

Jeff Scott's composition *Passion for Bach and Coltrane* is a concert-length Passion oratorio that combines elements from classical and jazz music. It features orator and poet A.B. Spellman, as well as wind quintet Imani Winds, string quartet Harlem Quartet, and jazz trio Alex Brown, Edward Perez, and Neal Smith.

This brief summary, though entirely accurate, profoundly misses what makes this work one of Imani Winds' most personal musical journeys.

Inspiration runs through every aspect of this composition based on music by Johann Sebastian Bach and John Coltrane, and not just in the improvised solos threaded throughout the work. One might be tempted to think this album is a mere redressing of these giants' work. That too doesn't tell the whole story - this is a piece of astonishing originality; and in today's musical landscape, inspiration is an entirely underrated miracle.

Poet A.B. Spellman has had a lifelong passion for Bach and Coltrane. Even now, at the age of 88, when either composer's music plays on the radio, he stops and listens with all of his strength. His enduring love for their music led him to write poetry about the two men "swapping infinite fours" in heaven, as music is his religion and those Prophets his musical stanchions.

I know this, by the way, because A.B. Spellman is my father.

When Jeff Scott, Imani Winds' founding hornist, first experienced Dad's poetry, he felt the need to enhance the spirit of the words in music. Jeff spent months reading his dog-eared copy of the poetry while our group toured the world. Eventually, he took a trip to the church in Leipzig where Bach was musical director; in that pilgrimage, Jeff felt a deep connection to both Bach and Coltrane's universal spirituality, which helped him complete the work.

Bach's Presence

Jeff took the shape of the piece from Bach's iconic "Goldberg Variations". *Passion* opens with **Aria** and a poem describing Bach's affect on my father. The Goldberg theme is masterfully arranged amongst the entire ensemble. Other references to Bach are scattered in more or less intensity throughout each movement. The biggest quote is in **Variation 13**, where Mr. Scott makes a jazz variation-within-a-variation. **Out Of Nazareth** is the true classical Passion of the whole work. At one point A.B.'s poetry describes Christ's moments to and from the cross with brutal beauty, accompanied by a Bach chorale. The rest of the movement is a musical illumination of the texts that speaks directly to how the Passion relates to contemporary times.

Coltrane's Influence

Jazz is equally omnipresent, as Jeff used the spirit of "A Love Supreme", one of Coltrane's most sacred works, to guide the movement of the music. The second movement, **Psalm**, shows us a glimpse of the scope of the piece with a jazz chant and A.B.'s poem that begins "I will die in Havana in a hurricane." The next track **Resolution**, after John Coltrane's rhapsodic tune, is the mirror image of **Aria** that speaks to my father's deep communion with Coltrane. **Groovin Low** is a swinging baroque slow drag: "I bop to the bassline now", A.B. declares. **A Hug for Gonzalo** is

a tribute to pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba and the sacred power of being a passionate listener of music. **Acknowledgement**, the final movement, is a play on the Resurrection of Christ, combining “A Love Supreme” and an uplifting poem on death, renewal, and the power of love.

Imani Winds, my father, Harlem Quartet, Alex Brown, and Neal Smith have performed the Passion many times together since 2015. Every time has been such a healing experience, almost transcendental. I believe this is partially because of the sacredness of the piece, but not necessarily because of its religious material. When music is made with true collaboration, fearlessness, and love, it can elevate those who experience it to a higher realm.