

Spiritual Gifts

A Professional Black Sacred Music Repertory Ensemble, Inc.



**2015 European Concert Tour
Souvenir Program Booklet**



Acknowledgments: Past & Present

Grateful acknowledgment is hereby given to the many relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers, pastors, church members, and others who have supported our work over the years. Thank you very much!

Black Aspirations Week Issue

The Vindicator
April 25, 1984 7

The spirit of joy & love was alive as the Black Aspirations Gospel Choir spiritually uplifted its audience.



Kevin Gibaldi, assistant director of the choir raises his hands up in praise as the Choir gave an audience a pleasing show.



Reginnia Simpson, originator of the Aspirations Week Choir does a solo performance during the second half of the Choirs performance.

Gospel Music brings Church to CSU

by Reginnia Simpson

Gospel music has to be one of the most beautiful cultural expressions to come out of the Black experience in America. The driving rhythms and heartfelt lyrics have rocked our churches for over 50 years. On Good Friday the Black Aspirations Gospel Choir was presented in concert. At some points in the performance, Cleveland State's University Center Auditorium rocked like the sanctuary of a spirit-filled church.

Lisa Williams, a freshman at CSU, brought members of the audience to their feet as she led the choir in singing *God Said It, I Believe It*.

Celecia Martin, a student in the music department, sang a very moving rendition of *He Would Not Come Down*. The

lyrics, "He decided to die just to save me," were being sung as her father, the Reverend General E. Martin, of the Phillipi Missionary Baptist Church, extended the invitation to Christian Discipleship.

Other soloists on the program were Janet Harlie, an alumna of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Debra Nelson of the Elim Chapel, Charlie Mae Humphrey of the Grace Missionary Baptist Church, Michael Phillips of the United Missionary Baptist Church, Cheryl Bohanan of Good Shepard Baptist Church, and Reginnia Simpson, CSU staff member and student.

Minister Nathaniel Williams, of the United Missionary Baptist Church, the musical director for the program, provided piano accompaniment for the group and Kevin Gibaldi, a student in

the College of Arts and Sciences, served as assistant director.

The program included songs such as the traditional Negro Spiritual *Ride on King Jesus*, as well as more contemporary arrangements like *It Is Well With My Soul*, which was performed as a flute solo by Beverly Moore.

The special guest and master of ceremonies for the evening was Jerry Thomas, owner of the Christian Music Centre. Thomas had also served as an advisor to the group during the planning of the program.

That these 26 young adults were able to carry out their program plans is proof that cooperation between the university, business, and religious community can be achieved.



Celecia Martin, as she captivates the audience with her singing.



Beverly Moore plays the song, *It is Well With My Soul*, during the Choir intermission. Nervous prior to the performance, Moore was well received by the audience.

Photos by Smith

1984, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio, USA



2008, Trinity Cathedral, Cleveland, Ohio, USA



2013, Severance Hall, Cleveland, Ohio, USA



2014, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, USA



Spiritual Gifts



2015, Gethsemane Baptist Church, Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Spiritual Gifts, a Professional Black Sacred Music Repertory Ensemble, Inc., is a 501 (c)(3) arts education organization. Each member brings a wealth of talent, training, and performance experience to their work. Among the singers are several individuals who trace the history of their public performances with the group to a 1984 *Black Aspirations Week* Gospel Choir concert at Cleveland State University (CSU). CSU alumnus Nathaniel Williams Jr. served as Pianist and Director for that choir, the *Messengers of Joy* (a subsequent student community ensemble), the first *Spiritual Gifts Gospel Choir* (founded in 1994), and an *Evening of Gospel Music* at Severance Hall in 2003. Kevin Gibaldi, another CSU alumnus, served as Associate Director for both the *Black Aspirations Week* Gospel Choir and the *Messengers of Joy*. In 2009, David Manning Thomas directed the *Spiritual Gifts Ensemble* in its Community Open House performance at Severance Hall, and in December 2011, Beverly Brown served as Choir Master for the group's "Colors of Christmas" performance with the Cleveland Orchestra. Spiritual Gifts was also part of the September 2012 "Harvest Time" Concert at the Mount Zion Church of Oakwood Village, Ohio. In January 2013, the choir returned to Severance Hall for a second Community Open House performance, with Pastor Nathaniel Williams, Jr. serving as Music Director. In September 2013, *Spiritual Gifts* presented a concert featuring Duke Ellington's jazz, gospel, and other styles of sacred music at Trinity Cathedral. In 2015, Maestro Glenn A. Brackens is serving as Artistic Director for the group's first European tour.

