

**PORTO FRANCO RECORDS ANNOUNCES THE JANUARY 18, 2011 RELEASE OF
AWARD-WINNING BASSIST/COMPOSER MARCUS SHELBY'S
"SOUL OF THE MOVEMENT: MEDITATIONS ON DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR."**

*** Featuring the 15-piece Marcus Shelby Orchestra with Vocalists Faye Carol, Kenny Washington and Jeannine Anderson ***

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For Marcus Shelby, history breathes music. Over the past decade, the San Francisco bassist/composer has created a series of captivating large-scale works that illuminate the accomplishments, spiritual fortitude and tribulations of African-Americans. In his debut recording for Porto Franco Records, Shelby delivers his most ambitious project yet, "Soul of the Movement: Meditations on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," a glorious tapestry that weaves together his vivid original compositions with his arrangements of classic spirituals as well as a Civil Rights anthem "We Shall Overcome", Charles Mingus' politically charged "Fables of Faubus", and Curtis Mayfield's black pride hit "We Are a Winner". Based on his extensive research into the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, he's crafted a highly personal work that captures the era's charged energy and fierce sense of mission. Wielding his 15-piece jazz orchestra with confidence and precision, Shelby brilliantly showcases some of the Bay Area's most accomplished and expressive musicians, including trumpeters Darren Johnston and Mike Olmos, reed experts Sheldon Brown, Howard Wiley and Gabe Eaton, pianist Adam Shulman and drummer Jeff Marrs.

"It's like someone with a committed theatre group," Shelby says. "You write for the same actors. Gabe Eaton has been with me for a long time and his voice is central to the music. I know his sound and his strengths and what he's really comfortable playing. There are 15 amazing voices in the group, and each one provides inspiration as a composer and arranger."

Through a series of grants, residencies and independent investigation at the Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University, Shelby dug into the movement's history and visited the sites where the struggle for civil rights unfolded. While he initially planned to create a sweeping work exploring Dr. King's life and times, he found that his family's experience in the movement provided a powerful point of entry. Visiting with family in Mississippi and Memphis, he interviewed relatives who participated in the struggle, particularly

the 1968 “I Am A Man” sanitation workers strike that brought King to the city where he was assassinated.

“As I got into the research, I found the pieces of the story that resonated most were the ones where I had some connection via family or location,” Shelby says. “My family members were in the movement and I went and asked them questions I had never asked before. Several relatives were in the I Am A Man marches, and several had been arrested in the struggle.”

In many ways, “Soul of the Movement” flows from Shelby’s earlier projects, particularly 2006’s “Port Chicago,” a powerful work exploring the World War II-era miscarriage of justice following a catastrophic explosion at a shipyard in Pittsburg, Calif., and 2008’s “Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman,” a soul-drenched oratorio celebrating the life of the legendary abolitionist and Underground Railroad activist. With “Soul,” he brings all of that preparation to bear, as a composer, arranger and conceptualist capable of distilling complex ideas and emotions into a flexible orchestral language. More than preparing him for the technical challenge of creating a cohesive work that reinvents beloved sacred songs, the earlier projects provided Shelby with insight into social, political and musical history that informs every note on “Soul of the Movement.”

“The historical understanding, how the social and political evolution of the music happened, I couldn’t have dealt with that six or seven years ago,” he says. “I’m not sure if it was conscious, but there is a line from ‘Port Chicago’ and ‘Harriet Tubman’ to ‘Soul of the Movement.’ There *was* a conscious commitment to use blues-based music and swing as a way of capturing history. That was always a goal. ‘Harriet Tubman’ got me thinking about what came afterwards, how freedom and slave songs fed the following generations.”

Many of the historical connections came through a residency at Chicago’s Black Metropolis Research Consortium. Drawn by King’s oft-overlooked Chicago Freedom Movement of the mid-60s, Shelby had already gathered much of material for “Soul” when his Windy City sojourn provided new depth to his understanding of the interaction between the movement of African-Americans and the evolution of black culture.

“Chicago changed a lot of things for me,” Shelby says. “When I got there this history opened up. It helped me rethink how music evolved in this country. I looked into early blues and music

that came up from the Delta. You had the great migration, and Louis Armstrong leaving New Orleans for Chicago and New York. That's the historical arc of our music."

Like on "Harriet Tubman," Shelby built "Soul of the Movement" around three extraordinary vocalists: the irrepressible jazz and blues singer Faye Carol, the dynamic soul jazz belter Kenny Washington and soaring conservatory-trained soprano Jeannine Anderson. The album opens with Shelby's arrangements of two gorgeous spirituals, "There Is A Balm In Gilead" and "Amen," and closes with Thomas A. Dorsey's sublime plea "Take My Hand Precious Lord," King's favorite song (performed by gospel legend Mahalia Jackson per his request at his funeral). In between, the protest anthem "We Shall Overcome" and John Work's folk standard "Go Tell It On the Mountain" connect Shelby's hard-swinging tunes with Charles Mingus' "Fables of Faubus," a searing indictment of the segregationist Arkansas governor, and Curtis Mayfield's black pride hymn "We're A Winner." Despite the disparate musical sources and locations referenced, the album feels like a coherent, free flowing conversation that keeps circling back to fundamental questions.

"'Harriet Tubman' was much more vocally orchestrated," Shelby notes. "This was more in the spirit of the church, with some harmony, but mostly I was looking for a choral effect. Faye has a very specific, bluesy timbre. Kenny has a very clear voice. He's at home singing jazz, R&B or gospel. I had him come out on lead a little more. I think of Jeannine Anderson like a soprano in the mix with other instruments. I may not have her doing any swing material, but if I need her to lead in the gospel, she's right at home. These spirituals are songs I heard growing up in church. 'Gilead' is directly connected to King's story. He ends his 'Knock at Midnight' speech with a quote from it. 'Amen' is a song I grew up with and something I wanted to reinvent musically."

Shelby notes that he and Carol both collaborate with Howard Wiley on his ongoing investigation into songs from Louisiana's Angola Prison, a project that's produced two acclaimed albums. He and Wiley are two of Carol's most illustrious protégés, and it's no coincidence that they've both created potent works excavating the roots of African-American history.

"I really consider Faye a mentor," Shelby says. "We spend a lot of time talking about music and life. This was a very natural project for her. I know she likes the opportunity to do things she

doesn't normally do, singing lead parts or harmonizing with other singers, interpreting songs like 'We're A Winner' and 'Precious Lord.'”

Ultimately, “Soul” is the work of an engaged artist and citizen who’s determined not to let crucial stories be forgotten. Whether following King’s footsteps to Chicago, Montgomery and Memphis, or gleaning first-hand accounts of the civil rights struggle from his relatives, Shelby bears witness with his orchestra, capturing the essence of an era. More than soul-stirring music, “Soul of the Movement” is timeless testimony about the people who made America start to live up to its promise of equality under the law.

“I’ve got two daughters and I wanted them to keep the story going,” Shelby says. “Getting it from my ancestors and passing it on--story telling is an African tradition and African-American tradition. I feel blessed I had the opportunity to do my part.”