

**DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN GOSPEL PIANO STYLE (1926-1960):
A SOCIO-MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF ARIZONA DRANES AND THOMAS A. DORSEY**

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African-American gospel music has long been recognized as a vocal music, and its piano accompaniment has also been an indispensable and important component in shaping and defining the genre. This dissertation traces and examines the historical and stylistic development of the gospel piano style from 1926 to 1960. Arizona Dranes and Thomas A. Dorsey are highlighted as two of the earliest and formidable practitioners who aided in codifying and promulgating the gospel piano style.

The four primary areas of investigation include: 1) explicating the musical development of the piano style from 1926 to 1960 through the pianistic styles of twenty-three gospel pianists; 2) providing biographical information on over twenty-five gospel pianists; 3) examining the sacred versus secular dichotomy through musical similarities and differences that exist between the gospel piano style and other popular, African-American piano styles; and 4) presenting an ethnographic exploration of the musical and sociohistorical roles of gospel pianists. Each area of inquiry is informed by methods in Ethnomusicology and Musicology, and augmented by methodologies in African-American Studies, Anthropology, and Sociology. Wilson's work on conceptual approaches to African and African-American music-making (1974, 1984, 1992), and Gates' work on Signifying (1988) provide the major theoretical framework for the musical analysis.

Fifty-five recordings of various gospel pianists, representing nine sub-styles, are transcribed and analyzed in order to define and delineate established practices, techniques,

idiomatic harmonic movement, and shared motives, riffs, and “fill-ins” -- all which are important in establishing a stylistic and performance canon for the gospel piano style. Eleven motivic techniques that are endemic and idiomatic to the foundation and development of the gospel piano style are identified. The gospel piano style is grouped into three historical periods. Dranes and Dorsey define the first period with twenty-six musical characteristics, thirteen musical characteristics define the second period, and ten musical characteristics define the third.

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PREFACE

“God of my weary years
God of my silent tears
Thou who has brought me thus far on the way”

I thank God for His unwavering promises and incomparable faithfulness – “In Him I move, live, and have my being.” I would like to first thank Prof. Nathan Davis for his steadfast support, encouragement, and guidance throughout the years. To my committee members – Prof. Andrew Weintraub, Prof. Akin Euba and Prof. Laurence Glasco, thanks for your perspicacious feedback and ideas. I appreciate your untiring support and steadfast encouragement throughout the years.

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This dissertation stands as a monument of perseverance and faith. “They that wait on the Lord, He shall renew their strength.” (Is 40:31)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

African-American gospel music is a sacred vocal music that has become one of the seminal genres of contemporary African American culture. Gospel music consists of an outpouring of emotional, communal and soulful music that expresses an individual's religious experience within a collective predicament. While musical precursors of gospel music date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was Thomas A. Dorsey (known as the "Father of Gospel Music") who, in the 1920s and 1930s, spawned the foundation upon which gospel music could crystallize into its present form. Despite gospel music's relatively short period of development and history, it has become part of the broader culture and consciousness of American society within the past thirty to forty years. Thus, gospel's position in the multi-faceted mass media industry evinces its move from church sequestration. Although gospel music has acquired international acclaim, it has remained (eminently and relatively autonomous) primarily produced by and for African Americans – (more than other African-American genres) by embodying various expressions of African and African-American musical styles.

Gospel music is primarily recognized as a vocal music, and its instrumental accompaniment, the piano in particular, is an indispensable component of the music that aids in shaping the genre. Various writers concur with this view that the piano is an important component in defining gospel music. According to Sharon Brown Cheston, "Instrumental accompaniment is one of the key

features that contributes to the contrast between gospel music and the spirituals and jubilees.”¹ Horace Boyer also regards the piano as a determinant of the gospel piano style. “With female singers and the added accompaniment of Dorsey’s piano (1933), a new gospel sound was created. From this point, two kinds of gospel ensembles coexisted: the male group, unaccompanied, wearing business suits, and supplying additional rhythm and sound by slapping their thighs in time with the music: and the gospel group, composed of women with piano accompaniment, dressed in choir robes and clapping their hands for rhythmic accentuation.”² By the 1940s, when gospel groups (female and mixed) and choirs emerged, the piano had become a staple in gospel music. Even today, besides the vocalists, no other element has run more persistently and pervasively throughout gospel music than the piano.

1.1 SCOPE OF STUDY

Two of the earliest pianists who aided in developing and promulgating the gospel piano style were Arizona Dranes and Thomas A. Dorsey. Dranes, a blind pianist from Greenville, Texas, was one of the first gospel pianists to record during the 1920s. Not only did she accompany herself, but she also accompanied preachers and other gospel soloists. As a member of the Church of God in Christ, Dranes developed a rollicking, barrelhouse style of piano playing that mirrored the fervor of the sanctified service.³ Thomas A. Dorsey, a former blues pianist from

¹ Sharon Brown Cheston, “Afro-American Gospel Music: Piano Accompaniment Performance Practices” (master’s thesis, Cleveland State University, 1989), 79.

or

² Horace Boyer, “Gospel Music,” Music Educators Journal 64/9 (1978): 38.

Villa Rica, Georgia, developed a smoother, bluesy style of playing that proliferated among the more staid denominations of the Baptists and Methodists. My dissertation attempts to illustrate that the gospel piano style is rooted in these two formidable practitioners. While Dranes and Dorsey did not have extensive recording careers (or were heavily mediated), their musical and pioneering influence is pervasive and legion within the field of gospel music.

In this dissertation I will trace and examine the historical and stylistic evolution and development of the gospel piano style originating with Arizona Dranes and Thomas A. Dorsey. I will show in my hypothesis, as it relates to the development of the gospel piano style, that while Dranes' style influenced subsequent sanctified pianists and Dorsey's style influenced subsequent Baptist pianists, that they both directly or indirectly influenced all gospel pianists to some degree, irrespective of denominational affiliation; and that their two styles form the foundation for gospel piano accompaniment.

In this dissertation, I shall trace the musical history of the gospel piano style from the 1920s to 1960, focusing on detailed musicological, historical, biographical, sociological, and cultural analysis. The term "gospel piano style," in this dissertation, refers to a number of different types and/or sub-styles of gospel piano (a genre) which will be explored in the subsequent chapters. (All of the different types and/or sub-styles constitute what I refer to as the "gospel piano style.") The time period that is historicized extends from 1926 to 1960, and the musical analysis is mainly constructed from extant early gospel recordings (that were available to the author).⁴ The historical

³ The Church of God in Christ was the first of a series of Sanctified/Pentecostal churches that emerged in the 1890s. These churches emphasized practices such as spirit possession, speaking in tongues, and holy dancing. See Chapter 2.

⁴ It should be noted that a substantial number of gospel recordings from the 1930s are not examined, because most of the recordings from that time consisted of male quartets, who traditionally sang a capella or used guitar accompaniment; therefore, the recordings that are analyzed in this study are products of preachers, female groups, female soloists, and mixed groups.

period ending with 1960 was chosen based on Heilbut's coinage of the term "Golden Age of Gospel," which marked the ending of the first flowering and proliferation of gospel groups.⁵

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As a result of having been raised in an African-American Baptist church, I have been exposed to gospel music all of my cognitive life. I became formally involved with gospel music at the age of seven, when I began taking piano lessons, resulting in my playing for various choirs at my church. At the time of my early exposure to gospel music, I would refer to myself as being more of a "participant"⁶. In retrospect, I began to assume the role of "participant-observer" in the early 1990s when I began my initial scholarly investigation into the musical development of the gospel piano style. Even though I have developed ideas, opinions, and sensibilities over the years that are endemic to my own experience, they will not serve as the sole hermeneutical lens for this dissertation. Within the body of literature in the field of ethnomusicology there are different degrees of authority, and methodologically, I allow my informants and colleagues to guide me according to their point of view.⁷

⁵ Anthony Heilbut coined this term. See Anthony Heilbut, Introductory notes to "Black Urban Hymnody Gospel" for *Brighten the Corner Where You Are: Black and White Urban Hymnody*, New World Records NW224, 1978.

