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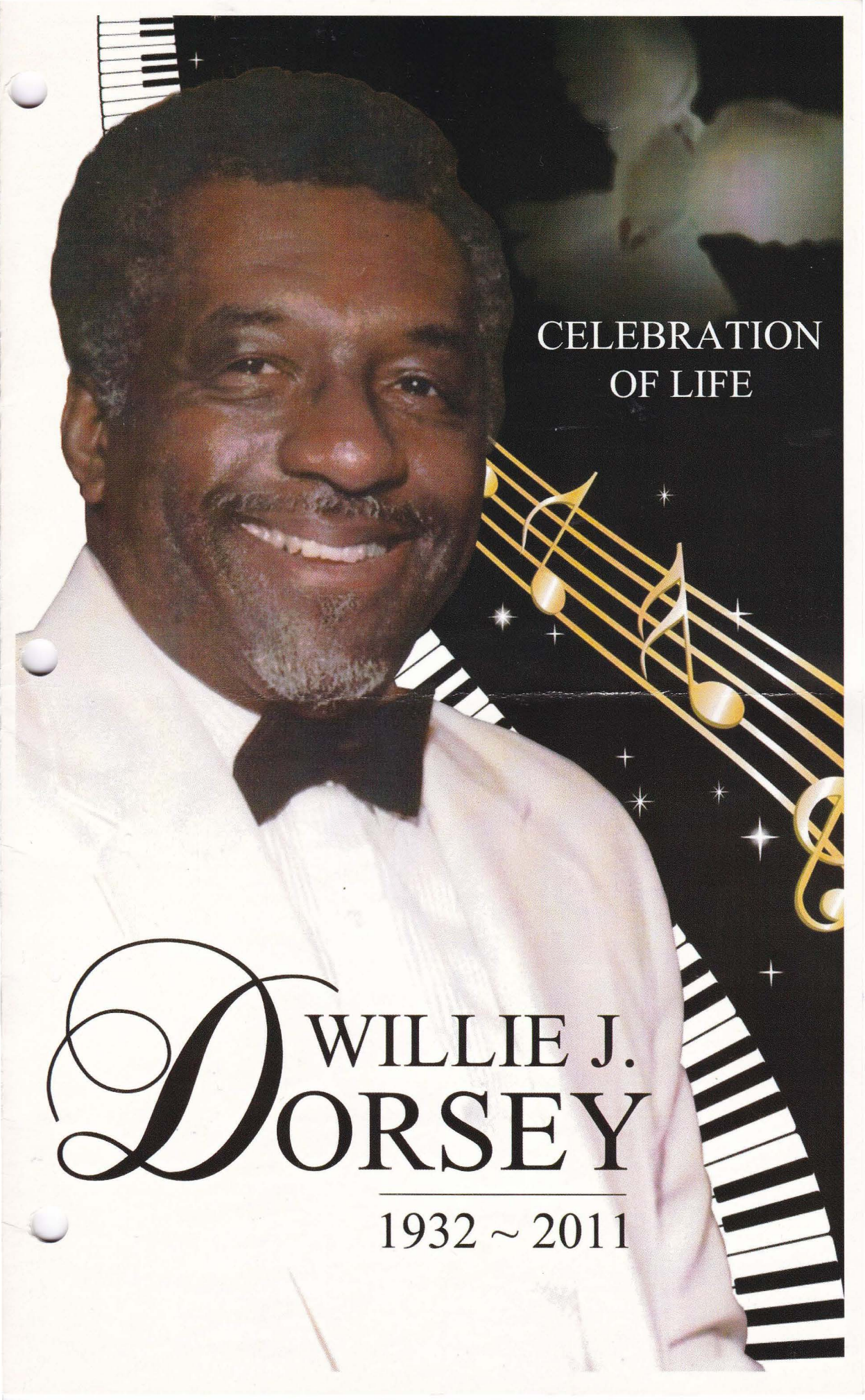


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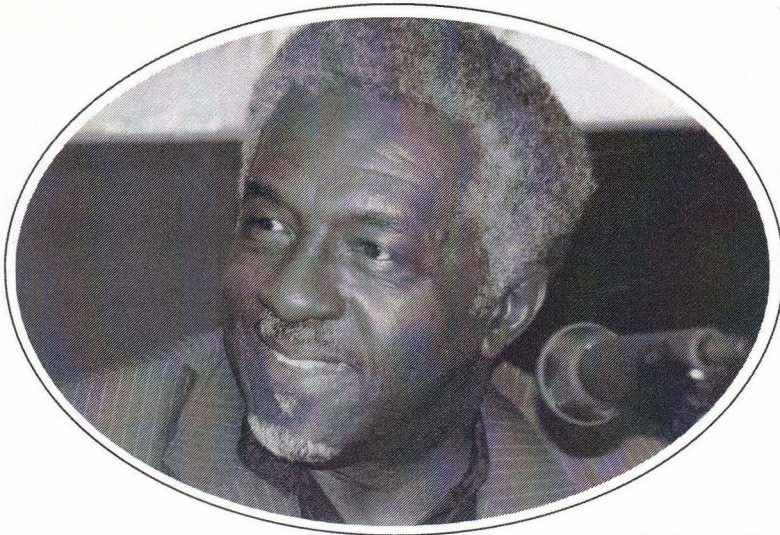
A portrait of Willie J. Dorsey, an older Black man with a mustache, smiling and wearing a white tuxedo jacket and a dark bow tie. The background is black with white piano keys on the left and right sides. A golden musical staff with notes and a treble clef is positioned diagonally across the right side. Small white stars are scattered throughout the black background.

