

**From the Heart of Steeltown**

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**Jazz at Lincoln Center Radio  
From the Heart of Steeltown  
Season XVI  
Program #1, Airdate: 9/25/08**

**1) Background music:** “Walkin and Swingin,” Andy Kirk and the 12 Clouds of Joy

**2) Gordon:**

1920S PITTSBURGH WAS NOT AN EASY PLACE TO GROW UP. SMOKE FROM THE STEEL MILLS WOULD OFTEN BLOT OUT THE SUN BY NOON. TUBERCULOSIS RATES WERE HIGH. GRUELING INDUSTRIAL JOBS WERE PLENTIFUL, BUT ECONOMIC COMPETITION FUELED PREJUDICE, PARTICULARLY AGAINST POOR AFRICAN-AMERICANS FROM THE SOUTH.

FOR A PRECOCIOUS GROUP OF YOUNG MUSICIANS, THOUGH JAZZ BECAME A WAY OUT OF THE TOUGH, WORKING-CLASS CITY. BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS, PITTSBURGH PRODUCED SOME OF THE GREATEST ARTISTS IN JAZZ HISTORY. THAT ROLL CALL INCLUDES EARL HINES, MARY LOU WILLIAMS, ROY ELDRIDGE, BILLY STRAYHORN, RAY BROWN, AND ART BLAKEY.

JUST AHEAD, TWO YOUNGER PITTSBURGH-BORN ARTISTS STEVE NELSON AND JEFF ‘TAIN’ WATTS JOIN THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA TO EXPLORE THE LEGACY OF STEELTOWN. IN FOR WYNTON MARSALIS, I’M WYCLIFFE GORDON – AND WE’RE GLAD YOU’RE HERE..

**3A) Background Music:** “Weather Bird” or “Monday Date”

**3b) Gordon:**

LOUIS ARMSTRONG MAY HAVE INVENTED THE EXTENDED JAZZ SOLO. BUT PITTSBURGH-BORN PIANIST EARL HINES IS ONE OF ITS GODFATHERS.

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LIKE ARMSTRONG, HINES PLAYED EXTENDED IMPROVISATIONS – WITH ACCOMPANIMENT FAR MORE FLUID (AND RHYTHMICALLY SUBTLE) THAN THE RAGTIME AND STRIDE STYLES OF HIS DAY. FROM THE STAGE OF THE ROSE THEATER, WYNTON MARSALIS AND PIANIST DAN NIMMER PLAY ONE OF THE MASTERPIECES OF EARLY JAZZ: THE ARMSTRONG/HINES DUET “WEATHER BIRD.”

**4) Music:** “Weather Bird”

**5) Gordon:**

TRUMPETER WYNTON MARSALIS AND PIANIST DAN NIMMER ON “WEATHER BIRD,” BY LOUIS ARMSTRONG.

AFTER HIS IMMORTAL COLLABORATIONS WITH ARMSTRONG IN 1928, EARL HINES LED BIG BANDS FOR THE NEXT TWO DECADES. IN THE 1940S HIS ENSEMBLE FEATURED THIS A HIGH-ENERGY COMPOSITION CALLED “YELLOW FIRE.”

**6) Music:** “Yellow Fire,”

**8b) Gordon:**

“YELLOW FIRE,” BY PUDDINGHEAD BATTLE (A PLAYER OF THE TRUMPET, VALVE TROMBONE AND ALTO SAXOPHONE) AND FRANZ JACKSON ONE OF THE LAST PLAYERS FROM THE ‘CHICAGO’ SCHOOL. JACKSON PASSED AWAY AT 95, IN MAY, 2008, OUR ALTO SOLO WAS BY SHERMAN IRBY, TROMBONE SOLO BY CHRIS BYERS, AT THE PIANO DAN NIMMER, AND TENOR SOLO BY WALTER BLANDING.

**8c) Background music:** “Rockin’ Chair”

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**8d) Gordon:**

ROY ELDRIDGE ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO JOIN HIS FATHER'S SUCCESSFUL HAULING BUSINESS IN NORTH PITTSBURGH. BUT AFTER HIS MOTHER DIED WHEN HE WAS 11 AND HIS FATHER QUICKLY REMARRIED, ELDRIDGE BEGAN PRACTICING HIS TRUMPET OBSESSIVELY. AND HE NEVER REALLY STOPPED.

