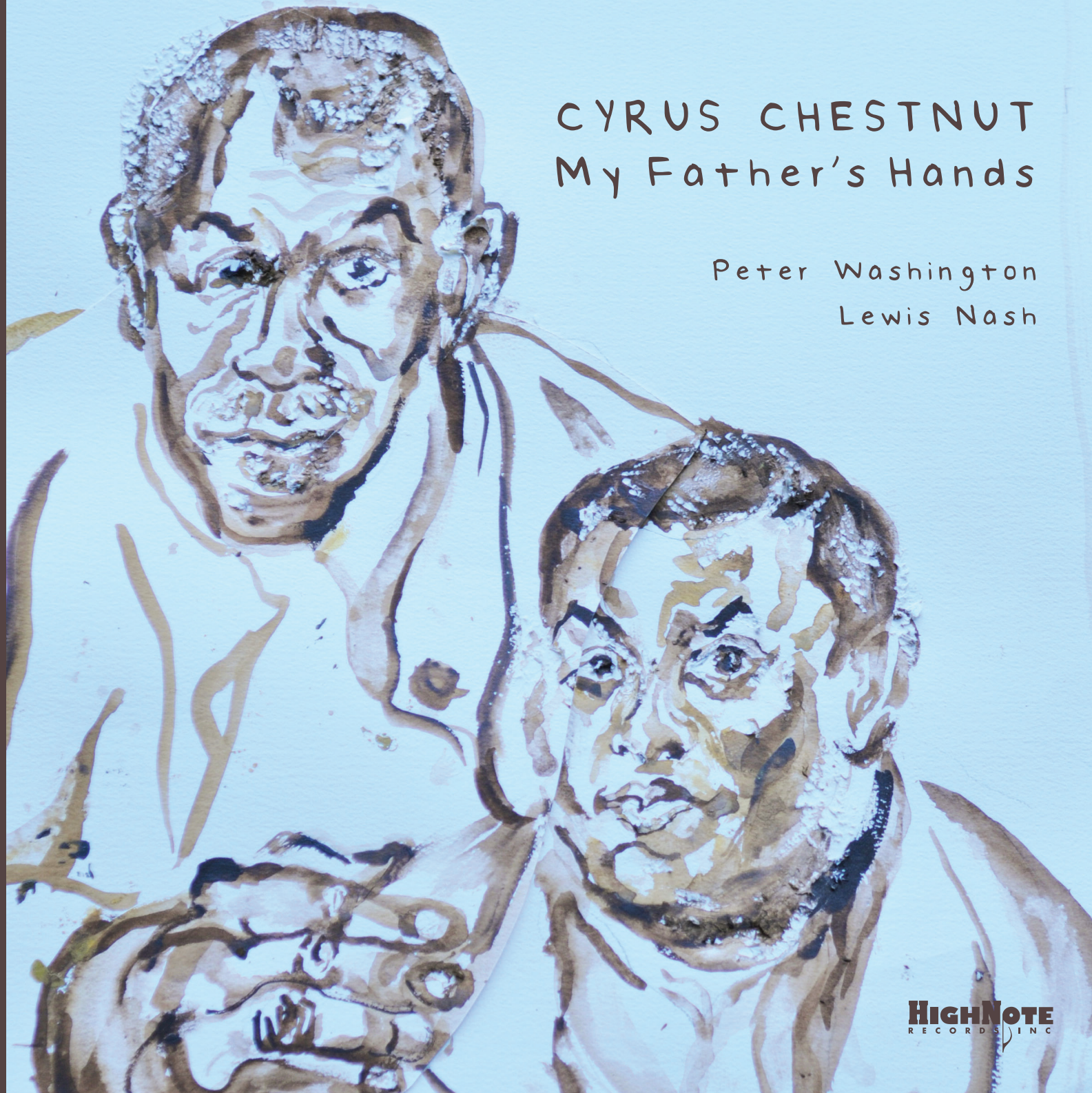


HIGHNOTE
RECORDS INC

CYRUS CHESTNUT
My Father's Hands

Peter Washington
Lewis Nash



HIGHNOTE
RECORDS INC

1. Nippon Soul Connection 7:26

(Cyrus Chestnut) (Nutman's Music Service) ASCAP

2. Thinking About You 5:24

(Cyrus Chestnut) (Nutman's Music Service) ASCAP

3. Cubano Chant 4:08

(Ray Bryant) (Second Floor Music) BMI

4. Baubles, Bangles and Beads 4:46

(George Forrest / Robert Wright) (Scheffel Music Corp.) ASCAP

5. Yesterday 4:19

(John Lennon / Paul McCartney) (MPL Communications / SONY/ATV Tunes) ASCAP

6. I Must Tell Jesus 3:26

(Elisha A. Hoffman) (Public Domain)

