



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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mary lou williams | **mary lou's mass**



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mary lou's mass

1. **WILLIS** 3:37
2. **O.W.** 2:16
(Music and vocables by M. L. Williams /
Cecilia Music Pub. Co., ASCAP)
3. **PRAISE THE LORD** 2:09
4. **OLD TIME SPIRITUAL** 1:10
5. **THE LORD SAYS** 1:50
6. **ACT OF CONTRITION** 1:26
7. **KYRIE ELEISON
(LORD, HAVE MERCY)** 1:43
(Words and music by M. L. Williams /
Cecilia Music Pub. Co., ASCAP)
8. **GLORIA** 1:53
9. **MEDI I AND MEDI II** 3:59
10. **IN HIS DAY / PEACE I LEAVE
WITH YOU / ALLELUIA** 0:53
11. **LAZARUS** 4:36
(Music by M. L. Williams, words by M. L. Williams and
Sonny Henry / Cecilia Music Pub. Co., ASCAP - Richcar
Music Corp., BMI)
12. **CREDO** 2:19

13. **CREDO (INSTRUMENTAL)** 5:48
14. **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY** 2:24
15. **AMEN** 0:17
16. **OUR FATHER** 2:11
17. **LAMB OF GOD** 3:23
18. **IT IS ALWAYS SPRING** 2:34
(Words and music by Leon Thomas)
19. **PEOPLE IN TROUBLE** 3:27
(Words and music by M. L. Williams /
Cecilia Music Pub. Co., ASCAP)
20. **ONE** 1:23
(Words and music by Leon Thomas)
21. **PRAISE THE LORD
(COME HOLY SPIRIT)** 3:55
22. **JESUS IS THE BEST** 2:53
(Music by M. L. Williams, words by Thomas Virga /
Cecilia Music Pub. Co., ASCAP)
23. **TELL HIM NOT TO TALK TOO LONG**
2:33
(Words and music by M. L. Williams /
Cecilia Music Pub. Co., ASCAP)
24. **I HAVE A DREAM** 1:59
(Words and music by M. L. Williams /
Cecilia Music Pub. Co., ASCAP)

*All music and arrangements by Mary Lou Williams /
Cecilia Music Publishing Co., ASCAP, except where noted.*

SFW CD 40815

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INTRODUCTION

Rev. Peter O'Brien, S.J.

When Alvin Ailey began to prepare new choreography to accompany the composition Mary Lou Williams called "Music for Peace," he asked me: "Peter, what is a Mass?" He had already created his masterwork, *Revelations*, set to African-American spirituals. It remains a deeply religious piece. But he was not a Roman Catholic, nor was his usual mode of prayer and worship connected to that church. My theological explications must have been inadequate, since he simply subtitled his offering "Dances of Praise." It was he, however, who renamed Ms. Williams's composition *Mary Lou's Mass*, and that is the title he also gave to his ballet.

The word *mass* itself comes from a phrase that occurs at the very end of the ritual, and from a time when Latin was the language universally used in the Roman Catholic church, whereby the priest or the deacon dismisses the congregation with the words *Ite, missa est* 'Go, the Mass is' (i.e., ended). *Missa* comes from the Latin verb *mittere*, which often translates as 'to send'. The word here implies that the congregation is sent forth from the assembly back out into the world at large to love and serve the Lord and one another. The congregants respond

with "Thanks be to God," and thus the Mass ends. The word *mass* persists to this day, but now the same rite is often called the Liturgy of the Eucharist, or the Celebration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. These words offer further considerations.

Eucharist, from the Greek, is an act of thanksgiving; *liturgy*, again from the Greek, involves the public work of the people, sometimes an offering made by the people or on behalf of the people. The Liturgy of the Eucharist therefore takes place publicly, with the people gathered and united. This Eucharist also takes place within the context of a ritual meal. The occasion celebrated in the United States most like the Mass is not a directly religious one at all, but arrives on Thanksgiving Day, when we express our gratitude at dinner. Roman Catholics believe that the first Mass took place concurrently with the last seder meal Jesus ate, and at which he presided. The Eucharist is also referred to as "the breaking of the bread," and is followed by its distribution around the table, also characteristic of a seder meal.

Scripture tells us that at his last seder, on the night before he suffered and died, "Jesus took bread, and when he had said the blessing, he broke it and gave it to the disciples. 'Take it and eat,' he said, 'this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had given

thanks he handed it to them saying, 'drink from this, all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28). Elsewhere Jesus promised: "And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (Matthew 28:20).

It is perhaps useful not to take an overly biological view of these words. Nonetheless, Jesus plainly states that he (his body), living (his blood), will be with them when they do "this" (eat the seder meal, or by extension, any communal meal) in his memory. The Mass for Roman Catholics is the repetition of that meal and a remembering of his death, but we also believe that when these words of Jesus ("this is my body," "this is my blood") are prayerfully and intentionally pronounced by the priest over the bread and chalice of wine, the living Christ is made present. These are known as the words of consecration, and they are spoken slightly more than halfway through the ritual. They are not sung, and no music accompanies them. When they are said, Roman Catholic congregants are invariably still and silent.

The Harper Collins *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (1995) tells us that "as early as the second century, there is evidence of a basic structure for the celebration of the Eucharist: a service of Scripture readings, psalm prayer,

and preaching, the people's offering of bread and wine, with an improvised prayer of praise and thanksgiving for God's work of salvation, followed by a Communion rite. Each section became more elaborated with time."

An explanation of two other words will prove useful: the *ordinary* of the Mass comprises the texts set to music in each composed Mass that are common to every Mass: "Kyrie Eleison" (Lord, Have Mercy), "Gloria" (Glory to God), the Creed (Credo), "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Sanctus), and "Lamb of God." The *propers* are scriptural texts assigned to the Mass for a given feastday or purpose. Mary Lou Williams has set to music the proper from the Votive Mass for Peace: "The Lord Says," "In His Day," "Turn Aside from Evil and Do Good," "Seek and Strive after Peace," "Blessed Are The Peacemakers," and "Give Us Peace, Oh Lord / Grant us Peace, Oh Lord."

The recording of *Mary Lou's Mass* begins with four preludes. The proper begins with the entrance hymn "The Lord Says." As the gathering rite continues, the people are called to express sorrow for their sins in a penitential rite ("Act of Contrition" and "Lord Have Mercy"). Having received pardon, the congregation erupts in sung praise ("Glory to God"), which is followed by a prayer. The

congregation then sits for the liturgy of the word, to listen attentively as scriptural passages are proclaimed. A pause for reflection may be indicated ("Medi," for 'meditation'). The congregation rises for the Alleluia verse and the proclamation of the Gospel ("In His Day" and "Lazarus"). After the Gospel, the congregation is seated once more, and a sermon is delivered. In response, the congregation rises to express its belief ("Credo") in what the Gospel reading and the sermon have announced, at which point the liturgy of the word comes to an end.

The liturgy of the Eucharist now begins, as people bring forward the gifts of bread and wine and the altar is prepared ("Credo," instrumental). A passage suitable to the feast or occasion is read or intoned, which leads to the sung "Holy, Holy, Holy," and we enter into the Eucharistic prayer. At the end of this prayer, the congregation asserts its agreement by saying "Amen."

We now proceed to the Communion rite. In preparation for receiving the Sacrament, we pray (or sing) the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father"), and as the rite proceeds, "Lamb of God" is sung. During the distribution and reception of Communion, a hymn may be sung ("It Is Always Spring"). After kneeling for a period of quiet prayer, the congregation sits and a postcommunion hymn may be sung

("People in Trouble"). The final prayer is said, followed by a blessing and the dismissal, whereupon more exuberant hymns may be heard ("One" and "Praise the Lord").

The final three selections on this recording are additional hymns—the last two are blues—and in the celebration of a Mass might be used at the very beginning, or during the offering of the gifts, or at Communion, or at the end.

Mary Lou Williams often went to daily Mass and was a daily communicant. It is almost inevitable for any practicing Roman Catholic who composes sacred music to turn toward the writing of a Mass. Mary Lou Williams did this three times. We have the evidence of her final glorious triumph here.

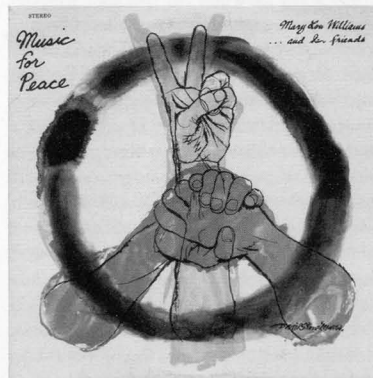
Rev. Peter F. O'Brien, S.J.
Executive Director,
The Mary Lou Williams Foundation
September 26, 2004

The score and parts for all the sections in Mary Lou's Mass, as well as for "Anima Christi," "Black Christ of the Andes," and "The Devil," are available from Cecilia Music Publishing Co., a division of The Mary Lou Williams Foundation.

MARY LOU WILLIAMS

Tammy L. Kernodle

Music for Peace, a multimovement composition commonly known as Mary Lou's Mass, is the third of three masses written by jazz composer and pianist Mary Lou Williams. It was not released in the version that most know until 1975, but its genesis dates back to 1954, when the 44-year-old Mary Lou Williams was one of the most celebrated jazz performers of the Parisian jazz scene. What had begun as a two-week stint in England to break the ban against American jazz musicians playing with British jazz musicians had turned into a two-year extended engagement across Europe. While some view this as a high point in Williams's career, it was in reality an emotionally troubling period for her. Years of working nonstop since her prepubescent years, financial hardship, and management issues had taken their toll. In addition, she had watched friend and fellow pianist Garland Wilson die a lonely and agonizing death in Paris. Although the factors that led to Williams's departure from jazz are unclear, it is certain that sometime in the spring of 1954, Williams walked off the stage at the nightclub Le Boeuf sur le Toit, and for three years, no one knew what happened to her.



Original cover design by David Stone Martin for the 1970 release of Music for Peace on Mary Records. Released during the Vietnam War, the design is cast in shades of black, brown, and yellow against a background of white. The design implies peace among races as well as nations.

In the years between her sudden disappearance and her long-awaited return performance at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival, Mary Lou Williams entered a period of self-inventory, spiritual inquiry, and community service that could only result in the powerful music that makes up her opus of religious music.

Shortly after returning to New York, in late 1954, troubled by visions and dreams, she sought solace in religion. She first attended the famed Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, where the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., was pastor, but she felt stifled by the politics of the church and the inaccessibility of the sanctuary throughout the week. She then began praying at Our Lady of Lourdes, a Roman Catholic Church not far from her apartment, on Hamilton Terrace. What began as a daily ritual of prayer and meditation quickly grew into a genuine interest in the rituals and liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1957, along with Lorraine Gillespie, Dizzy Gillespie's wife, Williams was baptized and confirmed in the church. Her confirmation would not only signal a new spiritual life, but lead her into a new musical identity.

Despite numerous attempts by friends and clergy, Williams long rejected any notion of returning to jazz. She had found a new

calling in her work rehabilitating addicted jazz musicians. Her work had been primarily inspired by the rise of drug use in jazz and the deaths of notable musicians, such as Charlie Parker. Her apartment became the central location for her efforts in aiding ill and addicted musicians. On a daily basis, she fed, detoxified, clothed, prayed for, and found work for the musicians under her care. Some remained with her for only a short period, but the worst cases were housed in a room down the hall from her apartment. She calmed cravings for drugs by reading the Psalms to her "patients," or by engaging them in composing music to take their minds off of the physical cravings. By 1958, her one-woman operation had proved to be so successful that she decided to expand to a larger facility. She desired to raise enough money to buy a larger home in upstate New York, where addicts could be attended to by a medical staff and be supplied with the means to make music. With legal assistance from friends, she started the Bel Canto Foundation and immediately began soliciting donations for purchasing property. When these efforts proved to be fruitless, she decided to hold a benefit concert. The 1958 Carnegie Hall concert was well supported by other performers, but expenses consumed the profits. Disappointed, but not defeated,

Williams decided to try other means. She opened a series of thrift shops that featured items and clothing from jazz's elite and New York's elite. In the long run, these ventures would also prove to be unprofitable, but she continued in her benevolent efforts.