ELDRIDGE PLAYED WITH EVERYONE FROM TRAVELLING CARNIVALS TO BILLIE HOLIDAY. BY THE TIME HE JOINED THE GENE KRUPA BAND IN 1941, HIS SOARING, IMPASSIONED STYLE HAD ESTABLISHED THE MAN THEY CALLED "LITTLE JAZZ" AS THE GREATEST TRUMPETER SINCE ARMSTRONG.

THE SONG "ROCKIN' CHAIR" WAS A SHOWCASE FOR THE MAN WHO LIKED TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT THE TRUMPET COULD DO.

AT THE HOUSE OF SWING, SEAN JONES TACKLES THE ROY ELDRIDGE CLASSIC.

**9) Music: "Rockin Chair"**

**10) Gordon:**

HOAGY CARMICHAEL'S "ROCKIN CHAIR," FEATURING SEAN JONES AND THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA.

**11) Background Music: "Froggy Bottom," Andy Kirk Band**

**12) Gordon:**

THE PIANIST AND COMPOSER MARY LOU WILLIAMS THOUGHT OF HER MUSICAL TALENT AS A "SHIELD" AGAINST SUFFERING – AND SHE HAD MORE THAN HER SHARE OF BOTH. WILLIAMS WAS RAISED BY AN INDIFFERENT MOTHER AND A KINDLY STEPFATHER, BOTH OF THEM

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ALCOHOLIC AND POOR. WHITES AND LIGHT-SKINNED BLACKS BULLIED THE YOUNG MARY LOU ABOUT HER DARK COMPLEXION.

BUT HER MUSIC ALLOWED HER TO ESCAPE THE PETTINESS AND CRUELTY OF HER PITTSBURGH CHILDHOOD – AND SHE BECAME KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE EAST LIBERTY NEIGHBORHOOD AS THE GIRL WHO PLAYED PIANO FOR MONEY AT PARTIES, THE LOCAL FUNERAL HOME, AND EVEN A BROTHEL.

AT THE AGE OF 16, SHE MARRIED JOHN WILLIAMS, A SAXOPHONIST WHO EVENTUALLY LANDED A JOB WITH A BIG BAND BASED IN OKLAHOMA AND THEN KANSAS CITY. A TUBA PLAYER NAMED ANDY KIRK TOOK OVER THE BAND, AND MARY LOU WILLIAMS STARTED WORKING FOR HIM AS A BACKUP PIANIST AND BAND CHAUFFEUR. SHE EVEN DROVE A HEARSE FOR EXTRA MONEY. BUT HER PRODIGIOUS TALENT AND DETERMINATION DROVE HER TO SUCCESS IN THAT MALE-DOMINATED WORLD. DURING THE 1930S, SHE BECAME THE MOST IMPORTANT MEMBER OF KIRK’S BAND, CONTRIBUTING COMPOSITIONS, ARRANGEMENTS, AND HER PIANO PLAYING.

AT ROSE HALL, THE LINCOLN CENTER JAZZ ORCHESTRA TACKLES WILLIAMS ORIGINAL COMPOSITION “MARY’S IDEA.”

**13) Music:** “Mary’s Idea,”

**14) Gordon:**

“MARY’S IDEA,” BY MARY LOU WILLIAMS -- WITH SOLOS BY TROMBONIST VINCENT GARDNER, TRUMPETER MARCUS PRINTUP, AND PIANIST DAN NIMMER.

MARY LOU WILLIAMS EVENTUALLY GOT BORED WITH THE KIRK BAND – AND ANGRY WITH THE LEADER OVER A ROYALTIES DISPUTE. SO SHE QUIT AND WENT BACK TO PITTSBURGH IN 1942.

