

Michael Eure Show Transcript

Black Music Month – Lydia Salett Dudley

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Michael Eure

Hello, this is Michael Eure and I'd like to invite you to the Michael Eure show, featuring student hosts and very special guests talking about a variety of interesting topics. You can find us on the Eagle Stream YouTube channel.

Michael Eure

Good afternoon and welcome to Michael Eure show. And we really are very happy today that we're going to have Lydia Salett Dudley as our special guest. And before we talk with her. And by the way, my name is Michael Eure. In case you don't know. My first guest is, normally we'd have student hosts, but today we have a special alumni host. He was a host for us last year, Alphonzo Hedgepeth. And the last time I talked to him in person, we went to the North Carolina Legislative Black Caucus Foundation Scholarship banquet, and other activities, and he said he wanted to go to North Carolina Central and all ten HBCUs in North Carolina were featured at this event, and he got to meet the chancellor of North Carolina Central and other people. And now he is going into his junior year. So Alphonzo, tell us about your experience since you left Wake Tech, and whether you felt you were prepared.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

My experience has been awesome. I would definitely say Wake Tech has prepared me for Central and being at Central around, you know a bunch of hungry, individuals and people who look like me is just a blessing. I'm thankful for the opportunity, and I look forward to getting my degree, degree from here and hopefully graduate degree also.

Michael Eure

That sounds wonderful. And our second guest and I'm gonna let you ask a few questions for her along Alphonzo and I may come back, but Ms. Lydia Dudley is also a graduate of Central and she got her master's in jazz music so you might want to ask her a few questions.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

All right.

Michael Eure

You don't have any questions? Alphonzo?

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

Oh yes I do. Sorry. Oh, how was your experience at North Carolina Central?

Lydia Dudley

I can truly say, I had a wonderful two and a half years maybe three years at Central. And I went in as an older student, a much older student so I'll work during the day and try this muscle in doing my

classes and be around my work schedule. But I, the music family. The Jazz Department, under Dr. Ira Wiggins is an incredible family. I first met Professor Ed Polantonio, and then he encouraged me to come to Central and to try to get into the music program. So the people that I have met at a Central, I'm still in relationship with them today. I collaborate with them. Professor Leonora Helm Hammonds, I'm doing the online class with her right now, so it's like it was more than just taking classes and getting the grade there. It's like, I found a whole nother family, and really I've been ushered into a whole nother world, because you get to tap into everyone's experiences at university.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

That's awesome. When did you realize that that you want to do jazz, or study jazz?

Lydia Dudley

Wow, so kind of tell my age but actually I started taking jazz piano lessons when I was five. I took piano lessons for a while and then I took a couple classes at UNC Chapel Hill. To get the experience I needed to get. I had to go to North Carolina Central University, and just they had the entire package you know? It's like you enter into a whole setup and the staff. All the teachers there, they are very experienced so in any whichever direction you would like to go into you got like some type of mentor, one way or the other that can talk you through everything.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

So growing up, like was was jazz your first choice like growing up listen to music was that your first choice and when did you segue into jazz?

Lydia Dudley

Okay, so no jazz wasn't my first choice, and I did not grow up listening to jazz. As a matter of fact I grew up in a Christian home. My mother studied music she started studying music when I was a young child, and she studied classical music. So my brothers and I, we grew up listening to her practice her classical music, and she was also our church musician, which was small Baptist Church. So between the hymns and classical music, pretty much that's what I grew up hearing in the house. And so you know like all young people, you know, gravitate toward pop, rock, or whatever is popular at the time. But, um, I think the very first time I've been in North Carolina 20 years and I I searched out a piano teacher, and he asked me to play something for him. So I played something kind of a church song. And he said to me, he said "You have a slight jazz undertone and you're playing," and no one had ever told me that. And so I already knew I wanted to study music, but I just didn't know what the approach would be. And so once he said that, you know, kind of piqued my interest and I was like, you know, I just felt led to say, you know, maybe I could find a teacher, and see if this skill can be, you know, developed. And who knows where I can go with it? So my initial thing really was just to take some lessons to get acclimated with the music so I'm gonna say around 35 is when I got my first lesson and jazz piano lesson I guess I should say so that was my introduction. Then I took a jazz appreciation class. And the rest is history. And so I went to, my undergrad was in accounting. So I wound up having to take classes, you know, until I can get enough classes and then I went into the master's program over at Central.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

So I'm currently in the accounting program at North Carolina Central. That's pretty awesome. Um, so, uh, I want to ask you about like workshop for one. What about the workshop you did at Wake Tech? And also the, the performance, the performance, excuse me, at the night of museum?