While many believed her 1957 performance at the Newport Jazz Festival was her official "return" to jazz, Williams had agreed to the performance only because of the urgings of her friend Dizzy Gillespie. After this performance, she had performed again; however, most of her performances were modest bookings at New York nightclubs. She had no real desire to return fully to the jazz scene; but lack of money, charges for back taxes from the Internal Revenue Service, and her growing efforts to help others were taking a financial toll on her. Those around her, especially her religious confidants, urged her to return to music: "God wants you to return to the piano," one remarked; "you can serve Him best there[.] for that is what you know best" (Kernodle 2004:188).

During Mary's hiatus from jazz, the New York scene had gone through dramatic changes. Most of the jazz clubs that had lined 52nd Street and had been the cradle of the modern jazz movement were now strip clubs and Chinese restaurants. The West Coast had become the new incubator for

modern jazz sounds, and jazz musicians struggled to bring audiences back to the music. Even the music itself had changed: by the early 1960s, it had become more connected to the attitude of resistance that was spawned out of the black community. The civil-rights movement, the murder of Emmett Till, the Montgomery bus boycott, and freedom marches became the unspoken impetus behind the "freeing" of jazz. The divide between black and white musicians, white club owners, and black musicians, and white critics and black musicians, was growing. Although not directly connected rhetorically or musically with the black arts movement or avant garde movement in jazz, Mary's own beliefs coincided with the notion that the public needed to know the truth regarding jazz's cultural connections to the experiences of African Americans. Much of this was in response to the industry's efforts to deny black performers' contributions. It was perhaps these factors, coupled with Mary's interaction with young people while teaching jazz history at a neighborhood public school in the late 1950s, or her desire to save jazz from its own self-destructive path, that prompted her to return full-time to jazz composition and performance. She put aside the conflicts she felt between her spirituality and her love for the music, which some

deemed the "devil's music," and she began an extended stint at Wells Restaurant in New York. Soon, other factors would inspire her return to composition.

In the late 1950s, the Roman Catholic Church had begun discussing ways to better serve its parishioners. One of the changes suggested was the reformation of the liturgy. Not since the Council of Trent, in the sixteenth century, had the church considered a large-scale reformation of the liturgy. One of the main issues to be addressed in regard to the reformation involved how to create changes that spoke to modern believers without breaking with tradition. No widespread solutions were found right away, but the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) produced a series of documents that signaled the beginning of a period of significant changes and a more progressive musical movement. Out of this movement, Mary Lou Williams would find the impetus to write a new body of liturgical compositions that would combine the liturgy and traditions of the church with the rhythms, harmonies, and nuances of jazz. Her initial compositions in this opus would not involve masses, but would be centered on hymns. Her first composition, "A Hymn in Honor of St. Martin de Porres," foreshadowed her political leanings in infusing the essence of black musical expression—the blues and

spirituals—into her compositions. Martin de Porres, an Afro-Peruvian humanitarian, became in 1962 the first "Negro" saint to be canonized in the Roman Catholic Church. His life and service fascinated Williams, and she identified with his African ancestry, especially within a denomination that in the United States was centered on its European membership. Mary, along with many black Catholics, had sought especially in the 1960s for ways to connect their heritage with their faith. For her and many who heard her music, this resonated in her religious compositions. The composition was debuted on Martin de Porres's feastday, 3 November 1963, at St. Francis Xavier Church in New York. The celebration of the feastday was part of a concerted effort by Roman Catholic parishes throughout the country to foster awareness about the struggle for civil rights and equality. Although many, including critics and other jazz musicians, could not understand Williams's compositional shift and stated so publicly in sometimes unflattering terms, Williams continued to compose what she would deem "Music for the Soul." She added to "St. Martin de Porres" another complex a cappella hymn, called the "Devil." This was followed with a gospel-tinged hymn, "Anima Christi" (Latin for "Soul of Christ"), which reflected the direct connections between the

Saturday-night sinfulness of jazz and the Sunday-morning-sanctified gospel. It was in sound and nuance a return to Mary's musical roots in the Baptist church that she and older sister, Mamie, had attended with her mother during her early years in Atlanta. With the belief that jazz was the only true art and Catholicism the only true faith, she headed for the studios of Nola and Cue records and produced her first domestic album in more than ten years. The result was the EP and LP *Mary Lou Williams Presents Black Christ of the Andes*. Released in 1964, the album contained performances of "St. Martin de Porres," "The Devil," "Anima Christi," and several other compositions, including "Dirge Blues," which Williams recorded shortly after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Folkways Records, whose owner, Moe Asch, had recorded Mary's first solo records after her departure from Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy in the 1940s, pressed the records and distributed them. Though the recording received a lukewarm reception, Williams continued in her efforts to reeducate the public regarding the history of jazz and compose music that offered solace.

