

Arizona Dranes - Complete Recorded Works (1926-1929) [1993]

Written by bluesever

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01. *In That Day* 02. *It' All Right Now* 03. *John Said He Saw a Number* 04. *My Soul Is a Witness for the Lord* 05. *Crucifixion* 06. *Sweet Heaven Is My Home Dranes* 07. *Bye and Bye We're Going to See the King Traditional* 08. *I'm Going Home on the Morning Train* 09. *Lamb's Blood Has Washed Me Clean* 10. *I'm Glad My Lord Saved Me* 11. *I Shall Wear a Crown Traditional* 12. *God's Got a Crown Dranes* 13. *He Is My Story Dranes* 14. *Just Look Dranes* 15. *I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go* 16. *Don't You Want to Go?* 17. *He's the Lily of the Valley* 18. *He's Coming Soon* 19. *Let Us Therefore Come* 20. *Lord Who Shall Abide in Thy Tabernacle* 21. *Soon We'll Gather at the River* 22. *Where He Leads Me I Will Follow* Arizona Dranes - Accompaniment, Piano, Vocals Coley Jones - Mandolin R.J. Jones - Vocals Sara Martin - Vocals Southern Sanctified Singers – Vocals

In 1993, Document reissued the complete recordings of Afro-Mexican-American Pentecostal pianist and vocalist Arizona Dranes, a passionate singer whose lively syncopated piano technique had a ragtime-cakewalk-honky-tonk-barrelhouse quality capable of propelling entire choirs and congregations. It is no exaggeration to say that this woman, who is generally recognized as the first gospel pianist ever to make phonograph records, had a profound and lasting impression upon the entire 20th century gospel tradition and other traditions that drew upon it. Her influence can be detected in the music of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Madame Ernestine B. Washington, Goldia Haynes, Clara Ward, Roberta Martin, Aretha Franklin and, as far as the piano goes, Jerry Lee Lewis. Parallels could be drawn with Elder Richard Bryant's Sanctified Singers or the modern gospel-fired adventures of Charles Mingus. Born Arizona Juanita Drane (later changed to "Dranes") in Dallas, TX in 1891, she studied music at the Institute for Deaf, Dumb and Blind Colored Youths in Austin and assisted evangelist Ford Washington McGee when in 1920 he founded an Oklahoma City chapter of the Church of God in Christ. This was the same foundation that encouraged the inclusion of multiple musical instruments during worship, a policy that engendered a surprising sacred-secular blend throughout Memphis (see Document 5300, Memphis Sanctified Jug Bands 1928-1930). Eventually, Dranes was brought to the attention of the Okeh Phonograph Corporation by the Reverend Samuel Crouch. Okeh sent composer, pianist, and talent scout Richard M. Jones to investigate; he in turn asked blues vocalist Sara Martin to meet with Dranes in Fort Worth and

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escort her to Chicago, where Dranes made her first recordings on June 17, 1926. After she accompanied herself singing "It's All Right Now" and "In That Day," both Martin and Jones chimed in with rather stagey backup vocals on "John Said He Saw a Number" and "My Soul Is a Witness for the Lord," whereupon Arizona knocked out her only unaccompanied piano solos, "Crucifixion" and "Sweet Heaven Is My Home." On November 15, she recorded "Lamb's Blood Has Washed Me Clean" and three other titles with backing by her friend the Reverend F.W. McGee and his Jubilee Singers. In each case, the uncontrived fervor of collective ritual was successfully documented. Dranes sang with a zealous intensity that clearly influenced Rosetta Tharpe, who is known to have heard her perform in St. Louis, and whose mother, Kati Bell Nubin, is believed to have played mandolin with McGee's ensemble. These records were enormously profitable for the folks at Okeh, even though a letter written and sent to Chicago from Memphis by Dranes while she was convalescing there in February 1928 reveals that payments to the artist were not always promptly delivered. Her next session took place in July 1928 with several exuberant women and a mandolin player believed to have been her mother, Cora "Coley" Jones. Arizona's 16 Okeh titles are followed in this collection by six recordings released under other peoples' names on which her presence is heard and felt. "He's the Lily of the Valley" and "He's Coming Soon" were performed by the Texas Jubilee Singers in December 1928 and "Let Us Therefore Come" and "Lord Who Shall Abide in Thy Tabernacle" are sermons delivered by Reverend Joe Lenley in December 1929. The final two recordings were made for the Brunswick label in Chicago in April 1929 by the Southern Sanctified Singers, possibly under the direction of Reverend D.C. Rice, with the vocalists, pianist, and guitarist boosted by an enthusiastic trumpeter and a booming trombonist. Although Dranes subsequently stopped making records, she spent another 20 years performing on the CoGiC circuit. She lived out the rest of her life at a home near East 52nd and McKinley Avenue in Los Angeles and was felled by a stroke at the age of 72 on July 27, 1963. This precious album of early gospel exists at the very heart of her legacy. --- arwulf arwulf, Rovi

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