

LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER

April 7, 1999 8-10 PM on PBS

"Uptown Blues; Ellington at 100"

New York Philharmonic- Kurt Masur, Conductor

Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra- Wynton Marsalis, Music Director

Kelley Nassief, Soprano

Program:

Grieg "Peer Gynt", Op. 23

Each movement performed in the original version by the New York Philharmonic, and in the Ellington/Strayhorn arrangement by the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra:

"Morning (prelude to Act IV)

"Solveig's Song" (from Acts IV and V)

"Ase's Death" (from Act III)

"Anitra's Dance" (from Act IV)

"In the Hall of the Mountain King" (from Act II)

Intermission

Ellington, arr. Marsalis

"Afro Bossa (Bula)"

"Blues in Blueprint"

"Happy Go Lucky Local" (from *Deep South Suite*)

"A Tone Parallel to Harlem"

Performed by the New York Philharmonic and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra.

Program Notes by MARTIN BOOKSPAN

The commingling of Jazz and "Classical Music" (for want of a better term) is by now an old story. Strangely, however, the potential of jazz- an archetypal American genre- to become an enlivening element in their musical armament was exploited by European composers of "serious music" long before it was taken up in earnest by Americans. One need only remember Stravinsky's "Ragtime" of 1918 or Milhaud's "La Creation du Monde" of 1923. True, John Alden Carpenter's "Krazy Kat" Ballet music of 1921 was an early jazz-tinged score by an American composer, but it was not until the 1924 premiere of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" that jazz-influenced music by an American was officially welcomed into the staid confines of American concert halls. Soon thereafter came Aaron Copland's Piano Concerto (which is in fact called his "Jazz Concerto") and George Antheil's "Jazz Symphony". That Jazz has been a striking influence in the music of American composers ever since is undeniable.

One of the greatest figures of American music is the man whose birth centenary will be celebrated on the next LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER telecast on Wednesday evening, April 7, in a joint concert with the New York Philharmonic

and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. His name: Edward Kennedy Ellington, born in Washington, DC on April 29, 1899. His social elegance and gracious manner earned him the affectionate title "Duke", and as Duke Ellington, he became world-famous.

After years as a pianist playing Ragtime and other Jazz forms in and around the District of Columbia, Ellington settled in New York City in 1923 and formed a "big band" comprised of ten players, a large expansion from the four or six musicians who made up the typical Jazz combo of the time. The Ellington Band played from intricate written-out arrangements which still left room for- and depended on- improvisation. Some of his best-known compositions from an output of some 2,000 works are "Creole Love Song", "Mood Indigo", and "Sophisticated Lady".

As time went by, Ellington the composer explored extended musical forms and produced such works as "Black and Tan Fantasy", "Liberian Suite", two Sacred Concerts, a number of film scores, and a ballet score, "The River". In 1965, Duke Ellington conducted the New York Philharmonic in the world premiere of his composition, "The Golden Broom and the Green Apple". Under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State, the Duke Ellington Orchestra made tours of the Soviet Union, Latin America, Japan, and Australia. Many honors were bestowed upon Ellington during his lifetime: in 1967, the Republic of Togo in Africa issued a postage stamp bearing his likeness; in the United States, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. A year before his death in 1974, he became the first Jazz musician to receive an honorary degree from Columbia University.

Among Kurt Masur's most memorable successes during his tenure as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic were the 1995 performances of substantial portions of Ibsen's dramatic poem, "Peer Gynt", which featured the incidental music composed for it by Edvard Grieg. The first half of our April 7 LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER telecast will consist of five sections from "Peer Gynt" played alternately by the Philharmonic conducted by Masur, and then by Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in the arrangements made in 1960 by Duke Ellington and his longtime arranger-colleague, Billy Strayhorn.

First will come "Morning Mood", familiar to many from its ubiquitous use as background music for countless television commercials and Saturday morning cartoons. Next we'll hear "Solweig's Song"- Kelley Nassief will sing with the Philharmonic. This will be followed by "Ase's Death", which in the Ellington arrangement is reminiscent of a New Orleans funeral, while the Grieg is a stark, subdued exploration of grief. The perky "Anitra's Dance" will be heard next, and the first half will conclude with "In the Hall of the Mountain King".

After the intermission, the program is all Ellington, with the New York Philharmonic and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra combining forces onstage

for new arrangements by Wynton Marsalis of four original Ellington pieces: "Afro Bossa (Bula)", "Blues in Blueprint", "Happy-Go-Lucky Local", and "A Tone Parallel to Harlem". Wynton Marsalis, who is the Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, has stated: "I've wanted to work with Maestro Masur for some time now and am honored that he asked me to combine the jazz and symphonic orchestral traditions. This is something that Duke Ellington and Leonard Bernstein, amongst others, were interested in doing. I am striving to write something that will be fun to play and that will utilize the sophistication and power of both orchestras."

One might react with surprise at the enthusiasm of the New York Philharmonic's Music Director, Kurt Masur, for the music of Duke Ellington. Masur, after all, earned and learned his musical expertise in the heartland of mittel-Europa and he is generally considered a custodian of the central symphonic tradition and literature. As a young man, however, Masur became intrigued with jazz and came to know Ellington's music at first hand. About the April 7 concert, Masur has stated: "The New York Philharmonic is both proud and enthusiastic about being able to celebrate the life and works of this great musician. For a very long time, I have admired this music, even the entire big-band syncopated style, that forms the legacy of Ellington. Also, I am very much looking forward to our partnership with Jazz at Lincoln Center and Mr. Marsalis."

"Uptown Blues: Ellington at 100" promises to be a very special event in the continuing LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER series. The live performance will be seen on PBS on Wednesday evening, April 7, at 8 PM. be sure to check your local listings for the date and time in your area. See you then!