During 1964–1965, she worked extensively with the Pittsburgh diocese to add jazz education to the curriculum of the city's Roman Catholic schools and spearheaded

the Pittsburgh Jazz Festival, whose primary objective was to raise money to fund the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), which provided educational and recreational opportunities in underprivileged areas. Bishop Wright of Pittsburgh, in response to Williams's initiative in raising money for the CYO, offered her a teaching position at the all-white Seton High School on the north side of the city. Faced with a large classroom of students, she stretched convention to present jazz to the students in new ways. She decided, largely out of a need to create new compositions that combined jazz with the spiritual atmosphere of the Roman Catholic school, to write a jazz mass. Despite being urged for years to write a mass, she had never seriously considered it. It was not until she started working at Seton that she began working on the multimovement work. She called her setting of the ordinary merely "Mass." Unlike her previous religious works, this work employed unison vocal lines and established a jazz feel through her choice of instrumentations and various vocal nuances. Although she would later contend that the "Mass" was not "really jazz," she had broken convention with her nontraditional rhythms and harmonies. The "Mass," commonly called the *Pittsburgh Mass* by scholars, was first performed at a celebration of the



Mary Lou Williams received by
Pope Paul VI at the Vatican in 1969.

liturgy at St. Paul's Cathedral in Pittsburgh in 1967. The impact of jazz during a mass was twofold. First, the integration of African-American musical forms into the liturgy provided the church with identifying qualities that can be linked with the community of blacks within the church—the invisible church within the church; these were the black laity and clergy, who had largely been ignored by the church, but had remained loyal. Second, this act of inclusion validated the need for such cultural rituals within the church. The inclusion of these cultural forms into masses throughout the 1960s and 1970s was nothing new, but was a continuation of black Roman Catholics' efforts that dated back to the late nineteenth century. Mary Lou Williams was not the first to incorporate African-American musical styles into liturgical music, as Frank Tirro, who would later bring Mary Lou Williams to Duke University, had already composed a jazz mass, and Father Joseph Rivers had predated her with his *American Mass Program*, which combined black spirituals with Gregorian chant. Rivers did not, however, write a jazz mass, but one that through the use of spirituals could be identified as inherently black.

Williams's first attempt at writing a mass was well received at its debut (10 June 1967),

but she discarded the work, claiming it was too "drawn out, like a symphony" (Kernodle 2004: 220). The following year, she began work on another mass. This work, known as the *Mass for The Lenten Season*, was the product of a commission. In early 1968, Father Robert Kelly, a priest at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Harlem, approached her about writing a mass for Lent. She planned a work that would reflect the repentant, quiet spirit of the Lenten season. The result was a nine-movement piece which was performed for the six weeks of Lent and then on Easter Sunday at St. Thomas the Apostle, and was well received: one had to "get to the church before 11 am in order to get a seat" (Kernodle 2004: 223). In the only recording of this mass, now housed in the archives of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, we hear the hymn "We Shall Overcome" added at the end of the work. The addition of this hymn was no doubt a response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., on 4 April 1968, at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. Williams watched helplessly as Harlem and other major cities around the country erupted in flames. As those around her, who had once adopted King's mantra of nonviolent protest, exploded into frenzies of anger and grief, she began writing two compositions that would commemorate King:

"I Have a Dream" was based on King's famous 1963 speech from the March on Washington; "Tell Them Not to Talk Too Long," was based on King's sermon "If You're Around When I Meet My Day." These compositions were first performed on Palm Sunday 1968 during a mass in Harlem.

Her attention turned to performing for the Pope. In May 1968, she left New York for a European tour, which she hoped to parlay into a visit and performance in Rome. Her aspirations did not become reality. She was wracked with debt from an ill-fated stint at Timme Rosenkrantz's Copenhagen nightclub, and when she finally made it to Rome, she found that the bureaucracy of the papacy made it almost impossible to get an audience with the Pope. Just when she thought a celebration of her mass was in sight, Angelo Cardinal Del' Acqua, the assistant secretary of state in Vatican City, campaigned successfully against the performance because of the use of drums in the work. The mass and the two compositions written in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., were performed as a recital following the liturgy. Williams was disappointed, especially since she was not given the opportunity to exclude the drums from the performance. The mass was recorded the following day on Vatican radio, featuring a group of students from the North American

College and the College of the Propagation of the Faith. Williams's stay, however, proved still to be successful. Shortly before returning to New York, she met with Monsignor Joseph Gremillion, secretary of the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace. He suggested that she compose another mass—a mass for peace and justice. With a papal commission, she returned to New York in April of 1969, and began working on what would become *Music for Peace*.

More than in her previous works, Williams wanted this mass to address the contemporary social problems of the Vietnam War, racism, and the overwhelming lack of compassion that many displayed. She drew heavily from biblical scripture, and extemporized the traditional texts so that they reflected contemporary contexts. For example, the "Kyrie" extends beyond the traditional repetition of "Lord Have Mercy," and "Christ Have Mercy" to beg pardon for particular sins:

*For our failure to care, Lord have mercy
For our jealousies, Christ have mercy
For our lies, Lord have mercy on our souls.*

On 15 July 1969, the *Mass for Peace* was performed at the Holy Family Church on East 47th Street, New York, in memory of assassinated Kenyan leader Tom Mboya.

In the days following the performance, Williams decided to revamp the work into the jazz-rock idiom that was drawing younger listeners to jazz. She enlisted the help of arranger Bob Banks, who reorganized the mass. Ed Flanagan, a former priest, invested \$6,000 in a recording project, and in late 1969, Williams, several singers, and a talented group of musicians began recording *Music for Peace*. Williams contracted flutist Roger Glenn, guitarist Sonny Henry, bassist Chris White, David Parker on drums, and Abdul Rahman on congas. The vocalists included tenor Carl Hall and baritone Milton Grayson. The first sessions yielded six sides that consisted of material from the *Pittsburgh Mass* and the *Mass for the Lenten Season*, along with portions of *Music for Peace*. The project stalled after the first session, but Williams continued to compose new material in hopes that she would raise enough money to complete it. She did receive the much-needed financial backing, and when the project was revived, she added to the lineup vocalists Christine Spencer, Randy Peyton, Eileen Gilbert, and bass player and vocalist Carline Ray. In the liner notes that accompanied the original recording, Bob Banks received credit for arranging the compositions; however, he had worked only on "Kyrie," the entrance hymn "The Lord Says," and "Holy, Holy,

Holy." Despite all the setbacks and financial issues Williams encountered, *Music for Peace* was completed in February 1970. It would be the second of several recordings released on her label Mary Records. Throughout the early 1970s, Mary continued to perform *Music for Peace*, and even aspired to celebrate the liturgy at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. The performance would come several years later; but in the meantime, Williams, under the guidance of her manager, Father Peter O'Brien, a Jesuit priest, began touring and playing extensively throughout the United States.