The numerous churches represented provide evidence of the choir's ecumenism. Individual singers have also performed in concert settings and/or recorded with numerous school, community, and professional groups. For many years, *Spiritual Gifts* worked in collaboration with CSU's Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD) and the Praying Grounds Oral History Project, founded by Dr. Regennia N. Williams, who now serves as the organization's Executive Director. The current officers and board members are: Lana J. Miller (President), Carlisa R. Burge (Vice President), Dr. Ernestine Davis (Treasurer), Kevin Gibaldi (Secretary), James Catledge (Trustee), Lois Coleman (Trustee), Methia Martin Weems (Trustee).

In the Spirit of the Original Wings Over Jordan Choir, Touring and Singing in Vienna, Austria and Paris, France in December 2015!



Spiritual Gifts



PROGRAM

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| FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN | Words and Music by Gary Hines |
| I KNOW THE LORD'S LAID HIS HANDS ON ME | Traditional Spiritual Arr. by Moses Hogan |
| EV'RY TIME I FEEL THE SPIRIT | Arr. by William L. Dawson |
| AIN'T HE GOOD, CHILDREN | Words and Music by Damien D. Price |
| ANOINT US | Words and Music by Glenn Burleigh |
| I'M GONNA RISE (Just Wait Till Sunday Morning) | Words and Music by Glenn Burleigh |
| NEVER GONNA WALK THIS JOURNEY ALONE | Words by John Parker (ASCAP) Music by: Greg Gilpin (ASCAP) |
| AMEN | Words and Music by Jester Hairston |
| IN BRIGHT MANSIONS ABOVE | Arr. by: Roland M. Carter |
| GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD | Words and Music by Drene Ivy |
| I CAN'T THANK HIM ENOUGH | Words and Music by Brenda E. Johnson |
| IL EST NÉ, LE DIVIN ENFANT | Words: Traditional French Music: Traditional French |
| O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL | Latin hymn, 18 th Century Trans. By: Frederick Oakely Arr. by: Glenn A. Brackens |
| O HOLY NIGHT | By Adolphe Adam Arr. by Glenn A. Brackens |
| I LOVE THE LORD | Words and Music by Richard Smallwood |
| SWING LOW SWEET CHARIOT | Arr. by Barbara Collier |
| JESUS, WHAT A WONDERFUL CHILD | Arr. by Glenn A. Brackens |

Members of the 2015 Spiritual Gifts Touring Ensemble are identified with an asterisk. *



Maestro Glenn A. Brackens, Artistic Director*

For more than 30 years, Maestro Glenn A. Brackens has served as master musician, composer, arranger, teacher and mentor. A native Clevelander, he holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, and a Master's Degree in Education from Cambridge University in Boston, Massachusetts. He has also completed post-graduate coursework from Cambridge University, where he was appointed Dean of Students for the summer evening programs. Maestro Brackens has also served on the faculty of the Rev. James Cleveland's Gospel Music Workshop of America.

Maestro Brackens strives daily for excellence. Very early in life he was inspired by the loving nature of his unailing "Grandma Nanna," Mrs. Persie Ford, and he attributes his musical abilities to her. Mrs. Ford, an outstanding singer in her own right, was one of the original members of the *Wings Over Jordan Choir*. He grew up in the historic Gethsemane Baptist Church, where the Rev. Glenn T. Settle founded the *Wings Over Jordan* in the 1930's. It was at Gethsemane that Maestro Brackens launched his career in music ministry.

Since those formative years, Maestro Brackens has shared his gifts in the music ministries of numerous other churches, including Starlight Baptist Church, Bethany Baptist Church, and Imani Temple Ministries. He is also the founder-director of the acclaimed *Wings Over Jordan Celebration Choir*. His artistic versatility is further evidenced by the fact that he has served as music director for productions at Karamu House, the Cleveland Art Theater, the Paul Robeson Theatre in Buffalo, New York, and many other venues.

Maestro Brackens' other mentors have included Margaret Ford-Taylor, playwright, educator, and former director of the Karamu House Theater; educator and former president of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Shirley Kilpatrick, entrepreneur and educator Dr. Booker T. Tall; musician, educator, and choral director Dr. William Woods; the Rev. Dr. Albert T. Rowan, the Rev. Dr. Rodney Thomas, and Pastor Edward Small.

For nearly two decades, he taught music in public schools. He was a charter faculty member of the Cleveland School of the Arts, where he served as music specialist under the leadership of Winifred Albert, the school's founder. Most recently he served on the faculty of the Wiley Middle School in Cleveland Heights, directing both local performances and concert tours with the award-winning Wiley Middle School Challenge Choir. Many of his former students have gone on to have successful careers as professional artists, including vocalist, and pianist Geoffrey Golden ("Sunday's Best" winner), vocalist Antoine Dunn, choreographer Terrance Green, and Richard Morrison, set designer for Cleveland's historic Karamu House, home of the nation's oldest African American theatre.

