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Mahakala Music and the Oxford American Present the *No Tears Suite* Studio Album

A Monumental Ode to the Little Rock Nine, out on September 25th

August 3, 2020—LITTLE ROCK, AR—We're excited to announce that the *No Tears Suite* studio album is now available for pre-order and will be released on September 25. Written by Little Rock musicians Christopher Parker and Kelley Hurt, the Suite was performed at Central High School National Historic Site in 2017 in commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Little Rock Central High School desegregation crisis and the school's integration and features GRAMMY award-winning drummer Brian Blade, bassist Bill Huntington, trumpeter Marc Franklin, and saxophonists Bobby LaVell and Chad Fowler. The CD comes with a digital download.



Concurrent with the release of the studio album, a bonus free live recording of the *No Tears Suite* conducted by Geoffrey Robson features the jazz septet alongside a sixteen-piece Arkansas Symphony Orchestra chamber ensemble, and will be available in streaming format only. This live recording from March 2019 at Mosaic Templars Cultural Center in Little Rock, Arkansas features expanded orchestral arrangements of the suite written by and featuring GRAMMY-nominated arranger, composer, and bassist Rufus Reid.

ABOUT *NO TEARS SUITE*

In September 1957, 61 years after the “separate but equal” ruling of Plessy vs. Ferguson, in Little Rock, Arkansas, nine Black high school students finally broke through the threshold of Little Rock Central High School after a month of facing protestors and blockades by the Arkansas National Guard. *No Tears Suite*, composed by Arkansas-native and music teacher Christopher Parker and his wife, jazz vocalist Kelley Hurt, was initially written to commemorate and celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Little Rock Nine’s historic enrollment and their continued courage and fortitude, which has inspired every generation thereafter.

When the piece premiered in September 2017, the group of GRAMMY award-winning drummer Brian Blade, bassist Bill Huntington, trumpeter Marc Franklin, and saxophonists Bobby LaVell (tenor) and Chad Fowler (alto) was so successful in communicating Hurt and Parker’s vision, that the composers began to explore how they could continue to expand the *No Tears Suite*. Their solution manifested itself in a new collaboration with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, with the incomparable, GRAMMY-nominated arranger, composer, and bassist Rufus Reid penning the orchestral arrangements, flawlessly infusing the sweeping grandeur of the ASO’s 16-piece ensemble into the *No Tears Suite*—the live orchestral version of the suite that premiered in March 2019 in Little Rock, will be available as a free streaming-only bonus album on the same day that the studio version is released from the Arkansas-based label, Mahakala Music.

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Largely inspired and informed by the memoir *Warriors Don't Cry* by Melba Pattillo Beals, a member of the Little Rock Nine, the music of *No Tears Suite* reflects the resilience of those students as they ascended the steps of Central High School in 1957 and shifted the course of American history. The tension of inequality and oppression felt by these students is felt on “Roll Call,” as Hurt details the lives of those involved Little Rock Nine and others involved in Arkansas’, and America’s, educational integration over an unsettled and lamenting pool of instrumentation. But ultimately, *No Tears Suite* emphasizes emotions of power and joy, highlighting the significant progress and lasting brightness the Little Rock Nine brought to Arkansas and the country. “Jubilate” bounces and uplifts, and “[Don't Cry \(Warrior's Song\)](#)” struts with a confidence and strength—similar to Mingus’ composition on the same subject matter, “Fables of Faubus,”—Hurt sings words of grit and motivation over the soulful swing: “Beaten, bruised, yeah you refused / there are no cowards here.”

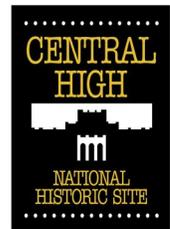
No Tears Suite never loses sight of the astounding humanity of the nine students that prompted the piece in the first place. In speaking on the development of the music, Parker said, “We just wanted to put the spotlight on those kids... how can anyone not be proud of those kids?”

Written by members of the Little Rock community, for the Little Rock-based literary magazine, *Oxford American*, about a pivotal moment in the city’s civil rights history, *No Tears Suite* is the result of and a testament to a community that believes in celebration, perseverance, and growth, and serves as an enduring reminder of the progress made and the progress still required.

Stream “[Don't Cry \(Warrior's Song\)](#)”

[Pre-order the *No Tears Suite* studio album](#) (CD + digital download)

Thanks to all the partners who supported the creation of
the project and recording of *No Tears Suite*.



National Park Service, Central High School National Historic Site, Lower Mississippi Delta Initiative, Stella Boyle Smith Trust, Arkansas Arts Council, the Department of Arkansas Heritage, the Roy and Christine Sturgis Charitable Trust, Andy & Somers Collins, Daddylog Jazz, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Marion Fulk & Jeff Rosenzweig, Chuck Cliett & Jay Barth, Jane & Chuck Beach, UCA College of Fine Arts & Communication, Associate Dean Gayle Seymour, Jennifer Deering, Superintendent Robin White, Ranger Jodi Morris, and Chief of Interpretation David Kilton.