The 1970s proved to be a period of rebirth for Williams and her music, and her live performances received more acclaim than those of the previous fifty-plus years of her life. Following extensive bookings at notable nightclubs, like The Cookery in New York, London House in Chicago, and Keystone Korner in San Francisco, Williams accepted the position of artist-in-residence at Duke University in 1977. She spent the final four years of her life doing what brought her the most joy: teaching others about the history and importance of jazz, and touring and playing good music. She died on 28 May 1981. She was seventy-one.

GENESIS OF MARY LOU'S MASS

In 1971, Alvin Ailey, famed choreographer and founder of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, heard *Music for Peace* and wanted to create a full-length work to the score. The two had been aware of each other's work, as Williams had approached the choreographer as early as 1965 with the possibility of his creating a dance to accompany "St. Martin de Porres." Ailey was unavailable at the time, but Mary had held to the notion that they might one day work together. It is reported that Ailey was in attendance at Tom Mboya's memorial service, at which *Music for Peace* debuted, and that this greatly influenced his desire to work with Williams. So, in early 1971, the two began working on a production that would feature the music of Mary Lou Williams and the choreography of Alvin Ailey. The work, consisting of movements from *Music for Peace* and new compositions, would come to be known as *Mary Lou's Mass*. For the production, Williams composed a new Agnus Dei. The result was a thirteen-section work that displayed the same overtly religious aspect of the black aesthetic that Ailey had represented in his other famous pieces, such as "Revelations." The work was highly praised when it debuted during Ailey's pre-Christmas season in 1971

(7–19 December), and for the next two years it would remain in the Ailey Company's repertory. To accommodate Ailey's touring company, in early 1972, Williams recorded the additional movements of *Mary Lou's Mass* that had been written specifically for the production. The master tapes were made available to Ailey, who could then perform *Mary Lou's Mass* on the road without the added expense of live musicians. He in turn allowed Williams to include the material on the 1975 album *Mary Lou's Mass* (Mary 102). Of the selections released on the recording, "Old Time Spiritual," "Act of Contrition," "Medi I and II," "Lamb of God," and "Praise the Lord (Come, Holy Spirit)" were never released before. All of the remaining movements were remixed and remastered from the 1970 *Music for Peace*. In this reissue of this original material, Father O'Brien has added material scarcely heard after 1972. These additions include "Willis," and the instrumental version of "Credo," which was released along with "Jesus Is the Best," sung by guitarist Sonny Henry on 45-rpm recordings. The two singles went virtually unnoticed. "It Is Always Spring" was composed by Leon Thomas, but arranged by Williams. Because of the weakness of the lyrics, the text was eliminated, but

the listener gets the complete line of Thomas's signature falsetto moaning, as well as the background vocals. The last two notable additions are the two hymns written in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These tracks are the original performances on Vatican Radio, which featured singers from the North American College and the College of the Propagation of the Faith. The most important thing to note about *Mary Lou's Mass* and the other compositions written in this vein is that unlike Ellington's *Sacred Concerts*, these compositions were conceived as liturgical pieces. Williams composed these movements to function within the celebration of the Mass—which accounts for the shortness of many of them. To say *Mary Lou's Mass* is a landmark recording is to limit its importance to historical reference, for there is a more important reason for its significance: it was perhaps the most overtly religious jazz recording made at its time, but it attempted to address many of the social ills that colored the 1960s and 1970s. Regardless of how scholars, listeners, and critics interpret this music, there is only one description that best fits it, and for this we look to the words of Mary Lou Williams herself, for it is indeed "Music for the Soul."



Mary Lou Williams at the piano with Buster Williams on bass during the celebration of Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York City, on Feb 18, 1975.

SONG NOTES

1. WILLIS

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Carline Ray, bass; David Parker, drums; Abdul Rahman, congas
Recorded 3 September 1917.

The first of seven tracks contained on this CD was not originally released on *Mary Lou's Mass* or *Music for Peace*. It was composed in honor of Williams's half-brother Willis Scruggs. This tune features Mary Lou Williams at her best—great piano playing that is supported by a strong “pocket,” created by a swinging, but subtle rhythm section.

2. O.W.

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Chris White, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar; David Parker, drums; Abdul Rahman, congas; Roger Glenn, flute; James Bailey, Milton Grayson, Carl Hall, vocals. Recorded 5 October 1969.

“O.W.” is a simple blues, set primarily to wordless vocals. It was adapted from Williams's first mass, the *Pittsburgh Mass*, but actually dates from 1954. It was composed in reference to tenor saxophonist Orlando Wright, who played with Mary during the 1940s and early 1950s. He later converted to Islam and changed his name to Musa Kaleem. Mary adapted the work to the Mass

after using it as a teaching tool at Seton High School in Pittsburgh.

3. PRAISE THE LORD

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Chris White, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar; David Parker, drums; Abdul Rahman, congas; Roger Glenn, flute; James Bailey, Milton Grayson, Carl Hall, vocals. Recorded 5 October 1969.

For this track, Williams adapts the text from Psalms 148 and 150. It is one of three compositions in the pianist's oeuvre that bears this title. Its fast tempo sets the tone for a text of praise, and Glenn's countermelodies offer a commentary on the unison voices. The song gets its gospel feel not necessarily from the swinging vamp that the piano and the rhythm section provide, but from the heavy use of call and response between the vocalists, especially in the final bars and their extemporizing of the text “Praise the Lord.”

