2-17-2000

Mavis Staples

Center for Performing Arts

Follow this and additional works at: http://opus.govst.edu/cpa_memorabilia

Recommended Citation
http://opus.govst.edu/cpa_memorabilia/153

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Performing Arts at OPUS Open Portal to University Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Center for Performing Arts Memorabilia by an authorized administrator of OPUS Open Portal to University Scholarship. For more information, please contact opus@govst.edu.
THE CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS
Governors State University

Presents

MAVIS STAPLES
in
A Tribute to Mahalia Jackson

With Special Guests
The St. Sabina Levites Choir

Saturday, February 17, 2000
8:00 PM

2000/2001 Season Sponsored in part by a grant from the:
MAVIS STAPLES

What makes a musical legend? If you’re singer/songwriter Mavis Staples, the prerequisite includes having made records that define modern rhythm and blues, and having a distinctive voice and style that has influenced everyone from Michael Jackson to David Byrne, to BeBe and CeCe Winans. No wonder then, that Mavis’ most recent Paisley Park CD is titled THE VOICE. The CD marks yet another milestone in the career of one of R&B’s most valuable exponents.

In the spring of 1987, “The Artist” (formerly known as Prince) called Mavis, offering a seven year contract on his Paisley Park label. Together they produced two dynamic CD’s, TIME WAITS FOR NO ONE and THE VOICE. In addition, she appeared in his movie, Graffitti Bridge, as Melody Cool; and was the opening act for his Nude Tour, and a part of the Love Sexy tour.

In addition to T.A.F.K.A. Prince, Mavis has worked with a stellar group of musicians, singers, songwriters and arrangers. The list includes Curtis Mayfield, Kenny Loggins, Bob Dylan, Areatha Franklin, John Mayall, Nat Adderly Jr., Sheila E., Diane Lovie, Tom Jones and a host of others. The results are an impressive collection of songs that seamlessly fuses R&B, gospel, funk and even hip-hop.

Mavis’ gift is her uncanny ability to convey, with her voice, the gamut of feelings from heavenly bliss to early sadness. Her lyrical interpretations, combined with her soulful trademark grunts and moans, can move mountains. Vocalists are taught to sing from the diaphragm; Mavis sings from somewhere deep within the soul.

Mavis’ history is already etched in the annals of pop music. It is the story of Roebuck “Pops” Staples, a hard working, Chicago based steel mill worker who, with wife Oceola, nursed Mavis and her siblings – brother Pervis and sisters Cleo and Yvonne – on gospel music. As the “Staples Singers,” led by the guitar-playing Pops, the group
achieved stardom first on the gospel music circuit, with rousing live and recorded performances, before making the transition to pop/R&B.

However, the Staple Singers did more in the 70’s than simply score on the national pop charts with inspirational hits like “Respect Yourself” and “I’ll Take You There” (or the group’s more secular hit, 1975’s “Let’s Do It Again”). They are the act of the era that actually spearheaded and pioneered “contemporary gospel,” inspiring acts as diverse as Amy Grant, Earth, Wind and Fire and the Winans, among others.

Mavis’ most recent project, A Tribute to Mahalia Jackson CD with Lucky Peterson on the Hammond organ, is available on Verve Records.

MAVIS STAPLES
“A TRIBUTE to MAHALIA JACKSON”

The triumph of American music in this century has been its indelible influence on musicians worldwide. If you merely scratch its surface, the rich fragrance of African-American zeitgeist springs forth like so many blooming black orchids. Probe a little deeper and you will find three crucial ingredients: gospel, blues and jazz.

For too long, this holy trinity of song and life has been viewed as forever opposing entities, never to be equitably united. Perhaps it serves the Western myths of the sacred and profane, “high” art vs. “low” art better if the differences rather than the shared likenesses are emphasized, but the reality is that in the African-American cultural experience, gospel, blues and jazz are one and the same. In truth, save for Duke Ellington’s Sacred Concerts, The Gospel at Colonus, and the works of Albert Ayler and Mahalia Jackson, very few recorded examples of this maxim are to be found.

