

## **JAMES VINSON COCKERHAM**

### **Music Composer, Songwriter, Arranger, Musician and Playwright**

James grew up in Wilkesboro, NC, the fourth of six children. His mother, Ada S. Cockerham was a domestic worker for three generations of judges and the towns newspaper publisher. His father, George E. Cockerham, worked for the Southern Railway.

When he was young, his family could not afford piano lessons, so he borrowed music books from his cousins and taught himself to read them. He also learned to play keyboard instruments by ear.

James began his formal musical training in the third grade at Lincoln Heights School and by the seventh grade he was directing his first choir at Rickard's Chapel AME Zion Church. Playing in the band and singing in the Chorus from Elementary through High School at Lincoln Heights gave him a firm foundation in music.

A BA degree in Sociology was received from Livingstone College. Many hours were spent rehearsing and playing for groups, talent shows, weekend band gigs and the Prayer Meeting Choir. James became a member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He vividly remembers his "Big Brother" asking, "Do you know how to write a song?" By the end of the night, a new song had been written. James has been writing songs since then.

His first single release was with "**The Superbs**," an R&B group at Livingstone. The 45 rpm record '**Til You Tell Me You Love Me** and **Every Sign of Spring**.

Upon graduating from Livingstone College, James moved back home to Wilkesboro, NC. His first album, **Rickard's Chapel Gospel Choir**, was recorded in 1970. Gertrude Robinson was the Choir Advisor at Rickard's Chapel AME Zion Church. Ms. Gert recognized that James had a gift for music became his greatest

encourager. He worked for BROC and drove the lush, verdant green mountains of Wilkes, Ashe and Allegheny counties as a social worker helping people help themselves. He later became the BROC HeadStart Education Director.

Three years later, he moved to Atlanta, Georgia to see what it would be like to live in a city. His initial plan was to stay for five years and move back home to Wilkes, but he met his lovely wife, Beverley, and now with two adult children, their spouses and three grandchildren, Decatur, Georgia, an Atlanta suburb, has become his home. His love for the rolling blue and sometimes purple mountains, the crimson sunsets, and the peaceful quietness of Wilkes County will always remain in his heart.

James returned to Rickard's Chapel to record his second album, ***Rickard's Chapel Gospel Choir presents James Cockerham***. Soon after, he was again invited back to Wilkesboro to record a third album, ***The Soul-Stirring Youth Choir of First Baptist Church***.

James became Choir Director of the Gospel Chorus at Shaw Temple AME Zion Church in Atlanta and the choir recorded its first album, ***Let Thy Will Be Done***.

In 1978 James produced his first live recording at the Shaw Temple AME Zion Church. Original compositions by James were performed by the W.A. Potter Choir, Rickard's Chapel Gospel Choir, Shaw Temple Gospel Chorus and Genesis Gospel Singers. Dr. Ndugu T'Ofori-Atta brought a **Message From Africa**. This album launched his record label **Copro Record Company, Inc.** and is currently being played in New Zealand, Amsterdam, Budapest, Paris and London over forty years later.

Cockerham's sixth album, ***Lifted***, was also recorded by the Shaw Temple Gospel Chorus.

His first CD, ***BASIC/cockerham: Nobody Like Jesus***, was produced while he was Health Administrator at the Fulton County Jail, playing and directing five choirs at

two different churches and taking classes toward a Masters Degree in Public Health at Emory University.

In the year 2000, after thirty-five years of working in management positions, James decided to follow his dream and he became a full time musician.

His second CD, ***Morning Meditation***, became his best seller.

Brian Cockerham, his son, produced his next CD, ***Reflections of the Heart***.

***Be Still and Know***, was an eclectic project. It contains a jazz rendition of a favorite hymn featuring trumpeter **Keyon Harrold**, operatic singing, a lined hymn, solo piano and orchestral works all on one CD.