⁶ By "participant", I mean that I was intimately involved and engrossed in the tradition, thoroughly enculturated, taught by those inside the tradition, and understood it according to the principles and values of those involved in the tradition – an experience that was reflective *of*, not reflective *on* the tradition. As ethnomusicologist Mellonee Burnim has noted, I am a "culture and tradition bearer." See Mellonee V. Burnim, "Cultural Bearer and Tradition Bearer: An Ethnomusicologist's Research on Gospel Music," *Ethnomusicology* 29/3 (1985): 432-47.

⁷ See Charles Seeger, M. Miller, and J. H. Nketia, "Whither Ethnomusicology?," *Ethnomusicology* 3/2 (1959): 101-03 and Mantle Hood, *The Ethnomusicologist* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971) for learning and approaching the music of others according to their own standards and canons.

The four primary areas that I propose to investigate include: 1) explaining musically how the piano style became codified and how it has continued and changed overtime;⁸ 2) providing biographical information about gospel pianists; 3) examining the musical similarities and differences that exist between the gospel piano style and other popular, African-American piano styles; and 4) eliciting and describing the historical, musical, and social roles of gospel pianists. These areas are not mutually exclusive, but rather interrelated and overlapping.

In the first area of investigation, I use the musical styles of Dranes and Dorsey as points of departure in order to establish and define the musical characteristics of the gospel piano style in its nascent years. Transcriptions of their pianistic output are provided to facilitate analysis. I analyze musical styles of their disciples and analyze the styles of other prominent gospel pianists in order to point to the centrality of Dranes and Dorsey, to further codify the early gospel style, and to illustrate general and individual stylistic changes. Transcriptions are provided from a number of pianists in order to define and categorize established practices, techniques, idiomatic harmonic movement, and shared motives, riffs, and “fill-ins” -- all which are important in establishing a stylistic and performance canon for the gospel piano style. The role of the piano in gospel music is essential because it provides the musical support that the vocalist needs in order to render what they call an “effective” performance, and it aids the singer in “creating” and “filling up” the musical space, a process which is important in producing an atmosphere that is conducive to spirited worship.⁹ An

⁸ By “codify”, I am implying how the gospel piano style became established, arranged, and systematized, categorized, set, reduce to a code or system, etc.

⁹ Instrumental music (piano) serves as a medium that enhances and heightens the interaction between the worshipers and God – it creates the “worship and ritual space.”

analysis of the dynamic interplay and relationship between the piano and the voice is also presented for selected examples.¹⁰

The second area of inquiry unearths historical details about the lives of pianists who were major proponents in forging and codifying the gospel piano style. Relatively little is known about gospel pianists. Where did they live? What occupation(s) did they have, if any, outside of being a musician? How did they receive their gospel training? Who were their role models and inspirations? Who did they influence? I have probed these aspects along with other biographical and social details. Most scholars of gospel music have mentioned pianists in their work only fleetingly, and as a result, very little is known about them. Thus, my investigation elevates, out of the abyss of anonymity, figures who were important in the development of gospel music as a whole. Not only does identifying gospel pianists help in establishing the development of the gospel piano style, but it aids in creating a canon of gospel pianists.

After there are works and composers, there is a canon. Musical canons have been formed in other musical genres such as Baroque, Classical, and Jazz as a means of compartmentalizing the style, its proponents, and compositions. Likewise for gospel pianists, canons are 1) the starting point of all methodologies, and 2) powerful tools that provide another way of establishing musical boundaries, identity, genres, styles, pedagogy, performance practice, authority, and authenticity. For example, Martin Williams' production of the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz* (1973) was a monumental addition to the field of jazz studies – and there was hardly a course on jazz studies that did not utilize these recordings in some manner. Consequentially, this collection became the “yardstick” for jazz history in its powerful

¹⁰ Baker (1978) proposes that one of the changes in the vocal style might be attributed to the change in the nature of the keyboard accompaniment. See Barbara Wesley Baker, “Black Gospel Music Styles, 1942-1975: Analysis and Implication for Music Education” (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1978).

canonization of recordings from ragtime to free jazz. Within the field of gospel music studies, there has been, for the most part, a tacit unanimity among scholars about its historiography and hagiography regarding singers, groups, and composers; but, no such canon exists for gospel pianists. The need for a canon of gospel pianists becomes increasingly crucial as the music becomes more cross-cultural.¹¹

The third area of investigation places the gospel piano style within the larger African-American musical context by exploring the possibility of a direct and substantial secular influence on the development of the gospel piano style from the mid-1920s to the end of the Golden Age of Gospel in 1960. Since the African-American gospel piano style is one of many African-American pianistic styles, it drew some of its practices from secular styles. Furthermore, many scholars recognize a continuum between sacred and secular in the African-American musical experience (Raichelson 1975, Murray 1976, Maultsby 1981, 1982, Heilbut 1982, Oliver 1984, Boyer 1985, Burnim/Maultsby 1987, Harris 1992, and Reagon 1992). A careful examination of the early gospel piano style suggests that there are striking similarities between it and other African-American pianistic styles of the 1920s (e.g. ragtime, stride, boogie woogie, barrelhouse, blues, and jazz). Similar to secular genres of the 1920s, gospel music embraced the piano as a creative force and focal point for its realization of the gospel style. This provides one possible reason for the infusion of secular elements in the gospel piano style - thus, concomitantly, the gospel piano is a composite of most American secular styles.

I make references are made to these secular styles in order to examine the extent of mutual borrowings that prevail between secular piano styles and the gospel piano style. Pertinent aspects of

¹¹ While I seek to be truthful and objective with the material, I do recognize that canons are “half-truths” because other examples and possibilities exist. One history is only as good as the next history that is published.

the musical and historical record are examined in order to point to new or overlooked contexts for the sacred and secular musical exchange. I appraise to a degree, the role and effect of technology and mass media (print, audio, electronic) in this sacred and secular continuum.

The musical and sociohistorical roles of gospel pianists form the fourth area of investigation. The gathering of such data is weighted toward an ethnographic approach, gleaned from the context of insiders' theories and opinions, and sprinkled with my critique as a participant-observer. For instance, what are the musical expectations of gospel pianists? How is competency valued? What is the social and cultural role of gospel pianists? What is their socio-political status within the gospel community? Relatively little attention has been paid to the creative processes involved in gospel music as a whole (vocal or instrumental); furthermore, its effects on the individual pianist is absent from the scholarly literature. For instance, how does a pianist choose what to play? What forces, musical (e.g. other instruments, soloist, choir) or extra-musical (e.g. congregation, personal, spiritual) combine to affect the pianist's choices?¹² How are such choices consciously forged? How are the concepts of tradition and innovation understood in relation to the creative process? How and when is improvisation employed? Is there a clear framework, set of rules, or stock of extant performances by which the creative individual spontaneously composes? How do aesthetics figure in? What events or contexts provide stimulus for creativity (individuality)? What terms or phrases are used by pianists to express their ideas and describe the musical process?¹³ What does

¹² Waterman discusses how changes in material and sociohistorical factors affected the performance practice of modern, Nigerian Juju music in the late 1940s. See Christopher Waterman, "Juju History: Toward A Theory of Sociomusical Practice," in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, ed. Stephen Blum, et al., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 49-67.