OPPOSITE: *Mary Lou Williams at the piano, David Parker at the drums, and Roger Glenn on flute with children from Queen of Angels Church, Newark, New Jersey, during a celebration of Mary Lou's Mass at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, New York City, on Palm Sunday, 1973.*



4. OLD TIME SPIRITUAL

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Milton Suggs, bass; David Parker, drums; Ralph MacDonald, congas; Roger Glenn, flute. Recorded 7 January 1972.

One of the few acoustic sets on this recording, "Old Time Spiritual" is so bluesy, so soulful, so much the essence of the black sacred and secular experience, that one wishes it were longer than one minute and fifteen seconds. Williams's gospel-influenced vamping is punctuated subtly and responded to aptly by Milton Suggs's bass. Adding dimension and more depth to an already soulful performance is Glenn's blues-inflected flute.

5. THE LORD SAYS

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Chris White, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar; David Parker, drums; Abdul Rahman, congas; Milton Grayson, solo vocal; James Bailey and Carl Hall, vocals. Recorded 5 October 1969.

Based on a text adapted from Jeremiah 29: 11–12, 14, this track evokes much of the energy of the black gospel tradition. The fast upbeat tempo of the beginning shifts to a slow, almost improvised pulse, which effectively accompanies Grayson's soulful vocals, punctuated with Hall's high falsetto screams and background vocals that reach back to gospel vocal groups such as the Caravans, the Robert Martin Singers, and the Barrett Sisters.

*The Lord says / The Lord says
I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction.
You shall call upon me and I will hear you,
And I will bring back your captivity from all
places.*

*Lord, you have favored your land.
You have restored the well-being of Jacob*

Thank you, thank you...

6. ACT OF CONTRITION

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Milton Suggs, acoustic bass; Honi Gordon, vocal. Recorded 7 January 1972.

This track is also adapted from the Pittsburgh Mass. It is a melancholy and penitential prayer, dominated by Gordon's lush contralto voice. Suggs and Williams offer just enough accompaniment to establish the mood of the piece and set the plaintive atmosphere of the text.

7. KYRIE ELEISON (LORD, HAVE MERCY)

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Chris White, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar; David Parker, drums; Abdul Rahman, congas; Roger Glenn, flute; Carl Hall, solo vocal; James Bailey, Milton Grayson, vocals (recorded 5 October 1969); Eileen Gilbert, Randy Peyton, Carline Ray, Christine Spencer, vocals (overdubbed on 13 February 1970).

Mary Lou Williams wrote a text that contemporizes many of the social ills of her time, answered by the traditional Greek prayer Kyrie Eleison (Lord, Have Mercy) / Christe Eleison (Christ, Have Mercy) / Kyrie Eleison, and set this to an upbeat gospel-tinged melody. Once again, the choir's ostinato exclamations of "Lord, Have Mercy" are punctuated with Carl Hall's extraordinary falsetto, improvising the text. Listen carefully for the lower voices singing the bass line during the last few bars of the call and response.

*For our lack of faith, Lord have mercy.
For our lack of hope, Lord have mercy.
For our failure to care, Lord have mercy.*

*For letting ourselves be paralyzed with fear,
Christ have mercy.
For our division, Christ have mercy.
For our jealousies, Christ have mercy.*

*For our hatred, Lord have mercy.
For not being peacemakers, Lord have mercy.
For our lies, Lord have mercy on our souls.*

8. GLORIA

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Carline Ray, bass and vocals; Leon Atkinson, guitar; Al Harewood, drums; David Amram, French horn; Eileen Gilbert, Randy Peyton, Christine Spencer, vocals. Recorded 13 February 1970.

Most notable here is the use of the French horn, an instrument rarely used in jazz, though appearing in another landmark jazz recording, *Birth of the Cool*.

*Glory to God above all things. Peace on earth to
men, loved by God.
We praise You, we bless You, we thank You /
Because You are who You are.*

*Lord, God, King, Father, Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ,
Lord, God, Lamb of God, Lord, Christ, Son of
God,*

*We praise You, we bless You, we thank You,
because You are who You are.*

9. MEDI I AND MEDI II

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Milton Suggs, bass; David Parker, drums; Ralph MacDonald, congas; Roger Glenn, flute. Recorded 7 January 1972.

This slow blues begins with only Williams and Suggs; however, following the first chorus, the bass lines alters the tempo and segues into Medi II, which adds the remaining instrumentation. The additional instruments provide the perfect rhythmic "pocket" for Mary Lou's piano, which sings through some great lines of improvisation before returning to the original tempo and quiet blues motive of Medi I.

10. IN HIS DAY / PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU / ALLELUIA

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Carline Ray, electric bass; Al Harewood, drums; Leon Atkinson, guitar; Eileen Gilbert, Randy Peyton, Carline Ray, Christine Spencer, vocals; Carl Hall, Randy Peyton, solo vocals. Recorded 7 January 1972.

This composition is actually three separate works combined into one. The first is Carl Hall's interpretation of "In His Day"; the second is the blessing "Peace I Leave with You," sung by baritone Randy Peyton; the third is the Alleluia, sung by the choir, which switches from the slow 4/4, which defines the first two sections, to a faster tempo, in 3/4 time.

In his day, justice shall flourish, and peace, till the moon fails.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

11. LAZARUS

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Carline Ray, bass and vocals; Leon Atkinson, guitar. Recorded 13 February 1970.

This work was considered one of the stellar moments of the Ailey production, and it proves to be so here as well. A funky bass line and a prominent guitar riff dominate the

composition. Ray's warm contralto voice is augmented by the guitar and bass ostinato and Williams's piano. The message of the text is enhanced by Williams's word painting, which comes in the form of fluctuations between the major and minor mode in correspondence to the narrator, the rich man, the Lord's, and Abraham's texts.

