



Vanessa Renee Williams, (born November 28, 1960, in [Baton Rouge, Louisiana](#)) is an American [gospel music](#) singer. After working as a [public school art teacher](#) for many years, she signed with [Light Records](#) and [Bajada Records](#). Her debut album *Vanessa* was released in 2002 and made the top ten of [Billboard](#) magazine's gospel albums chart.^[1] Her follow-up album *Here I Go Again* was released in 2004.^[2] She performed for several years with [Yolanda Adams](#) and as a member of [Richard Smallwood's](#) ensemble Vision.^[3]

ABOUT THE ARTIST VANESSA RENEE WILLIAMS

Vanessa Renee Williams was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and is the very proud mother of one daughter, Lisa. She was named the 2019-2020 Artist-In-Residence of The Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center and is an adjunct Art instructor for the Prince George's Community College SAGE program.

Five of her paintings are currently on display at Wellspring Manor and Spa, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

On career path in the visual arts, Williams was encouraged to continue her studies by the late artist and educator, Laurie Ann Siegel. Upon graduation from The Academy of Notre Dame in 1978, Williams was accepted to study at Howard University's College of Fine Arts. She was instructed at Howard by noted visual artists Lucille Malkia Roberts, E.H. Sorrells-Adewale, Albert Michael Auld, Winston Kennedy, Chi Chong Lee, Lila O. Asher, Alfred J. Smith, Tritobia Benjamin, Raymond Dobard, Jarvis Grant, Martha Jackson-Jarvis, Starmanda Bullock, Edward Love, Jeff Donaldson, and Doris Colbert.

As a student, her art was exhibited at Hadley Memorial Hospital, Wheeling College, Howard University Gallery of Art, and the Armour J. Blackburn Center.

During her sophomore year, she served as a congressional intern with the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Public Works and Transportation.

Williams earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1982.

In the mid 80's, she was an apprentice of the late machinist and master engraver, John F. Gerhold, founder of Washington Engraving.

As an elementary Art teacher at Patricia Roberts Harris Educational Center, in Southeast Washington, from 1987 until 2002, Williams served at the school as Key Communicator for the D.C. Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative "Art for Every Student" Program, and co-coordinator for the nationally acclaimed "Best Friends", a character-building based youth development program for adolescent girls. She also worked for Associates for Renewal in Education as a site coordinator and module leader.

She illustrated a children's book published in 1994, entitled "Smarty's New Friend" written by Joseph Dennie and the late Bishop Joseph Weathers. She also created the cover art for Steven A. Ford's book, "Is Your Music Department Ministry or Misery". Her paintings have been utilized for Universal Music Group Distribution's, Black Music Month marketing campaigns, and currently on promotional art for playwright Iyona Blake's "Diagnosed".

Vanessa's path to the music industry began at the close of the 1994 school year. Williams received a phone call from soprano, Darlene Simmons, of the Richard Smallwood Singers, concerning a role as a pit singer in a local production of "Bubbling Brown Sugar" (produced by the late Helen Hayes Award winner, Mike Malone, and under the musical direction of Grammy-winning composer, Raymond Reeder). During the production, she was chosen by Reeder to sing background vocals for Howard University's 1994 homecoming guest, Yolanda Adams. Not long after the production, a phone call came from Smallwood himself to travel with the Smallwood Singers.

Williams moved, with ease, between concert dates with the Richard Smallwood Singers, and, until October of 2000, sang simultaneously in Adams' background vocals trio. She traveled with "The Richard Smallwood Singers" throughout the United States and on her very first trips out of the country from Norway to France, to Venezuela. Her first studio recording experience with The Smallwood Singers was "Faith", a track featured on the compilation project, "Verity Records Presents: A Tribute to Rosa Parks". In 1995, when he signed with Verity Records, she accepted Smallwood's invitation to become a part of a larger, recording choir for a one-time event and project. This choir, however, *continued* to record and is the musical family known as "Vision".

As a member of Smallwood's "Vision", Vanessa recorded "Angels" ("Adoration: Live in Atlanta" 1996) with Stellar Award winner, and radio announcer Maurette Brown-Clark, "O What a Night" ("Rejoice" 1997) with Darlene Simmons, the Dove Award-nominated anthem, "Holy Thou Art God" ("Healing: Live in Detroit" 1999), "Oh, How He Loves You and Me"/"Your Love Divine" ("Persuaded: Live In Washington" 2001), "I Love The Lord" ("Verity: Live at The Apollo"), "Is There Any Way" ("Promises" 2011), and "Lord You Reign"

(Anthology 2015).

She has performed live as a background vocalist for numerous artists including Phil Perry, Tramaine Hawkins, Patti Austin, Kevin Whalum, Alex Bugnon, The Canton Spirituals, David Archuleta, Donald Lawrence, Marvin Sapp, Karen Clark-Sheard, Oleta Adams, Peabo Bryson, The Five Blind Boys of Alabama, Angela Winbush, Michael Henderson, Chante Moore, and the late George Duke and Vesta Williams.

There was a phenomenal roster of producers on her first solo recording "Vanessa", including Fred Hammond, Steven A. Ford, and Richard Smallwood. The project debuted at number 7 and peaked at number 10 on Billboard's Gospel Chart. Her 2004 sophomore release is entitled, "Here I Go Again".

