

# Marvin Gaspard Chronicle

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2016 (Second Edition)

## Gaspard Celebrates 20-Year Anniversary with St. Luke's Presbyterian Church

HOUSTON Marvin Gaspard, Director of Music/Organist-Choirmaster at St. Luke's Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas, was honored this Sunday morning, January 31, 2016, with a celebratory worship service marking his 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with St. Luke's. Following the worship service, guests attended a reception in his honor.

The Rev. W. Scott Harbison, pastor at St. Luke's, led the special worship service honoring Mr. Gaspard. Rev. Harbison, on behalf of the Session and congregation of St. Luke's, presented Marvin with a framed certificate commemorating his 20 years at St. Luke's.

Renowned organist and composer, Alfred Fedak, led and conducted the musical portions of the service from the organ, including hymns, service music and choir performance. Mr. Fedak is a widely-published and well-known composer of church music. Since 1990, he has held the position of Minister of Music and Arts at Westminster Presbyterian Church on Capitol Hill in Albany, New York. He has also been the Organist/Choir Director of Congregation Beth Emeth in Albany since 2014. Mr. Fedak was flown into Houston just for this joyous occasion.

Special music for this celebratory service included a prelude, "Melodie", written by Marvin Gaspard for hand bells, hand chimes and harp; an offertory anthem written by Mr. Fedak titled, "Christus Paradox",

and a parting response, "Old Irish Blessing", written by Marvin. The service ended, appropriately, with Marvin playing his arrangement of a familiar tune on the organ. The day was clearly one of special music by two exceptional organists/composers.

A reception of hors d'hourves and punch followed the service. Marvin was presented with a monetary "Thank You" gift from the St. Luke's congregation. A good time was had by all.

Gaspard was installed as St. Luke's Director of Music, Organist-Choirmaster on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 1996, by the Rev. Kenneth Sinclair. Since that time Marvin has worked with two additional pastors: Rev. Dr. Fairfax Fair (1998-2004) and currently, Rev. W. Scott Harbison (2007- ).



*Marvin Gaspard pictured here (second from right) with the St. Luke's Presbyterian Chancel Choir after their December 20, 2015, Christmas Choir Service, "The Beauty of the Nativity"*

Marvin was ordained as elder in the Presbyterian Church in 2007. He was also installed to serve a term on St. Luke's Session in 2007.

The first edition of the Marvin Gaspard Chronicle, published Saturday, October 28, 2006, documented highlights of Marvin's career, including his first ten years at St. Luke's. This second edition is dedicated to Marvin's second decade at St. Luke's and highlights his most notable accomplishments, both inside and outside St. Luke's.



*Marvin Gaspard with Rev. Scott Harbison  
Marvin's installation as elder, 2007*

# Marvin Performs and Chancel Choir Sings at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, New York City, and Church of St. Ignatius, Rome, Italy

Marvin's musical connections and networking proved to be fruitful for him and his St. Luke's Chancel Choir three times during his second decade at St. Luke's. He and his choir were invited to participate with other U. S. choirs again at Carnegie Hall, New York City, in 2009, at Lincoln Center, New York City, in 2013, and at the Church of St. Ignatius, Rome, Italy, in 2014.

Marvin's choral arrangement of "America the Beautiful" was published by Shawnee Press in 2001. As one of its best sellers, this piece was chosen by Shawnee Press to be performed at their 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala concert at Carnegie Hall in New York City on June 6, 2009. Marvin was honored by being asked to play the piece on piano as part of the orchestra accompanying the 200+ voice choir as they sang his arrangement.

Marvin was also invited to bring members of his Chancel Choir to sing as part of one of the large, multi-choir ensembles to sing other Shawnee Press choral works. The experience was once again rewarding for those choir members able to participate, as they had several days of rehearsal with composers like Joseph Martin and Greg Gilpin --- and of course,



*Inside beautiful Carnegie Hall in New York City for the Shawnee Press 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala concert, June 6, 2009*

another exciting chance to perform on stage at the famous Carnegie Hall.

Then in 2013, Marvin and his choir were invited to join a larger, multi-choir, world-premiere performance of composer Mark Hayes' "Requiem" at Lincoln Center in New York City. Marvin and Mark Hayes are both friends and writing partners, as they have written two organ/piano duet books (with another planned for 2018). Once again the choir was privileged, as they sang under the direction of Mark Hayes.

When Mark was invited to present his "Requiem" in Rome

in 2014, at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Festival Di Musica e Arte Sacra, he invited Marvin and his choir to participate. So, Marvin and the St. Luke's Chancel Choir "went international". Not only did they sing the entire "Requiem" on October 26, 2014; but they also sang selections from it in Assisi at the Church of St. Mary Major. While in historical Rome, Marvin and the choir not only practiced daily, but soaked up the Italian sights, culture, food and shopping.

The choir has been truly blessed by Marvin and his musical gifts and connections. Thank you, Marvin.



*Inside Lincoln Center in New York City for the world premiere of the Hayes "Requiem" May 27, 2013*



*Marvin and members of St. Luke's Chancel Choir inside the Church of St. Ignatius in Rome following the performance of the Hayes "Requiem" October 26, 2014*

# Fans Cheer as Gaspard Releases Additional Albums

Over the decade from 2006 to 2016, Marvin has continued to please his fans by releasing three additional CD's. In 2009 he recorded a piano solo album of popular standard songs entitled, "Collage". The recording and mixing was done here in Houston at Sugar Hill Recording Studios.