7. Working Out Just Fine 6:36

(Cyrus Chestnut) (Nutman's Music Service) ASCAP

8. There Will Never Be Another You 4:18

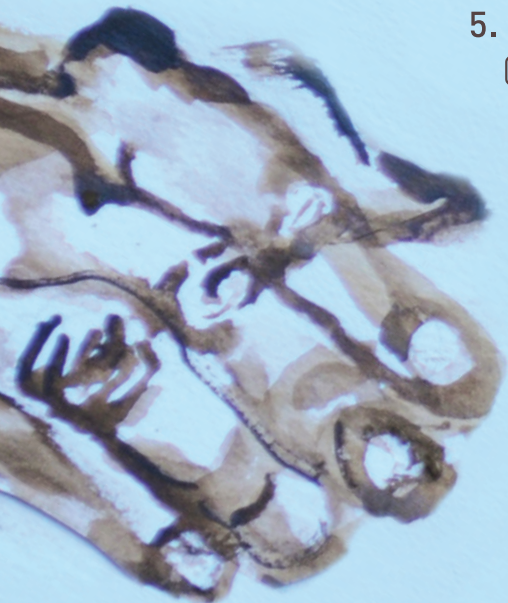
(Mack Gordon / Harry Warren) (Four Jays Music / Mattsam Music / Morley Music) ASCAP

9. But Beautiful 2:58

(Johnny Burke / Jimmy Van Heusen) (Bourne Co. / Music Sales Corp.) ASCAP

10. Epilogue 5:57

(Cyrus Chestnut) (Nutman's Music Service) ASCAP





My Father's Hands

For as long as I can remember, I saw my father's hands have a passionate relationship with the piano. They played arpeggios and triads in a strong driving pulse that would make you move with joy the minute you heard the sound.

Growing up in Baltimore, there was always music playing in the house whether on the radio or playing records. It was predominantly Gospel, especially the records of James Cleveland, The Caravans, Professor Charles Taylor, Shirley Caesar and so on. Some of my greatest musical moments were hearing my father accompany my mom as well as hearing him play and sing himself. He taught himself how to play the piano and he spent most of his days honing his skills by playing in the church.

I wanted to start trying to do what my father did and somewhere between 2 and 3 years old, my legs were strong enough to climb up on the bench and imitate him. I had watched his hands and their intimate relationship with the piano and attempted to do the same. One day, he presented me with the Leila Fletcher Piano Course and the rest is history. My father was responsible for turning on the music gene that most likely was there from conception.

Time progressed and I began to explore Haydn, Beethoven, Bach, Monk and more. Even now as I think about my father, I still see his hands going up and down the piano keyboard with an infectious driving rhythm. He played until he could no more. It was at that point, he crossed over to play that heavenly piano that was waiting for him.

This record is a statement of gratitude to my father. It's amazing to me how I can look at my hands and see his. He inspired many with his life and I hope to do all I can to inspire as he did.

I know everything is working out just fine with you Daddy....

~ Cyrus Chestnut

"I believe that music should tell a story. And this record is about the story of a son being grateful to his father for all of the lessons taught."

~ Cyrus Chestnut

McDonald Chestnut, who passed away at the age of 85 on May 20, 2021, was a most formative influence on his son. A loving parent and devoted husband, he channeled beauty through his fingers, playing piano at home and in Baptist churches. As a toddler, his only child was taken with the substance of those sounds. So McDonald inspired, encouraged and supported that interest, gifting something greater than riches: “My father told me that he could’ve left me an inheritance, but he felt that if he introduced me to music it would keep me and nourish me a lot longer than any money could. To this day, I’m so thankful that he had that type of insight.”

