

10/23/2022

For Mahalia,

My Grandmother told me the other day that she heard you sing live in concert when she was 6 or 7 years old. I was blown away with excitement! I wondered what that felt like, maybe it was the closest thing to hearing the voice of God. I can only imagine what she must have experienced. Maybe hearing your voice ceases to be about like and dislike, but powerful enough to force acknowledgement.

It is important to be seen rather than liked or disliked because a presence moves past subjectivity. And needless to say, your voice was the earthquake that shook my grandmother's generation. She was born in the '30s and during those times you learned to lean on faith because God reigned supreme, and in many ways still does.

I could see in her eyes and hear from her voice that you had a deep impact on her life. Mahalia, you served as model for folks like her on how one should live their life, and for one primary purpose: "To serve God". The times I would hear Grandma sing, either at church or around her house, she would often sing the classic songs you made popular such as "Precious Lord," "His Eye Is On the Sparrow" and "How I Got Over." Based on how she would interpret the songs I could tell you inspired her, she would ad-lib the songs much in the way you did. She would ad-lib, she would improvise, while keeping the scriptural integrity - the essence - of the original text of the piece.

Mahalia, I became enamored with you from the day my Grandmother told me about you, because everything grandma mentions must be special. Grandmothers hold a special place in the hearts and minds of children. You remember everything about grandma - what she cooked, wore, her words of wisdom, what her house smelled like... Ms. Mahalia Jackson, your name alone will forever serve as a reminder of the mutual love my grandmother and I shared for Music, for you and your music especially, and the countless times her and I would talk about your impact and jam to your sounds. Thank You!

With Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Brandon Lewis". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

James Brandon Lewis

Thanks to My Family & Friends ... special thanks to TAO Forms for providing the platform ... thanks to Steven Joerg, Bill Mazza, Whit Dickey ... and The Band William Parker, Kirk Knuffke, Chris Hoffman, Chad Taylor - JBL



Red Lily Quintet is James Brandon Lewis - tenor saxophone, Kirk Knuffke - cornet, Chris Hoffman - cello, William Parker - bass, Chad Taylor - drums, tambourine

All compositions Trad., Arr. by James Brandon Lewis

Except "Sparrow" medley, comprised of: "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" Comp. by Charles H. Gabriel/Civilla D. Martin and "Even The Sparrow" Comp. by James Brandon Lewis, Arr. by James Brandon Lewis

And "Precious Lord" Comp. by Thomas A. Dorsey, Arr. by James Brandon Lewis

All arrangements and "Even The Sparrow" (c) James Brandon Lewis Music (ASCAP)

Produced by James Brandon Lewis

Recorded, Mixed & Mastered by Paul Wickliffe at Skyline Studios, NJ

Production Assistance by Steven Joerg

Executive Producer: Whit Dickey

Art & Design by William Mazza Studio

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