CELEBRATION
OF LIFE

*W*ILLIE J.
DORSEY

1932 ~ 2011

CELEBRATION OF LIFE



WILLIE JAMES DORSEY

MAY 11, 1932 ~ JUNE 26, 2011

Saturday, July 2, 2011
11:00 AM

Lincoln Memorial United Methodist Church

641 Masten Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14209

Reverend George F. Nicholas
Pastor, Officiating



The Music of His Life . . .

WILLIE JAMES DORSEY

May 11, 1932 ~ June 26, 2011

Willie James Dorsey, age 79, was the only child born to the late John Dorsey (1893-1970) and Maude C. Dorsey (nee House) (1908-1994) on May 11, 1932 in Buffalo, NY. He was baptized at Lincoln Memorial United Methodist Church in 1932 and became a member at a very young age. He was educated in Buffalo Public schools and graduated from Fosdick-Masten Park High School in 1950. He received his Bachelor of Music from Fredonia State Teachers College in 1954 and also studied at the Universities of Tokyo, New Mexico, Buffalo and Eastman School of Music. He married Joyce Wright in 1957 and the marriage yielded three children. He was to married Cynthia Wilhite in 1990 until her death in 2006. He was a member of the United States Air Force Band and honorably discharged in 1962 and has held key positions in many local musical organizations. He owned and operated W&C Enterprises, which sold herbal products and African items at summer festivals. He has served as the choir director and organist at Lincoln Memorial United Methodist Church for more than ~~30~~ years.

Since his father John Dorsey was an early entrepreneur, Willie helped with the family businesses at a young age where one of his duties was delivering chickens. As a young boy, he was active in the scouting movement and even “conducted” the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra at a kid’s concert. In high school, he played basketball and was a drum major of the Fosdick-Masten Marching Band. As his mother Maude had, he also grew up and served at Lincoln Memorial UMC.

Willie and five other students broke the color barrier at Fredonia State Teacher’s College in 1950. When he arrived on the scene, news articles were written about him in the local newspapers. “You’ve seen one man bands in the past, you seen many toned vocalists, but until you’ve seen Willie Dorsey of 351 Jefferson Avenue...you ain’t seen nothing yet!” The article goes on to talk about how he gave a recital on six different instruments and then sang several songs in bass, baritone and tenor ranges. The article states that Willie was the most talented freshman to enter the school in 10 years (Fredonia Censor: September 21, 1950). What they didn’t know is how wide he would open the door for so many more black musicians to follow him or how far his legacy would stretch across the generations.

He began his professional career teaching music in the Buffalo Public School System, teaching at School 37, and taught at Riverside High School, Lafayette High School, South Park High School and East High School before retiring about 30 years ago. Mr. Dorsey was much loved by his students and many remember his excellent choir directing and fun sense of humor.

Mr. Dorsey has been an influential musician in Buffalo for more than 50 years. He was a professional bass player, pianist, trombonist, singer, composer, arranger, director, poet and skilled performer. He was known to play at least 27 instruments. He started playing at the Colored Musicians Club (the oldest continuously operating club of its type in the United States) as a teen in the late 1940's, and later served on its Board of Directors for many years. He helped organize the CMC Boat Ride and is featured in a television documentary about the Club. An admirer of Duke Ellington, he used Ellington as an inspiration for the Last Word Jazz Researchers Big Band, of which he was the founding director. His group is scheduled to play next Thursday in the M&T Plaza Event Series.

At one time, he also directed the Johnson Male chorus, the Delaine Waring AME Church Choir and the Suburban Serenaders. He has played with many of the most notable ensembles in Buffalo, including the CQ Price Band, the Buffalo Bills Band, the Orchard Park Symphony and the Cecil Johnson Orchestra.

Willie was proud of his African heritage, having lived through segregation and participated in the Civil Rights Movement. He was known to have cried when President Obama was elected. He proudly displayed pictures of himself with Jesse Jackson and his certificate from his attendance at the Million Man March in DC. He was Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for the Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial Trust. He was active in the civic community and was known to organize and perform at events for the celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday and other important Buffalo events. He has been given numerous music and service awards.

Willie was preceded in death by his parents and his wife of 16 years, Cynthia Marie Dorsey. He is survived by his children: Kevin James Dorsey (Deborah) of Scotia, NY; Dara Joyce Dorsey (William) of Buffalo, NY; Holly Jean Pasquale (Bert) of Laurel, MD; John Lenard Wilson (Rachel) of Buffalo, NY, and Anthony Michael Washington of Williamsburg, VA; two grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Willie will also be mourned by three cousins: Lowell, Stephen and Edmund Malcolm; his stepchildren: Martin A. White (Carol), Richard A. Tyree (Lisa), and Lawrence J. Payton, and many other close relatives and friends.



Thank
You

"It is during a time such as this that the love of Jesus Christ shines forth through those who show love and compassion to their fellow man."

We would like to extend a heartfelt "Thank You" to everyone who has been a blessing to us during the illness and homegoing of our loved one. Your thoughts, prayers, words of encouragement and kind deeds have helped to comfort our hearts and are truly appreciated. May God bless and keep each of you in His tender love and care.

The Family of Willie James Dorsey

PALLBEARERS

Mr. William Cote
Mr. Bert Pasquale

Mr. Leslie Davis
Mr. George Scott

Mr. Phillip Nyhius
Mr. Lester Robinson

HONORARY PALLBEARERS

Mr. Jerry Daniels
Mr. Lowell Malcolm

Lt. Col. Cravane Givens
Mr. Stephen Malcolm

Mr. Edmund "Les" Malcolm
Mr. Paul Moore

FLORAL ATTENDANTS

Friends of the Family

THE CARE OF OUR LOVED ONE

THOMAS T. EDWARDS FUNERAL HOME, INC.
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(716) 894-4888 · www.thomastedwardsfuneralhome.com
Mr. Darrell M. Saxon II
Funeral Director

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