¹³ See Charles Keil, *Tiv Song* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Ruth Stone, *Let the Inside Be Sweet: The Interpretation of Music Event Among the Kpelle of Liberia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1982); and Steven Feld, "Communication, Music, and Speech about Music," *Yearbook For Traditional Music* 16 (1984): 1-18.

the gospel piano style communicate that language cannot? What does it communicate about values?¹⁴ The data is organized and presented around four ideological constellations of Centrality, Leadership, Creativity, and Authority.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Each area of inquiry will be informed by methods of ethnomusicology, which not only seeks to understand musical styles and systems, but more importantly, how they relate to cultural systems, cultural values, and cultural processes.¹⁵ Studies in ethnomusicology and musicology will be augmented by studies in cognate disciplines, namely, African-American Studies, Anthropology, and Sociology. The works of Wilson (1974) and Gates (1988) will provide the major theoretical framework (underpinning) for my musical analysis.¹⁶

In my analysis of the musical examples, not only do I employ standard musicological approaches, but I also seek to analyze the music in such a way that places it within the larger African and African-American music-making continuum. Particularly relevant for this study are

¹⁴ Song transcriptions are analyzed and used to describe the relationship between the musical form and religious meaning in William Thomas Dargan, "Congregational Gospel Songs in a Black Holiness Church: A Musical and Textual Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., Wesleyan University, 1983). The emotional content of music is explored in Feld, "Communication, Music, and Speech about Music" (1984).

¹⁵ A representative sampling would include Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), Hood (1971), and Timothy Rice, "Towards the Remodeling of Ethnomusicology," *Ethnomusicology* 31/3 (1987): 469-88.

¹⁶ The following scholars have utilized and applied Gates' theory of Signifyin(g) to formal musical analysis grounded in African American cultural aesthetics: David Brackett, "James Brown's 'Superbad' and the Double-Voiced Utterance," *Popular Music* 11/3 (1992): 309-323; Robert Walser, "Out of Notes: Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis," *Musical Quarterly* 77 (1993): 343-365; Ingrid Monson, "Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation: Irony, Parody, and Ethnomusicology," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1994): 283-313; Samuel Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Guthrie Ramsey, Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

Olly Wilson's conceptual approaches (1974, 1984, 1992), which stress a qualitative approach in measuring the overall function and context of African-American music in its totality, rather than a quantitative one.¹⁷ This methodology does not measure the African or African-American influence by the presence or absence of singular, arbitrarily defined musical characteristics, but seeks to describe and analyze African-American musical genres through a flexible set of musical characteristics that are unique to African and African-American diasporic music-making practices. Furthermore, this theoretical approach allows for musical change through time as a naturally occurring product that is shaped by internally consistent African and African-American ways of thinking about music and culture. This would facilitate linking the gospel piano style to other concurrent African-American pianistic genres, and would also provide a hermeneutical framework for probing aesthetic concerns.¹⁸

Henry Louis Gates' The Signifying Monkey employs the hermeneutics implied by the Yoruba myth of Esu-Elegbara and the poems of the Signifying Monkey to present a theory of literary inquiry.¹⁹ Gates argues that "signifying", "double-voicing", and "speakerly texts" – narrative strategies and texts that comment on tradition and revise enduring "tropes," in a manner of

¹⁷ Wilson purports that in African-American music, the presence of basic African musical characteristics such as call-and-response, rhythmic contrast, playing of instruments in a percussive manner, and the association of music-making with physical body movement, serve as points of departure for the understanding of the continuity of African and African-American music-making traditions. Important earlier works that comment upon the relationship of African to African-American music are: Melville Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past (Boston: Beacon, 1941); Richard Waterman, "African Influences on American Negro Music," in Acculturation in the Americas, ed. Sol Tax, 227-44 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952); Alan P. Merriam, "African Music," in Continuity and Change in African Cultures, ed. William Bascom and Melville Herskovits (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); and Harold Courlander, Negro Folk Music, U. S. A. (New York: Columbia University, 1963).

¹⁸ See Pearl Williams-Jones, "Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystallization of the Black Aesthetic," Ethnomusicology 19/3 (1975): 373-85 and Mellonee Burnim, "The Black Gospel Tradition: A Symbol of Ethnicity" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1980). These studies place gospel music (the musical object) within a cultural/ethnic hermeneutic.

¹⁹ Yoruba diasporic cultures are found in areas such as Benin, Nigeria, Brazil, Cuba, and Haiti. For example in Nigeria, Esu-Elegbara is the deity who represents the mythical classical figure of mediation, and is the interpreter of black culture. The Signifying Monkey is Esu-Elegbara's African-American descendant, and both are similar in that they function as "tricksters," and employ formal and colloquial language.

West African oral culture – dominate the black literary tradition Gates’ theory proposes that the meanings and implications of the myth of Esu-Elegbara and the rhetoric of the Monkey narratives be used as a guide to reading and interpreting black literary works, thereby exploring “the relation of the black vernacular tradition to the Afro-American literary tradition.”²⁰ For my research, I use this theoretical framework to interpret, analyze, and codify my musical findings.²¹

“Signifying” or “troping” is a figurative, suggestive, and implicative speech; it is a complex rhetorical device that requires the possession and application of appropriate modes of interpretation and understanding on the part of the listener.²² Of the four, theoretical types of “signifying” that Gates defines, “tropological revision” can provide a theoretical framework for analyzing African-American musical styles.²³ Likewise, in African-American music, cries, hollers, calls, licks, riffs, fill-ins, various melodic, rhythmic, and other musical practices serve as “signifying” (“troping”) musical features in musical performances and compositions; furthermore, genres can “signify” on other genres. While musical “signifying” can imply poking fun at a particular musical style, process, or practices, through parody, indirection, or implication, analysis for this research on the gospel piano style will examine a kind of “signifying” that uses musical borrowing, restating, reworking and performance of pre-existing material within the gospel style, and from other musical genres. This study will provide important evidence for the expansion of theoretical thinking on the

²⁰ Henry Louis Gates, The Signifying Monkey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xix.

²¹ In The Signifying Monkey, Gates allows “...the black tradition to speak for itself about its nature and various functions, rather than to read it, or analyze it, in terms of...theories borrowed whole from other traditions, appropriated from without.” Ibid. xix. Using “signifying” as a theoretical framework is a reflexive way of approaching the subject of gospel piano style. See Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

²² Signifying and troping are related to semiotics. See Roland Barthes, Elements of Semiology (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967) and Kofi Agawu, Playing With Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music (Princeton University Press, 1991).

²³ Gates states that “By tropological revision I mean the manner in which a specific trope is repeated, with differences, between two or more texts. The revision of specific tropes recurs with surprising frequency in the Afro-American literary tradition.” Gates, The Signifying Monkey, xxv.

understudied, but important concept of “signifying” and “troping,” as it relates to musical analysis. This theoretical approach will also be helpful in eliciting what pianists learned and how they communicated the gospel piano style.