Maestro Brackens has recorded several CD's, including "Step Chillun" – which is based on his research on the music of the Gullah Islands and the work of Bessie Jones; "Strengthened Within," and "A Joyous Christmas Celebration." He also composed music scores for the productions of: "For the Love of the Game" and "Double Nickel Blues," a work commissioned through Cleveland State University.

His motto is "I just want to live so God can use me victoriously in this land and around the world." Having recently released a Christmas CD, Maestro Glenn A. Brackens looks forward to continuing to work in the Spirit of the original *Wings Over Jordan Choir*, by leading **Spiritual Gifts: A Black Sacred Music Repertory Ensemble** in its first educational, concert, and, cultural tour of Vienna, Austria and Paris, France during the 2015 Advent season.





Regennia N. Williams, PhD, Executive Director/Alto*

Dr. Regennia N. Williams is the founder and Executive Director of *Spiritual Gifts*, “Praying Grounds, African American Faith Communities: A Documentary and Oral History” project, and the Initiative for the Study of Religion and Spirituality in the History of Africa and the Diaspora (RASHAD). She holds undergraduate degrees in Urban Studies and Liberal Studies and a Master’s Degree in Public Administration, all of which were earned at Cleveland State University. She also holds a Doctorate in Social History and Policy from Case Western Reserve University. In 2010, she was a Visiting Fulbright Scholar at Nigeria’s Obafemi Awolowo University. Other research-related travels have taken her to Canada, Austria, China, France, and South Africa. In 2013, she conceived and produced “Come Sunday @ 70: The Place of Duke Ellington’s Sacred Jazz in World History and Culture, c. 1943-2013,” a project that included scholarly presentations and performing arts activities. From 1992 until 2015, she was a faculty member at Cleveland State University. Today, she is an independent scholar, consultant, and owner of *RMW Business Enterprises*. Her current research is related to school desegregation, Black sacred music in world history and culture, and Billy Strayhorn, who is the subject of “Strayhorn 2.0,” a 2017 international symposium that she is planning with CSU’s Dr. Michael Baumgartner. Williams is a member of the *Oral History Association*, the *Association for the Study of African American Life and History*, the *American Academy of Religion*, the *Western Reserve Historical Society*, and East View United Church of Christ. A mother of two and grandmother of two, her favorite scripture is Psalm 3:3, “But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.”



Robert L. Brown, Bass*

Robert L. Brown’s introduction to and affiliation with classical, organized music began when, as a nine-year-old fourth grader, his school participated in the “Youth Key Concerts” produced by the Cleveland Orchestra. Every spring for the next two years he was captivated by the performances at Severance Hall. Richard Wagner was the featured composer for his first visit, and there was heavy emphasis on the brass section. He knew then that he had to be involved with music. He started playing the Baritone Horn in junior high and then changed to the French Horn--eventually playing both instruments from grades 7th through 12th. He was a member of Cleveland’s “All City Band” and the Ohio State University’s (OSU) 300- member “All Boys Band” which played for two weeks at the Ohio State Fair. He auditioned for and received a music scholarship from Central State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Music Education. After teaching instrumental music for six years, he became a Licensed Professional Guidance Counselor, continuing his educational journey and receiving a Master of Arts Degree from Case Western Reserve University (on a full-time fellowship) and Cleveland State University. He also obtained state certification in the areas of School Administration, Supervision, and Vocational Counseling. Brown was employed for 39 years in the Cleveland Public Schools. Currently, he is an active Counselor/Student Advisor at Cuyahoga Community College.

Brown’s professional involvement includes a lifetime membership with Central State University’s Alumni Chapter of Cleveland, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and “One Hundred Black Men” of Greater Cleveland, Ohio. He also has active memberships in four choral ensembles: Pan Hellenic Choir of Greater Cleveland, Gethsemane Baptist Church Choirs, Wings Over Jordan Celebration Chorus, and the Spiritual Gifts Choir. He has performed with several community orchestras and he plays with the Tri-C Eastern Campus Orchestra.





Theresa Ann Bumpers, Alto

Theresa Ann Bumpers was a primary writer for the final report on the *Ford Foundation Grant* to the Cleveland Public Schools for an initiative to promote interest in Science and Mathematics. She is also one of a five-member panel to design new regulations for the schools' bilingual program and a participant in implementing the new standards for Music Education in the Cleveland Public School System. Additionally, she has served as an educator in the Cleveland Public School System during the following years: 1965-1969, 1978-1993, and 1996-2003. Her musical training includes various schools and churches. A choral and orchestral participant and soloist from 1955 – present, she studied piano and music theory at Phillis Wheatley from 1949-1961, and has been a Traditional Gospel Apprentice with Helen Turner Thompson (Master Teacher) from 2002-present.



