

10A ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Battle's 'Grace' is wonderful



By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

**Kathleen Battle
Grace
David Frost and
Steven Paul,
producers
Sony Classical**

☆☆☆☆ 1/2

Kathleen Battle's voice should be listed as one of the wonders of the world. It is a unique instrument filled with passion, emotion and beauty. It radiates as warm as the sun and is as nearly beyond description. Whatever she sings becomes a part of beauty itself.

Her latest effort, *Grace*, is as awe-inspiring as anything I've ever heard her sing. It is filled with the music of deep and abiding faith, worship and praise. Recorded at Riverside Church in New York City, Battle masterfully interprets the music of George Frideric Handel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johann Sebastian Bach and others as if she was born singing these complicated masters' music. She does, it with such an ease it's almost eerie, chilling. She makes you believe everyone can or should sing like this.

But we know everyone cannot sing like this. This is a gift from God - one Battle is in complete control of. From the opening power of Handel's "Rejoice Greatly" to the lilting splendor of "Ave Maria," Battle is intent on showing off her glorious pipes.

Not into classical music you say? Give a listen to Battles' interpretation of "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord? You've never heard this traditional hymn until you heard her version. It shimmers with emotion, with quiet fire. She communicates as if she's watching the crucifixion firsthand. Her voice radiates like a beacon for the lost, drawing him nearer to salvation. It's breathtaking music making.

**Various Artists
Original Motion
Picture Soundtrack
Love Jones
Various producers
Columbia Records**

☆☆☆☆

I can't begin to tell you how good it is to hear a movie soundtrack that isn't filled with foul-mouthed rappers spewing out hate and other forms of nonsense. No, *Love Jones* is filled with singing - real singing that's more about conveying emotion than ringing up sales.

Not that this CD isn't capable of racking up huge sales. It's got the star power to do so. Xscape, the Fugee's Lauryn Hill, The Brand New Heavies and rising stars Kenny Lattimore, Dionne Farris and Maxwell contribute a host of good music that should satisfy any listener.

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Rap world mourns B.I.G.'s death, hopes violence ends

By Paula Story
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES - The Notorious B.I.G.'s lyrics mirrored the hard and fast life he lived.

"You wanna see me locked up, shot up, Mom's crouched up over the casket screamin' bastard; crying, knowing my friends is lying, ya'll know who killed him," he sang on his upcoming album *Life After Death ... 'Til Death Do Us Part*.

The lyrics were prophetic: Christopher Wallace, whose stage names were The Notorious B.I.G. or Biggie Smalls, was shot to death Sunday. He was 24.

A drive-by shooter killed him as he sat in his vehicle after leaving an industry party. Stickers on the GMC Suburban bore the message "Think B.I.G., March 25, 1997," the release date of his album.

Once a crack-selling kid who had a knack for rhyming, Wallace became a hulking man who commanded respect as the king of East Coast rap. He was a dapper dresser at 280 pounds and more than 6 feet, often topped with a derby hat.

Wallace was Billboard Rap Artist of the Year in 1995. His single, "One More Chance/Stay With Me," was named best rap single that year, after debuting at No. 5. His debut album, *Ready to Die*, sold more than 1 million copies.

"He knew where he came from and he knew what was up," said Peter Spiner, who worked with Wallace on the

newly released rap documentary "Rhyme & Reason."

"I think the guy had a great ability of being able to talk about his environment," Spiner said.

The music is hard for some to listen to and even harder for some to understand. But the gangsta rapper was also a new father who looked at what he was doing as a business.

Kurtis Blow, a rap pioneer and disc jockey for KPWR-Los Angeles, said Wallace had a distinctive, East Coast style.

"Biggie was smooth, his vocal delivery was one of pure silk," Blow said. "He was the chill gangster. His lyrics were really hardcore expressing his innermost feelings coming from a Brooklyn ghetto, and he was real, because everything he said, he lived that life."

Wallace visited the station a few weeks ago and music director Damion said the rapper was positive and happy to be in Los Angeles, despite rumors of an East Coast-West Coast rivalry.

"This guy didn't want any of this drama, he was finishing his album," Damion said.

In an interview Friday, Wallace told the Los Angeles Times he had begun thinking more about where his life was headed.

"When you start making a whole lot of money and you start living too fast, it's up to you to slow yourself down," he said.

"You can't be getting drunk, smoking two or three ounces of weed a day, and (having sex) with all these different females. Something's bound to happen."

The Notorious B.I.G.

Rapper's death shocks nation

By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST



Life After Death... Until Death Do Us Part, a two-CD, 22-song set to be released March 25, was how rapper Notorious B.I.G. planned to answer a number of questions about his troubled life. Now it will stand as his swan song.

B.I.G., real name Christopher Wallace and also known as Biggie Smalls, was killed Sunday morning in Los Angeles while leaving a Vibe Magazine party in his Suburban. He was 25.

Reports about B.I.G.'s death are sketchy. He was shot several times while parked at a stop light. He was taken to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and died shortly thereafter. Police have no leads and have conflicting reports about the type of vehicle the culprit drove. Some say the assailant was driving a white sedan. Others say it was a black van or sport utility vehicle. At presstime, no suspects had been arrested and Los Angeles police had no solid leads.

Funeral arrangements will not be announced, according to Kirk Burrowes, president of Bad Boy Entertainment.

"To his friends and fans: there will be plenty of time in the coming weeks for you to show your support, your love and your respect for B.I.G.," Burrowes said. "But for now we ask the public and media to respect the wishes of his family and let them mourn in peace and solitude."