Marvin returned to Sugar Hill in 2010 with his Marvin Gaspard Trio (piano, bass and drums) to record "Colors of Jazz". On some pieces he added flute and guitar, played by St. Luke's own Ryan Klasen, Contemporary Music Leader.

As has become tradition, Grammy winning vocalist and dear friend of Marvin, Cynthia Clawson, sings on one of the tracks on each of these albums.

## THE CELEBRITY OF GASPARD

A few years ago, Steinway and Sons, the premiere piano manufacturer, in recognition of Marvin's stellar mastery of the keyboard, recognized him as one of its Steinway artists. (By the way, the list of pianists recognized by Steinway includes people such as Harry Connick, Jr., Billy Joel, Roger Williams and Van Cliburn.) Congratulations, Marvin!

Sugar Hill Recording Studios is steeped in history. The enterprise is believed to be America's oldest, continuously-operating recording studio. Over the years, the likes of recording artists George Jones, Freddy Fender, Willie Nelson and Beyonce have recorded there, to name a few. So, recording at Sugar Hill is quite the experience.

As a Steinway artist, Marvin was honored by Sugar Hill when he was asked to be one of the renowned pianists to sign their Steinway grand piano.



Marvin signing the Steinway grand piano at Sugar Hill Recording Studios



Marvin's Signature inside the Steinway

sings on this album as well. In fact, through the miracle of technology, she and Marvin teamed up to sing a three-part harmony on "Winter Wonderland".

One more album, "Songs of Stained Glass" was recorded here at St. Luke's with Marvin on the organ and the Chancel Choir singing some of their favorite anthems. The album was released to celebrate St. Luke's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.



Marvin at the door of Houston's Sugar Hill Recording Studios

In 2013 Marvin recorded his first Christmas album, "I'll Be Home for Christmas". The album is piano solo by Marvin and includes many Christmas favorites. And yes, Ms. Clawson

# Gaspard Accompanies South Main Baptist Choir on Mission Trip to China

Marvin is one of Houston's finest organist/pianists. He is engaged continually to play for events – from intimate private groups to large public audiences. One of the most notable engagements in the past decade was when, in March of 2011, the choir of South Main Baptist Church asked Marvin to accompany them across China for their choir mission trip.

His flexibility and skill were put to a test, as the condition of instruments in small Christian churches across China were quite varied. The trip was a tremendous success; and Marvin enjoyed experiencing the history and culture of China.



Marvin standing on the Great Wall of China



Marvin recording at Sugar Hill

Marvin and Cynthia with Sugar Hill Sound Engineer, Andy Bradley (center)



## Special Musical Events at St. Luke's Presbyterian

Two events at St. Luke's have become a tried and true tradition: Jazz in the Parking Lot at the beginning of Lent and Jazz Communion on the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend. Both events are made more special with the music of the Marvin Gaspard Trio. These events are just two examples of how Marvin's church career and entertainment career meet.

For years St. Luke's has hosted a Fat Tuesday fish fry for the community. Tables and chairs are set up in the parking lot; a fish fry is catered and sold to neighbors for rock-bottom prices; and the jazz music of Marvin and his trio floats through the evening air. St. Luke's friends and neighbors have grown to anticipate the event with delight.

The Jazz Communion worship service on Independence Day weekend began in 1999 and became so popular that in 2010 the church added a second Jazz Communion service each fall. The Marvin Gaspard Trio never fails to move the congregation to hand clapping and toe tapping with good old-time gospel music.

In 2015 Marvin began Belle Campana, a hand chime choir for youth at St. Luke's. The group played for Thanksgiving worship and the Christmas Eve, pre-service concert. They bring great joy to the congregation when they play. Marvin is assisted by Ryan Klasen, Contemporary Music Leader at St. Luke's.

*The  
Marvin  
Gaspard  
Trio  
Jazz  
Communion  
2015  
(right)*



*St. Luke's  
Belle  
Campane  
(below)*



### Thank you, Marvin,



**for 20 marvelous, musical years at St. Luke's!**

## Gaspard Still Writing Music

The Chancel Choir is blessed to frequently have Marvin Gaspard choral arrangements to sing. Marvin continually finds inspiration to write music. If he can't find the right piece for a certain service or occasion, he just writes or arranges one. Sometimes the arrangements include parts for harp, violin, flute or other instruments to help enhance the sound.

Many of the responses that the choir and the congregation sing are written by Marvin. If a hymn doesn't have a descant for the sopranos and it "needs it" (his words), he just writes one. The choir knows they are spoiled and wouldn't trade it for anything.

Marvin has also continued to write music for publication. His "Three A Cappella Blessings" were published in 2010.

He just completed a project to convert Mark Hayes' piano book of spirituals to organ format. The book will be published by Lorenz Publishing this year. This project continues with the conversion of many more piano books in Hayes' collection over the coming years.

Spoiler alert – Mark and Marvin may be formulating plans to co-write another organ/piano duet book in the near future.