By KELEFA SANNEH

How do you pay tribute to the blues? How do you capture the music’s restless spirit, its bitter wit, its elusiveness, its raucous energy? The organizers of “Blowin’ the Blues Away: A Gala Evening Celebrating the Blues and Jazz” decided to trust the music. On Monday night the Apollo Theater held a concert that took its shape from the most vibrant expression of the blues today: the television documentary.

The concert, a benefit for Jazz at Lincoln Center, succeeded, thanks in large part to the star performer, Laurence Fishburne, whose smooth, rich voice evoked the great voice of narrators of old. If you sat back in your seat and closed your eyes, it was easy to feel as if you’d been transported... to your own sofa, in front of the television set.

The soundtrack was supplied by the Wynton Marsalis Septet, which deftly brought to life blues and blues-inflected pieces from throughout the century. The ensemble sounded especially impressive during a run through Ornette Coleman’s jagged, asymmetrical “Ramblin’,” bending the notes a little further to emphasize the blues connection.

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