1.4 REVIEW OF LITERATURE/STATE OF GOSPEL PIANO RESEARCH

Beginning in the early 1960s, African-American musical genres (especially jazz) became popular areas of interest (and study) among journalists and scholars alike. Even though a number of very general histories have been produced on jazz, the kaleidoscopic trend within the last thirty years has been to concentrate on more specific aspects of the music: individual musicians (John Coltrane, Duke Ellington), particular bands/groups (Original Dixieland Band), certain periods (Bebop Era), regional studies and styles (Chicago, New Orleans Jazz), evolution of styles, detailed musicological studies and analysis, socio-political studies, aesthetics, and studies on the role of particular instruments (e.g. how the drums were revolutionized in the bebop era), or how musicians influenced various musical trends, in-depth musical analysis, for example.²⁴ However, there have not been an equal amount of comparable advances in African-American gospel research.

In 1981, gospel scholar and historian, Irene V. Jackson-Brown maintained that

²⁴ Gunter Schuller, Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development (New York: Oxford University, 1968); Andre Hodeir, Jazz, Its Evolution and Essence (New York: Da Capo, 1975); Harry O. Brunn, The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (New York: Da Capo, 1977); Gunther Schuller, The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); William Howland Kenney, Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); John Edward Hasse and Wynton Marsalis, Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington (New York: Da Capo, 1995); Ingrid Monson, Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996); Scott DeVeaux, The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History (Berkeley: University of California, 1997); Lewis Porter, John Coltrane: His Life and Music (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); David Ake, Jazz Cultures (Berkeley: University of California, 2002); David Dicaire, Jazz Musicians of the Early Years, to 1945 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003).

Gospel music is only now being considered in any serious way by the scholarly community. Scholarly works have managed to appear in spite of the narrowness of academic departments, academicians and disciplines whose focus and interest lie outside the Western European tradition. For the most part, music scholars have turned to writings in other disciplines in their need to justify the study of gospel music scholarship, (e.g. Folklore, Afro-American Studies, and Black History).²⁵

Although written in the early 1980s, Jackson-Brown's critical assessment of the production of historiographical material in the field of gospel music still reverberates today (almost thirty years later). What has (or has not) been studied to date? And what approaches have been employed?

As a result of gospel's recent rise in popularity in America's hegemonic culture over the last thirty or forty years, many scholars have begun to embrace it as a serious and erudite area of study. Although the piano occupies a prominent place in the history and performance of gospel music, it is conspicuously absent from gospel scholarship. By contrast with jazz scholarship, the majority of academic literature on gospel has remained centered around general historical (Heilbut 1985, Boyer 1995, Darden 2004), anthropological (Hinson 1989, 2000), textual (Dargan 1983, van Rijn 1997), and in a few cases, regional (DjeDje 1972, 1989, 1998, Boyer 1988) and aesthetic (Williams-Jones 1975, Burnim 1985) studies. Furthermore, besides the general music descriptions and analysis of vocal melodies, in-depth musicological research on gospel is almost non-existent; presently, more detailed research needs to be done on specific aspects of the genre. Study of the gospel piano style has yet to be thoroughly undertaken.

The time has come, however, to borrow from jazz scholarship and employ some of its approaches in order to present gospel music in its entirety, and to alleviate disparities in research between it and other African-American musical genres. The majority of African-American gospel scholarship published prior to 1970 ignores serious musicological analysis. By 1973, a significant

²⁵ Irene Jackson-Brown, "Developments in Black Gospel Performance and Scholarship," Black Music Research Newsletter 4/3 (Spring 1981): 6.

broadening of scope in the field of the musical aspects of gospel occurs with the publication of Boyer's dissertation, "An Analysis of Black Church Music with Examples Drawn from Services in Rochester, New York". But gospel piano style has received very little attention. With accompaniment (namely the piano) being one of the sine qua nons that define gospel music, it is particularly arresting that only a modicum of scholarship exists on it. While a number of musicological studies on gospel vocal style exist (Ricks 1960, Boyer 1964, DjeDje 1972, Baker 1978, Dargan 1983), extant scholarly material on the gospel piano style is expressly deficient in dealing with matters of interpretation and performance practices, differing accompaniment styles, biographical data on pianists, detailed musicological analysis of the development and history of the piano style, and variegated and regional styles. This dissertation attempts to fill the scholarly chasm by furnishing such information.

This section focuses on the current state of gospel piano research, with a particular emphasis on musicological research. Books, dissertations, theses, articles, papers, and hymnals are included, and represent a broad range of musical, contextual, theoretical, geo-graphical, and cultural perspectives. The primary criteria for examination in this section center around sources that have any type of musicological analysis/description that focuses on the gospel piano style. It may be in the form of a musicological narrative, transcription of an accompaniment, or chord changes. Literature on this topic is quite marginal, and mainly represents the work of scholars in the fields of musicology and ethnomusicology. Because of the paucity of materials, this criterion was extended to include selected sources that have some type of musical analysis as it relates to the gospel song (vocal: solo, hymn, melody, or coral arrangement. Any sources that tersely mention the piano, other instruments, gospel pianists, or aesthetics are also included. I have also included a small number of general works on African-American music which provide musical and cultural

perspectives useful in the study of the gospel piano style. Even though this current state of research is not exhaustive, my approach is exploratory and inclusive. The material has been selected not only for its individual merit, but also for its potential contribution to understanding the larger mosaic of the gospel piano style.

1.4.1 Reference Tools

Gospel literature has not always been readily accessible to scholars. Before delving into an examination of the literature, a review of extant reference tools is necessary in order to evaluate the state of research in the area of gospel piano scholarship. The first bibliography published to provide germane sources for the gospel scholar was Irene V. Jackson's 1979 publication of Afro-American Religious Music: A Bibliography and A Catalogue of Gospel Music. Remarking on Lovell's (1972) dereliction of Black religious music in the Caribbean and South American, and the twentieth-century spiritual" (gospel music), Jackson attempted to compile a bibliography that addresses those areas of study, and "...demonstrate[s] how an ethnomusicologist might examine gospel music within the context of New World black religious music."²⁶ Relevant bibliographic entries on gospel music appear in chapter 4 on "Religious Folksongs." Of great interest for this dissertation is the catalogue portion that provides a listing of the Library of Congress' holdings of Black gospel music copyrighted between 1938 and 1965. Although gospel music is performed differently than the printed score, the music would still provide a frame of reference of the basics that the pianist would play.

²⁶ Irene Jackson, Afro-American Religious Music: A Bibliography and a Catalogue of Gospel Music (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1979), x.

In 1983, Samuel Floyd and Marsha Reisser produced an annotated bibliography of selected reference and research materials entitled Black Music in the United States. This bibliography arose out of the need to facilitate access to materials on, and related to, African-American music. From the lists of discographies, catalogues of printed and recorded music, record collections, anthologies/collections of printed music, and repositories and archives, information can be gleaned about important recordings and printed music, and where gospel paraphernalia can be found.

Eileen Southern's pioneering Biographical Dictionary of Afro-American and African Musicians (1982) provides a relatively comprehensive and representative source of fresh and crucial information on the lives of musicians (birth years from 1642 to 1945) that has remained conspicuously obscure for decades. Consequently, historical perspectives on a number of gospel musicians are readily available. Information can be extracted from entries on gospel pianists (such as Roberta Martin, Edwin Hawkins, Arizona Dranes, Jessy Dixon, James Cleveland, Theodore Frye, Lena McLin, and Clara Ward), or entries on groups or soloists which include information on their accompanists.