In 1995 James created a composition entitled, ***"New Meaning"*** which was licensed to the Toni Morrison Society and in 2020 he played this instrumental rendition at the Atlanta Memorial Service Honoring the Life of Toni Morrison.

He received the Moondance International Film Festival Seahorse Award for Best Music for Film Score in 2013.

Forty years after graduating from Livingstone, James returned to school and received a Master's Certificate in Orchestration for Film and TV from Berklee College of Music in Boston at the young age of sixty-five.

His most recent recording, **LOOKING**, is available on Vinyl Albums or CD's along with other merchandise, exclusively sold ONLY on the website of the newly formed record label Dirty Glasses, LLC, a new partnership formed with his son, Brian Cockerham and Ethan Gouldbourne (Producers). To order, visit: [www.TheDirtyGlasses.com](http://www.TheDirtyGlasses.com) where you will hear a variety of genres and styles that feature some of the industry's most desired recording artist performing each song.

**Bishop Nathaniel Townsley, Erick Walls, Th3 Saga, Aaron Marcellus, K'Valentine,**

**Algebra Blessett, Dee I, Hanan Rubinstein, India Shawn, Ayana George, JoJo Martin, Nicole Phifer and Regina Belle** are all featured artists on this CD.

His musical stage productions include:

***Come Home: The Story of the Prodigal Son***

***A Gift of Love***

***A Lifestyle, not A Religion: Songs from the Book of James***

***The Secret Diary of the Treasure Troves***

They featured several treasured entertainment industry icons such as: Academy-Award nominated **Ruby Dee Davis** and **Ossie Davis, John Patton** of the movie, “The Color Purple,” **Q. Parker** of the R&B group “112,” Grammy-Award Winning Recording Artist **PJ Morton, Chantae Cann** who recorded with “Snarky Puppy” and many others.

Cockerham’s orchestral work, “***Soon I Will Be Done,***” was performed by **The DeKalb Symphony Orchestra** with **Thomas Anderson** conducting. Coloratura Soprano, **Arietha Lockhart** was guest soloist.

**Gateways Music Festival Orchestra**, conducted by **Maestro Michael Morgan**, on Sunday, August 11, 2019, at Kodak Hall, Eastman College of Music was first to perform Cockerham’s ***Fantasia on Lift Every Voice and Sing***. This orchestra is composed of one hundred twenty-five classically trained musicians of African descent from major orchestras around the world. They will be, according to **Harlem News**, “The first All Black Symphony orchestra to perform at Carnegie Hall in its one hundred thirty-three year history.” The April 2022 concert ends with Cockerham’s composition, “***Fantasia on Lift Every Voice and Sing.***” His work has also been performed by **Virginia Symphony Orchestra, Richmond Symphony Orchestra** and **St. Louis Symphony Orchestra**.

Spanning over four decades James has recorded (6) six albums, (5) five CDs and written (4) four musical stage productions. He is currently working on a new film project, ***When Morning Comes***.

James, while in Atlanta, has been a church musician at Solid Rock AME Zion Church, New Life AME Zion Church and From the Heart Church Ministries. He continues to play on Sundays at Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church and Spread the Word Christian Ministries where former Atlanta Hawks shooting guard, Bishop Dr. **John S. Battle**, is his pastor and the world-renowned First Servant **Regina Belle Battle** is Minister of Music.

With so many notable accomplishments, James V. Cockerham continues to provide quality music with his horizons set on producing more music, stage productions, film projects and books in the near future.

If you would like to stay connected with James V. Cockerham

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(Facebook, IG, Twitter) **@brocockerham**

Visit his websites: **[www.coprorecords.com](http://www.coprorecords.com)**

**[www.thedirtyglasses.com](http://www.thedirtyglasses.com)**

**Gateways Music Festival Orchestra: Lift Every Voice and Sing**

**<https://youtu.be/P94yMddO5Mc>**

**HIS MUSIC IS AVAILABLE ON ALL MAJOR DIGITAL MUSIC OUTLETS AND WEBSITES**