Carlisa Ruth Burge, Soprano*

Carlisa Ruth Burge is a native Clevelander. Although she loves to travel and meet new people, she continues to reside in the Cleveland area. Carlisa is the second and much anticipated child of Eulilla and Charles Burge. She received her primary and secondary education in the Cleveland Public Schools. As an honor student she competed in scholarly competitions and was active in extracurricular activities including being a teen mentor and educator with T.E.A.M.S (Teaching and Educating against the Misuse of Substances) and in the All-City Music Chorus.

Carlisa discovered her passion for helping people when she began her career at the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center (CRCC) in 1998. Through her work at the CRCC she learned that her calling in life dwelt in assisting others. As a result, she ultimately decided to pursue a career in higher education to assist students throughout their educational journey.

Carlisa's love of music began as a child when she would fondly listen to her maternal grandmother, Mrs. Georgia Porter, sing some of her favorite songs around her home. Through her grandmother she learned that music could have a profound influence in a person's everyday life. Due to Carlisa's ongoing love of music she has sung with a variety of choruses, including the Martin Luther King Celebration Chorus that performs annually at Severance Hall in Cleveland, Ohio. The chorus is accompanied by the world renowned Cleveland Orchestra. In addition to singing Carlisa has taken private piano lessons, which she plans to resume in the near future.

Her spiritual guidance began at Pilgrim Baptist Church under the pastorate of Rev. Will H. Brown and Rev. Willie J. Colbert, III respectively and she has recently joined Philippi Missionary Baptist Church where Rev. Kevin Byous, Jr. is the pastor. One of her favorite scriptures is 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." This is one of her favorite scriptures because it reiterates that if you believe in God you should not live in fear but in reassurance that He is in control.

Carlisa is a 12-year employee of Cleveland State University (CSU) where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in Communications with a minor in Black Studies in 2008. She is currently completing her Masters of Education in Adult Learning and Development at CSU, and her anticipated graduation day is May 13, 2016. One of Carlisa's philosophies is "Life is a Song, Sing it!"





Ernestine Marie Davis, EdD, Alto*

“Oh to be kept by Jesus: Lord at thy feet I fall: I would be nothing, nothing, nothing, Thou shalt be my all and all.” These are the words that have helped Dr. Davis walk this Christian journey. She is the seventh of seven children in her family. As a child of God, she is a member of Greater Abyssinia Baptist Church (GABC) where she serves as Coordinator of the GABC Food Pantry, attends Sunday school, prayer meeting, bible study and sings in many choirs: Sanctuary, Women’s Day, Celestial Mass choir, Wings Over Jordan Celebration Chorus, and Spiritual Gifts Choir.

Dr. Davis has been in school for most of her adult life and through much prayer, patience and perseverance she has obtained an Associate of Arts degree from Cuyahoga Community College; Bachelor of Science in Education from Kent State University; Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Ashland University; and was the first African-American to receive a Doctorate of Education from the College of Education at Ashland University.

She is just another soldier on the battlefield for the Lord, fighting, advocating and educating others about Jesus Christ and people with disabilities. Dr. Davis works as an intervention specialist in East Cleveland City Schools. She also labors in the vineyard as Chairperson of the Northeast Ohio Education Association’s Elections Committee and is a newly appointed member of the Ohio Education Association Representative Assembly Planning Committee. One of her favorite scriptures is Philippians 2:14, “Do ALL things without murmuring and disputing,” because sometimes she has to remind herself of this. So, each day she talks with God and asks Him to, “Keep my heart and keep my hand, Keep my soul I pray. Keep my tongue to speak thy praise, Keep me all the day.”



Dr. Robyn L. Davis, Soprano

For more than 20 plus years, Dr. Robyn L. Davis has served as an elementary teacher, an intervention specialist for the visually impaired, a mentor, and consultant for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. A native of Cleveland Ohio, she holds a Bachelors of Education Degree in Elementary Education from Central State University in Ohio, a Master’s Degree in Education from Cambridge College, an Associate of Biblical Studies from Christian Leadership University, A Diploma of Biblical Studies from All Nations International School of Ministry, and a Doctorate of Education Degree in Organizational Leadership and Development from Grand Canyon University.

