

# Alton Merrell

## PIANIST - COMPOSER - EDUCATOR

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Alton Merrell is a highly sought after pianist, Hammond B-3 organist, music educator, composer, and speaker.

He is currently an instructor and PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh with an anticipated graduation date of April 2012. Under the guidance of Dr. Nathan T. Davis, his dissertation topic is "The Life and Music of Alfred McCoy Tyner: Improvisations during his Blue Note Years (1967-1970). Alton also holds a Master of Music Degree in jazz piano performance, as well as a Bachelor of Music Degree in Music Education/Classical Piano Performance from Youngstown State University graduating Cum Laude.

Alton is also the founder of Minstrel Enterprises LLC, a music ministry providing concerts, seminars, music instruction, music consulting, arranging, and studio production services. He also leads his own group "Alton Merrell & The Tribe of Levi" an instrumental and vocal ensemble incorporating diverse musical styles in their repertoire. The mission of his group is to create music that will minister love, healing, joy, deliverance and peace to people around the world. Alton's latest award winning CD "You're The Reason" embodies this vision.

Alton is active in the local church serving as pianist and organist at both Covenant Church of Pittsburgh where Bishop Joseph Garlington is pastor and Mt. Ararat Baptist Church where Dr. William H. Curtis is pastor. Along with the music team at both ministries, he ushers congregants into the presence of God on a weekly basis.

Mr. Merrell has ministered with gospel artists Kim Burrell, Martha Munizzi, Donnie McClurkin, Alvin Slaughter, Dorothy Norwood, Israel Houghton, LaShunn Pace, Parkes Stewart, and the late Rev. Timothy Wright. He has also been seen several times on the nationally televised Bobby Jones Gospel Show. Mr. Merrell has also performed with jazz artists: Wynton Marsalis, Benny Golson, Jimmy Heath, Slide Hampton, James Moody, Phil Woods, Claudio Roditi, Rufus Reed, Marvin Stamm, Maria Schneider, Kenny Burrell, Billy Pierce, Conrad Herwig, Sean Jones, Leslie Lewis, Frank Foster, Roger Humphries, Jim Rupp and Greg Abate. He is a current member of the Pittsburgh Jazz Orchestra and has performed with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, Cleveland State Jazz Heritage Orchestra, Pittsburgh Concert Chorale, YSU All-Star Alumni Jazz Ensemble, Warren Philharmonic Orchestra, and the OMEA Intercollegiate All-Star Jazz Ensemble.

Alton has received numerous honors including: Gospel Jazz Artist of the Year, American Gospel Music Award, Best New Gospel Jazz Artist & Producer, Capital Jazz Festival Competition Finalist (2008), YSU Jazz Quintet Member of the Cultural Exchange Group performing in Beijing, China (Summer 2002.) YSU Jazz Quintet Member of the Cultural Exchange Jazz Group performing in Shanghai, Nanjing, and Hangzhou, China (Summer 2004) where a number of Alton's compositions and arrangements were performed. Selected to perform in a master class with world renowned jazz pianist Danilo Perez at TRI-C Jazz Festival (2002), Who's Who Among America's High School and College Students; Member of the Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society; Featured pianist in classical and jazz genres at the Dana School of Music's Showcase Concert (1999), Tri-C Jazz Festival Special Performance Citation from city of Warren's probate judge Thomas Swift and the International Association of Jazz Educators, Recipient of Outstanding Performance award with Y.S.U. Jazz Ensemble I in Big Band Category of the 2000 Down Beat magazine student music awards, Featured soloist at the Warren City Schools General Convocation(1999), Recipient of Founces M. Luley Music Scholarship.

Alton's life is dedicated to exalting and magnifying God with excellence, power, and authority! He and his wife Kimberly reside in Pittsburgh, PA with their son Jaden and daughter Zion.

**Life Verse:** "As the deer panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" - Psalms 42:1