Williams also appears as a lead and/or background vocalist on the following sound recordings:

"Backlash", Backlash Band 1980

"RichSpirit 1", Terrence Richburg 1994

"Yolanda Adams: Live In Washington" 1996

"The Canton Spirituals: Living the Dream: Live in Washington" 1997

"When We Get Over There", Toby Palmer and Chosen Generation 1997

"Love So Real", John Stoddart 1997

"Mountain High, Valley Low", Yolanda Adams 1999

"Eternity", Benjamin "Skip" Pruitt 1999

"Faith In The House", Straight Gate International Church Mass Choir 2000
"Ready", Mike McCoy and Voices United 2000
"The Heavens Are Telling", Karen Clark Sheard 2003
"The Praise and Worship Songs of Richard Smallwood" 2003
"Megachurch Gospel" 2004
"Not To Us", Drexel University's Gospel Choir 2004
"All for Love", Kim Waters 2005
"Love Calling", Anthony Walker 2005
"Touch Me In The Morning", Shanachie: Various Artists 2005
"Journey: Live in New York", Richard Smallwood with Vision 2006
"Sweet Classic Soul", Maysa Leak 2006

"For The Rest of My Days", Henry McKenzie Davis with El Shaddai 2006
"Jimmy Russell and BOC: Live" 2007
"The Next Level", John Tillery and Living Sacrifice 2007
"Continue to Continue", Mike McCoy and Voices United 2008
WHUR: "Soul of the Holidays" 2008
"InSpiration", Nolan Williams 2008
"The Alaskan Project", Norris Garner 2008
"Healing Within", Lori Williams 2010

"Thirty Years of Music", Straight Gate International Church Mass Choir 2011
"Uncommon", Kim Jordan 2012
"Do You Hear What I Hear" Benjamin "Skip" Pruitt 2013
"Keep Pressing", Conrad Miller 2013
"Just Believe" Tim Spady and Inspiration, 2014
"Miracles", John Tillery and Living Sacrifice 2014
"Anthology", Richard Smallwood with Vision 2015
"Sing Over Me" Michael White and True Praise 2016
"Psalm Full of Soul", Norma Brooks, Vince Evans, Vanessa R. Williams 2016
"Put Your Hands Together" Kim Jordan 2017

Williams has participated in the following events:

Ira Aldridge Theater production of "God's Trombones", Howard University, Washington, DC 1995
BET 15th Anniversary Special honoring Michael Jackson 1995
"Federation Francaise de Gospel/Best of Gospel on Tour", featuring Tramaine Hawkins, Paris and Strasbourg, France, 1996
"Barbados World Gospel", 1997
"Amerique: Gospel Cite de la Musique", Paris, France, moderated by Bernice Johnson Reagon, 1998
"Umbria Jazz Gospel and Soul" Festivals 1 and 2, Terni, Italy, 1997 and 1998
Glaxo Wellcome "Living Proof" Gospel tour, 1999
Ira Aldridge Theater production of "Tambourines to Glory", Howard University, Washington, DC 1999

Daimler Chrysler "Shout 2000" Tour

The Alliance Tour, 2002

McDonalds' Gospel fest 2005

Parks-King Lecture Series, Yale University, 2007

"Kingdom Powerful" European Believers' Conference, Abano Terme, Italy 2007

"Coro Gospel Agua Viva" featuring the "Madrid Gospel Choir" 2008 Expo Zaragoza/World's Fair, Zaragoza, Spain

Novara Gospel Festival, Novara, Italy 2008

Real Women Conference, Jesus World Outreach Center, Heidelberg, Germany 2009, 2010

The John F. Kennedy Center's "Sacred Sounds: Gospel Across America" Concert Series, 2010
26th Annual Kennedy Center Open House
"A Capitol Fourth: America's Independence Day Celebration", Washington, DC 2010
Verizon "How Sweet the Sound" concert, 2010

"Capital Jazz Fest" Super Cruises, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020
Children's Defense Fund "Beat the Odds" Awards program, 2012
"International Samaa Festival for Spiritual Music and Chanting" Cairo, Egypt, 2012
Alex Bugnon: Thanksgiving at Blues Alley 2013
John F. Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage component of Renee Fleming's "American Voices", 2013
National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, Black Press Week: Torch Awards Ceremony 2013
TV One: One Christmas 2013 w/ Richard Smallwood and Iyanla Vanzant

John F. Kennedy Center "Beyond the Score: Dvorák's Symphony No. 9--Whose World?" w/ National Symphony Orchestra, 2014
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Eastern Province Council Public Meeting, 2014
Riviera Maya Jazz Festival 2015 w/ Phil Perry
Berks Jazz Fest 2016 w/ Phil Perry
Capital Jazz Fest Tribute to Maurice White 2016 w/ Spur of the Moment
Southern Maryland Jazz, R&B and Funk Festival 2016 w/ Anthony Walker

National Symphony Orchestra Season Opening Gala Concert 2016 w/ The Steven Ford Singers, Mervyn Warren, and Take 6
St. Louis Symphony Orchestra: A Gospel Christmas with Richard Smallwood 2016
Berks Jazz Fest 2017 w/ Patti Austin and Everette Harp
Celebration of Black Music, Cincinnati 2017 w/ Everette Harp and Friends
NSO Pops: Handel's Messiah A Soulful Celebration 2017 w/ The Steven Ford Singers. Mervyn Warren
IRCPL Columbia University at Corinthian Baptist Church, Harlem: Perfect Praise in a Post-Soul Age Concert 2018
Capital JazzFest Tribute to Aretha Franklin, 2019

BLOG: (<http://vanessa-ideasandimages.blogspot.com/>),

<https://soundcloud.com/artsong28>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/vanessa-williams-2b82a1127>.