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FOLLOWING THE RECENTLY-DIVORCED WILLIAMS BACK TO HER HOMETOWN WAS THE SECOND MAN SHE WOULD MARRY -- TRUMPETER SHORTY BAKER. BAKER WAS NOT MUCH OF A HUSBAND -- DIDN'T TREAT HER WELL , BUT HE WAS AN EXCELLENT TRUMPETER. WHEN DUKE ELLINGTON INVITED BAKER TO JOIN HIS BAND, HIS NEW WIFE BEGAN CONTRIBUTING ARRANGMENTS.

HERE'S THE ARRANGMENT OF HOAGY CARMICHAEL'S "STARDUST" SHE WROTE FOR ELLINGTON'S 1943 CARNEGIE HALL DATE. IT INCLUDES TWO TRUMPET CHORUSES -- SHE INTENDED IT AS A PRESENT FOR BAKER.

**16) Music:** "Stardust,"

**17) Gordon:**

MARY LOU WILLIAMS' ARRANGMENT OF HOAGY CARMICHAEL'S STARDUST. -- WYNTON MARSALIS PLAYING THE FEATURED PARTS WILLIAMS WROTE FOR TRUMPETER SHORTY BAKER.

**18) Gordon:**

AND IF YOU NEED A LITTLE MORE STARDUST IN YOUR LIFE, LOG ON TO OUR WEBSITE J-A-L-C DOT ORG TO HEAR THIS SHOW AGAIN.

IT'S ALSO A GREAT WAY TO KEEP UP WITH THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER JAZZ ORCHESTRA ON TOUR, WITH AMERICAN MUSIC ABROAD, AND SWING U -- OUR JAZZ EDUCATION PROGRAM. SO BRING HOME THE SWING -- FROM J-A-L-C DOT ORG.

IT'S JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER. IN FOR WYNTON MARSALIS I'M WYCLIFFE GORDON.

**21) Midbreak:** "Bearcat Shuffle," Andy Kirk and his 12 Clouds of Joy (by Williams)

**22a) Background music:** "C Jam Blues," Oscar Petersen, Ray Brown

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“When I was coming up, man, it was just music. When I walked outside the door, and walk a block, there was some music being played live. And I had the opportunity of being around some great musicians, like Ahmad Jamal. When I come home from school? Ahmad Jamal would be practicing piano. Ray Brown, the bassist, he would be delivering papers to my house. There were so many great musicians, Kenny Clarke, I had the opportunity to play with Clarke, Art Blakey. All these guys were just there, there, right there. I could see them at any given time.

**22c) Gordon:**

THE LATE SAXOPHONE GREAT STANLEY TURRENTINE, WHO GREW UP ON LAPLACE STREET IN PITTSBURGH. AMONG THE PITTSBURGH JAZZ GREATS, ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL IS THE GUY WHO USED TO DELIVER TURRENTINE’S MORNING NEWSPAPER: BASSIST RAY BROWN. AFTER YEARS OF PRACTICE AND GIGGING AROUND HIS HOMETOWN, BROWN DECIDED TO TAKE A CHANCE AND MOVE TO NEW YORK. ON HIS FIRST DAY THERE, HE MET AND PLAYED WITH DIZZY GILLESPIE, CHARLIE PARKER, AND BUD POWELL. A GOOD EXAMPLE OF SOMEONE “MAKING THEIR OWN LUCK.” THE PITTSBURGH KID WAS READY AND GILLESPIE INVITED HIM TO JOIN HIS BAND. THE PRECOCIOUS YOUNG BASSIST QUICKLY CONTRIBUTED TWO STAPLES TO THE GILLESPIE BOOK: “ONE BASS HIT,” AND “TWO BASS HIT,” WHICH WE’LL HEAR RIGHT NOW.

**23) Music:** “One Bass Hit”**24) Music:** “Two Bass Hit (3:35)**25) Gordon:**

RAY BROWN’S “ONE BASS HIT” AND “TWO BASS HIT.” THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA, FEATURING VIBRAPHONIST STEVE NELSON AND BASSIST CARLOS HENRIQUEZ.

