

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FTS 32 425

Rev. Audrey E. Bronson & Becky Carlton, Minister of Music *Are You Ready For Christmas?*

PRODUCED & RECORDED BY VERNA GILLIS
with Ramon Daniel Perez Martinez



COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

In November, 1976 I attended the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology which was held at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in Philadelphia. Part of a planned music program for Friday evening was "Evangelist Audrey Bronson and Congregation." Rev. Bronson took the podium, requested that all drinking and smoking cease, and she then proceeded to transform the Grand Ballroom of the Benjamin Franklin Hotel into a room vibrating with the full implications of the combined forces of music and a strong religious belief backed by both the charisma and the "power" to communicate that message. The Rev. Audrey Bronson and Becky Carlton, Minister of Music at the Sanctuary Church of the Open Door in Philadelphia, which they both founded, have a very dynamic relationship, both inspiring the other. They are two extremely effective and ambitious women with a definite vision of a better world here on earth and how to achieve it, and the central focus of their incredibly creative dual energies is startlingly revealed in the combined chant-poetry-song-shout voice of Audrey Bronson revealing the message in a very inspired and extremely sophisticated 'style,' accompanied by the Minister of Music, Becky Carlton, whose equally inspired organ playing contains the complete history of Black American Music in the 20th century from gospel to blues to jazz to rhythm and blues to rock and roll. A very florid and impeccable technique with the power to reveal the message through the music. An amazing team. I asked Audrey and Becky to write statements about themselves—to present themselves. Their statements follow. It was a real privilege and joy to have had the opportunity to record them in their church on December 19th, 1976.

Verna Gillis

All photographs by David Gillis

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Are You Ready For Christmas?

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FTS 32425

ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS?

Rev. Audrey F. Bronson & Becky Carlton, Minister of Music

In November, 1976 I attended the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology which was held at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in Philadelphia. Part of a planned music program for Friday evening was "Evangelist Audrey Bronson and Congregation." Rev. Bronson took the podium, requested that all drinking and smoking cease, and she then proceeded to transform the Grand Ballroom of the Benjamin Franklin Hotel into a room vibrating with the full implications of the combined forces of music and a strong religious belief backed by both the charisma and the "power" to communicate that message. The Rev. Audrey Bronson and Becky Carlton, Minister of Music at the Sanctuary Church of the Open Door in Philadelphia, which they both founded, have a very dynamic relationship, both inspiring the other. They are two extremely effective and ambitious women with a definite vision of a better world here on earth and how to achieve it, and the central focus of their incredibly creative dual energies is startlingly revealed in the combined chant-poetry-song-shout voice of Audrey Bronson revealing the message in a very inspired and extremely sophisticated 'style', accompanied by the Minister of Music, Becky Carlton, whose equally inspired organ playing contains the complete history of Black American Music in the 20th century from gospel to blues to jazz to rhythm and blues to rock and roll. A very florid and impeccable technique with the power to reveal the message through the music. An amazing team. I asked Audrey and Becky to write statements about themselves - to present themselves. Their statements follow. It was a real privilege and joy to have had the opportunity to record them in their church on December 19th, 1976.

Verna Gillis



Rev. Becky Carlton



Rev. Bronson leading congregation in prayer

I was born in Deland, Florida. My father, Dr. Uriah P. Bronson, was a Minister and an educator. My mother, Mrs. Susie Bronson, was a teacher and church worker. My brother, Dr. Oswald P. Bronson, is a Minister and President of Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida.

I was baptized at the age of eleven and started an active preaching ministry at the age of fourteen.

I was a member of the Church of the Living God for about 25 years, located in Philadelphia, Pa. under the leadership of Bishop A.H. White. I was ordained by Bishop White when I was 22 years old and I served as youth leader and evangelist in the church. As an evangelist my ministry consisted of holding series of services at various churches and I usually travelled alone. I have never in the past depended on one particular person as I now depend upon Becky for music.

We are both founders of the church and consequently feel more of a responsibility to make it work through service and sacrifice. Our different specialties, preaching and music, complement each other and eliminate any sense of competition. After working in churches all of our lives we recognize that cooperation is essential to success.

The Sanctuary was started in 1975 shortly after we both independently separated ourselves from our former religious affiliations. I personally had become weary of the travelling that evangelizing re-

quired and felt I wanted to settle down. So the decision was made to start a "small" church.

We are endeavoring to build a ministry that would meet the needs of the whole person. Anyone may join the church and whatever the needs of the person are we try to help the person in meeting those needs whether they be spiritual, social, educational, psychological, etc. Most of all we are endeavoring to get people to become self-sufficient, independent, fully-functioning people.

The present programs are educational and to some extent social service in nature. We currently have an elementary school, K-6 grades. Our purpose is to bring a consciousness of God back into the educational process and go back to basics in education. We also currently refer people to appropriate agencies, schools, etc. and counsel those who do not know how to interact successfully with the system with regard to basic living. We have plans to open a separate counseling and referral center, a crises center for battered wives, fire victims, and other emergencies that might arise in a person's life. We also plan an adult educational program in basics and emphasis on economics. A prison ministry is also on the drawing board.

I am an Associate Professor of psychology at Cheyney State College, a public speaker, and educational consultant.

Most of my sermon is prepared in terms of research on the subject, but unrehearsed. Because I have been preaching for 30 years, I have the advantage of experience to draw upon in delivery and thus may give the impression of improvisation or spontaneity.

