

Jubilant Junior Mance always pleases audience

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THERE'S always a lot of Jubilation when Junior Mance hits town.

The New York-based pianist loves to play the gospel-tinged Jubilation, the first song he composed, and the infectious piece always pleases the audience.

Mance, with bassist Earl May and drummer Jackie Williams, opened the fourth **Asper Foundation Jazz Performances** yesterday with two shows.

Ellington is always featured prominently in a Mance performance and the pianist turned in an exquisite solo rendition of Single Petal of a Rose that held the audience spellbound at the afternoon show. A trio version of C Jam Blues set more than few heads bobbing in the crowd.

That other member of jazz royalty, Count Basie, was given his due with Splanky, a tune that composer/arranger Neal Hefti wrote using one of Basie's nicknames for a title. May, an excellent bassist, turned in a tasty solo on the number while Mance proved how a little comping can go a long way.

Drummer Williams is the soul of taste, a skilled musician who knows how to alternately support the pianist and drive a tune. And he does it without grand displays of flash, except, of course, on the tune Broadway, designed as a showcase for the percussionist who pleased the audience by playing his kit with his hands at one point in a lengthy solo.

This trio, which performed two years ago in the Asper series, has such an easy rapport backed by friendship and a lot of hours onstage together making fine music.

Mance performed a tantalizingly slow and bluesy Willow Weep For Me before turning to the Benny Golson composition, Whisper Not, which featured gorgeous piano and ensemble playing.

The pianist turned his Hand to a Johnny Mandel ballad, Emily, for a change of pace and for some sublime playing.

Mance loves to play the blues, and does it so well, and a taste of the roadhouse can find its way into anything he plays.

The Mance trio, as well as being the first act at this season's jazz series, became the first group to be filmed for Cool TV, CanWest Global's cable jazz station that is expected to be available in the spring.

CanWest chairman Izzy Asper, the man behind the jazz series, said they hoped to get two hours of performance film from yesterday's shows.

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