Sherry and Herbert Dupree's African-American Good News (Gospel) Music, published ten years later (1992) and exclusively on gospel music, offers valuable and obscure, but in a disheveled manner. While it includes many of the pianists found in Southern (1982), it furnishes more information on unfamiliar gospel pianists – especially those scarcely represented in scholarly literature (e.g. Twinkie Clark, Mary Tilghman, James Roots, Curtis Dublin, Margaret Allison, Kenneth Morris, Lucy Collier, and Marie Thompson.) Because of its outdated information, lack of thoroughness, and indiscriminate hermeneutics, another document of this nature (yet improved) would be an inestimable asset in gospel research overall; but, until then, this publication should not be disregarded.

Two fairly recent reference tools, McNeil's Encyclopedia of American Gospel Music (2005) and Carpenter's Uncloudy Days: The Gospel Music Encyclopedia (2005) provide updated biographical information on many gospel artists. Carpenter's work is based on previous scholarly source material and his extensive work as a music journalist. While gospel artists from the earlier years are highlighted (although uneven in coverage), more emphasis is focused on contemporary gospel artists. Unlike Carpenter's work, McNeil's encyclopedia features both White and African-American gospel artists, and is a collaborative effort of more than sixty contributors from varied backgrounds.

1.4.2 Books, Dissertations, Theses & Articles

The literature examined here is divided into five major categories: i) Musical Analysis, ii) Musical Description, iii) Piano Style/Role, iv) Pianists, and v) Aesthetics/Identity;²⁷ furthermore, sub-groupings exist within each category, and the categories, in and of themselves, are not mutually exclusive, but rather interrelated and overlapping.

1.4.2.1 Musical Analysis The first academic work that included a relatively detailed discussion of gospel music was Katharine Lucille Small's 1949 Master's Thesis on "Influence of Gospel Songs on the Negro Church." Although this work is rarely cited, Small provides a succinct, musical analysis and comparison of ten gospel songs which is quite positivistic in nature. Information about the keys, rhythm, text, melody, and chord progression are included. Even though many of her comments tend to be subjective, pejorative, and highly opinionated, the

²⁷ For the purpose of this study, I define the category of "musical description" as those studies that only include prose to describe the music, and are void of musical examples and charts.

harmonic patterns for each of the ten songs, and the chart on (frequent) chordal usage, supplies data that can be used in this dissertation.

The first dissertation on gospel music was published in 1960 by George Robinson Ricks on “Some Aspects of the Religious Music of the United States Negro: An Ethnomusicological Study with Special Emphasis on the Gospel Tradition.” Most of Ricks’ data is based on extensive field research in Northern and Southern black churches, and interviews with performers, publishers, and composers of gospel music. The study encompasses the time period from 1750 to c. 1959, and its findings are presented in two parts. In Part I, Ricks presents demographic and social data, as well as information about the religious, educational, and music environments in which African-American religious music developed. Part II provides a musicological analysis and comparison of the primary African-American religious music genres - the spiritual, jubilee, and the gospel song.²⁸ In this section, Ricks also notes three distinct techniques of gospel piano accompaniment: 1) overlapping call and response pattern, 2) bass beat octaves in left hand, while improvised octaves and chord patterns are played in the right hand, and 3) inner tones moving against stationary tones in the upper and lower positions. These descriptive techniques illustrate the type of stylistic distinctions that I will highlight and illustrate in this dissertation.

Horace Boyer’s master’s thesis provides the first detailed musical analysis about gospel piano. In “The Gospel Song: A Historical and Analytical Study” (1964), he renders a musicological study of eight songs that vary in tempo (fast, slow, and without rhythm) from

²⁸ Although untenable distinction exist between the spiritual, jubilee, and shout, the relationships between the various styles of African-American religious music is made evident through statistical analysis of intervals, tempo, melody, and mode.

representative recordings spanning 1950 to 1962.²⁹ Boyer works directly with music by transcribing the sung and played material, and laying it out so the reader can compare/contrast it to the original published version. Along with the analysis, this method allows the researcher to identify gospel piano accompaniment practices - notably, how chords are voiced, which pitches are altered or added, and what rhythms and harmonies are utilized. This type of analysis can provide a strong foundation for an initial discussion of the gospel song and piano. While these definitive musical elements cannot be refuted - and are very important - Boyer's analysis is a bit stifling because it fails to contextualize the music and to explain the importance of these elements as being endemic of gospel music. In subsequent chapters, I will fill this gap.

Boyer's 1973 dissertation, entitled "An Analysis of Black Church Music with Examples Drawn from Services in Rochester, New York," examines the music of 16 different denominational services by placing considerable focus on melodic intervals, conventional and combined scales, harmony, rhythm, text, performance practices, and musical expression within the service.³⁰ Although the dissertation is not entirely on gospel music, Boyer renders more information on the "spontaneous and extemporized" denominations, in which gospel music is a primary element. Influenced by some of the methods adhered to in his master's thesis, Boyer's dissertation also includes published and performed versions of gospel songs. Questions exegeted from the

²⁹ While the rationale behind the selection of the eight songs is not clear, it can be assumed that their inclusion was predicated upon the three tempi classifications. For each transcription, Boyer supplied analytical notes on the following: the published version of the song, the author or arranger of the words and music, name and date of the recording, meter and tempo, personnel, instrumentation, form, key, modulations, scale, melody, diatonic chords, common altered chords, uncommon altered chords, root movement, non-harmonic tones, spacing/voicing and doubling of chord tones, rhythm, harmonic rhythm, and any type of accompaniment.

³⁰ Boyer notes the upper and lower neighboring tones in the piano accompaniment of certain songs, the predominant use of electric organs (mainly, the Hammond), the "gospelization" of standard hymns, and the organ registration/settings.

dissertation's content represent potential areas of investigation for this dissertation: how does the congregation affect the pianist's style(what is, and is not played); what are the differing levels of skill and denominational differences that exist among pianists; and how does the pianist vary his/her style throughout the service.

Another extremely helpful and cogent musicological survey is Jacqueline DjeDje's master's thesis. In "An Analytical Study of the Similarities and Differences in the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Song from the Southeast Region of Georgia," DjeDje's explanation of the differences between the two vocal genres extends "beyond the superficial distinction such as instrumental accompaniment, improvisation, ornamentation, and physical movements."³¹ DjeDje painstakingly articulates the musicological differences between the two. From the copious and meticulous musical examples, charts, and diagrams, I argue too that gospel piano research should, too, employ detailed musical analysis to explicate and fortify the differences and similarities of gospel piano styles. DjeDje's research methodology is also apropos. Of the 23 persons that she recorded in the field, she asked them to sing the same two songs; these constitute the foundation of her analysis.³² Asking an array of gospel pianists to play the same songs allows the researcher to delimit the scope of the re-search in order to obtain a selected and representative sampling of material.

Drawing data from a single Pentecostal congregation, William T. Dargan's 1983 dissertation employs musical and textual analysis to identify congregational songs that have influenced gospel music. "Congregational Gospel Songs in a Black Holiness Church" includes 104

³¹ Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, "An Analytical Study of the Similarities and Differences in the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Song from the Southeast Region of Georgia" (master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1972), i.