Dr. Davis strives daily to “Seek ye first The Kingdom of God.” Through prayer, she realized early in life that she had a purpose that consisted of reaching, teaching and encouraging people, and part of her process of reaching people was through her ability to teach, and encourage through the gift of singing. Dr. Davis began singing with her choir at Second Metropolitan Baptist Church at the age of seven. Dr. Davis was also a dynamic force with the choir at John Marshall High School, under the direction of music educator Mr. Willie Dykes. She received a scholarship to sing with the Central State University Choir under the direction of Dr. William Henry Caldwell. Upon graduation, Dr. Davis continued to use her voice to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ through worship and praise, while incorporating her gift of singing in order to reach, teach, and encourage people.





Dwight Fleming, Tenor

Dwight Fleming is a native Clevelander. He has performed with numerous artistic companies, including Cleveland Opera, Opera Circle, Cleveland Orchestra Blossom Festival Chorus, the Shaker Heights Civic Orchestra, the Mount Pleasant Symphony, and the Duffy Liturgical Arts Company. His performances include the following Operas: “Turandot,” “Cavalleria Rusticana,” Rigoletto,” and “Norma.” With training in classical piano, he has performed with the Amethyst Ensemble Trio, which he created. Dwight also enjoys Broadway music and the Spirituals of the Black American experience. He also shares his love for church music and choral directing at Cleveland’s North Presbyterian Church.



Kevin Gibaldi, Tenor*

A graduate of Cleveland State University with a Bachelor’s Degree in Music Education and a Master’s Degree in Educational Administration, Kevin is presently completing a Doctoral Degree in K-12 Organizational Leadership at Grand Canyon University. For the past 25 years he has served as an educator for the Bedford City School District, Bedford Ohio. In this capacity he has served as Music Teacher, middle school Assistant Principal, and Assistant Principal and Principal to the high school respectively.

Kevin’s love for music has afforded him the opportunity to sing abroad with the Cleveland State University Concert Choir. He has served as the Assistant Minister of Music at Bethany Baptist Church under the leadership of Maestro Glenn Brackens. Presently Kevin serves as a director/soloist at Gethsemane Baptist Church. Additionally, he is the Assistant Director of the *Wings Over Jordan* Celebration Choir. He also serves as Vice-President of the “Wings Over Jordan Alumni and Friend,” Inc. and Secretary of the Spiritual Gifts Choir. Kevin has performed in several theater productions at Karamu House under the leadership of Maestro Glenn Brackens and the directorship of Margaret Ford-Taylor. Other theater opportunities include Cleveland State University and Kent State University. Kevin’s recording experience includes background vocals on “Step Chillun,” recorded by Maestro Brackens, and the lead vocal on “A Joyous Christmas Celebration” by Maestro Brackens. He has also record a self-titled CD “Kevin Gibaldi,” Nashville Tennessee.





Brandi Hancock, Soprano*

A native of Cleveland, Ohio Min. Brandi Q. Hancock holds a Bachelor's Degree in both Theatre and Music from Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. She appeared as the character Alice in the movie "Freedom Song," starring Danny Glover and Loretta Devine. Her singing credits include The National Association of Negro Musicians Opening Gala Concert Soloist, Videmus Festival and African American Art Song Soloist, and Spoleto Festival Soloist. She has sung for artists and conductors such as Moses Hogan, Roland Carter, Nathan Carter, V. Michael McKay, and Carol King. In 2012 She appeared with the North Carolina Symphony in her solo Soprano debut in "T'was the Night before Christmas," where she premiered "The Kwanzaa Song"

composed by William Henry Curry. The following January, she appeared with the Durham Symphony in celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Brandi was the director of the outdoor drama "The Amistad Saga: Reflections," produced by the African American Cultural Complex in Raleigh, North Carolina. She wrote, produced, directed and starred in two musicals - "Evolution of a Black Woman," while her one-woman show "I'm Gonna Sing Out" was featured in The Sensoria Festival in Charlotte, North Carolina. Ms. Hancock is the vocalist for the North Carolina Jazz Ensemble. She is also the recipient of the National Pan-Hellenic Council's Gus Witherspoon Award in the area of Musical Excellence. Brandi currently resides in Charlotte, NC where she is completing her debut CD and operating QueBee Cakes a home-based bakery business.



Lillie B. Harris, Soprano*

Lillie B. Harris is a native of Alabama and a graduate of Stillman College, in Tuscaloosa Alabama, with a degree in Early Childhood Education and Secondary Education. She has served as an educator in the Cleveland Public School System. Additionally, she owned two daycare centers for 30 years, and one of these centers provided 24-hour service. She joined Gethsemane Baptist Church in 1950, started singing with the Youth Choir, and later joined the Celestial Choir. Since joining Gethsemane, she has served in numerous capacities. She enjoys singing with the *Wings Over Jordan* Celebration Choir and *Spiritual Gifts*. Here motto is: "If I can help somebody as I travel this way, then my living will not be in vain!"