Historically I admire the bravery of Harriet Tubman; the intelligence persistence, faith and aggressiveness of the late Mary McCloud Bethune whom I knew as a child; the spirituality and orderliness of the late Mother E. J. Dabney whose leadership I was under as a teenager. At present I know of no one outstanding female model I admire, but I do hold in high esteem the rising number of young black women seminarians who are preparing themselves for the ministry in traditional churches.

Our form of worship, such as handclapping, tambourines, other musical instruments and the type of singing may resemble the Pente-

costal church, but beneath this surface there are differences in terms of doctrinal emphasis.

Audrey F. Bronson

I was born in Greensboro, North Carolina. There are 5 children: one older brother and three younger sisters. Both my parents were musically inclined. My mother played guitar and sang; my father played piano and served as pianist for our church in Greensboro for a number of years. Just before my sixth birthday my father taught me to play one song on the piano. Between the ages of six and seven I was fascinating everyone by my ability to play tunes that were suggested to me. My formal music training began at age six. I was discouraged in terms of playing 'by ear' and advised to play only by music. However, I managed to combine both. My parents held responsible positions in the church even before my birth; therefore one may say that I was "born in the church."

I began playing for our children's choir at the church at age 8 or 9. At age 12 or 13, I became the church pianist. (My father was "replaced" by me). My entire life centered around the church and religious activities. I was only allowed to play "religious music."

My sisters and I had wonderful times singing together, travelling all over the south, and performing with top black gospel groups. We appeared weekly on radio as "The Moore Sisters."

My father, now deceased, was the most influential person in my life.

Previously I have worked with many other top black musicians and performers. I appeared regularly at the Apollo Theatre (annually and sometimes semi-annually). I have appeared off-broadway; Madison Square Garden, Lincoln Center, many colleges, universities, churches. I have recorded six albums as well as other albums with other groups. My albums include my interpretations of hymns and other religious music. I play the Hammond Organ on all my recordings and accompany myself, by

means of overdubbing, on the piano. In the 1960's I appeared on the television series "The Gospel Time", that was aired for approximately two years.

Audrey and I began working together in 1974. I had worked for many years as background musician (piano and organ) for major recording studios in New York. I was heard weekly for fourteen years on radio - gospel shows; along with many other activities. Audrey was travelling alone as an evangelist and I decided to join her. We travelled extensively throughout the east coast.

Our relationship (Audrey's and mine) has a specialness about it in regards to the Sanctuary in that we founded it together in 1975 and our goal is to continue to develop it into a firm religious reality.

The Sanctuary is community involved, helping the people in the community in times of personal crisis where spiritual and religious commitment can relieve suffering. Audrey and I have tried to design a workable formula which will continually lead towards inner peace and personal christian satisfaction.

Some of the present programs running at Sanctuary include the Music Department (I have founded five choirs with ages beginning at 3 years old); the Sanctuary Prayer Band, Missionary Outreach, Deacon and Trustee Boards, Ministers Council and other auxiliaries.

My professional activities are limited at this time as I am concentrating on obtaining a Master and Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology. However, I am involved in an orchestra, the Concerto Soloists of Philadelphia, not as a performer, but in helping to set up concerts.

Most of my music for the services is improvised. I do, however, teach the choirs some music (anthems, hymns) occasionally. Only about 2% of the choir members read music. Therefore, they learn by ear.

The difference between Sanctuary and a Pentecostal Church is the fact that our church probably allows more religious freedom than the Pentecostal church. We are non-denominational and seek to serve the needs of the whole person. The Pentecostal church may cater more to the spiritual needs. We are rather non-traditional in terms of our mode of dress (ladies may wear slacks or pant suits).

Future plans for the church include a day care center. We will soon offer full social service aid; half-way house for alcoholics, etc.

Becky Carlton

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The edited selections on this record were taken from three different parts of the church service. The sermon, which is the final part is left intact. At points, Rev. Bronson walked "off mike" and thus the quality of the recording is not as clear as the rest. However, to edit out these moments would destroy the continuity of the sermon. The minor disturbance should not detract from full appreciation.

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For information on a film that was made on Rev. Bronson, contact Gei Zantinger, Pikeland Road, Devault, Pa. 19432.

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For information on recordings, films, video tapes, and books pertaining to Black American culture, write to the Center for Southern Folklore, 1216 Peabody Avenue, P.O. Box 4081, Memphis, TN 38104.

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Recorded on December 19, 1976 by Verna Gillis, with Ramon Daniel Perez Martinez

Edited by Verna Gillis

Technical assistance - John Fisk

All photographs - David Gillis

Dedicated to Yolanda Margarita Perez Martinez, a remarkable woman who prayed for me many times.

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OTHER RECORDINGS by VERNA GILLIS

FE 4491 Vodun - Rada Rite for Erzulie
FE 4281 The Island of Quisqueya - Music from the Dominican Republic - Vol. 1
FE 4282 The Island of Española - Music from the Dominican Republic - Vol. 2
FE 4282 Cradle of the New World - Music from the Dominican Republic - Vol. 3
FE 4282 Songs from the North - Music from the Dominican Republic - Vol. 4
FW 8510 Lora Music from the Gambia by Foday Musa Suso
FC 7776 ANPAO - An American Indian Odyssey by Jamake Highwater
FE 4531 Rara in Haiti - Gaga in the Dominican Republic
FE 4328 Comanche Flute Music played by Doc Tate Nevaquaya
FE 4324 Music of the Dagomba from Ghana
FE 4240 Music of the Ashanti of Ghana
FS 3539 David 'Honeyboy' Edwards - Mississippi Delta Blues Singer

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