12. CREDO

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Carline Ray, bass and vocals; Leon Atkinson, guitar; Al Harewood, drums; David Amram, French horn; Eileen Gilbert, Randy Peyton, Christine Spencer, vocals. 13 February 1970.

Williams and Ed Flanagan, who financed the early sessions for *Music for Peace*, composed this track. It begins with a funky drum solo that is joined after the first four bars by bass, French horn, and guitar. This swinging tempo is altered only once, as Williams retards to emphasize the text "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried," but the tempo returns to exclaim victory over death. This is one of several examples of Williams's conscious efforts to convey musically the emotion of climactic textual moments. Normally, the more extensive Nicene Creed (A.D. 325) is sung at a Mass; here, Williams sets to music the far earlier Apostles' Creed (A.D. 100).

13. CREDO (Instrumental)

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Carline Ray, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar; David Parker, drums and tambourine; Abdul Rahman, congas. Recorded 3 September 1971.

On this track, Williams reinterprets her vocal Credo as an instrumental number. The tempo is slowed to a subtle pace, as she explores the harmonic possibilities of this twelve-bar blues over Ray's funky bass line. Like the other instrumental tracks, this one reminds us of the brilliance of Williams's piano playing: it swings, and always invokes the blues. Here we hear Saturday night meeting Sunday morning in a copulation of harmonic sounds that make the head bob and the toes tap.

14. HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Chris White, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar; David Parker, drums; Abdul Rahman, congas; Roger Glenn, flute; James Bailey, Eileen Gilbert, Milton Grayson, Carl Hall, Carline Ray, Christine Spencer, vocals; Randy Peyton, solo vocals. Recorded 5 October 1969 and 13 February 1970.

A short verse titled "Turn Aside From Evil," sung by baritone Randy Peyton, begins this track. After the exclamation of "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts" by the chorus, Chris White enters with a swinging ostinato bass

line, which transitions the work into a bossa nova. The laid-back feel of the bossa nova is punctuated by a choir of voices exclaiming "Hosanna" in call and response to Hall's extraordinary falsetto extemporizations.

15. AMEN

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Chris White, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar; David Parker, drums; Abdul Rahman, congas; Roger Glenn, flute; James Bailey, Milton Grayson, Carl Hall, vocals. Recorded 5 October 1969.

This short track did not appear on either *Music for Peace* or the original recording of *Mary Lou's Mass*. It is a simple and quick realization of the Great Amen.

16. OUR FATHER

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Carline Ray, bass and solo vocal; Al Harewood, drums; David Amram, French horn; Eileen Gilbert, Randy Peyton, Christine Spencer, vocals. Recorded 13 February 1970.

One of the most striking elements of this track is Carline Ray's contralto voice and how she makes this plaintive prayer so heartfelt. The setting presents the text of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6: 9–13) and one of the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God" (Matthew 5: 9).

17. LAMB OF GOD

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Milton Suggs, bass; Roger Glenn, flute; Honi Gordon, solo vocal and screams; additional vocals provided by SATB chorus directed by Howard Roberts. Recorded 7 January 1972.

According to Father Peter O'Brien, Williams had composed a simple version of "Agnus Dei" for *Music for Peace*, but she had not recorded it. Noticing the lack of this essential movement of a Mass, Ailey gave Williams recordings by Schoenberg, Webern, and Penderecki, urging her to compose an Agnus Dei in this style. She then composed this version. It is a very dark setting of a text full of hope, punctuated by screams, shouts, and rapid articulations of consonants, all of which were traits associated with Penderecki's choral music.

Perhaps the most avant-garde composition in Williams's repertory, this selection moves away from any traditional settings of this text and explores traits of Gregorian chant and harsh dissonances.

18. IT IS ALWAYS SPRING

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Chris White, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar; David Parker, drums; Roger Glenn, flute; Leon Thomas, solo vocals; James Bailey, Milton Grayson, Carl Hall, vocals. Recorded 5 October 1969.

This is a previously unreleased track from *Music for Peace*. It is a laid-back groove that is propelled initially by Leon Thomas's yodeling, but soon yields itself to Williams's improvisation. The song was recorded with lyrics, but the producer deemed them unworthy and had them stripped away to reveal Williams's groove-laced piano-playing, supported by the rhythm section.

19. PEOPLE IN TROUBLE

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Chris White, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar; David Parker, drums; Abdul Rahman, congas; Roger Glenn, flute; Carl Hall, solo vocals; James Biley, Milton Grayson, vocals. Recorded 5 October 1969.

"People in Trouble" is an effective and assertive title. Of the compositions included on the two original recordings, this and "One" are the most contemporary in their political and spiritual perspectives. A simple, but soulful, prayer for peace, it is interrupted by an up-tempo vamp that transitions into "People in Trouble," Williams's poignant text on the lack of compassion and humanity.

Give us peace, O Lord. Send us peace, O Lord.

People in trouble. Children in pain.

Too weak to care. Too mean to share.

Worked so hard trying to find a brother.

Became impatient; now we hate each other.

Oh God, come to our aid; make haste to help us.

Oh, God, if you will, you can cure us.

Oh, Jesus, who has loved us so much, have pity on us.

For we believe; increase our faith.

You are the resurrection and the life.

Save us Jesus, before we perish.

20. ONE

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Carline Ray, bass and vocals; Leon Atkinson, guitar; Al Harewood, drums; David Amram, flute; Eileen Gilbert, Randy Peyton, Christine Spencer, vocals. Recorded 13 February 1970.

Williams explores the tenets of hard bop on this track, in which strong, buoyant chords go right into some fast swinging. The rhythmic "pocket" is there, and Williams takes advantage of it with some chordal work that lets you know that modern pianists in the likes of McCoy Tyner have nothing on her. The text, written by Leon Thomas, gets to the heart of Williams's musical and spiritual crusade in the 1960s and 1970s: unity and peace. It does not skirt around the racial issue that cuts across many lines, including the Vietnam War, the black-power movement, and the civil-rights movement.

If we all could love one another, / All the world would be as one.

Just take time to love one another; / All the world would be as one.

Black man, white man working together; / No more fighting to be done.

Yellow, red man dancing together: / Yes, the world would be as one.

Black man, white man, red man, and yellow: / Yes, the world will be as one.

Could be, must be, will be together. / Yes, the world will be as one.

21. PRAISE THE LORD (COME, HOLY SPIRIT)

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Milton Suggs, bass; Leon Atkinson, guitar; David Parker, drums; Ralph McDonald, congas; Julius Watkins, French horn; Peter Whitehead, solo vocals; additional vocals by SATB chorus directed by Howard Roberts. Recorded 7 January 1972.

This version of Williams's interpretation of Psalms 148 and 150 combines Whitehead rapping the lyrics with choral responses. It is funky, and it swings, as Williams's piano is propelled by McDonald's strong conga playing, which opens this piece.

22. JESUS IS THE BEST

Mary Lou Williams, piano; Carline Ray, bass; Sonny Henry, guitar and vocals; David Parker, drums and tambourine; Abdul Rahman, congas. Recorded 3 September 1971.

"Jesus Is the Best" is pure gospel. Its subtle piano vamp, accented by tambourine, drums, and bass, sounds similar to the contemporary music of Edwin and Walter Hawkins and Andre Crouch—all of whom had brought gospel into crossover status and incorporated many of the blues, jazz, and rock elements that Williams used in her sacred music. If played on black radio in the 1970s, this would have been categorized as "gospel" music, and not jazz. This is just another indication of how diverse Williams's influences were.

23. TELL HIM NOT TO TALK TOO LONG

Mary Lou Williams, organ; flute (unknown); choir from the North American College in Rome. Recorded at The Vatican Radio, Spring 1969.

This is Williams's interpretation of King's famous speech. This is the actual recording made in Rome in 1969. It is very simple and plaintive, and the male choir sings in unison. This is one of the few instances in which Williams is recorded playing the organ.

24. I HAVE A DREAM

Mary Lou Williams, organ; flute (unknown); choir from the North American College in Rome. Recorded at The Vatican Radio, Spring 1969.

Williams wrote this composition and "Tell Him Not to Talk Too Long" immediately after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968. This too was recorded in Rome in 1969.

OPPOSITE: *Mary Lou Williams, 1975.*



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Tammy L. Kernodle is associate professor of musicology at Miami University in Ohio. Her specialization is twentieth-century African-American and American music. From 1999 to 2001, she served as the head scholar for the Women in Jazz Initiative at the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. Her work has appeared in *Musical Quarterly*, *U.S. Catholic Historian*, and *Journal of Musicological Research*. Her book *Soul on Soul: The Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams* (Northeastern University Press, 2004) is the most recent biography addressing the contributions of the composer and pianist.

Fr. Peter O'Brien, S. J., is a Roman Catholic priest and a member of The Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). He met Mary Lou Williams in 1964, when they became fast friends. He managed her musical career from the fall of 1970 until her death in 1981. He is now Executive Director of the Mary Lou Williams Foundation, which has two purposes: to advance the work of Mary Lou Williams and to bring jazz to children. He teaches English composition at St. Peter's College in Jersey City, New Jersey.

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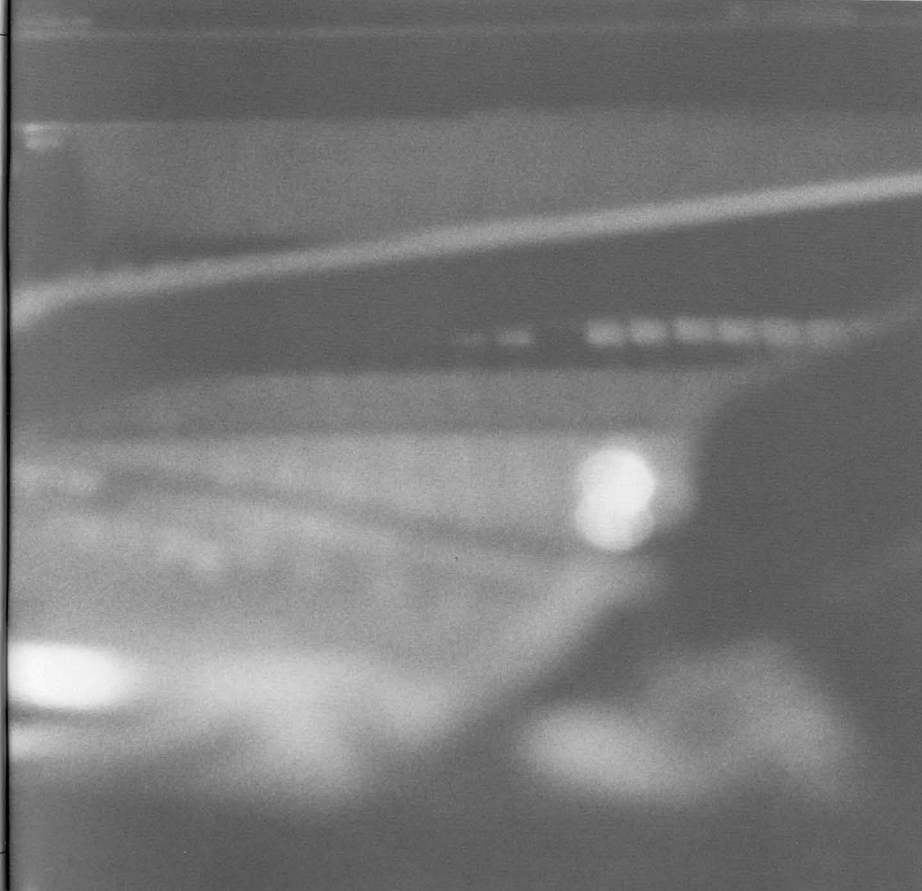
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