

Musical Biography of Senior Monà Raines

My story in music goes back to my early childhood. As far back as I can remember, I was always singing and if I wasn't, then my parents knew that it was either because I was not feeling well or something was wrong. As I grew older, I would listen to WBGO 88.3fm with my dad whenever we were in the car going someplace. As time went on, I found myself listening more and more to the bass line of different songs. At that time, I had no idea that I would become a very competent electric bass player. One day my dad came home with an American made Fender electric jazz bass that a friend of his had given him to practice with. I watched my dad struggle with tuning and learning the various keys and chord progressions, which give me the opportunity to help him figure it out. Assisting my dad soon made me realize that I, too, wanted to play the electric bass.

In October of 2009, I started playing the electric bass and by April of 2010, I was playing at our church. My dad saw that I had a musical gift and he told me that there would be times that he would need me fill in for him if he could not play. I took that to heart and in April of 2010, while my dad was out of town, I filled in for him at our church; that was my first time playing in public and I loved it. When he returned home, our pastor, Reggie Bynum, jokingly told my dad that his service was no longer required and that he was replaced by me. Dad loved it because I

was able to handle it. From that day to the present, I still play every Sunday as part of my music ministry. In 2011, the pastor and his wife, Mrs. Yvette Bynum decided that with the musical skill levels that we had in the church, we should put together a smooth jazz band. It worked out really well. We had nine members and I played the electric bass. We did several dinner dances, retirement parties and private affairs.

When my dad became pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Newark, New Jersey, I saw my role change from bassist to pianist, we had a small congregation with one musician and he was the drummer. Playing piano is something that came naturally to me. With my background on the electric bass, I was able to make the transition smoothly. Over the past several years, I have performed with some very prominent people in the jazz world such as: James Gibbs the 3rd - nationally known trumpeter, David Braham – nationally known Hammond B3 organ and keyboard player, and Lady Cici Williams –vocalist and her husband, Mr. Don Williams on drums and arrangements. Currently, I perform with a group called “One step beyond” directed and led by Mr. Roland Washington.

Since the fall of 2015, I have been a member of the Rutgers Youth Jazz Ensemble at the Mason Gross School of Performing Arts at Rutgers University - New Brunswick, New Jersey, where I have been able to continue to hone my

musical abilities. The culmination of working with this ensemble was in spring of 2016, when we had an outstanding concert to close out our musical season.

Additionally during the summer of 2016, I studied and performed with the NJPAC All Female Jazz Residency Ensemble. Also, for the past three summers, I have attended the Rutgers summer jazz program. All of this is in preparation for the next phase of my life, which is to become a world class musician. Overall, I feel blessed that God has given me the gift of music so that I can always serve our Lord through music and song.