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**26a) Background music:** Blakey intro to “A Night in Tunisia,” 1957

**26b) Gordon:**

ART BLAKEY TENDED TO REFER TO PITTSBURGH USING FOUR-LETTER WORDS – AND NOT IN A POSITIVE WAY. HIS MOTHER DIED WHEN HE WAS 6 MONTHS OLD, AND HIS FATHER ABANDONED THE BABY. HIS MOTHER’S COUSIN SARAH PARRAN ADOPTED AND RAISED HIM, BUT AS A TEENAGER BLAKEY WENT TO WORK IN THE COAL MINES AND STEEL MILLS – AND PLAYED MUSIC AT NIGHT.

A TOUGH CHILDHOOD BUT BLAKEY GREW UP TO BE A MASTER OF POLYRHYTHMIC DRUMMING. AND HE WAS ALSO A BRILLIANT MENTOR TO JAZZ PRODIGIES FROM JACKIE MCLEAN TO LEE MORGAN TO WAYNE SHORTER.

ANOTHER DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS OF “ART BLAKEY’S JAZZ MESSENGERS” REMEMBERED HIM FONDLY FROM THE STAGE OF ROSE HALL.

**27) Vox: Marsalis**

“What can we say about Art Blakey? He was one of the most original people to ever walk the face of the planet Earth.

**27b) Gordon:**

WYNTON MARSALIS.

**27c) Vox: Marsalis:**

“He was at one time the person with the most integrity, who could tell you the deepest and most honest truth, with three or four words. And then he could follow it up with the deepest, most sacrilegious lie, humanly imaginable. (laughter) He would tell a lie about you, and then ask you to co-sign it. (mimics gruff Blakey voice) ‘Ain’t that right?’ No, man, that’s not right... He would say, all the people I got high with died 40 years ago. And I’m still here. And I’m still getting high. So. On that worthy note. (laughter) You know I’m presenting it, the way he would want it presented. That’s why I’m telling you like it is. Cause he always used to say ‘tell it like it is.’ No need to lie about it.”

**28) Gordon:**

ART BLAKEY ALWAYS ENCOURAGED HIS SIDEMEN TO CONTRIBUTE ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS. SO AS A TRIBUTE TO THE DRUMMER, THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA OFFERS THIS TUNE BY HIS FORMER MUSIC DIRECTOR BOBBY WATSON. IT HAS A HUGE DRUM FEATURE FOR THE PITTSBURGH-BORN JEFF 'TAIN' WATTS. "WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL."

**29) Music:** "Wheel Within a Wheel"

**30) Gordon:**

BOBBY WATSON'S "WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL," IN A TRIBUTE TO ART BLAKEY. SOLOS BY VIBRAPHONIST STEVE NELSON, ALTO SAXOPHONIST TED NASH, TROMBONIST ANDRE HAYWARD, AND DRUMMER JEFF "TAIN" WATTS.

WHEN HE WAS GROWING UP IN PITTSBURGH, ART BLAKEY ACTUALLY WANTED TO PLAY PIANO, NOT DRUMS. BUT ONE DAY, THE GANGSTER WHO OWNED THE NIGHTCLUB WHERE A TEENAGED BLAKEY WAS GIGGING HEARD ANOTHER PIANIST PLAYING. HE ORDERED BLAKEY TO SWITCH TO DRUMS TO MAKE ROOM. WHO SAID A THUG WITH A GUN NEVER DID ANY GOOD? BLAKEY WENT ON TO BECOME A DRUM LEGEND. AND THE PIANIST WAS NAMED ERROLL GARNER.

HIS STYLE, OFFERED OF GUITAR-LIKE COMPING WITH THE LEFT HAND AND FLAMBOYANT SOLOS -- DRAWN FROM BOP, SWING, AND EUROPEAN CLASSICAL MUSIC. IT THRILLED AUDIENCES FOR DECADES TO COME.

THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA HONORS GARNER WITH A NEW TED NASH ARRANGMENT OF HIS MOST FAMOUS TUNE. THIS IS "MISTY,"

**31) Music:** “Misty”

**32) Gordon:**

ERROL GARNER’S “MISTY.” WYNTON MARSALIS ON TRUMPET AND VINCENT GARDNER ON TROMBONE.

