BROWN AND RECORD ON THE ALBUM 'UNFORGETTABLE' WITH NATALIE COLE IN TRIBUTE TO HER FATHER.

ALEXANDER PUTS HIS OWN CARRIBEAN BEAT ON THESE NEXT TWO COLE-CLASSICS.

10) MUSIC: NATURE BOY (3:02)

11) MUSIC: To The Ends of the Earth (5:16)

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH -- BY JOE AND NOEL SHERMAN.
BEFORE THAT NAT KING COLE'S FIRST HIT 'NATURE BOY,' WITH HASHAN SHAKUR ON BASS, DENNIS MCCRELL AT THE DRUMS, BOBBY THOMAS ON THE HAND DRUM AND MUSICAL DIRECTOR MONTY ALEXANDER ON PIANO.

13) MUSIC

14) PIERCE:

BORN IN HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY IN 1915, FRANK SINATRA STARTED SINGING FOR TIPS AT THE AGE OF 8. HE SANG AROUND WITH BANDS IN NEW JERSEY AND THEN, WITH THE '*HOBOKEN FOUR*,' WON FIRST PLACE ON 'MAJOR BOWES' POPULAR '*AMATEUR HOUR*' – THE '*AMERICAN IDOL*' OF ITS DAY.

AT 23, HE GOT A JOB AS A SINGING WAITER AT A ROADHOUSE CALLED THE RUSTIC CABIN, JUST ACROSS THE SEVEN YEAR OLD GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE FROM NEW YORK CITY.

NOW, THERE HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF SINGING SERVERS -- BUT LUCKILY FOR SINATRA, (AND FOR US) THOSE NIGHTS WERE BROADCAST LIVE OVER THE 50 THOUSAND WATT AIRWAVES OF W-N-E-W.

THE TRUMPETER AND FLEDGLING BANDLEADER HARRY JAMES TUNED IN AND HIRED SINATRA, WHO MADE HIS FIRST HIT RECORDING 'ALL OR NOTHING AT ALL' WITH THE JAMES BAND IN 1939.

A FEW MONTHS LATER, TOMMY DORSEY, WHO LED ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR BANDS OF THE DAY, OFFERED SINATRA A SPOT IN HIS ORCHESTRA.

OVER SIX DECADES, SINATRA WOULD BECOME TEEN HEART-THROB, HOLLYWOOD FILM STAR, 'BAD BOY' LEADER OF THE 'RAT PACK' – AND "THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD" --- RECORDING DEFINITIVE VERSIONS OF '*NIGHT AND DAY*,' '*MY WAY*' AND DOZENS OF OTHER TUNES INCLUDING TWO THAT WE'RE ABOUT TO HEAR NEXT .

15) MUSIC: MOONLIGHT IN VERMONT (2:18)**16) MUSIC: FLY ME TO THE MOON (3:27)****17) PIERCE:**

MOONLIGHT IN VERMONT -- JAMES DEFRANCES. AND *FLY ME TO THE MOON* SUNG BY ALLEN HARRIS. BOTH BACKED BY HASHAN SHAKUR ON BASS, DENNIE MCCRELL AT THE DRUMS, BOBBY THOMAS ON THE HAND DRUM AND OUR PIANIST AND MUSICAL DIRECTOR MONTY ALEXANDER.

18) PIERCE (CON'T):

WE'RE DIGGING THE REPORTOIRE OF TWO GREAT – PERHAPS THE GREATEST -- SINGERS OF THE SWING ERA: FRANK SINATA AND NAT'KING' COLE.

YOU CAN FIND LOTS MORE GREAT JAZZ PERFORMANCES AT J-A-L-C (DOT) ORG SLASH JAZZCAST.

AND WHILE YOU'RE THERE, CHECK OUT OUR JAZZSTORIES PODCASTS TOO.

CHECK IN TO J-A-L-C DOT ORG. – AND BRING HOME THE SWING.

BACK IN ONE MINUTE WITH MORE -- JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER. I'M WENDELL PIERCE.

19) MIDBREAK MUSIC

20) MUSIC

31) VOX: ALEXANDER

Not so long ago, I saw a poster, a photograph. And it inspired me to want to do this program. And it was these two gentlemen in a place much like Jilly's having the time of their lives. And they were sitting at the piano, singing and playing. And there was this one man sitting and playing and looking over at his friend. Sitting there with his eyes closed holding a glass, a drink of some kind. And they were singing and playing their hearts out. And there's Sinatra and Nat Cole having a ball.

21) PIERCE:

BORN IN 1919, IN MONTGOMERY ALABAMA, NATHANIAL ADAMS COLES MOVED WITH HIS FAMILY TO CHICAGO AND ASPIRED TO BE A PIANIST LIKE EARL HINES. SINGING WAS JUST ANOTHER WAY TO ENTERTAIN THE PATRONS. BUT, HIS SWEET GOOD LOOKS, PERSONAL CHARM AND INCREDIBLE TALENT LEAD HIM TO THE TOP OF THE ENTERTAINMENT LADDER. COLE WAS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN HOST OF A NETWORK TELEVISION SHOW, AND IN THE TOP RANK OF POPULAR SINGERS.