³² For the few who did not know the requested songs, she asked them to sing other ones that were similar.

song transcriptions that are analyzed and used to describe the relationship between the musical form and religious meaning. By appropriating these same methodological approaches, the depth and breadth of gospel piano research will be more comprehensive (interdisciplinary) and substantial; also, this aids in developing links between the gospel piano style and other (influential) pianistic styles. From Dargan's dissertation, I can further explore the analytical information on harmonic patterns, and the descriptive information on the role of instrumental accompaniment (in the structural and textual analysis) that helps to facilitate and encourage singing.

1.4.2.2 Musical Description Among the works included in this section, three principal types can be noted: 1) those with a historical focus, 2) those engaging in taxonomies, and 3) those demonstrating gospel as a musical process.

In 1997, Anthony Heilbut's classic work, The Gospel Sound, appeared in its 25th anniversary edition. Originally published in 1971, this work continues to be a helpful, yet impressionistic introduction to the history of gospel music, its pioneers, and of the social and cultural aspects of the genre. Even though Heilbut followed the routes of gospel performers for 15 years, his musical description is extremely extrinsic³³ colloquial, and monological. To this work, other cursory histories (with sparse musical description) by Broughton (1985) and Hillsman (1990) can be added.³⁴ The section on gospel music in Lawrence Levine's Black Culture and Black Consciousness (1977) includes musical descriptions that are culturally grounded, where insiders articulate their own thoughts. Together with sections on gospel music in Eileen Southern's The Music of Black Americans (1997) and Burnim and Maulsby's African American Music: An Introduction

³³ Heilbut's academic training was in English, not music.

³⁴ See, Viv Broughton, Black Gospel: An Illustrated History of the Gospel Sound (England: Blanford Press, 1985), and Joan R. Hillsman, Gospel Music: An African American Art Form (Washington, DC: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 1990).

(2006), and studies by Horace Boyer(1988, 1992), these resources provide a growing wealth of musical description and documentation of the origins and development of gospel music.

How Sweet the Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel, published in 1995, is Horace Boyer's first book on the historical development of gospel music between 1945 and 1965 (a period known as the "Golden Age," or "heyday" of gospel music). After providing a terse overview of the development of the African-American sacred music tradition from 1755 until 1900, Boyer discusses the phenomena that generated the formal inception of gospel music (i. e.: birth of Pentecostalism, sanctified ministers and singers, rise of jubilee quartets, instrumental accompaniment). The balance of this socio-musical monograph focuses on the proliferation of gospel in important geographical areas, key figures (singers, composers, and instrumentalists), musical groups/quartets, instrumentation, secularization, and commercialism during the "Golden Age of Gospel." Boyer discusses the introduction of the piano in gospel music, explains its style, includes a section on "Piano-Accompanied Groups," and highlights many pianists that have not been represented in previous gospel literature. Heretofore, there has been no such discourse that contains the wealth of information on gospel music during this period. This book provides an indispensable tool. While in-depth musical analysis is conspicuously absent, Boyer describes the musical characteristics of various artists in lucid prose. Throughout this historical narrative, references to other literature is virtually nonexistent; and at no time, does Boyer evince his plan or methods that are involved in the research and writing of this monograph, and neither does he explain what hermeneutical tools are employed.³⁵

³⁵ Since Boyer was born in 1935 - ten years before the inauguration of this era - it seems safe to assume (from his personal background) that the major part of his research involved his personal knowledge/experience and "fieldwork"; furthermore, it appears that the criteria for inclusion centered solely around African-American performers who had achieved some degree of popularity.

Robert Darden's People Get Ready! A New History of Black Gospel Music (2004) seeks to be a comprehensive history of gospel music extending from its African roots to the present-day contemporary artists. Darden's chronological narrative emphasizes stories behind various artists, and establishes connections between musical styles and social patterns. While the strength of this monograph rests in the fact that Darden built his work on the "shoulders" of many African-American and gospel scholars – carefully documenting every step of the way – he extends the historical scope by including more contemporary gospel artists up until 2003.

To illustrate the diversity within the genre of Gospel, Boyer's descriptive and taxonomic article on "'The Old Meter Hymn' and Other Types of Gospel Songs" (1984-85) delineates six major types of gospel songs, which are categorized according to tempo. Boyer asserts that "by changing the tempo of a song, a new or different attitude is projected and what was once a song of sorrow becomes a song of celebration, without altering the text, melody, or rhythm."³⁶ When considering the role of the piano within gospel music, not only do styles vary according to tempo, but they also vary according to rhythm and harmony. From this study, the gospel piano researcher can utilize these foundational song types as the basis for the analysis of pianistic styles, or construct new classifications based on tempo, rhythm, and harmony.

Many scholars identify gospel music as part of an ongoing continuum because it is a living tradition, and not a relic, or frozen entity of the past. Thus, the musical description in Horace Boyer's two articles, "Contemporary Gospel Music" (1979), and "A Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Contemporary Gospel Music" (1985), centers around the fundamental conception of continuity and change. In the first part of "Contemporary Gospel Music" (1979),³⁷ Boyer presents

³⁶ Horace Boyer, "The 'Old Meter Hymn' and Other Types of Gospel Songs," *Views on Black American Music* 2(1984-85), 41.

a concise history of gospel music that describes the social and historical changes experienced by the gospel musician and congregation.³⁸ Part Two describes standard singing and *playing* devices that are employed in gospel music vis-à-vis performance practices of hymns and songs in the non-gospel traditions. The stylistic elements which Boyer focuses on are: timbre (predilection for growling,³⁹ vibrato, tone color), range (vocal agility), text interpolations, melodic and rhythmic improvisation, *role of the left and right hand in piano accompaniment*, and harmonic practices. Employing musical elements with the expressed purpose to describe how the piano style changes over time, permits me to 1) codify a definitive pianistic style, and 2) establish differences between it and other pianistic styles.

The 1985 article⁴⁰ comes closer to establishing a definition of “contemporary gospel music” that is based on

a physical and intellectual move from the rural . . . to the urban. In some instances, this means a deeper plunge into the mainstream of secular practices, sound, and acceptance. The most important of the three is sound.⁴¹

Boyer proceeds to describe the dichotomy/continuity of the two styles by citing musical examples from various artists and recordings. After analyzing the musical elements, Boyer concludes that there has been little change in terms of the melody, lyrics, and rhythm, while conspicuous

³⁷ Part One is a reprint of Boyer’s 1977 article, “Contemporary Gospel Music: Sacred or Secular?” First World 1/1: 46-49.

³⁸ Instead of formulating a clear and concrete definition of what is meant by the term “contemporary gospel,” Boyer lists groups that epitomize contemporary gospel.

³⁹ This is the only point where Boyer makes a distinction between traditional and contemporary. He states that contemporary singers use clearer tones and approximates a growl at “climatic points.”

⁴⁰ Groups that were categorized as contemporary in the 1979 article are now part of the traditional group in the 1985 article. Again, this illustrates the changing nature of gospel music.

