**BMI CELEBRATES THE BEST IN GOSPEL MUSIC AT THE 2022 TRAILBLAZERS OF GOSPEL MUSIC AWARDS**

***“Speak To Me” Named BMI’s Gospel Song of the Year***

***Aaron Lindsey, J Drew Sheard II, Kierra Sheard and Jeshua “TedyP” Williams tied for Songwriter of the Year***

***Be Essential Songs Honored as Publisher of the Year***

**(March 31, 2022- NASHVILLE, TN)-** Today [**BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.)**](http://www.bmi.com) celebrated the best and brightest in gospel music at the **2022 BMI Trailblazers of Gospel Music Awards** held at the National Museum of African American Music in Nashville. **BMI’s Gospel** **Song of the Year**, **Songwriter of the Year**, **Publisher of the Year** and **the top 20 songs** of the previous year were all honored at the private event hosted by **BMI’s President & CEO, Mike O’Neill** and **BMI’s Vice President, Creative-Atlanta Catherine Brewton**.

The inspirational celebration was filled with gospel luminaries and music industry insiders who were thrilled to honor the songwriters whose music brings the sounds of faith and joy to the world. The event kicked off with **Mali Music** performing the GRAMMY Award-winning song “Movin On,” co-written with Jonathan McReynolds and Terrell Demetrius Wilson. **Natalie Grant** followed with a performance of **Donald Lawrence’s** hit song, “God,” which she is featured on, and brought the crowd to its feet. Before the awards were presented to the afternoon’s honorees, gospel legend **CeCe Winans** gave a powerful rendition of “Believe for It.”

BMI’s **Gospel Songwriter of the Year** was a four-way tie between **Aaron Lindsey**, **J Drew Sheard II**, **Kierra Sheard** and **Jeshua “TedyP” Williams**. GRAMMY, Dove and Stellar Award-winning songwriter, **Aaron** **Lindsey** was honored for two chart-topping songs, “It Belongs to Me,” co-written and performed by Juan and Lisa Winans (feat. Marvin Winans) and “Thank You for It All,” co-written by Jarmone E. Davis and Marvin Sapp. **J Drew** and **Kierra Sheard** were honored for co-writing “His Love” and “It Keeps Happening,” which marked Kierra’s “first #1 single at Gospel radio as a solo artist and her third #1 overall on the Gospel Airplay chart,” as quoted from *The Christian Beat*. This also marks the first time that siblings have received this honor at a Trailblazers of Gospel Music Awards ceremony. GRAMMY Award-winning songwriter/producer **Jeshua “TedyP” Williams** was honored for his work on “Hold Me Close” and for co-writing “Trouble Won't Last” with **Keyondra Lockett**, who won her first BMI award for the hit single.

**BMI’s Gospel Song of the Year** was **“Speak to Me,”** co-written by **Troy Taylor** and featuring samples from **Donnie McClurkin**’s 1996 single “Speak to My Heart.” The hit single, performed by Koryn Hawthorne, spent 41 weeks on *Billboard’s* Hot Gospel Chart and was nominated for Song of the Year at the 2021 Dove Awards. This was McClurkin’s fifth BMI Gospel Award, and Taylor added his first BMI Gospel Award to his collection of honors, which includes three BMI R&B/Hip-Hop Awards.

BMI’s **Gospel Publisher of the Year** went to **Be Essential Songs** for having hits such as “In Spite of Me,” “Movin' On,” and “Never Lost” among its repertoire.

Throughout the ceremony the music continued with featured performances by gospel greats and BMI Trailblazers of Gospel Music Icons **Marvin Sapp** and **Kirk Franklin**, as well as rising gospel star **DOE**. After being honored with his sixth BMI Gospel Award for “Thank You for It All,” Sapp gave a moving performance of the chart-topping single. The music continued with DOE’s uplifting performance of “Brighter,” from her 2020 self-titled debut EP. To close out the performances, Greg Cox joined Franklin on stage for a moving rendition of “Strong God,” which hit #1 on Billboard’s Gospel Airplay chart. This marks Franklin’s 19th BMI Gospel Award. Following the performance, Franklin paid tribute to Dr. Bobby Jones, who was recognized with a standing ovation for his many years supporting the gospel music community with his show, “Bobby Jones Gospel” on BET, which was that network’s longest running original series.

The **Top 20 Gospel Songs** of the previous year were awarded prior to the ceremony, welcoming 27 first-time winners. Some of the emerging songwriters who collected their first BMI award included Byron Cage, Emerald Campbell, Quennel Gaskin and Juan Winans to name a few.

To join the conversation on social media, follow us @BMI and use #BMIGospel. Please visit (<https://www.bmi.com/trailblazers2022>) to see a full list of BMI’s Trailblazers of Gospel Music Award honorees.

To download high-res photos and video clips from the red carpet and inside the event, go to <https://publicity.gettyimages.com/event/bmi-s-2022-trailblazers-of-gospel-music-awards>.
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