HIS MOTHER GAVE HIM PIANO LESSONS, AND COLES GREW UP PLAYING ORGAN IN HIS FATHER'S CHURCH. AS A TEENAGER HE HAD A STRONG CLASSICAL TRAINING, BUT BY 17, NAT HAD DROPPED THE 'S' FROM HIS LAST NAME AND MADE HIS FIRST RECORDING ON PIANO WITH HIS BROTHER'S BAND

IT IS REPORTED THAT EVEN THEN, HIS PLAYING STYLE WAS REMINISCENT OF HIS IDOL EARL HINES.

IN 1936, NAT COLE WENT ON TOUR IN EUBIE BLAKE'S AND NOBLE SISSLE'S *SHUFFLE ALONG*. BUT THE SHOW WENT BUST IN LOS ANGELES. STRANDED THERE, COLE FORMED HIS OWN *KING COLE SWINGERS* WITH JUST A GUITAR AND BASS TO ACCOMPANY HIS PIANO. THAT CONFIGURATION WOULD INFLUENCE PLAYERS LIKE AHMAD JAMAL AND OSCAR PETERSON.

FROM THE ALLEN ROOM, PIANIST MONTY ALEXANDER LEADS HIS ENSEMBLE ON TWO STANDARDS FROM THE MID-FORTIES THAT COLE USED TO SHOWCASE HIS PRECISE PIANOWORK.

22) MUSIC: SWEET GEORGIA BROWN (5:15)

23) MUSIC: BODY AND SOUL (4:11)

24) PIERCE:

'*BODY AND SOUL*,' AND BEFORE THAT '*SWEET GEORGIA BROWN*.'

THE SWEET GEORGIA NATIVE RUSSELL MALONE PLAYING GUITAR, HOUSTON PERSON ON TENOR SAX, HASHAN SHAKUR PLAYING BASS, BOBBY THOMAS ON THE HAND DRUMS, DENNIS MCCRELL AT THE DRUMS, AND MONTY ALEXANDER AT THE PIANO.

25) MUSIC

26) MUSIC: COLE PIANO SOLO

26) PIERCE:

JUST NAT COLE'S MASTERFUL PIANO PLAYING WOULD HAVE SECURED HIS PLACE IN MUSIC HISTORY. BUT, LEGEND HAS IT, ONE NIGHT AN INEBRIATED PATRON DEMANDED THAT COLE SING *SWEET LORRAINE*.

UNWAVERINGLY POLITE, COLE OBLIGED AND BEGAN HIS CAREER AS A VOCALIST.

COLE DID RECALL, IN HIS BIOGRAPHY, A FIFTEEN CENT TIP TO THE TRIO FOR THAT PERFORMANCE. IN FACT THOUGH, COLE HAD LONG SUNG A BIT BETWEEN INSTRUMENTAL NUMBERS.

AS A VOCALIST, NAT COLE'S STYLE ECHOED HIS PERSONALITY – UNDERSTATED, INVITING, AND PERFECTLY PRECISE.

27) MUSIC: (Straighten up and) FLY RIGHT

28) PIERCE:

COLES' FIRST BIG HIT CAME IN 1943 -- ON HIS OWN COMPOSITION 'STRAIGHTEN UP AND FLY RIGHT.' IT LED JOHNNY MERCER OF CAPITOL RECORDS TO SIGN THE YOUNG SINGER, WHO WOULD HAVE HIT AFTER HIT FOR THE LABEL.

A DOZEN YEARS LATER, FRANK SINATRA JOINED WITH CAPITOL, AND LIKE COLE, WORKED CLOSELY WITH GREAT ARRANGER NELSON RIDDLE.

COLE WAS ENORMOUSLY POPULAR, EVEN IN THE SEGREGATED SOUTH, BUT HE WOULDN'T STAND FOR MISTREATMENT. HE SUED HOTELS THAT DENIED HIM ACCOMMODATIONS.

29) PIERCE:

IN APRIL 1956, WHILE HE WAS ON STAGE PLAYING A 'WHITES ONLY' SHOW IN BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, HE WAS ATTACKED AND INJURED -BY FOUR WHITE MEN SHOUTING RACIAL EPITHETS. THAT WAS THE LAST TIME HE WOULD SET FOOT IN HIS HOME STATE AND THE LAST TIME HE'D PLAY A SEGREGATED VENUE.

HE PRESSED ON, DRAWING AUDIENCES FROM ALL SIDES. AND IN NOVEMBER OF 1956, THE NBC TV NETWORK PREMIERED A NEW VARIETY SHOW WITH NAT KING COLE AS ITS HOST.

