

Lifesaving Heroes on a Fateful Elevator Ride Inspire Music with a Mission

ALBUM REVIEW

“Grateful: A Sudden Cardiac Arrest Survivor’s Awakening,”

by Maurice Trosclair/Miracle Meaux,

Funky Bone LLC, 2020.

Photo by The Red M Studio

By Suzanne Shelley

To hear Maurice Trosclair tell it, he died on the elevator that day. Moments after the doors closed on Elevator C on February 14, 2017, Maurice suffered a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA), following a short run along New Orleans’ Lake Pontchartrain. One moment he was texting his wife Nancy on his way up to the office. The next moment he was face down in a pool of his own blood from a head wound suffered in the fall. His heart had stopped completely, without warning. On Valentine’s Day, no less — a day that celebrates happy hearts everywhere. The irony was beyond tragic.

Sliding doors

What happened next, in the chaotic minutes that followed was nothing short of a miracle. When the elevator doors finally opened on the ground floor, Maurice was reborn — a phoenix rising from the ashes — thanks to an incredibly fortuitous series of events and a handful of “citizen first responders” who sprang into action to save the life of a total stranger. Six complete strangers reacted selflessly, creating a swift and decisive “chain of survival” that quite literally kept him alive until emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and an ambulance could arrive. He was finally speeding toward the local hospital, a full 50 minutes after his heart had stopped beating.

Sliding doors

In addition to his career in the oil industry, music has been Maurice's heart and soul throughout his life. Now he's hoping to use his music to save others.

Fit as a fiddle, Maurice had completed a half marathon just nine days before his SCA. He was scheduled to fly to New York City the following morning, to perform at the famed Jazz at Lincoln Center with Delfeayo Marsalis and The Uptown Jazz Orchestra. It was an exciting and stressful time.

Sliding doors

With just a 10% survival rate, SCA is a particularly deadly, devastating cardiac event. A leading cause of death in the U.S., it kills nearly 36,000 Americans each year. With only 2–3 minutes to intervene in a cardiac emergency, it's no surprise that 90% who experience an SCA will die. However, when bystanders are able to intervene with cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and an automated exterior defibrillator (AED) within minutes, the chance of survival rises dramatically.

Maurice could have easily died on the elevator floor that fateful day. Was he lucky? Absolutely! Were the coincidences incredible? Yes. But as a wise old sage once said: "Luck favors the well prepared." The truth is, Maurice's luck in the life-or-death moments that erupted quickly in Elevator C was greatly enhanced by the preparation, training and presence of mind that each of his "lifesaving guardian angels" brought to bear so instantaneously when his heart stopped. What made the difference is that

each of the citizen first responders who jumped in to save Maurice's life was already prepared in some way. Several were trained in CPR. Others were able to grab a nearby AED and use it appropriately. All demonstrated the incredible presence of mind to save the life of a total stranger — in a heartbeat.

When Maurice's heart stopped suddenly in Elevator C, the two strangers in the elevator reacted quickly, racing to get help and call 911 when the doors opened on the 9th floor. But the doors closed quickly, leaving the initial good Samaritans on the outside, and the elevator shot up to the 21st floor, with Maurice's lifeless body trapped inside.

***So many things could have gone tragically
“wrong on that fateful day for Maurice.”
So many things went miraculously right.***

When the doors opened there, Suzanne Howard, a registered nurse, was waiting to get on. Reflexively, she dropped her purse, kicked off her high-heeled shoes and sprang into action. The doors closed again, and the elevator continued its wild ride.

Suzanne desperately administered CPR and provided a non-stop drumbeat of chest compressions and rescue breaths to keep a steady flow of oxygen to Maurice's brain. Maurice's strange luck continued. When the doors finally opened in the lobby, another stranger, Tricha Arabie — also a registered nurse with training in CPR — was waiting to get in. Hearing Nurse Suzy call out "I need some help here!" she instinctively jumped in, taking over chest compressions and rescue breaths for Nurse Suzy. Working in tandem, the two continued to

perform CPR and administer rescue breaths in the elevator at lobby level.