Drene Ivy, Accompanist/Bass/Composer

Drene began playing the piano at the age of four and began formal training in piano at the age of five. By the age of eight, he was skillfully playing compositions by Beethoven. He studied classical piano, jazz, and theory at the Cleveland Music School Settlement (CMSS), and he studied classical piano at the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM). While still a junior in high school, he was awarded a scholarship to Durham College in North Carolina, where he studied percussion and composition and was a student in the *Eastern Music Festival Youth Orchestra*, in which he skillfully played the timpani (kettledrum). He also studied music at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio.

Drene served as musician for many years at his home church, Pentecostal Church of Christ, where his gifted musical skills were honed. His pastor, the late Bishop Charles Watkins, inspired him to pursue his talent in the contemporary music realm. Drene was an instructor of jazz piano, composition and theory in Houston Texas as well as instructor of Jazz History at Cleveland State University.

Drene has composed over 200 songs. His compositions are comprised of a wide range of genres, including inspirational, gospel, classical, easy listening, jazz and Latin jazz. His music is published under G Sharp Sonata. His composition "Worship The King" was selected for presentation at the Gospel Music Workshop of America in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is also an accomplished playwright. His current work, "Saved" is a musical drama for the Easter season spanning the era from Biblical antiquity to modern times. Since 2004, Drene has appeared as guest clinician at the famed Edwin Hawkins Music & Arts Seminar, where he serves as staff clinician teaching piano. In 2009, his composition "Lift The Savior Up" was recorded with the Music & Arts Seminar Choir. Drene has also played with Grammy Award Saxophonist Kirk Whalum and many others.



Eleanor J. Jackson, Alto*

Eleanor J. Jackson is a graduate of Hampton Institute, Case Western Reserve University, and Lake Erie College. She received a Master of Arts Degrees in Speech Pathology and Education. At Hampton she was a member of the famous Hampton Institute College Choir. Miss Jackson studied voice with Dr. A. Grace Lee Mims at the Cleveland Music School Settlement from 1986-1994. She participated in several voice performance classes during those years. Solo performances have included: The Robert Ray *Gospel Mass*, Ruth J. Richey, Music Director, performed by the East Cleveland Theater Chorus (1994); the *Mozart Requiem, K. 626*, Dr. J. LanYe', Conductor, performed by The Shaker Symphony Orchestra and the New Shaker Symphony Choir (1998); and Handel's *Messiah*, under the direction of James R. Tanner, Jr., Esq., Conductor, performed by the Cleveland School of the Arts Chamber Orchestra and the Forest Hills String Quartet (1999). Choir memberships have included: *The Cleveland Choral Collective*, *The Accord Chamber Choir*, and *The LanYe' Singers* (LanYe'); and *Wings Over Jordan Celebration Chorus* (Glenn A. Brackens). Miss Jackson is a member of St. James A.M.E. Church where she sings in the Choir. She participated in two joint vocal recitals at St. James in 1990 and 1994. She also sang in four memorable concerts: *A Tribute to America's Music- The Negro Spiritual* at Chautauqua Arts Institution, New York (Summer 2000), *Music from the Words of Langston Hughes* at Reinberger Chamber Hall, Severance Hall (2002), *University Circle Sings for the Gulf Coast* featuring Negro Spirituals at Epworth-Euclid United Methodist Church (2005), and the 75th Anniversary of the *Wings Over Jordan* Choir at Holy Trinity Baptist Church (2012). Miss Jackson is a Certified Speech/Language Pathologist, and currently resides in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.





Meryl Trimble Johnson, Tenor*

A lifelong resident of Cleveland, Meryl Trimble Johnson attended and graduated from Cleveland Public Schools. She completed 40 years as a Language Arts, Drama, Oral Communication, and Reading teacher in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. She retired in October 2012.

Meryl earned a degree in English with minors in Secondary Education and Theater at Kent State University, where she became a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated. She received a Master of Education degree at Cleveland State University in Curriculum and Instruction. Meryl is also certified in Reading K-12.

Meryl comes from a musical family. Her mother, Lucille Downs, taught music in the Cleveland School District for 26 years. As a child, Meryl's mom made sure she and her brother took private piano lessons. This musical background made

it possible for Meryl to serve as the Youth Choir Director for a number of years at her church, Lee Memorial A.M.E., where Rev. Wesley I. Reid is the pastor. Meryl's mother was the accompanist.

