

= Ave Maria (Beyoncé song) =

" Ave Maria " is a song by American R & B recording artist Beyoncé Knowles from her third studio album *I Am ... Sasha Fierce* (2008) . Amanda Ghost , Ian Dench and Makeba Riddick wrote the song in collaboration with its producers Knowles and production duo Stargate . As stated by Ghost , " Ave Maria " was inspired by Knowles ' and her own respective marriages . The song is a re @-@ write of Franz Schubert 's " Ave Maria " . It is instrumentally complete with a piano and strings . Throughout the ballad , Knowles sings in a lower register with an operatic soprano . Lyrically , it speaks about being surrounded by friends but still feeling alone .

Critical reception towards the song was mixed . Many contemporary critics praised its balladry and Knowles ' vocals while others dubbed it as merely a normal take on the original . Following the release of *I Am ... Sasha Fierce* , " Ave Maria " debuted on the UK Singles Chart at number 150 on November 29 , 2008 , based on downloads alone . The song was a part Knowles ' set list during her *I Am ... Tour* (2009 ? 10) where she sang it dressed in a wedding dress and veil . " Ave Maria " was subsequently included on her live album , *I Am ... World Tour* (2010) . Knowles also performed the song as a tribute to Michael Jackson during the 2009 BET Awards .

= = Writing and inspiration = =

Mikkel Storleer Eriksen and Tor Erik Hermansen , together under the stage name Stargate , wrote and produced the song with additional writing by Amanda Ghost , Ian Dench and Makeba Riddick . The song was written in Bangladesh , Patchwerk and Silent Sound Studios in Atlanta , Georgia in 2008 . Knowles worked with Amanda Ghost to re @-@ write Franz Schubert 's " Ave Maria " after having co @-@ written " Disappear " in London . She stated that the song was one of the most personal on the album . Ghost told *The Daily Telegraph* that Knowles ' references to rapper Jay @-@ Z are usually unclear and open to interpretation , yet her music , including " Ave Maria " , " is the one place she can be incredibly expressive " . Knowles and Ghost both liked Schubert 's song and walked down the aisle to the song during their respective weddings . The marriages of the artists inspired them to write their own version of the recording . She further discussed the lyrics and inspiration :

[T] he lyric is very much about her . She talks about being surrounded by friends but she 's alone : ' How can the silence seem so loud ? ' and then ' There 's only us when the lights go down ' . I think that 's probably the most personal line on the whole album about her and Jay , because they are very real , and they 're very much in love , and it must be pretty tough to have that love when you 're incredibly famous .

" Ave Maria " is present on the *I Am ...* disc of the double album *I Am ... Sasha Fierce* , as it is a ballad that shows Knowles ' insecurities about love , and the person she is " underneath all the makeup , underneath the lights and underneath all the exciting star drama " . Knowles has said that she loves singing ballads because , " the music and the emotion in the story is told [sic] so much better . It 's a better connection because you can hear it and it 's not all these other distractions . I really wanted people to hear my voice and hear what I had to say . " During an interview , Knowles revealed that " Ave Maria " was the most personal song to her on the whole album .

= = Composition = =

" Ave Maria " is a ballad that runs for 3 minutes and 42 seconds . *The Village Voice* 's Nana Ekua Brew @-@ Hammond described the song as being " opera @-@ tinted " . According to the sheet music published by EMI Music Publishing , it is written in the key of C Major with a slow tempo of 75 beats per minute and it is set in common time . The song samples Franz Schubert 's " Ave Maria " , however as noted by Leah Greenblatt of *Entertainment Weekly* , even though it " does riff on the classic aria , it 's not an actual cover " . The main instruments in " Ave Maria " include a piano and strings . Throughout the song , Knowles ' voice shows restraint as she sings in a lower register with an operatic soprano that gives her more vocal power , as commented by Jennifer Vineyard of MTV

News . Her vocal range spans from the music note of B3 to E5 . Lyrically , " Ave Maria " is about being surrounded by friends but still feeling alone , as conveyed by the lines , " How can the silence seem so loud ? " and " There 's only us when the lights go down " . This view was echoed by Joey Guerra of the Houston Chronicle , who wrote that the song weaves " a vivid tale of a desperate woman " .

= = Critical reception = =

Contemporary music critics received the " Ave Maria " with mixed reception . While some praised Knowles ' emotion @-@ filled vocals , others stated that her version as merely a normal take on the original . Joey Guerra of the Houston Chronicle commended the open @-@ hearted emotion and the soft vocals that Knowles adopts on " Ave Maria " , before adding that it is " a clever riff on the classic aria " and " a unique risk that pays off " . Likewise , the Hartford Courant 's Eric R. Danton , praised the rework of the classic aria , adding that Knowles ' lyrics were an " elegant take on the timeless melody " . Ryan Dombal of Pitchfork Media commented that Knowles ' twist on the song is " vocally impeccable , but it reads more like recital fodder rather than a true confessional . " Leah Greenblatt from Entertainment Weekly wrote that on the I Am disc there were some " lovely ballads " including " Disappear " , the " soaring ' Halo ' and ' Ave Maria ' " . Matos Michaelangelo of The A.V. Club wrote that " Beyoncé has a real flair for grandeur " and the " big , wide melodies of ' Halo ' and ' Ave Maria ' give her enough to work with that . " Greg Kot of Chicago Tribune commented that " Ave Maria " offers a " rare moment of comfort " and added that it " come [s] off as delicate as [Knowles '] emotions . " Jim Farber of Daily News praised the song with its " operatic flourishes ... [and] heavenly élan " . In another review , he noted that the song was " by far her most melodically sure , and musically diverse , work " . USA Today 's Elysa Gardner chose " Ave Maria " as one of the songs to download from the album . While reviewing I Am ... Sasha Fierce , a critic from People magazine noted that " the classically tinged ' Ave Maria , ' ... shows even more range [than ' If I Were a Boy '] . "

Spence D. of IGN Music praised " Ave Maria " , writing that it shows Knowles in " crystal clear form " due to the mellow accompaniment that highlighted her " often captivating " voice . Darryl Sterdan , writing for the Canadian website Jam ! , noted that Knowles " draws on the classic composition for this sweeping number " and echoes a similar line to John Lennon 's quote : " Life is what happens to you while you 're busy making other plans . " Talia Kraines of BBC Online called the song " very strange , but wonderful " . In his consumer guide , Robert Christgau wrote , " But me , I 'm a hater , and thus I 'm something like outraged , by not just those two pimp @-@ outs but an ' Ave Maria ' lacking even the dumbstruck literalism of Pink 's rendition or the grotesque conversion of ' Umbrella ' into ' Halo . ' " Bernard Zuel of The Sydney Morning Herald wrote that the song was " pompous and frankly embarrassing " . Colin McGuire of PopMatters commented that " Ave Maria " is a " pretty normal take , a piece that has simply been done too many times before to think [Knowles] would even have a shot at putting her stamp on it . " Alexis Petridis of The Guardian described the song as " dreary " . According to James Reed of The Boston Globe , the song is " an intriguing proposition torpedoed by a soggy arrangement " . Adam Mazmanian of The Washington Times gave a negative review for the song , writing that the high notes included on " Ave Maria " , " should have remained a secret between Beyonce and her producers " . In 2013 , John Boone and Jennifer Cady of E ! Online placed the song at number ten on their list of ten best Knowles ' songs . They further added , " The new classic kicks off with the plucking off some light strings and you know by the end you 'll be singing through tears . "

= = Live performances = =

" Ave Maria " was a part of the set list during Knowles ' I Am ... Tour (2009 @-@ 2010) , where she performed the song dressed in a wedding dress and blended it into Sarah McLachlan 's " Angel " (1998) . The wedding dress Knowles wore during the tour , was originally designed as a black dress and was designed by Thierry Mugler . Her mother and designer , Tina Knowles , made the

dress stage @-@ appropriate so Knowles could dance in it . When Knowles performed the song in Sunrise , Florida on June 29 , 2009 , animated graphics of turntables , faders , and other club gear throbbed behind her and her musicians . Knowles was accompanied by her two drummers , two keyboardists , a percussionist , a horn section , three backup vocalists called the Mamas and a lead guitarist , Bibi McGill . According to Parke Puterbaugh from News & Record , the strangest moment of the concert was Knowles ' " unironic delivery " of " Ave Maria " , for which she was attired in a wedding dress and veil .

Following Knowles ' performance of the ballad at The O2 Arena in London , a writer for the newspaper Irish Independent commented that " an Irish audience surely cannot sit through the old convent staple ' Ave Maria ' ... without feeling something cold squeeze the heart . " Alice Jones of The Independent felt that the performance was an " exceedingly odd segment " during the tour . While reviewing Knowles ' performance at the Madison Square Garden , a writer of People magazine compared her look with Madonna 's . While reviewing another concert by Knowles , Ann Powers of Los Angeles Times also compared the performance with " pop 's ultimate alpha female " Madonna at the 1984 MTV Video Music Awards . She also compared " Ave Maria " with the singer 's 1989 song " Like a Prayer " because they both used religious imagery to elevate a romantic connection . A writer of Evening Chronicle praised the performance of the song during the tour , saying that it showed off Knowles ' " incredible " vocals . A critic of Daily Mail , noted that Knowles performed " near operatic heights " during " Ave Maria " . MTV News ' Jayson Rodriguez commented that Knowles uses her softer side while performing the ballad . Jim Farber of the Daily News praised the performance of the song , saying that " Beyoncé hit notes with a new delicacy , then moved seamlessly into the final operatic crescendo " . Barbara Ellen of The Observer was negative about the performance of " Ave Maria " during the I Am ... Tour , comparing it with Challenge Anneka and bridezilla . She described it as " nonsense ... [it] has no place in a Beyoncé show " .

Knowles performed " Ave Maria " in Burswood Entertainment Complex , Perth , Western Australia , on September 25 , 2009 . Jay Hanna , writing for The Sunday Times , described the performance as " stunning " . Jay Lustig of New Jersey On @-@ Line described the same performance as " operatic " . Holly Byrnes of The Daily Telegraph while reviewing another stop during the concert tour of Knowles in Australia wrote that her performance of the ballad " guaranteed to have raised the sails of the Sydney Opera House " , while Patrick Emery of The Australian described her performance during another stop in the same country as " soaring " . A live performance of " Ave Maria " is featured on Knowles ' 2010 live album , I Am ... World Tour . Andy Gill of The Independent , while reviewing the DVD , gave a negative review for the performance of the song , writing that " if her grotesque over @-@ emoting on ' Ave Maria ' is anything to go by , legibility could make things a lot worse . " On December 3 , 2008 , Knowles ' performance of " Ave Maria " at the Rockefeller Center , in New York , was broadcast on NBC . A writer from People magazine described her performance as " rousing " . Knowles sang the song as a tribute to Michael Jackson at the 2008 Essence Music Festival . She later performed the song during the 2009 BET Awards , where she blended it with Sarah McLachlan 's song " Angel " in honor to Michael Jackson , following his death . Knowles appeared in an angelic Balmain mini white dress , and according to a writer from The Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail , she performed a " moving version " of " Ave Maria " . A writer for the newspaper The Hindu commented that the performance of the song was " simultaneously sexy and angelic " .

= = Cover versions = =

On May 12 , 2012 , Molly Rainford , a contestant of the sixth season of Britain 's Got Talent , sang " Ave Maria " during the show 's final . Digital Spy 's Daniel Sperling noted that Rainford sang a " pimped @-@ up version " of the song which he called " incredible " . A writer of BBC Online described her rendition as " moving " . On May 28 , 2012 , Fatai Veamatahau sang " Ave Maria " on The Voice (Australia) . Simon Holt of The Sydney Morning Herald noted that " she has a voice which brought tears to many eyes " , including coach and mentor Seal 's . Coach Joel Madden said :

" I have to be respectful . That was a very spiritual performance . I 'm not sure what it was like for people at home , but that felt electric in here " . A reviewer for Take 40 Australia called it a " rousing version " . Veamatahau 's version peaked at number 25 on the Australian Singles Chart for the week of June 10 , 2012 .

= = Credits and personnel = =

Credits are taken from I Am ... Sasha Fierce liner notes .

Beyoncé Knowles ? songwriter , vocals

Amanda Ghost ? songwriter

Ian Dench ? songwriter , guitar

Makeba Riddick ? songwriter

Mikkel S.Eriksen ? songwriter , producer , recorder , other instrumentation

Tor Erik Hermansen ? songwriter , production , other instrumentation

Mark " Spike " Stent ? audio mixing

Matt Green ? audio mixing assistant

Recorded at Roc the Mic Studios , New York City , New York

Mixed at Record Plant , Los Angeles , California

= = Charts = =

Following the album 's digital release , " Ave Maria " debuted on the UK Singles Chart at number 150 on November 29 , 2008 . It also charted on the Portuguese Ringtone Chart in 2010 at number 16 .