Lydia Dudley

Okay, so at Wake Tech for Black History Month last year I came through, I think it was last year, or the year before last. And I was just going to do a songwriting session. And so I just kind of came up with a riff a couple of chords. And, you know, we were talking about freedom that was the subject. And so I just asked the participants. What is it that you think of when I say the word freedom and basically I want you to kind of develop a little short conversation and, wow, people have some wonderful things to say. And then I was just trying to get them to convert it to like a song. So I had some really good participation and I had some very good talent in the room. So that was really great and then I was asked to play this past January, at the museum downtown and, I actually brought my whole band. And we just played background music as the participants and visitors that came to the museum, we're checking out the music collection of the guests that you guys had. And we just jammed out we did our thing and all of the musicians in the group were either students at North Carolina Central University or they were graduates of North Carolina Central University so it's like I said it's just like a family and it's just a beautiful thing.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

So you mentioned in your group like is this is this a group that you formed or, like, how like was it the students or how did how did this happen?

Lydia Dudley

Well, first, when I was, I will get an opportunity to do a performance or a gig. I was just trying to get whoever I could play with me and whoever was available. But then after a while I said you know I need to really take the time and, uh, have people with me that we grow together. So I finally after, let's see, I think I played my first gig in 2009. And so finally around I'm gonna say about 2018 I finally begin to really settle into working with the same people. And so the name of the group is Jazz Xpressions with the "X," Jazz Xpressions, featuring Lydia Salett Dudley, and we have some recording to date. We've done a demo that include you know a couple of traditional standards that we've just arranged. And then we did a Christmas CD called "This is Christmas." And so we are constantly working on music to put it out so with the virus going around, you know, it's been kind of tough, you know to get together we haven't been able to get together so I'm really looking forward to the time when we can get together so this is a whole nother.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

So, um, how can someone get more information about you and how can they reach out to you to have you perform.

Lydia Dudley

They can reach me by this, you can Google Carolina Jazz Girl, or carolinajazzgirl.com, or they can contact me at 919-247-4630. And they can just, you know, check our availability and let us know exactly, you know, what it is that they would like and we'll tailor make our show, to fit their need.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

All right, and I have one more question before I asked you for a selection.

Lydia Dudley

Okay. Okay.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

What type of jazz do you play? I understand that there's like Big Band there's Mississippi and New Orleans type, what, what type of jazz do you play and what type of jazz do you enjoy playing? And-

Lydia Dudley

Well, I enjoy jazz standards. And the reason is because just the history behind jazz is so rich and rewarding. And when you think about the sacrifices that were made and how, you know, our composers and performers they really did not get the recognition that they deserve. And the fact that you can study Jazz at a university in the university setting, and really preserve that culture, and that inheritance, you know that's been passed down to our hands. And you know, each generation whenever you inherit something, you're in tune with what's going on currently. And so you modify your presentation before you pass it off, you modify it to your experiences so what you do is you take the foundational tools, and that's what we learned that's what I learned when I went to Central. I learned the foundational tools, and what jazz was and and the stories behind it, and then I interpret that. And then when I come with my angle and my ability. Then I'm going to spit out you know what's what is current to what's going on. And I think and each generation has that piece, whenever they do their own presentation so for me, you know I was born and bred in a church, you know, so I will always have like an underlying gospel theme or, you know, it's just the way I have my ears have been trained. So, um, you know, it's, I'ma say I do a mixture so I do original, original standards, but then I'm going to modify them and arrange them to my interpretation, so you know I can kind of be a sometimes I may come out with a groove or urban undertone. Or even a gospel undertone but pretty much. I really like it in this original state. So, well-

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

Go ahead.

Lydia Dudley

I was gonna say so one of the songs I did arranged by Billie Holiday was God bless the child. And so that's one of the songs that's on my website, and you know I've just done something a little different with it, because normally. I would sing it as a ballad, but I sort of brought the beat up just a little bit to give it more appeal more to my current audience.

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

Do you have a selection that you would like to play or do you need a minute?

Lydia Dudley

I'll perform God bless. A little bit of God bless the child for you.

[MUSIC]

Lydia Dudley

I think Michael is muted.

Michael Eure

Okay, thank you. Thank you for your patience. I'm unmuted now. Welcome back to the Michael Eure show and we have our special guests Lydia Dudley and Alphonzo Hedgepeth who Alphonzo was a graduate of Wake Tech, and he's now at North Carolina Central. Lydia is a noted jazz gospel musician in the Triangle area and she's also a graduate of North Carolina Central with her master's in Jazz Studies. So what we're going to do because our audience just loves good music, Lydia. Can you give us a little mini concert, maybe?