One of Meryl's favorite pastimes is acting in community theatre. She has appeared in many productions, including *Black Nativity* and *The Wiz* at Karamu Theater, *Dreamgirls* and *Working* at Cassidy Theater in Parma Hts., *Porgy and Bess* at Lakewood's Beck Center for the Arts, and *Ragtime*, a Jewish Community Theater production. She has sung with the Prayer Warriors for thirteen years. They have opened for entertainers such as Foreigner, Diana Ross, and Josh Groban. Meryl enjoys participating in the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center's choral fundraiser, *Sing Out!* every two years. The Panhellenic Choir, under the direction of Tillie Colter, is another one of Meryl's regular activities. As long as Meryl is singing, she's happy.



Zachary Marbury, Tenor *

Zachary Marbury is a published poet, musician, singer, songwriter, and a member of Spiritual Gifts Choir, as well as Brenda E. Johnson's Family and Friends Recording Choir. Through these avenues, Zachary has been blessed to perform at venues such as, Severance Hall, the Lincoln Center, Reach Week in New York, and much more. He is the proud grandson of the late Dr. Robert T. Marbury Sr., and son of the late, beautiful Carmen Walker; his role models, and the main people who were instrumental in him becoming the person that he is today. Zachary attends New Hope Baptist Church in Lorain, Ohio, where he serves as Deacon in training and Youth Musician. Zachary studied accounting at the University of Phoenix, and plans on finishing his degree sometime in the near future. Zachary has a very kind, gentle

and humble spirit, he is always willing to lend a hand where needed, and more importantly, a lover of God. Today, he works at a Prepared Foods factory, writes music, and still sings with both choirs; his favorite scripture is Galatians 6:9. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."





Pamela Lorena Mendez Hernandez, Soprano *

Pamela Lorena Mendez Hernandez was born in Guatemala City Guatemala in 1987. Music has always been part of her life, and her maternal grandfather was a violinist to the national Guatemalan Orchestra. At an early age, it was evident that singing was her gift. She participated in many plays and talent competitions in school and outside of school, obtaining high praise. She joined forces with two other cousins, and their trio became the entertainment at family gatherings.

When she was nine years old, she moved with her parents and two younger brothers to the United States of American, settling in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1996 the family found a Spanish speaking Catholic congregation, Saint Michael's Church, since they had not yet learned to speak English. Pamela rapidly joined the children's choir and becoming one of the soloists. Even at an early age, she would make parishioners turn to see who was singing. She became the staple singer for the "Ave Maria" at the church, with many people asking this 10- (almost 11-year-old) to sing at weddings, funerals, and other church events. She eventually went back to Guatemala for a visit and had the pleasure to sing accompanied by her grandfather on the violin and her great-uncle on the organ before their passing. She attended High School at Saint Augustine Academy and enrolled in the school choir. Under the direction of her vocal coach, Mrs. Schutze, she stood out in the school's many concerts and other events. Always remaining close to the church, at age 18 she stopped singing with the children and helping with the children's choir and went on to join the adult choir at Saint Michael's. An alumna of Cleveland State University, Pamela holds a Bachelor's Degree in Health Science. During her time at CSU, she enrolled in many courses, including an "African America History through Sacred Music" course taught by Dr. Regennia N. Williams. This is where she was introduced to the lovely people of Spiritual Gifts, and she is now an active member of the group. In recent years, she has also participated in the Martin Luther King Celebration Choir. To this day, she is still actively participating in different choirs at her church and is always open to other invitations to sing. With *Spiritual Gifts*, she has a great opportunity to travel to Vienna and Paris-- with some really good friends, and to add more memories that will fill future biographies.



Lana J. Miller, Tenor*

Lana J. Miller is a charter member of the Spiritual Gifts Choir and she is currently serving as its president. **"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit is the source of them all."** 1Corinthians 12:4 (NLT) Lana comes from a family that is gifted and talented in the field of music, especially as it relates to the church. She and her five siblings have been singing together as the Williams Family Singers for many years. **"There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord."** 1Corinthians 12:5 (NLT)

Lana has been a life-long member of the New Joshua Missionary Baptist Church, where she is the president and director of the adult choir. She has also served as the youth department coordinator and youth choir director under the leadership of

Pastor Walter Humphrey. **"God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us."** 1Corinthians 12:6 (NLT) Lana is also a member of the Directors, Musicians & Singers Fellowship here in Cleveland where Sister Lois Coleman is the president. **"A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other."** 1Corinthians 12:7 (NLT) Lana has a great love for children. She has been a teacher in the Greater Cleveland area for over 30 years. She is the mother of four and the grandmother of five. Lana enjoys sharing all of her gifts and talents with family and friends. **"It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have."** 1Corinthians 12:11 (NLT)





