

ANDREA MITCHELL: Wynton Marsalis' name is synonymous with jazz, with pure musical genius. He is an acclaimed trumpet player, composer, band leader and educator. His latest project is a gospel celebration- a spectacular celebration of jazz and gospel which includes educational initiatives to engage high school age students and community choir members through a national tour. This is a big project. And joining me is a great man - nine-time Grammy award winning artist, Wynton Marsalis. Thank you very much.

I know you were at the Kennedy Center and I'm sorry, we were up here. But, hope to see you soon. How did you conceive of this and what is your mission?

WYNTON MARSALIS: Well I talked with the Reverend Calvin Butts up at Abyssinian. It was their 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He asked if I would write a Mass. And we got together and planned everything out. My mission is to uplift people with a unified conception of our spiritual music in the United States and create a variety of different emotions and feelings around that experience.

AM: how are you bringing high schools and young people into this? Is this an idiom that not all of them are as familiar with as generations change? Do they need to be brought back into the world of jazz and gospel?

WM: They need to be brought back into the world of America, and a sense of what unifies us as a nation. And jazz does that better than any other art form. The spiritual roots of this country they are expressed in gospel. But we always have to remember that Afro-American innovations are always in relation, in America, to Anglo-American roots. The root of the hymn Anglican hymn at the bottom of the gospel tradition, at the bottom of jazz are part of the wellspring of what makes the country what it is as a whole.

AM: While I have you here, I want to ask you about music education. While we talk about budget cuts and i see it in D.C. and in my own community but in other cities around the country, and I've spoken to Yo-Yo Ma about this when I've done Education Nation reports one of the first thing that goes in urban school districts is music education.

WM: Well, that's just a deep profound ignorance that has pervaded the country since the first depression, the Great Depression. For some reason, we don't have the ability to understand centrality of arts to the identity of a group of people. We smokescreen it with "urban". I've been around this country for 30 years and over 1,000 American schools. Our kids are malnourished when it comes to culture in all of the schools, black schools, white schools, or the integrated schools we have. It's just a failure to understand what culture is and what the arts are about and it prevents us from stepping into the 21st century. So, instead of leading the world in education, we're following and it's because we can't adjust our education system to be framed around what a democracy should have.

AM: And how do you express that, you did it brilliantly just now. How do we persuade political leaders and school boards and mayors and governors that this is an essential part of becoming an educated person?

WM: It's a matter of looking at historical precedent and thinking about our country. There has to be a greater degree of agitation; we have to get out and vote more. You know I love sports but sports is not going to pass as culture. I joke with my kids, I put the TV on: it's time for American culture. I love sports but we need to get an understanding of who we are as a nation. It's like I always liken it to bubonic plague in Europe. People are looking all around for what was wrong: they couldn't figure out it was rats. We look all around and talk about education, the question is not education, but what is the quality of that education. When we use the term communication, education, what are you communicating? So what

we're being taught is not going to teach us how to come to grips with the variegated nature of our nation – so of course other countries that have a much simpler populace will be able to advance in education. They don't have as complex and myriad problems as we have. We need another type of education that doesn't exist on this planet. We have to create that.

AM: Well, you are doing such a great service, the role you have played for years and years and now with this tour: the Abyssinian gospel tour and the celebration of Reverend Calvin Butts and the Abyssinian Baptist church. Thank you so much. It's great to see you again.

WM: Thank you very much. Thank you.