With *My Father’s Hands*, Cyrus Chestnut honors the man who was always there for him. And he does so with supreme class, cutting right to the heart on a program ripe with appealing originals, gospel glories and tried-and-true classics. Engaging two distinguished musicians to join him for this project, Chestnut shows tremendous respect for his accomplished peers and the piano lodestar they once accompanied. “When I think about the combination of bassist Peter Washington and drummer Lewis Nash, it takes me back to the days I used to sit and listen to Tommy Flanagan,” he shares. “That was his rhythm section. So to have the opportunity to do something with these great titans is like another benchmark in the journey.”

The chemistry between all parties is palpable from the start. Opening with “Nippon Soul Connection,” a previously unrecorded original that’s been in Chestnut’s portfolio for at least two decades, the trio immediately finds its step. “In these days when everybody is dealing in metric modulation and all of these complex rhythmic and harmonic and melodic devices, sometimes you’ve just got to come on back home to the room from whence you came and do some good old-fashioned, foot-tapping music,” Chestnut remarks. With a smartly punctuated head, direct engagement with swing and Latin grooves, strong solos and open-eared trading, this performance speaks right to that truth. The follow-up—the newly-penned “Thinking About You,” a jaunty swinger with a 32-bar AABA form—is positive memory in motion. “I sit and reflect over so many things I’d do with my father,” Chestnut explains. “He would take me out when he was working on the car and I’d watch him fix the brakes [chuckles] and we’d work on things together. Or he’d be jogging at Morgan State University and I’d be sitting there playing the flute or, later on, jogging with him. And he loved planting fruit trees—peach and apple and pear—and I’d help plant and prune.” All of those fond thoughts spring cheerfully to the sur-

face in Chestnut's exploration of the 88s.

Moving away from originals, the trio continues to operate with serious spirit and conviction while aligning with the theme. A trip through Ray Bryant's "Cubano Chant" underscores the leader's belief that the composer presented "a perfect fusion of gospel and jazz"; George Forrest and Robert Wright's wonderfully waltzing "Baubles, Bangles and Beads" gives pause for Chestnut to visualize his father—"the consummate deacon and top-tier Christian educator"—appreciating the secular side of song craft; John Lennon and Paul McCartney's "Yesterday" acts as a hub for nostalgia, calling to mind those small, everyday interactions that add up to so much more; and "I Must Tell Jesus"—one of the elder Chestnut's favorite hymns, rendered as a meditation for solo piano—serves as an oasis of calm.

Returning to his own writing (and nodding to his father's reply to general questioning), Chestnut demonstrates an affinity for shuffling hard bop with the sly and soulful "Working Out Just Fine." Then Nash leads the trio into a Latin-ized look at Harry Warren and Mack Gordon's "There Will Never Be Another You," a number reoriented to reference the unique aspects of the album's subject, and Chestnut dials down the tempo—and the lights—for a gorgeous take on Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke's "But Beautiful," complete with a perfectly understated cadenza. Those two Great American Songbook treasures prove rich with emotion(s), and together they pave the way for an incredibly poignant closer: "'Epilogue' represents the last minute of my father's life. I was there when they took the breathing apparatus off of him, and his pulse went down from 60 to zero. The last part of this piece, where there's chromatic movement, represents those final moments. That was it. I held my father's hand when it was warm, and I held it when it was cold. It gets me a little choked up to think about it."

Supreme sadness naturally surrounds that parting, but gratitude is what's most obvious in what Cyrus Chestnut has to say over the course of this touching tribute: "I will always cherish my father. As I look at my hands, I see his. They say the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree. And though I might be the apple, I appreciate the tree. When I think about this music, I can see my father in it. He's a part of it. Everything has his stamp and his character in it."

~ Notes by Dan Bilawsky

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CYRUS CHESTNUT – piano
PETER WASHINGTON – bass
(except track 6)
LEWIS NASH – drums
(except track 6)

All arrangements by **Cyrus Chestnut**

Cyrus Chestnut is a Yamaha Artist

Produced by **Cyrus Chestnut**

Executive Producer: **Barney Fields**

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Engineered, mixed and mastered by **Katherine Miller**

Assistant engineer: **Steven Sacco**

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Graphic Design by **İrem Ela Yıldızeli**

Photo of Cyrus and McDonald Chestnut courtesy of **Cyrus Chestnut**