





2. **THE IT DEPARTMENT**

4. **FOR PHINEAS (INTRO)**

6. **TALES OF THE ELEPHANT
AND THE BUTTERFLY**

8. **THANK YOU BETSY**

I spent a lot of time trying to rationalize the hows, whats, and whys of my life. This album is like a view into the mind of Isaiah and a journal of what it is I've been delving into for the last few years. I wrestled with the idea of a live recording for a long time due to the more extensive length of each of the songs. In the end, I felt it was more important that people get the most authentic depiction of what my vision for my music is, and how it has evolved and will continue to evolve.

The first composition, "The IT Department," is of course a play on my initials, but it is also something my father used to say. I don't come from a particularly musical family, but they have always supported me. When someone would ask my parents if they had been involved in my musical education, my

father would respond by saying, "Music is his department." The second composition, "The Soul Messenger," is dedicated to the people in our lives who are always where we need them—when we need them—even when unsought. I began composing this upon hearing about the passing of the great Harold Mabern. Soul Messengers are people who have touched your heart, whether they're a teacher, a security guard, a parent, a deacon, a mentor, or even a friend.

"For Phineas" is an ode to one of my biggest inspirations, the great Phineas Newborn Jr. I dedicate this song to him but it also serves as an acknowledgment of the importance of the church in jazz and in all Black music. "Tales of the Elephant and the Butterfly" is reminiscent of a children's story. My mother is the inspiration for this piece as she has always loved both elephants and butterflies. This song touches on symbols that we use for others and how these symbols have the power to bring special people to you even when they themselves are not there.

"Good Intentions (Learn our names, Say them right)" is about the importance of

names. Most of my life I have been called by names other than my own, both first and last. At times I have even been made to feel that the use of my middle initial is a display of ostentation or arrogance. Sometimes a name is just misspoken or misspelled but sometimes it is a display of laziness, disrespect, or even power. This song was inspired by innovators such as Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols and its title and protest-like gumption were inspired by icons such as Charles Mingus. "Thank You Betsy" serves as a thank you to my mother's black Volvo, which she had named Betsy. Betsy got me to school, music lessons, friends' houses, fencing meets, rehearsals, and everything else you could imagine. That car was such a major part of my childhood and I am forever grateful.

Over the last few years, "The Power of the Spirit" became a mantra for me. It is rooted equally in both the reality of self-work and belief. This song follows in its own way the basic form of the blues. It deals with adversity and resolution in three parts. The first is you dealing with an internal struggle. Sometimes we battle our own thoughts and feelings.

The second deals with external struggles. There will be times when there is nothing that you could have done to avoid an outcome; as I've learned, we are not as much in control of what happens to us as we are our reaction to it. The last part is what gets us through these struggles and allows us to continue despite the severity of the obstacles we may face. It is the most unexplainable solution and generally the least recognized. This song is my interpretation of what it means to return in the power of the Spirit. Over the last few years I've written, played and spoken these words (and now lyrics) to myself:



ISAIAH J. THOMPSON

ISAIAH J. THOMPSON piano
JULIAN LEE tenor saxophone
PHILIP NORRIS bass
TJ REDDICK drums (tracks 2, 3, and 9)
DOMO BRANCH drums (tracks 5, 6, 7, and 8)

WYNTON MARSALIS

ROB MACOMBER
TODD WHITELOCK
CHRISTOPHER GOLD

GLORIA KABA

TODD WHITELOCK AT
AMPLIFIED ART AND SOUND

MARK WILDER AT
BATTERY STUDIOS, NYC 2022

GABRIELLE ARMAND

JAKE COHEN

BENJAMIN KORMAN

ZOOEY T. JONES

MADELYN GARDNER

DAPHNÉE SAGET WOODLEY
SUHAYDEE TEJEDA

GEORGINA JAVOR
JASON OLAINÉ

GEORGINA JAVOR

JUAN CARLOS ANDREWS

BRIAN WELESKO

CAROL BLACK-LEMON

WILLIAM MAURO


LAWRENCE SUMULONG

Recorded live on January 13, 2020; September 2-3, 2021;
and April 4, 2022, at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Dizzy's Club

Leadership support for Blue Engine Records
is provided by John and Jody Arnhold.

Leadership support for the inaugural Blue Engine emerging artist
release is made possible by the Jay Pritzker Foundation.

Major support is provided by David T. and Lisa Schiff and Len Riggio.



THE MISSION OF JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER IS TO
ENTERTAIN, ENRICH, AND EXPAND A GLOBAL
COMMUNITY FOR JAZZ THROUGH PERFORMANCE,
EDUCATION, AND ADVOCACY.



BLUEENGINERECORDS.ORG • JAZZ.ORG

© Isaiah J. Thompson under exclusive license to Jazz at Lincoln Center, Inc.

© 2023 Jazz at Lincoln Center, Inc.

Distributed in the USA by The Orchard. All Rights Reserved.

Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws.