



Juanita Brooks



Maxine Brown



Lady Cantrese



Ghanniyya Green



Rose Marie McCoy



Sandra Reaves-Phillips



LeeOlive Tucker



Baby Washington



# THE BLUES LADIES

By Ron Scott

The blues, baby, I'm talking about the down-home, rot-gut blues. The cornbread, collard greens blues. The my man, my woman done-me-wrong blues that made its way from the Mississippi Delta up to the urban North.

The southern migration to Harlem in the early 1920s included a crop of blues singers that added another dimension to the swinging jazz landscape. Women like Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters and Alberta Hunter were belting out soulful blues tunes that had everyone wanting more. Although these great women of the song are gone, they have influenced generations of ladies to follow in their blues path.

In the yearlong concert series Ladies Singing the Blues, eight remarkable ladies have rocked audiences throughout New York City. We honor...

## THE PERFORMERS

**Juanita Brooks**, a vocalist, actress, composer and dancer, began her career as a gospel singer in New Orleans. In her traditional jazz & blues performance, you can hear influences from Bessie Smith to Alberta Hunter, from Nina Simone to Sarah Vaughan. Equally at home on theater stages, she played the bluesy, no-nonsense Ma Reed in the Broadway hit musical *One Mo Time*. Brooks has performed to mesmerized audiences around the world.

**Maxine Brown** is capable of delivering R&B, soul, jazz and pop with equal ability. She began singing as a teenager with two gospel groups. In 1960, she signed with the Nomar record label. Her vocals and songwriting abilities led to her induction into the R&B Hall of Fame in 1991. With classic recordings like "Something You Got," "Ask Me," and "Since I Found You," Maxine Brown offers songs that are impeccable in style and matchless in content.

**Lady Cantrese** began singing in her elementary school's Glee Club. Following her passion, she became a member of the Abyssinian Baptist Church Chancellor Choir as a teenager. Lady Cantrese has toured Italy with the Harlem Gospel Choir and Japan with Vy Higginson and the New York Gospel Singers. She has also recorded with renowned jazz artist Olu Dara and performed in a myriad of venues around the world.

**Ghanniyya Green**, is recognized for her dynamic voice and stylized blues vocalization. She is a native New Yorker who has appeared in clubs such as the Blue Note, Cotton Club and Village Gate, and performed concerts at the Apollo Theater and the Whitney Museum. She has performed for off-Broadway theater productions, television, film and radio.

**Rose Marie McCoy** began as a singer in Arkansas, and later found success performing in such venues as Harlem's

Baby Grand, Montreal's Montmartre, Detroit's Flame Show Bar, and Toronto's Basin Street. As a songwriter, she caught the attention of record labels like Motown and Atlantic. She became one of the most prolific songwriters of the 20th Century; Ms. McCoy has penned more than 850 published songs for such performers as Tina Turner, Aretha Franklin, Eartha Kitt, Bette Midler and Elvis Presley.

**Sandra Reaves-Phillips**, tagged the "New Queen of the Blues," paved her way to show business through her success in singing. She garnered acclaim with a riveting portrayal of Mama Younger in the Broadway musical *Raisin* in 1973. She has appeared on the television shows *Law & Order* and *Another World* and in the classic film *Lean on Me*. The *Late Great Ladies of Blues & Jazz*, conceived and created by Ms. Reaves-Phillips, captures the essences of the Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Ethel Waters, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, and Mahalia Jackson.

**LeeOlive Tucker** grew up to the beats of the streets of Harlem—blues, calypso, jazz, salsa, doo-wop and R&B. She has performed with Reuben La Motta, Jerry Harris & Sally Smith, and Artie Simmons & The Jazz Samaritans to name a few. Influenced by Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Carmen McRae, Koko Taylor, Rohn Burton, Odetta and Sarah Vaughan, she fulfills her purpose as a quintessential vocalist, poet, songwriter and musician.

**Baby Washington** is a singer who epitomizes the sound of uptown soul. Ms. Washington began her career in 1956 with a singing group named *The Hearts*. The following year they disbanded, and she began a successful solo career. Recording for both Donald Shaw's Neptune label and for Juggy Murray's Sue label she released "The Time," "The Bells" and "Nobody Cares" which all scored her multiple places at the top of the R&B charts.