

A Celebration of Life for



Jann Parker

SUNSET: FEBRUARY 18, 2023

Memorial Service

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023 AT 3:00P.M.

BENTA'S FUNERAL HOME

630 St. Nicholas Ave • New York, New York 10030

Reverend Dr. J.C. White, *Officiating*

Order of Service

PROCESSIONAL

INVOCATION

Reverend Dr. J.C. White

OMEGA OMEGA SERVICE

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Denise Armstrong

SELECTION

T.K. Blue

SCRIPTURE

Denise Armstrong

OBITUARY

Silent Reading

SELECTION

Maisha Parker

HOMILY

Reverend Dr. J.C. White

BENEDICTION

Reverend Dr. J.C. White

RECESSIONAL





Obituary

JANET (JANN) ELIZABETH WHITE PARKER, mother, vocalist, composer, lyricist, arranger, educator and member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., was born to the union of James White and Inez Dudley White in New Bern, NC. There she spent her formative years attending elementary school while engaging in various activities that fed her love of theater and the arts including winning her first talent show at the age of 6 with a performance of a song whose lyrics would ultimately become her mantra for life; Don't Fence Me In.

After graduating early from J.T. Barber at the age of 16, Jann attended North Carolina Central University where she received her B.A in Speech and Drama. While there, her love of music afforded her the opportunity to perform in various venues in the Raleigh/Durham area where she met Robert Parker of Philadelphia, PA whom she married in June of 1969. The two settled in Harlem, NY where they welcomed a daughter, Maisha Parker some years later.

Jann found satisfaction in her ability to help others and spent a few years as an advisor with the Community Film Workshop Council and later as a manager at the Private Industry Council where she specialized in human resources for inner city youth, creating on the job training opportunities through various commercial businesses and corporations. But her talents and overall verve for life didn't allow her to comfortably remain there. Subsequently, her predilection for understated elegance and glamour led her to a position with one of the first prestige beauty brands created for black women: Fashion Fair, where she worked as a makeup artist and salesperson at Bloomingdales Department Store from the late 1970s to early 80s.

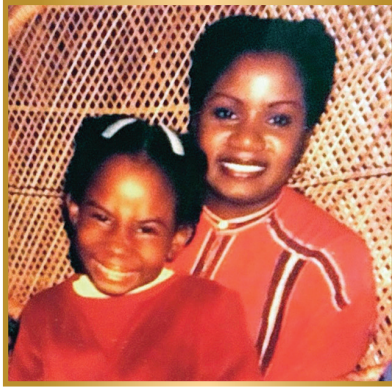
While her love of sophistication and polished artistry never waned, her desire to pair that expression with the language of music began to present itself more urgently. So, in 1987, Jann decided to make her livelihood solely by sharing her vocal talents with the world. The musical influences of Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald, whom she greatly admired, were often recognized in her choices on stage. Her experience included participating as a feature vocalist with many groups including the Lionel Hampton Orchestra, the Rahn Burton Trio, Igor Butman's Big Band (Russia), Ron Anderson's Versatiles, Larry Ridley's Jazz Legacy Ensemble, The Spirit of Life Ensemble and many others. Audiences in Paris, Greece, Portugal, Canada, Finland, Lithuania and countless islands in the Caribbean have been soothed by Jann's voice. Additionally, numerous jazz greats & entertainers have utilized her talent to enhance their recordings, special projects and events i.e. Ron Carter, Michael Olatunji, Randy Weston, John Hicks, Bill Cosby, Charlie Persip, T.K. Blue, Dave Hazeltine, Joe Lee Wilson, Don Braden, Chris White and Steve Turre' to name a few. One of her album's liner notes once described her as a "warm, confident, relaxed and always in control professional performer."

Jann added producer to her credits in 2001 with the release of her album, Voicings and wore the coproducer hat when recording Masterpieces live at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in 2004. In the spirit of staying close to her roots, Jann also founded the Jazz Preservation Society in 2003, located in her hometown of New Bern, NC where she was given the key to the city in 2004, and was later invited in 2010 to perform in their Tri-Centennial celebration. In 2013, she lent her voice to Vivica A. Fox's character, jazz vocalist Lady Midnight in the independent film Queen City.

In 2014, Jann suffered a stroke that rendered her right vocal cord temporarily dormant and while she underwent extensive therapy and regained the use of her voice, she felt her signature sound was compromised and made the decision to retire from performing professionally but remained a lover of music and often shared ideas with burgeoning artists who enlisted her counsel. She unwaveringly embodied grace, sass and beauty while being a lady; and a lady always knows when to leave.