It is fitting then, that the greatest living disciple of Ms. Jackson’s oeuvre, Mavis Staples, would embark upon an innovative, transcendent tribute to Miss Mahalia that dwells in the house of gospel/blues/jazz. A recorded collection of religious standards popularized by the late vocal giant, SPIRITUALS & GOSPELS, is not only a testament to her genius, but also a very persuasive argument for Ms. Staples’ canonization as a legend in her own right. The idea for the album came out of a conversation with Staples and producer John Snyder. “I was telling him about how much I loved the music of Mahalia, she’s been my favorite singer since I was a child,” I was 12 before I heard her in person. I told him all these stories from back in the day. Finally, John asked me why I didn’t do an album of her songs. I said you really mean it?” It turns out that he did mean it.

Throughout this recording’s 13 tracks, Staples voice is literally an instrument of the divine. From the piano-led holy roll of If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again (“The very first song Pops taught us”) to the Diva soul-bop of Wade In The Water to the deep organ rumblings and melismatic moanings of Go Down Moses, Mavis is magnificent.

The powerful live performance of these recorded treasures was witnessed for the first time at the Montreal Jazz Festival in July of 1997, making its live US debut in January of ’98 at the Symphony Hall in Chicago on Martin Luther King Day. Both performances received rave reviews, with the Chicago Tribune proclaiming, “...the ferocity of Staples’ singing and the authenticity of her style surely evoked the spirit of Jackson’s music.”

Mavis Staples, of course, is a member of the Staple Singers. The group (led by her father, Roebuck “Pops” Staples, Mavis and her siblings Yvonne, Cleotha and Pervis) evolved from its folk-gospel origins to become the most influential gospel/R&B pop band in American music. As lead singer, Ms. Staples supplies the “extra “oomph” to the band’s classic hits (Respect Yourself, If you’re Ready, Come Go With Me, and I’ll Take You There), singing from somewhere deep within the soul.

Outside the family band, Mavis has enjoyed a long solo career with a #1 R&B hit (Let’s Do It Again) and albums on Curtom and Warner’s Volt Labels.

In spite of all we can say, the words of Mavis Staples are infinitely more valid: “I just hope (Spirituals & Gospels) can be played where it can be heard by everyone – the young need this as well as the older people – we need to pass it on. My Daddy always told us what comes from the heart, reaches the heart.”
ST. SABINA
A Little of Our History

St. Sabina is a proud African American Catholic Community of faith, education and witness which sees itself at the service of the entire community. We are called and charged to be followers of Jesus Christ, which demands that we be ministers of the gospel, instruments of peace, witnesses of love and drum majors for justice—dedicated to forming a world community that sees itself as family to one another.

Our rich history of service began in 1916 when parishioners of St. Sabina celebrated their first Mass in a storefront on South Racine Avenue. The present edifice was completed in 1933 and it served as a monument of worship within its large Irish community. The parish thrived as the center of religious and social activities. It was, for example, the original site of Chicago’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade. During the 1960’s when the racial makeup of the community changed from white to Black, St. Sabina, unlike many other churches in the area, opened its doors to the new residents. The pastor at that time was Monsignor John McMahon. Our current pastor, the Rev. Michael L. Pfleger, has continued the St. Sabina tradition of reaching out to the community. During the summer months, Father Pfleger, along with church members, march in the community on Friday nights to bring a presence of love and peace to the troubled streets. Every year in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday, members from St. Sabina reach out to the homeless in the community. St. Sabina is recognized in the community as a beacon of hope and an outpost of love.

Today, St. Sabina is a strong and prophetic faith community. It is a vibrant church with a liturgy rich in African tradition that speaks to the cultural, social and spiritual needs of the black faithful. We stand in invitation to those who wish to join us as baptized members, and yet see ourselves as bonded to the world community by a spirit that is greater than race, creed, culture or denomination. We seek to be a powerful voice in our city and are committed to building a better world and establishing the kingdom of God in the earth.