⁴¹ Horace Boyer, “A Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Contemporary Gospel Music,” in *More Than Dancing: Essays on Afro-American Music and Musicians*, ed. by Irene V. Jackson, 127-46. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 128. The definition is basically constructed around the “sound.” If the sound stems from traditionalists like Thomas Dorsey or Mahalia Jackson, it is considered to be traditional. If the sound borrows from an extant tradition, such as jazz or soul, then it is contemporary.

modifications have occurred among the harmony, vocal timbre, accompaniment, and background sound. (The section on “Accompaniment” only describes changes in the composition of the ensemble; therefore, the gospel piano style must further illuminate this under researched area.) Overall, Boyer recognizes that there has been no “overwhelming change, [rather] there has been some advancement.”⁴² Although Boyer proclaims contemporary gospel as more “advanced,” he decries its lack of spontaneity. Here, Boyer’s subjective stance is unquestionable. While Boyer is to be applauded for the connections made between traditional and contemporary gospel, the reader should be aware that the corpus of examples was not sufficiently large.⁴³ In order to avoid these aforementioned pitfalls, any musical sampling of the gospel piano style must be judicious enough to prevent overt generalizations, and small enough to delineate vital characteristics.

The issue of continuity and change also surfaces in Boyer’s 1992a article entitled “Charles Albert Tindley: Progenitor of African American Gospel Music.” Boyer provides an additional section on Performance Practices that illustrates how one of Tindley’s published songs was performed in the 1960s by the Caravans, a famous gospel group. The change that occurs in the performance version further demonstrates that gospel music is a performer’s art as opposed to a composer’s art. From the transcription, Boyer markedly shows the possibilities that are available to a gospel singer, and how a song’s character is changed in actual performance. Although Boyer notes the changes as it relates to the key, meter (lining out), text, additional melismas, and insertion of swing lead techniques, he up-holds that continuity is maintained because “the song nevertheless retains both the message and the effect of the original hymn Tindley wrote in 1905.”⁴⁴ Here,

⁴² Horace Boyer, “A Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Contemporary Gospel Music,” 132.

⁴³ For example, Andrae Crouch served as the paradigm for contemporary gospel. Had Boyer chosen other artists/songs, the results would have been slightly different.

Boyer's approach has important implications for the exploration of the gospel piano style – namely, how gospel pianists can manipulate certain musical elements, yet still be true to the gospel aesthetic.

1.4.2.3 Piano Style/Role Most gospel scholars indicate that the piano, after the voice, is one of the primary, if not indispensable instruments, of gospel music. In gospel's nascent years, economic reasons encouraged the piano's dominance in gospel, since many churches could only afford one instrument; therefore, the piano had to act as an "orchestra." Speaking of Black Pentecostal churches, possibly prior to the formal introduction of gospel music, Eileen Southern, in *The Music of Black Americans*, declares that

One striking aspect of the performance was the role of the keyboard instrument, called the 'rhythmic piano,' although it might be a pump organ. It was hardly an accompanying instrument but rather a full partner in the music making and was expected to fill-in pauses in the singing with improvisation - broken chords, arpeggios, runs, glissandos, and other kinds of embellishment - although occasionally pauses might be used for special effects.⁴⁵

Dexter Allgood's article on "Black Gospel in New York City and Joe William Bostic, Sr." (1990) further reveals the harmonies employed, how pianists imitated one another, and the role of each hand. On the role of each hand, Allgood notes that

The right hand plays chords, while the left hand plays in octaves. The relationship between the two hands varies from one keyboard player to another: some double the melody in order to emphasize the importance of the gospel tune; other players may chord with the left hand and improvise on the melody with the right hand.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Horace Boyer, "Charles Albert Tindley: Progenitor of African American Gospel Music," in *We'll Understand It Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers* ed. Bernice Johnson Reagon, 53-78 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992a), 78. Also, Boyer infers the same principle of continuity and change in his 1964 master's thesis even though it is not explicitly stated in the text.

⁴⁵ Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 457.

⁴⁶ Dexter Allgood, "Black Gospel in New York City and Joe William Bostic, Sr.," *Black Perspectives in Music* 18/12 (1990): 103.

In the area of harmony, Allgood believes that “it is almost required that the gospel keyboardist have a thorough knowledge of jazz harmony and jazz piano technique if he would play gospel today.”⁴⁷ The ensuing articles note that the gospel piano style has been shaped by certain factors including time, other musical genres and instruments, geography, individuals, and sacred/secular elements.

One of the earliest references of the role of the piano in gospel music, is found in John W. Work’s 1949 article on “Changing Patterns in Negro Folk Songs.” According to Work, some folk churches considered instruments like the piano, guitar, harmonica, and banjo as “worldly.” Although Work is not clear about which African-American sacred genre he is talking about, he notes that

There is very little variance in the types and styles of accompaniment within any given community...[and] the accompaniment, as played by any performer varies very little from song to song with respect to his individual style.⁴⁸

Gospel piano scholars must conduct extensive musicological research to verify statements like this. Work notes that harmony, rhythm, and counterpoint are primary, while melody is secondary. Another important element of gospel piano style that Work mentions is improvisation. He correctly states that

Because the written note is a negligible factor in the instrumentalists’ performance scheme, the performance itself is improvisation. Thus the performance is essentially an aggregation of idioms.⁴⁹

Therefore, the

written example is a very simple one indeed, rhythmically, when compared with those intricate patterns which characterize the actual, improvised performance by skillful pianists who ignore notation.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ John W. Work, “Changing Patterns in Negro Folk Songs,” *Journal of American Folklore* 62/244 (1949): 139.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

While Work's statements are, at best, preliminary, it is the job of the gospel piano researcher to use verifiable evidence in order to establish concrete facts about the style during this time.

Employing the same musicological framework as Boyer, Barbara Wesley Baker's 1978 dissertation, "Black Gospel Music Styles, 1942-1975," analyzes 57 recordings/performances of ten major gospel figures in terms of tempo, harmonic patterns, modulation, accompaniment style, and formal structure; and, she divides gospel music into 4 major style periods. Although the gospel song is the main focus of her discourse, Baker proposes that the changes in gospel song style from the 1940s to the 1970s might be attributed to three factors: 1) the change in the composition of the performance forces, 2) the change in the nature of the keyboard accompaniment, and 3) the impact of individual styles upon the music as a genre.⁵¹ These insightful postulations provide gospel piano research with more data to further evaluate and research, particularly in the area of how the piano affects the vocal style.

Boyer and Southern provide information about the piano style's changes over time. Boyer (1978, 1979, 1985) reports that female groups only used the piano in gospel's early years, and now, male quartets also use instrumental accompaniment. Boyer also remarks that the piano's role is "becoming increasingly complex"; therefore, the differing levels of complexity are an important issue for the gospel piano researcher to examine. Southern (1997), on the other hand, highlights the incorporation of instruments in the gospel ensemble: early years, piano and small percussion;

⁵⁰ Work, "Changing Patterns", 140.

⁵¹ Baker, "Black Gospel Music Styles", 159.

1950s, organ, guitar, and drums added; 1970s, strings, brasses, and additional percussion added.⁵² How the incorporation of these instruments affected the piano's role and style of playing, is a worthy area to study.