On February 18, 2023 Jann took her final bow and quietly left the stage. She leaves to celebrate her life: Her daughter, Maisha Parker of NY; her former husband, Robert Parker of Philadelphia, PA; four sisters, Linda White, Clarissa Covington, Debbie Dominguez and Judy White all of NY; cousins Edward Earl Mallison & wife Essie Mallison, their children Eddie Mallison, Eric Mallison and Lavaba Mallison of NC and NY; Reverend Dr. J.C. White and wife; MaryAnn (Dudley)Bobbitt Smart, Ronald Chappelle, Dorothy & Eileen Dove of NC; two nephews, Michael Dominguez & wife of Houston TX; Albert Parker & wife Melissa Parker; seven nieces, Jennifer Bowers & husband, Christine Lackrage & husband, Monique Covington; Jill Parker Clark and husband Tony Clark, Noelle Parker Blockson, Sandra Mitchell, and EvaMarie (Penny) Parker of Philadelphia, PA; a host of cousins, great-nieces, great-nephews, sisterfriend Denise Armstrong of GA, adopted children of the heart and her longtime friend Mike Davis of NY.

Note: The absence of Jann Parker's birth date is not an oversight; it is intentionally omitted per her wishes. Jann believed that age could not be defined by numbers and time, but by energy. And in our desire to respect and honor her death as she lived her life, it will not be disclosed.



Remembering Jann Parker

I met Jann Parker more than forty years ago and was instantly drawn to her for the elegance, ease and self-confidence she carried. She was at once down to earth and a lady in that Southern sensibility of another era. That was before ever having heard her sing. Hearing her sing was another revelation.

She was a musician's musician, invited to collaborate with such venerated players as Ron Carter, Randy Weston, Lionel Hampton, John Hicks, Ted Curson, Talib Kibwe, Eddie Henderson, Onaje Allan Gumbs and more.

In a voice you can sometimes hear your mother call, your sister, brother, lover calling in accents as old as memory and as new as idioms never heard before. It can transcend the words sung and translate flawlessly our joy and pain and nameless yearnings. It can be, as it was for Jann, the instrument of one's own growth and deepening reflection.

Jann's voice struck such a chord in me from the moment I first heard her. It was at once instantly familiar and totally refreshing. No melismatic hysterics; none of the self-indulgent vocal gymnastics that often pass for passion. She was musically sophisticated, supremely confident and ever present in the moment.

Even with a surfeit of talent, lived experience and the presence to embody a lyric so seamlessly, it is no small feat to compose, arrange and often improvise a life in music; traveling the world, the only woman in the company of men, challenged to hold her own and doing so... with the Lionel Hampton Orchestra, the Rahn Burton Trio, Ron Anderson's Versatiles, Larry Ridley's Jazz Legacy Ensemble, the Spirit of Life Ensemble and others like bassist Curtis Lundy and trombonist Steve Turre. She toured the international jazz festivals in Paris, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal, Russia and Pori, Finland. And always a lady. She represented us and the music with pride in the tradition of those vocalists who, by virtue of their talent, were privileged and challenged to negotiate similar circumstances in a male-dominated culture—Nancy Wilson and Jann's primary musical influences, Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald.

When the voices of her mother and father were silenced with their passing just eleven weeks apart, Jann was compelled at last to make her own statement, for the record, about life as they'd taught her to live it—courageously, tenaciously and with joy. That essence, heard consistently in her live performances, comes through in her Voicings and Masterpieces recordings. Spiritually, she was buoyed by their support and, I suspect, knew at heart that their voices, commingled and distilled to their sublime essence in her own, will continue to be heard in songs that sing of life's fullness. That spirit lives in her daughter, Maisha Parker, her inspiration and muse, for whom Jann pursued life and livelihood with an unwavering passion.

For those of us who knew her—her elegance, eloquence, equanimity and laughter—and for all who are blessed to discover her song in recordings, her voice will continue to whisper, soar, console and inspire us.

– Khephra Burns

Death Is Nothing At All

By Henry Scott-Holland

*Death is nothing at all.
It does not count.
I have only slipped away in the next room.
Nothing has happened.*

*Everything remains exactly as it was.
I am I, and you are you,
and the old life we lived so fondly
together is untouched, unchanged.
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.*

*Call me by the old familiar name.
Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.
Put no difference into your tone.
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.*

*Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.
Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.*

*Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same as it ever was.
There is absolute and unbroken continuity.
What is this death but a negligible accident?*

*Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,
Somewhere very near,
Just around the corner.*

*All is well.
Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost.
One brief moment and all will be as it was before.
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again!*



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