Moments later, Roy Fontenelle — the manager of the Premiere Athletic Club who had heard the first calls for help on the 9th floor — entered the elevator at lobby level, and administered a shock with the AED he had grabbed from the health club. An ambulance eventually arrived and the EMTs administered four more shocks from their AED, finally stabilizing Maurice enough to get him into the ambulance and rush him to the closest emergency room.

Within moments of Maurice's SCA, six ordinary citizens — six extraordinary citizens and

complete strangers, several of whom had been trained in CPR — plus a handful of EMTs were working in tandem to save his life.

Thanks to their swift, decisive actions, when Maurice was discharged from the hospital — after going through heart surgery and spending two days in a medically induced coma and two more days in recovery — he emerged "neurologically unscathed." How different the outcome could have been. So many things could have gone tragically wrong on that fateful day for Maurice. So many things went miraculously right.

Sliding doors

In common parlance, this term-of-art describes those pivotal moments when life can suddenly turn on

a dime — for better or worse. A sly glance or winsome smile that could have created a lifelong connection or been missed altogether. A passing conversation that either means nothing or ultimately reveals one's soul mate. Seemingly inconsequential or random moments that can forever alter one's destiny.

Sliding doors

A fitting metaphor for an accomplished musician who has spent his life using his slide trombone to create and perform music that celebrates and preserves New Orleans' rich cultural heritage. As the former leader of New Orleans' legendary cover band, The Nobles (which was formed in 1959), Maurice performed with the band for 25 years. More recently, he has been a member of the Delfeayo Marsalis Uptown Jazz Orchestra and a busy trombone sideman.

A man on a mission

Since that fateful day, Maurice and his wife Nancy have been on a mission to increase those odds for others, and to pay forward some of the good luck that comes from good preparation. Together, they created Heartbeat NOLA in late 2017, a 501(c)3 non-profit, that raises funds to provide CPR training and install AEDs in public venues throughout New Orleans. Their goal is to increase the number of citizen first responders in the community. They have focused their initial efforts on installing AEDs in entertainment establishments and crowded public venues in New Orleans, and providing training for staff members, so they can be ready in a heartbeat. In a fitting homage to Maurice's deep New Orleans musical roots, the

first AEDs from Heartbeat NOLA have been installed in three of New Orleans' most iconic musical venues — Snug Harbor Jazz Bistro, Tipitina's, and Maple Leaf Bar.

When he returned to the stage following his near-death experience, Maurice was given a new nickname from his fellow musicians. That's when "Miracle Meaux" got busy, writing, arranging and recording an album of original music, entitled "Grateful — A Sudden Cardiac Arrest Survivor's Awakening." Released this year, the album pays homage to all of the citizen first responders, EMTs and medical professionals who save lives every day while also funding Heartbeat NOLA's ongoing efforts to raise SCA awareness, enable ongoing CPR training, and install AEDs throughout the community.

In light of the COVID-19 global pandemic that is impacting everyone, Maurice's music reminds us how grateful we are for health care professionals who are risking their lives every day on the front lines helping others. In another tragic "sliding doors" twist of fate, following the seemingly overnight collapse in oil prices spurred by the pandemic's economic slowdown, Maurice's position as Senior Exploration Technician at a local oil company was recently eliminated. After 35 years in the oil industry he now finds himself facing a career crossroads.

Bringing his music to life Miracle Meaux's album "Grateful" showcases a handpicked ensemble of world-class local musicians and vocalists "who made the music sound even better than I could have ever imagined," he says. The album combines a delicious mix of Crescent



Grateful: A sudden cardiac arrest survivor's awakening album cover - photography by The Red M Studio with post-production digital imaging by Andre Trosclair

City musical genres — contemporary jazz, gospel, pop, street funk and a heavy dose of New Orleans brass.

Track 1, “Before I Believed, Now I Know” is a loose adaptation of the Richard Rodgers jazz standard “My Funny Valentine.” With supple vocal treatment by Kate Abreo — “My grateful heart is in your hands...it just may be the master plan. Before I believed, now I know” — the track features woodwind solos by Khari Allen Lee on flute and Gregory Agid on clarinet. Together, the musicians evoke the tag-team efforts of the two female first responders who fought so valiantly and provided quality CPR to keep blood and oxygen flowing to Maurice’s brain in Elevator C.

Meanwhile, the instrumental version of this song (Track 8) moves along at a faster clip. With Maurice on his

signature slide trombone (which is now adorned with guardian angel wings and a heart motif), and Ryan Hanseler on piano, the duo creates a frenetic rendition of the song to capture the frantic energy of those life-saving moments that unfolded so spontaneously on that fateful day.

later joins in with his ever-insightful wisdom on tenor sax, and highlights an inspiring message for all of us during these pandemic days: “You are not alone. Our still beating hearts will keep us together.” ([Click here to view official music video of “You Are Not Alone”](#))

“This life-changing experience has awakened in me an extraordinary awareness of life, death and everything in between.”

- Maurice Trosclair

Track 4, “You Are Not Alone (A Sudden Cardiac Arrest Survivor’s Anthem)” opens with Ryan Hanseler’s interpretative piano intro, which sets the mood for Charlene Howard’s heartfelt and spiritual lead vocals. The song leads us on a journey of healing and hope. “The Reverend” Roderick Paulin

Track 5, “Keep Dat Funky Beat,” sets the rhythmic groove for the album and offers a whimsical riff on one of the conditions that can lead to an SCA — an irregular heartbeat or arrhythmia. In “Awakening” (Track 9), classical guitar master John Rankin and Khari Allen Lee on flute deliver



Backstage at Tipitina's Miracle Meaux Musicians Left to right: Lu Rojas, Mark Carson, Michael Skinkus, Roderick Paulin, Jimmy Robinson, Khari Allen Lee, John Rankin, Maurice Trosclair, Antoine Deil, Lorraine Hess, Kate Abreo, Gerald Watkins, Billy Nesbit, Scott Johnson

a haunting, soulful performance meant to illuminate the realization of our mortality. “Some feelings and experiences about that day are simply indescribable,” says Maurice, “but one thing for sure is that this life-changing experience has awakened in me an extraordinary awareness of life, death and everything in between.”

A very strong female presence is apparent on the album. “Four of the six vocalists on the album are women, and that was by design as it was the women who totally took charge and saved my life on that fateful day,” says Maurice. “I’m an

“*This is all about saving lives.*”

instrumentalist, not a vocalist — I know where my strengths lie,” he says with a laugh. “So I compiled the best group of performers to bring my music to life and in doing so, to save other’s lives.”

Miracle Meaux is an SCA survivor who beat incredible odds thanks to a miraculous chain-of-survival that was made possible by the swift and selfless response by citizen first responders who had the right training to jump in and save a life without hesitation. “I am working to pay it forward, by informing, equipping and inspiring the next citizen first responders,” he says. “Ideally, I’d love to see an AED next to the fire extinguisher in every public venue. I want my story to be the norm, not the exception. This is all about saving lives.” And the beat goes on. ♪

Suzanne Shelley

Please consider donating to Heartbeat NOLA and you will receive the CD

“Grateful: A Sudden Cardiac Arrest Survivor’s Awakening,”
by Maurice Trosclair/Miracle Meaux, Funky Bone LLC, 2020,
through the Heartbeat NOLA website (www.heartbeatnola.org),
or download the digital version on iTunes, Spotify, Amazon, and CD Baby,
and at the Louisiana Music Factory in NOLA.

<https://www.louisianamusicfactory.com/product/maurice-miracle-meaux-trosclair-grateful/...>

And pay it forward by telling all your friends!



Photo by: Titus Childers

Miracle Meaux performs at Tipitina's December 1, 2019
Left to right: Robert May, Naydja CoJoe, Maurice Trosclair, Gerald Watkins

About the Author:

Suzanne Shelley is a freelance technical writer/ghostwriter/editor living in New York City (www.linkedin.com/in/suzanneshelley), and a long-time friend of Maurice's from the days when the two worked together at Amoco Production Company in New Orleans in the late 1980s — she as a rookie Geologist and he as a young Exploration Technologist.