

LIVE
FROM LINCOLN CENTER



March 26, 2009, 8:00pm on PBS
Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

Our next Live From Lincoln Center telecast will mark the return to our series of the now-legendary Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and its guiding spirit, trumpet player Wynton Marsalis. It was in a conversation I had with Wynton Marsalis during the intermission of a radio broadcast of a New York Philharmonic concert some 25 years ago that he revealed his decision to "retire" as a classical musician and to concentrate on jazz. For this New Orleans-born musician such a move was not entirely surprising, particularly since his father, Ellis, is a highly-regarded jazz pianist. And yet....

At a very early age Wynton displayed uncommon expertise as a trumpet player, and when he was 14 he was invited to play with the New Orleans Philharmonic. During high school he was all over the music scene in New Orleans, playing with the Symphony's Brass Quintet, the Community Concert Band, the Youth Orchestra and the New Orleans Symphony. When he was 17, he was admitted as a Fellow to the Boston Symphony Orchestra's summer academy at Tanglewood in the Berkshire hills of Western Massachusetts. At the summer's end he was awarded the prize as outstanding brass student.

He then enrolled at Lincoln Center's Juilliard School, where his outstanding qualities were quickly recognized. He was signed to an exclusive contract by CBS Masterworks and embarked upon an intensive recording program embracing much of the standard repertory for trumpet and orchestra. At the same time he also recorded some jazz albums. In one and the same year – 1984 – he won two Grammys, one for classical music and one for jazz.

Once he made the decision to devote himself exclusively to jazz, his career moved ahead with dizzying speed, culminating in his appointment as Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, the newest constituent of New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. From rather modest beginnings Jazz at Lincoln Center has become what is probably the world's outstanding representative of classic jazz. The carefully assembled Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra tours extensively throughout the United States and foreign lands, and the March 26th concert at its home base in New York marks the jubilant conclusion of the ensemble's latest national tour.

What can we expect to hear that evening? All time classics, possibly including "When the Saints Go Marching In" and "Saint James Infirmary" among others, along with the greatest hits by the likes of Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Mingus and Benny Goodman. And some player-members of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra are also composers; we can assume we'll be hearing some of their music as well.

So be with us for what promises to be a truly festive evening on Live From Lincoln Center on Thursday, March 26: Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra performing in their own artistic venue, the Rose Theater at Frederick P. Rose Hall in New York City.

I leave you with the usual suggestion that you contact your local PBS station for the exact date and time of the telecast in your area.

Have fun!

By MARTIN BOOKSPAN