

(She sings Didn't It Rain.)

DIDN'T IT RAIN, CHILDREN, DIDN'T IT RAIN OH MY LORD.
DIDN'T IT, DIDN'T IT, DIDN'T IT, OH, MY LORD DIDN'T IT
RAIN. *(repeat)*

IT RAINED FORTY DAYS, FORTY NIGHTS WITH-OUT
STOPPING

NOAH WAS GLAD WHEN THE RAIN STOPPED DROPPING
A KNOCK AT THE WINDOW, A KNOCK AT THE DOOR
THEY CRIED, "OLD NOAH, WON'T YOU TAKE ONE MORE?"
NOAH CRIED OUT, "YOU'RE FULL OF SIN,
MY LORD'S GOT THE KEY AND YOU CAN'T COME IN!"

JUST LISTEN! HOW IT'S RAINING
JUST LISTEN! HOW IT'S RAINING

IN THE NORTH, IN THE SOUTH
IN THE EAST, IN THE WEST

ALL DAY, ALL NIGHT.

ALL NIGHT, ALL DAY.

OH TELL ME, DIDN'T IT RAIN CHILDREN, DIDN'T RAIN OH
MY LORD.

DIDN'T IT, OH DIDN'T IT, DIDN'T IT, OH MY LORD, DIDN'T
IT RAIN.

MAHALIA. *(cont.)* Well, as soon as we finished a great big fuss busted loose. Everybody began talking at once. The professors started arguing with each other and asking me all sorts of questions. *(to Music Inn audience stage left)* No...no...never had a lesson. Yes, that's just singing in churches and gospel tents. Mmm? No, baby, ain't nobody taught me to sing no special way. I just found myself doing it. *(to audience)* Then they fussed all over again and got out a tape recorder and played some African bongo music and asked me if it sounded familiar. *(to Music Inn audience)* Well...I don't know nothing 'bout no jungle drums, but the beat sound good. Don't it sound good to you Mildred?

MILDRED. *(not quite sure what to say)* Oh, yes. That does something for me.

MAHALIA. Sure does. *(to audience)* Then they started buzzing all over again. *(to MILDRED)* We into something with these crazy people! *(to audience)* Then Professor Stearns got up and asked me all about implied pulse, diatomic scale and overlapping antiphony. *(to God)* Jesus tender shepherd, don't leave me now! *(to Music Inn audience)* All you nice professors and PhDs are picking at my music like birds at a box of corn; telling me what my gospel music is made out of. Telling me it's jazz. Telling me it's blues. Telling me I'm singing twelve-twelve time when my foot knows it's four-four time. Now Halie going to tell you what gospel music is. It's good tidings. That's right, darlin's. Gospel music is good news in bad times. It's singing that comes from God telling us there's hope. It's a song of deliverance. A surrender of pain and suffering. It's a shout from the soul saying I am free at last. Free from slavery. Free from hate. Free from despair. Gospel is a song of joy so deep...that the world can hardly stand it.

MILDRED. Amen.

MAHALIA. *(to audience)* Then Mildred started playing "Down By The Riverside" *(MILDRED does.)* and we all started singing and clapping and doing the holy dance. I tell you, I could have led all those music experts out the door, down to the lake, and they all have waded right in to be baptized. *(music out, phone starts ringing)* By the time Mildred and I drove back to Chicago everything started happening at once. It was like a dam broke. We weren't hardly unpacked when the phone started ringing.

MILDRED. *(on the phone)* Carnegie Hall!

MAHALIA. What you say?

MILDRED. Mr. Joe Bostic wants you to sing at Carnegie Hall in October! *(hands phone to MAHALIA.)* Those music professors must be really talking you up.

MAHALIA. *(on the phone)* You must be some kind of fool, mister.

MILDRED. I'm not afraid to play Carnegie Hall.

MAHALIA. Hush, Mildred, one fool at a time! Listen, mister, do you know what you trying to do going into Carnegie Hall? My songs not high enough for Carnegie Hall. Carnegie Hall! That's for great opera singers.

MILDRED. Duke Ellington had a concert there three years ago.

MAHALIA. That's different; he's the daddy of 'em all. Duke Ellington is class. *(in the phone)* Now I don't know 'bout you, mister, but I am an authority on gospel, and they ain't got nothing like me and no gospel song at Carnegie Hall. Now if you'll excuse me...

MILDRED. This is a whole new audience, Mahalia. Who knows what will become of it.

MAHALIA. No! I say no!

MILDRED. The Lord is showing you a door if you got the sense to open it.

(MAHALIA covers the phone as she looks at MILDRED. She realizes there is no way out.)

MAHALIA. *(in the phone, barely audible)* All right, I'll do it.

MILDRED. Hallelujah!

MAHALIA. What you mean I won't be sorry? I'm already sorry now! *(slams phone down)*

MILDRED. *(pause)* What you going to wear?

MAHALIA. *(She gives MILDRED a look.)* Lord, why You put Halie up in Carnegie Hall?

MILDRED. I think you should come on with a loong train.

MAHALIA. Carnegie Hall scares me, Lord.

MILDRED. That's the way Marian Anderson did. *(with delight)* Oooo! Car-ne-gie Hall!

MAHALIA. *(with fear)* Oooo. Carnegie Hall. *(sits, then realizes)* We need an organ. *(rises)* Get Francis on the phone! Tell Mr. James Herbert Francis he going to play Carnegie Hall!

MILDRED. *(dialing)* Yes, ma'am.

MAHALIA. *(pacing)* The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

MILDRED. *(in the phone)* That's right, Francis, Carnegie Hall. It's a gospel breakthrough! Carnegie Hall. Hall. No, Hall! Car-ne-gie Hall!

(MAHALIA gives the audience a look.)

For the opera stars...?

(MAHALIA moans.)

It's a big deal, Francis; take my word for it.

(She hangs up as MAHALIA shakes her head in disbelief.)

MAHALIA. Call Bostic back. Tell him I don't want no orchestra. Orchestra like a girdle to me. *(MILDRED dials phone.)* And tell him we need a organ for Francis. And not a big pipe organ. Can't get no gospel out of a pipe organ, too grand. I want a Hammond organ. *(looking up)* Why would You do me like this, God? Has Halie displeased You? *(no answer)* You must be thinking my soul all loused up. *(She paces.)*

MILDRED. ...That's right, a Hammond organ. And I'll need a nine foot ebony Steinway grand. That's right. Just like the Duke. *(She hangs up and imagines her fingers on that Steinway.)*

MAHALIA. *(Out front, in response to what she has just seen and heard.)* Lord have mercy. *(more pacing)* Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.

(She suddenly stops and listens for her chest.)

END

I think it stopped. Mildred, my heart stopped! I can't breathe!

(To get more breathing room she hands MILDRED several rolls of money from her bosom. She catches her breath, gives MILDRED a suspicious look, then replaces the money. To audience.)