



## Kronos Quartet Glorious Mahalia

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GRAMMY-winning Kronos Quartet presents *Glorious Mahalia*, a new album that pays tribute to the life and legacy of legendary gospel singer and activist Mahalia Jackson, including her contributions to the civil rights movement. It is their third album on Smithsonian Folkways following *Long Time Passing*, their tribute to Pete Seeger, and *Mỹ Lai*, which reckoned with US military actions during the Vietnam War.

*Glorious Mahalia* is an homage to Jackson's work, music, and the friendships she forged throughout her career. It features archival audio from two moments in Jackson's history: a 1957 live performance of gospel and spirituals in her adopted hometown of Chicago, and a 1963 interview with her friend, the radio broadcaster Studs Terkel, which covers a wide range of topics including Jackson's experiences of working in the South, the continuing hardships she faced as a Black woman, and the civil rights efforts of her friend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Across eleven tracks, *Glorious Mahalia* sets these and other new and archival recordings to new compositions. The first movement of the album (also called *Glorious Mahalia*), composed by Stacy Garrop, features the interview excerpts with Terkel. The second, *Peace Be Till*, composed by Zachary James Watkins, includes audio from an interview that was recorded for the album with King's speechwriter and lawyer Clarence B. Jones. And in between, listeners are treated to a newly arranged version of "God Shall Wipe All Tears Away," with Jackson's powerful vocals set to new music by multi-instrumentalist and composer Jacob Garchik. These performances capture Jackson's preternatural ability to take her audiences to emotional highs and lows with her voice, as well as her commitment to speaking out about injustices inflicted upon Black people in America.

The initial seed for *Glorious Mahalia* came to Kronos leader David Harrington while he was watching C-SPAN one night in 2013. Jones was on air recounting the story of how he wrote the first draft of what would become the famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Ahead of the March on Washington in 1963, King had tasked Jones with drafting a speech in King's voice. "I was struck by that," Harrington said, remarking that Jones "could hear Dr. King's voice and wrote what he heard. That's what composers do! They hear music inside of themselves and find a way to communicate those sounds to the rest of us."

That late-night thought from over a decade ago became a full-fledged album concept when Harrington learned more about the evolution of what became the "I Have A Dream" speech. King started the speech by sticking mostly to what Jones had written. But midway through, Jackson, a friend of King's and a performer at that same rally, called out from her position behind him: "Tell them about the dream, Martin!" *Glorious Mahalia* honors that moment in history, and celebrates the woman behind it. Along with composer Zachary James Watkins,

Kronos approached Jones to record him speaking about his, Jackson's, and King's work in the civil rights movement for the composition *Peace Be Till*. On the day of the recording session, Jones not only shared his story about the "I Have a Dream" speech, but also read from his original copy of the "Letter from Birmingham Jail." In fact, as King's lawyer, it was Jones who took the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" out of King's jail cell to help get it published. Hearing it all directly from the source helped Harrington hone in on a central theme of the album: "We should be listening to our friends, and we all should be listening to what's going on in our society."

Glorious Mahalia, the album's first suite of five tracks, centers on the remarkable friendship and conversations between Jackson and broadcaster and Pulitzer prize-winning author Studs Terkel. Jackson and Terkel spoke regularly from when they first met in the 1940s until death in 1972. In this suite, Chicago-based composer Stacy Garrop incorporates tape of Jackson singing and speaking with Terkel, illuminating the sheer emotional power of Jackson's voice and presenting anew the stories of Jackson's life as a Black woman only two generations removed from slavery. On "Stave in the ground," the piece's second movement, Jackson describes her time working as a nanny in her native New Orleans, where the parents of the rich white children who loved her protested to keep schools segregated. On her haunting rendition of "Sometime I Feel Like a Motherless Child," Jackson's voice dips and soars in fervent relation to each warbling string of viola, cello, and violin. Set to music that ranges from sharp and sinister to rich and divine, the composition is Kronos Quartet's endeavor to play alongside Jackson the way they would have if she were still alive today.

The second part of *Glorious Mahalia* is a new arrangement of "God Shall Wipe All Tears Away" by Jacob Garchik. The performance vibrates with hopefulness, using heavy metal practice mutes, an octave divider on the cello, and other effects to help Kronos Quartet approximate the harmonium in the original song. The song was performed frequently by Jackson early in her career. The album's third and final section is entitled *Peace Be Till*. Composed by Zachary James Watkins, the acclaimed Oakland-based African American composer, musician, engineer, educator and member of experimental duo *Black Spirituals*, *Peace Be Till* juxtaposes Jones describing his involvement in the civil rights movement with him reading King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." A composition "sound collage" inspired by the complex, subjective concept of "high vibration resonance," Watkins described the five movements: "'Peace Be Till' is about the legacy of America's civil rights movement, the important role artists play in critical social justice movements, and the necessary dreams today." Speaking of the audio interview, Watkins adds: "These recorded stories became my blueprint for this composition. [And] the role of Mahalia in our human story is equally substantial."

Taken together, the album's three sections relate Jackson's life to our contemporary moment, shining a light on the connection between the events she lived through and the climate today.

#### **Band member**

<b>David Harrington</b>	violin
<b>Hank Dutt</b>	viola
<b>John Sherba</b>	violin
<b>Sunny Yang</b>	cello

#### **Producer**

**Kronos Quartet**  
**Reshena Liao**

## Mixer

Kronos Quartet  
Scott Fraser

## aufnahmestudio

Scott Fraser at 25th Street  
Recording, Oakland,  
California

## Mastering

Scott Fraser

## Phonotrphy

William "Popsie" Randolph

## Tracklist

- |     |   |       |
|-----|---|-------|
| 1.  | Glorious Mahalia: I. Hold on<br>M: Stacy Garrop   T: Mahalia Jackson                                      | 03:03 |
| 2.  | Glorious Mahalia: II. Stave in the ground<br>M: Stacy Garrop   T: Mahalia Jackson                         | 06:47 |
| 3.  | Glorious Mahalia: III. Are you being treated right<br>M: Stacy Garrop   T: Mahalia Jackson                | 04:48 |
| 4.  | Glorious Mahalia: IV. Sometime I feel like a motherless child<br>M: Stacy Garrop   T: Mahalia Jackson     | 03:33 |
| 5.  | Glorious Mahalia: V. This world will make you think<br>M: Stacy Garrop   T: Mahalia Jackson               | 03:12 |
| 6.  | God Shall Wipe All Tears Away<br>M: Antonio Haskell   | 03:04 |
| 7.  | Peace Be Till: I. Doors of Justice / Black Thread<br>M: Zachary James Watkins   T: Martin Luther King Jr. | 06:23 |
| 8.  | Peace Be Till: II. Protest<br>M: Zachary James Watkins   T: Martin Luther King Jr.                        | 04:16 |
| 9.  | Peace Be Till: III. Copter<br>M: Zachary James Watkins   T: Martin Luther King Jr.                        | 03:08 |
| 10. | Peace Be Till: IV. Symphony of Social Justice<br>M: Zachary James Watkins   T: Martin Luther King Jr.     | 07:55 |
| 11. | Peace Be Till: V. Tell 'em about the dream<br>M: Zachary James Watkins   T: Martin Luther King Jr.        | 04:34 |