Babette Reid Harrell, Accompanist/Alto*

Babette Reid Harrell is a concert pianist, music educator, and full-time music education student at Boston University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music from Spelman College and a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance and Literature from the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana. She has taught music courses and accompanied college choirs on the campuses of the University of Notre Dame, Saint Mary's College, and Holy Cross College all of Notre Dame, Indiana. She served as an Assistant Professor at Wiley College of Marshall, Texas where she was the accompanist for the Wiley College *A Cappella Concert Choir* under the direction of Stephen Hayes. She taught music for six years in the East Cleveland City Schools District. Her doctoral dissertation will be a case study of the *Wings Over Jordan* Celebration Chorus of Cleveland, Ohio under the direction of Maestro Glenn Brackens. In 2001, Babette composed the Holy Cross College Alma Mater, "Ave Crux Spes Unica" (Hail the Cross, Our Only Hope). Babette is a veteran of the United States Army where she served in the 26th Army Band of New York at Fort Hamilton of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, New York as a euphonium player and pianist. She is a native of East Cleveland, Ohio, the youngest of four children and the daughter of the late William Reid, Jr. and Mrs. Mattie W. Reid. She and her husband Samuel Vincent, Pastor of Damascus Missionary Baptist Church of Cleveland, Ohio, reside in East Cleveland, Ohio.



J. Mark Thompson, Keyboard Artist / Baritone*

J. Mark Thompson is a gifted pianist, organist, vocalist, and sought-after accompanist. He first performed with *Spiritual Gifts* during a September 2015 concert at Cleveland's historic Gethsemane Baptist Church. Thompson currently serves as the Minister of Music at the Greater Abyssinia Baptist Church, where the Reverend Dr. Emmitt Theophilus Caviness is pastor. He has also worked in music ministry at Peace Baptist Church, Christ Temple Baptist Church, Greater Mount Zion Baptist Church, Starlight Baptist Church, and Antioch Baptist Church. His teachers have included Helen Turner-Thompson and Ruby Patton. J. Mark Thompson is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including serving as Concertmaster for the American University Symphony Orchestra in 2006-7 and earning Brevard Music Festival honors in 1998, 1999, and 2001.





Geraldine C. Hardin Washington, Alto*

Geraldine C. Hardin Washington (Educator and singer) is a native of Cleveland, Ohio. She earned a certificate from the Washington Montessori Institute in Washington, D.C., a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Cleveland State University, and a Master of Arts Degree from National University. Currently, she is a doctoral student at Grand Canyon University. She has been associated with a number of performing groups in Washington, D.C. among them, The Gospel Truths, F.C.C., the Howard Gospel Choir, Sweet Honey in the Rock, and Performing Artists under the Lord, P.A.U.L. Her musical theatre performances have included “Guys and Dolls,” “Man of Lamancha,” “Treemanisha,” an opera by Scott Joplin, and Mahalia’s Song,” directed and choreographed by Mike Malone. Geraldine studied voice with the late Dr. William Moore. When she returned to her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio, she established several performing arts groups, including We Who Be and Women of Season.

Her passion is singing, and has said, “I love to sing, and as a child I sang all through the house and listened to music while other children were outside playing.” Presently, Geraldine sings in the choir at Mount Zion Congregational Church, where the Reverend Paul Hobson Sadler is pastor, and with the *Spiritual Gifts* Choir under the direction of Maestro Glenn A. Brackens.



Reverend Irma J. Williams, Alto*

The Reverend Irma J. Williams is the Senior Pastor of the Hundredfold Church in Cleveland, Ohio. Following her ordination in 2003 and careful thought and deliberation, she founded the church where she presently serves. With a support staff consisting of Elders, Ministers and Deacons, Reverend Williams oversees 12 ministry boards, congregational worship, teaching, preaching, spiritual counseling, and civic and community outreach.

Along with her pastoral influence, Reverend Williams is also an accomplished vocalist. She has been praised for her remarkable agility, precision, and the soul stirring fire in her voice. The public and press have greeted her with exceptional accolades alike for her performances in the most prestigious concert halls and venues throughout the United States.

Reverend Williams has collaborated and conferred with instrumental music composers and is currently working on a musical presentation entitled, “A Night with Hymn”, which combines vocal singing and speaking performance appropriate for auditorium and theater. Reverend Williams envisions that her work will be shared globally, and that her work will be a creative help in the lives that are touched by these endeavors.

Reverend Williams is a native of Cleveland, Ohio, where she was raised and educated. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry and Counseling from the United Christian Ministry Institute in Albion, Indiana. She is the proud mother of three sons and the grandmother of seven. Reverend Williams and her siblings have traveled extensively ministering in Word and Song.

Pastorirma@thehundredfoldchurch.org or www.thehundredfoldchurch.org.



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I am so honored to be a member of this glorious choir, under the direction of Maestro Glenn Brackens.



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Regennia N. Williams
Founder, Administrative Coordinator & Executive Director

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