**33A) Background music:** “Day Dream,” Duke Ellington

**33B) Gordon:**

BOOKISH AND GAY, COMPOSER BILLY STRAYHORN WAS ANOTHER PITTSBURGH ARTIST WHO FOUND REFUGE FROM BULLYING IN MUSIC. AND WHEN MUSIC INDUSTRY’S GREED PROVIDED HIM THE RARE OPPORTUNITY TO WRITE SONGS FOR DUKE ELLINGTON HE WAS READY.

IN 1941, RADIO STATIONS BALKED AT PAYING ROYALTIES DEMANDED BY THE COMPOSER’S SOCIETY ‘ASCAP.’ THEY BANNED THE BROADCAST OF ANY ASCAP SONGS, INCLUDING ALL OF ELLINGTON’S GREAT HITS OF THE 30S. ALL OF A SUDDEN, THE MAESTRO WAS DESPERATE FOR NEW MATERIAL – AND HE TURNED TO STRAYHORN.

FUELED BY BLACKBERRY WINE AND CIGARETTES, STRAYHORN, ELLINGTON, AND HIS SON MERCER COMPOSED IN MARATHON SESSIONS. UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE, STRAYHORN PRODUCED SOME OF HIS GREATEST SONGS, INCLUDING “TAKE THE A TRAIN,” “CHELSEA BRIDGE,” “PASSION FLOWER,” AND THE TWO TUNES WE’RE ABOUT TO HEAR NOW: “A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING” AND “RAIN CHECK.”

**34) Music:** “A Flower is a Lovesome Thing”

**35) Music:** “Rain Check”

**36) Gordon:**

BILLY STRAYHORN'S "RAIN CHECK," ANDRE HAYWARD ON TROMBONE, WALTER BLANDING PLAYED TENOR WITH THE PIANIST DAN NIMMER. BEFORE THAT, WE HEARD "A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING," FEATURING BARITONE SAXOPHONIST JOE TEMPERLEY.

**37A) Background music:** "Chelsea Bridge," Sonny Rollins or "Lush Life"

**37B) Gordon:**

BILLY STRAYHORN IS FAMOUS FOR THE MOURNFULNESS THAT PERVADES HIS GREATEST SONGS. SO IT'S IRONIC THAT A SONG HE NAMED AFTER HIMSELF IS UPTEMPO AND CHEERY. TAKING ITS TITLE FROM STRAYHORN'S NICKNAME, THIS TUNE IS CALLED 'BOO-DAH.'

**38) Music:** "Boo-dah"

**39) Gordon**

BILLY STRAYHORN'S "BOO-DAH," FEATURING MARCUS PRINTUP ON TRUMPET AND CHRIS BYERS ON TROMBONE. THE LINCOLN CENTER JAZZ ORCHESTRA WITH OF TED NASH, VICTOR GOINES, WALTER BLANDING, SHERMAN IRBY AND JOE TEMPERLEY ON SAXOPHONES. VINCENT GARDNER, ROLAND BARBER, ANDRE HAYWARD AND CHRIS BYERS ON TROMBONES. ALI JACKSON PLAYING DRUMS, CARLOS HENRIQUEZ, BASS, AND DAN NIMMER, ON PIANO. WYNTON MARSALIS LEADS THE BAND AND PLAYS TRUMPET WITH MARCUS PRINTUP, SEAN JONES, AND RYAN KISOR VIBRAPHONIST STEVE NELSON AND DRUMMER JEFF "TAIN" WATTS APPEARED AS SPECIAL GUEST STARS, IN OUR CELEBRATION OF THEIR HOMETOWN -- PITTSBURGH.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER RADIO IS PRODUCED AT MURRAY STREET. THIS EDITION WAS WRITTEN BY ANDREW ROSENBLUM <Rosen-Blum). OUR PRODUCERS ARE DAVID GOREN AND STEVE RATHE WITH ALEXA LIM. RECORDINGS BY ROB MACUMBER AT XM STUDIOS IN ROSE HALL, AND AT PARK AVENUE POST.

CAT HENRY SUPERVISES OUR RECORDINGS AND BROADCASTS. THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER IS ADRIAN ELLIS. AND THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR IS WYNTON MARSALIS. IN FOR WYNTON I'M WYCLIFFE GORDON.. THANKS FOR JOINING US.