B.I.G. recorded a string of hits that included "Juicy," "Big Poppa" and "One More Chance," the first single to debut at No. 1 on Billboard Magazine's Rap and R&B Singles charts. His new single "Hypnotized" - based on a sample of Herb Alpert's "Rise" - is already causing a buzz at radio stations.

"When I did the first album I was in a living hell, stressed and depressed," B.I.G. said. "I was more relaxed making this one and I'm proud of what I came up with. I want this to be the biggest record ever. I want it to hit the streets harder than any record before. I want to live up to my name and prove to everybody that there really is life after death."

Sean "Puffy" Combs, also known as Puff Daddy, is founder and CEO of Bad Boy Entertainment. Responsible for B.I.G.'s r&b, rap and hip-hop sound, Combs was also a close friend to B.I.G. In a statement released Tuesday, Combs said: "B.I.G. was one of my closest friends. Words can't express my pain. He was one of the greatest artists I've every had the pleasure to work with. I love him and will always miss him."

The news of his death spread across the country as if it were natural disaster. Phones started

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La Vern Baker dies in N.Y. hospital

By Larry McShane
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - LaVern Baker, the gutsy rhythm and blues belter who went to the top of the charts in the '50s and '60s with "Jim Dandy" and "Tweedle-Dee," has died at 67.

Ms. Baker was the second woman inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame - after Aretha Franklin - and was a favorite of Elvis Presley, who recorded eight songs in her repertoire.

She died Monday at a New York hospital. Ms. Baker had suffered from diabetes and had both legs amputated below the knees two years ago.

Ms. Baker scored 20 R&B

hits between 1955 and 1965, including "Tweedle-Dee," "Jim Dandy," "Play It Fair," "I Cried a Tear" and "See See Rider."

Like black contemporaries such as Little Richard and Big Joe Turner, Ms. Baker was late in receiving recognition for her role in the birth of rock and roll.

"Regardless of how old you are when you get this, it's still good, baby," she said upon being inducted into the Rock Hall of Fame in 1991.

Born Delores Williams in Chicago, she was the niece of a blues singer named Memphis Minnie. Her first performances were in her hometown at age 17. Under the name Little Miss Sharcropper, she signed with National Records

in 1950 and made her first recordings. Her career took off after she signed with Atlantic Records in 1953.

Segregation kept her R&B songs off the radio, where softer cover versions by Pat Boone and other white artists dominated playlists. Ms. Baker's irritation with singer Georgia Gibbs' frequent covers led to one particularly pointed incident.

"When I went to Australia with Bill Haley, Big Joe Turner, the Platters and Freddy Bell and the Bellboys, I left her my (flight) insurance policy," Ms. Baker recalled. "I sent it to her with a letter: 'Since I'll be away and you won't have anything new to copy, you might as well take

this." There were other artists whose covers didn't bother Ms. Baker. She liked Elvis Presley, and the Grateful Dead were among the bands that later did "See See Rider."

When her career cooled off in the late '60s, Ms. Baker visited Vietnam to entertain the troops. She came down with bronchial pneumonia and was told to recuperate in a warm climate.

She settled in the Philippines and spent most of the next two decades there managing a club near the U.S. military base and performing on weekends. Her first return to the United States was for Atlantic's 40th birthday party in 1988, where she performed

in Madison Square Garden.

Ms. Baker subsequently enjoyed a career resurgence, performing at the Kennedy Center in Washington, recording a pair of songs with Ben E. King and doing one song for the "Dick Tracy" soundtrack.

She appeared on Broadway in "Black and Blue," starting in 1990. In 1992, she released a new album. More recently, a recording of her nightclub act was released as "Live in Hollywood '91."

She was married twice, including to the late comic Slappy White, and had two daughters. Funeral arrangements were not immediately available.

Shop owner suit slows Spielberg's 'Amistad' movie



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEWPORT, R.I. - Angry comments and letters have been directed toward a business owner who sued Steven Spielberg's production compa-

ny and the city after claiming work on the film "Amistad" was hurting his business.

"People are getting the wrong impression and unfortunately it's something I can't control," said Mike Carlin,

owner of One Hour Moto Photo.

Carlin said his Touro Street business has suffered and he's been besieged with phone calls and letters, some anonymous, protesting his lawsuit seeking a restraining order against the movie.

"I've been characterized as everything from evil to tacky, to why don't I relocate my business, to why don't I put my tail between my legs and go with the flow," he said Tuesday.

In a ruling Monday, Superior Court Judge Francis Darigan prohibited Dreamworks from making any exterior or interior alterations to Carlin's shop, which faces Washington Square, where filming begins today.

Production crews converted the area to a 19th century town for the filming of "Amistad," the true story of the 1839 slave rebellion aboard a Spanish slave ship and the trials in New Haven, Conn., that followed.

"I was seriously concerned that my business would suffer

so much that I would go out of business," Carlin said. "I sincerely believed that and I saw that happening."

"I'm not trying to gouge Dreamworks," he said. "I'm just trying to protect my business."

Carlin still is seeking compensation for business he claims he lost during two days of preproduction work last week, but was happy with Darigan's ruling.

Carlin's lawyers were seeking \$25,000 in compensation and \$10,000 in lawyer fees, a source close to the case told The Newport Daily News. No monetary settlement was reached Monday.

Carlin also got a court order providing him unlimited access to his property.

Washington Square has been closed to automobile traffic and a parking ban is in effect. In court papers, Carlin predicted those measures would cost him up to 50 percent of his business during the five weeks that Spielberg will be filming in Newport.

Dreamworks has given cash to businesses affected by filming, said Keith Stokes, executive director of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce.

Some shopkeepers have been given a security deposit to make sure their storefronts are returned to their original state, while others have received compensation for lost revenue.