30) MUSIC WINDOW: UP AND OUT opening credit from Nat King Cole Show

30A) AUDIO: NBC NAT KING COLE SHOW

31) PIERCE:

THIS WAS A VERY DIFFERENT IMAGE FOR BLACKS IN MAINSTREAM AMERICA. BUT DESPITE GUESTS LIKE MAHALIA JACKSON, ELLA FITZGERALD AND TONY BENNETT, IT COULDN'T ATTRACT A NATIONAL SPONSOR -- A REFLECTION OF THE TURBULENCE OF A BURGEONING MOVEMENT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS. COLE WOULD QUIP: "#MADISON AVENUE IS AFRAID OF THE DARK."

FROM COLE'S ALBUM *BALLADS OF THE DAY* RELEASED THAT SAME YEAR -- THIS IS ANGEL EYES.

32) MUSIC: Angel Eyes (3:08)

32A) MUSIC: Red Sails in the Sunset (4:08)

33) PIERCE:

HOUSTON PERSON SOLOING ON SAX --*RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET* -- THE HUGH WILLIAMS AND JIMMY KENNEDY CLASSIC THAT WAS A HIT FOR NAT KING COLE IN 1951.

BEFORE THAT MATT DENIS' *ANGEL EYES*. WITH BASSIST HASHAN SHAKUR TAKING UP THE SOLO. RUSSELL MALONE ON GUITAR, DENNIS MCCRELL AT THE DRUMS, AND MONTY ALEXANDER ON PIANO.

THROUGH THE NINETEEN FIFTIES, NAT KING COLE APPEARED IN MORE THAN 20 FEATURE FILMS - INCLUDING A ROLE AS EUBIE BLAKE IN 'ST. LOUIS BLUES.'

HE ALSO MAINTAINED A PUBLIC ROLE, ADDRESSING THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION IN 1960, AND PLAYING FOR JOHN KENNEDY'S INAUGURATION.

33A) PIERCE:

COLE HAD HIS LAST BIG HIT IN 1963 WITH '*THOSE LAZY, HAZY, CRAZY DAYS OF SUMMER*.' HE WAS A HEAVY SMOKER FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE WITH THE BELIEF THAT IT KEPT HIS VOICE RICH AND SMOOTH. IN 1965, AFTER THREE DECADES OF HEAVY SMOKING, NAT 'KING' COLE DIED OF LUNG CANCER AT THE AGE OF 45.

FRANK SINATRA WENT ON TO ACT (EVEN COLLECTING AN OSCAR FOR HIS PERFORMANCE IN 'FROM HERE TO ETERNITY'), CAVORT WITH THE FAMED 'RAT PACK,' AND INDELIBLY ENGRAVE THE AMERICAN SONGBOOK WITH HIS STYLE.

33) PIERCE: (continues)

FROM THE ALLEN ROOM, MONTY ALEXANDER TAKES US OUT ON TWO TUNES: ONE MORE FROM THE COLE BOOK -- AND ONE THAT CAN'T BE BROUGHT TO MIND WITHOUT SUMMONING SINATRA.

34) MUSIC: WALKING MY BABY (2:50)

35) MUSIC: THAT'S LIFE (2:22)

36) PIERCE:

SINGER ALLEN HARRIS ON 'WALKING MY BABY' AND JAMES DEFRANCES ON 'THAT'S LIFE.' HASHAN SHAKUR ON BASS, DENNIS MCCRELL AT THE DRUMS, BOBBY THOMAS ON THE HAND DRUM AND MUSICAL DIRECTOR MONTY ALEXANDER ON PIANO.

AND THAT'S OUR TRIBUTE TO THE GREAT NAT KING COLE AND FRANK SINATRA.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER RADIO IS PRODUCED AT MURRAY STREET. THIS EDITION WAS WRITTEN BY ALEXA LIM, WHO PRODUCES THE SERIES WITH DAVID GOREN AND STEVE RATHE.

YOU CAN HEAR SONGS AND FIND VIDEOS OF NAT KING COLE AND FRANK SINATRA THROUGH OUR JAZZRADIO PAGE AT JA L C (DOT) ORG.

37) PIERCE:

YOU CAN HEAR THIS PROGRAM AGAIN THERE TOO -- ANY TIME YOU LIKE, ALONG WITH OUR *JAZZSTORIES* PODCASTS. J-A-L-C (DOT) ORG – BRING HOME THE SWING.

THIS CONCERT WAS RECORDED BY ROB MACOMBER AT THE XM STUDIO IN FREDERICK P ROSE HALL . ADDITIONAL RECORDING BY JENNI LAWSON AT WWNO NEW ORLEANS.

CAT HENRY SUPERVISES JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER RECORDINGS AND BROADCASTS. . OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR IS WYNTON MARSALIS. I'M WENDELL PIERCE. THANKS FOR JOINING US. COME BACK NEXT WEEK.