Lydia Dudley

Yeah, so.

Michael Eure

I'll get out the picture and let you do your thing. Thank you.

Lydia Dudley

So this next song is a beautiful song by Nina Simone, and it's very appropriate for today and what we're seeing in the news and out in the streets and the important events that are happening.

[MUSIC]

Michael Eure

All right, Lydia.

Lydia Dudley

Gotta unmute your mic again, Michael.

Michael Eure

Oh gosh, thank you Lydia. I was saying, "Good work." Good work. I know that you know, we're gonna have you perform another but we're going to ask a few other questions. You said that you were getting ready to work with some young people. This summer, tell us, how would, we talked about how people can get in touch with you, but if people wanted you to do particular workshops, because you've done some workshops for me in the past which were quite excellent. So give some descriptions of maybe some things you might be able to do with the public.

Lydia Dudley

Yeah. One of my biggest things that I love to do with youth is have them write their own music. I feel like, you know, as far as young people go sometimes when we get in these settings. We want them to be quiet we want them to listen to us as adults we want to guide them, which is all great. But there comes a point in time where their voice also needs to be heard. And I think that if we associate positive

things or say music that's motivational or music that you know is game changing music, you could take those positive, you know affirmation and ideas, and you could teach them some basics of songwriting, and you can just let them write. And kids they are so creative they come up with their own ideas and they help you to be creative. So generally, you know what I do, I do a couple things I've done a blue section session where with adults or with youth, where I'll sing the blues to them, explain the theory behind it, you know how you repeat phrases or how you answer phrases, and then I tell them to take their own experience, and write, according to the format of what I've given them. So, you know, okay kid's write about, "I like school or I don't like my brother," they can write about whatever they want, you know, and we turn it into a song, so this is the program that I'm doing this summer, we are going to do some recording and these are high risk youth, and they're under very restrictive, they're in a restrictive situation and but they still have a voice, and sometimes you can get frustrated or that anger come out of those outbursts, where if you just give them a creative way to really say how they feel, you know, and it could be in a respectful manner. I think it will lessen those outbursts, and that animosity that they build up toward the authority. So that's sort of my angle. When it comes to working with youth.

Michael Eure

Okay, well Alphonzo do you have any more questions? Yes or no?

Alphonzo Hedgepeth

Um, if you had, who's who's your, who's your favorite artist and who inspires you to play or make the music you play?

Lydia Dudley

Wow, I, boy, I like, I definitely like Sarah Vaughn, Sarah Vaughn Ella Fitzgerald and Ernestine Anderson even DD Bridgewater, and even our own Central professor, Dr. Lenora Helm Hammonds. I had a wonderful opportunity to participate with her. Nina Simone, they had a program they had a celebration back in 2018 in Tryon, North Carolina, where they declare her home a national treasure. And as a result of that event. They invited four local female artists to that event and I was one of the artists, and we got to perform and go through her home and just look at where she grew up, we got to meet her sister. And then we've been doing different things they've been doing different things every year and last year Professor Hammonds. She was the first woman to do a big band CD and release, and she had Nina Simone's daughter come to Raleigh, and she, her daughter did the concert and the big band performed behind them. So, we have local celebrities that I really look up to that people need to know more about. So Professor Lenora Helm Hammonds is definitely. And actually, the CD that she put together, I was able to play one of the songs to accompany the big band on that so it's just been an incredible experience working with different artists locally and not just, you know, far away of people who we see on TV, we're not in touch with so it's been great.

Michael Eure

Oh, we're getting ready to wind it down and I'm not even talking about Donald Byrd, you don't know him but he- We're going to do a quick commercial and then if you would take us out with a song, Lydia. I really appreciate it and you can choose gospel jazz whichever you choose.

Lydia Dudley

Okay.

Michael Eure

So Alphonzo and I are stepping away and it's all about you. Okay?

Lydia Dudley

All right. Okay. So in light of everything that's going on. I just want to dedicate this song to everyone that's concerned about the current events. And I want your heart to be encouraged, and keep hope alive.

[MUSIC]

Michael Eure

Well, thanks everyone for coming and join us next week, and Lydia you were wonderful we're gonna have you back again and Alphonzo, we're going to have you back again. As an alumni host. Next week we'll have Jamaican Funk, Funking for Jamaica with Tom Browne so tune in 12 o'clock next Thursday, and the week after that we'll have Ronitia Stewart and friends, and they're going to be doing historical duets. Marvin Gaye, Conitra Rails, and all that kind of stuff. So we're going to have some fun y'all come on back. Until next time, have a great day.

Lydia Dudley

Thank you so much.

Michael Eure

Thank you.