One potentially helpful work on the gospel piano is Sharon Brown Cheston's 1989 master's thesis on "Afro-American Gospel Music: Piano Accompaniment Performance Practices." Cheston documents piano accompaniment performance practices by examining the styles, texture, and formal structure of gospel music; yet, this analysis of accompaniment styles, devices, and practices "is presented in such a way that pedagogical materials may be generated..."⁵³ Printed scores, transcriptions, realizations and interpretations of printed scores (apparently her own), commercial recordings, church service recordings, and concert recordings were used in the analysis; but there appears to be no systematized way of selecting the representative examples.⁵⁴ General information about scales, altered scale degrees, keys, triad, and secondary dominants is given, but not in reference to a particular period. Cheston does not seek to codify gospel accompaniment practices, but rather, examines them- and her hermeneutical framework hinges on the work of others. She draws on the taxonomical work of Boyer (1978) and Ricks (1960) to provide her basic stylistic divisions: fast, slow, and ad lib. The closest that Cheston comes to identifying stylistic features, is represented by 1) the 17 examples of "fill-in" patterns, 2) the examples of how some techniques have been adapted for use in all three tempo styles, and 3) the superficial distinctions of the tempo:

⁵² See Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 475. Southern gathers most of her musical analysis from Boyer (1979). "The gospel pianist in the 1940s used primarily diatonic and blues harmonies, rarely modulated, and applied improvisation moderately to the basic material. Beginning in the 1960s the chordal piano style became more common, with its emphasis on the polarization between low-pitched chords in the left hand played simultaneously with high-pitched chords in the right hand."

⁵³ Cheston, "Afro-American Gospel Music," 141.

⁵⁴ Most of the examples are recent gospel songs (within 15 years of the 1989 publication), and standard hymns. There is no particular focus on any artist.

The fast accompaniment style requires extensive syncopation and a percussive sound created by rhythmic use of octaves. The slow style requires extensive use of “fill” patterns to replace the long note values created by slow tempos. The ad lib style requires a more legato style, with extensive reiteration and arpeggiation of chords.⁵⁵

Cheston also offers pregnant nuggets of information that represent fruitful lines for gospel piano research. These areas include: the two methods by which pianists learn (by ear, and by improvising the notated score); the characteristic gospel cadence developed by Roberta Martin; intuitiveness as it relates to the gospel idiom and pianist; and melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic improvisation in gospel piano accompaniment. Cheston maintains that improvisation is also a product of the pianist’s intuition. While this statement is true, question surrounding intuition, as it relates to gospel music, need to be scrutinized. What constitutes this intuitiveness? What musical language is used in intuition? What makes the intuitiveness idiomatic/endemic of gospel? How does a gospel pianist obtain this esoteric knowledge? Although Cheston’s work on the theoretical constructions of the piano style is important, more work needs to be done on the stylistic constructions.⁵⁶

Although substantial scholarship on regional/geographical piano styles has not been produced, a few extant studies do provide gospel piano research with some scanty information. Alvin Emanuel Amos’ 1987 dissertation on “The Use of Keyboard Instruments in the Religious Services of Selected Black Baptist Churches in Central Piedmont North Carolina,” investigates keyboard styles (piano and organ) of “Low Baptist” churches – those operating on levels that are

⁵⁵ Cheston, “Afro-American Gospel Music,” 145.

⁵⁶ Richard Smallwood’s article on “Gospel and Blues Improvisations” compares and contrasts blues and gospel, and gives specific musical examples for embellishment and accompaniment. See Richard Smallwood, “Gospel and Blues Improvisations,” Music Educators Journal (Jan 1980): 100-4.

more overtly “emotional”⁵⁷ than other Baptist churches. Other objectives in Amos’ dissertation included assessing the pianists’ level of performance and training, and the relationship of these factors to the demographics of the pastor and congregation.

Of the 25 churches randomly selected from a master list of 127, 12 churches participated. From these 12 churches, Amos classified five typical styles that represented the majority of music of the churches in his study: gospel music, metered hymns, Negro spirituals, strict/classic hymns, and preaching in key. The results of this study were based on questionnaires and interviews with the pastor and keyboardist, Sunday services, and song transcriptions.⁵⁸ Besides identifying the four frequently used keyboard styles in each church,⁵⁹ Amos concludes that piano and organ were the only keyboards in use, borrowed style (jazz, rock) were prominent in services, formal training was minimal while informal training was the paradigm,⁶⁰ and skills like arranging, transposition, and performance in several styles were expected by the pastors and congregations (though seldom observed). Although this dissertation does not specifically expound characteristics of a ‘Central Piedmont gospel piano style’, it does provide gospel piano research with 1) the preferential styles employed by most churches in the area, and 2) some of the fundamental views held by the people in that area as it relates to piano styles.

⁵⁷ Amos defines “emotional” as exhibited demonstratively charismatic behavior: i.e. speaking in tongues, holy dancing, clapping, and shouting.

⁵⁸ No musical analysis was conducted. Amos’ doctorate is in education.

⁵⁹ Amos constructed a keyboard performance summary table to identify the 15 keyboard performance styles that he observed; and the 4 frequently used styles were 1) As Written, 2) Classic Gospel, 3) a Cappella, and 4) Jazz/Blues.

⁶⁰ Formal training was usually a year or less, and informal training transpired by listening to tape, trial and error method by ear, and through informal apprenticeships.

Jacqueline DjeDje's article on "Gospel Music in the Los Angeles Black Community: An Historical Overview" (1989) yields pertinent information about the piano style in that area. In an interview with Don Lee White, DjeDje obtained information about the earliest gospel piano style in Los Angeles during the 1940s. White recalled that

Back then, most gospel you heard were gospel hymns...Most of the time, it was accompanied with just piano. There was a little improvisation. They had the rhythm, maybe a few arpeggios or so. But most of it was basically chordal structures with a few octave runs. The accompaniment was really subservient to the singing; it didn't overshadow the singing as we hear it now.⁶¹

For gospel piano research, this comment communicates information about dynamics and texture of the early Los Angeles gospel piano style; and, this could be further corroborated by recordings from that era. One could also consult published compositions by Eugene Smallwood, an early Los Angeles gospel musician/composer. In DjeDje's 1993 article on "Los Angeles Composers of African-American Gospel Music - The First Generation", she recognized that Smallwood

broke from the Dorsey tradition [by] writing songs requiring a broad vocal range, containing *varied chord progressions*, sometimes with *carefully notated keyboard accompaniment*.⁶²

DjeDje also provides an example from one of his printed scores. Research in the gospel piano style could surmise that Smallwood's piano scoring was probably influenced, to a degree, by Gwendolyn Lightner Cooper.⁶³

In attempting to codify a piano style, many scholars view it as a conceptual continuum between sacred and secular.⁶⁴ One factor that facilitated the infusion of secular elements into

⁶¹ Jacqueline DjeDje, "Gospel Music in the Los Angeles Black Community: A Historical Overview," *Black Music Research Journal* 9/1 (1989): 44.

⁶² Jacqueline DjeDje, "Los Angeles Composers of African-American Gospel Music - The First Generation," *American Music* 11/4 (1993): 422. (Emphasis mine).

⁶³ A gospel pianist discussed in Chapter 3.

gospel music was that by the 1920s, gospel music had joined other secular genres by having the piano as a creative force and focal point for its realization - thus, concomitantly, the gospel piano is a conglomeration of most American secular styles (ragtime, jazz, blues, musical theatre). Most studies include incipits of information on this sacred/secular element that must be reconstructed and amalgamated in a study on the gospel piano style. Commenting on Arizona Dranes, Lawrence Levine describes her style as being “marked by the rocking, driving beat that characterized the blues and jazz of the period.”⁶⁵ Other quotes in Levine (1977) describe African-Americans’ perceptions of instrumental accompaniment and style, and secular musicians’ interaction with the church. Richard Raichelson’s dissertation (“Black Religious Folk Song: A Study in Generic and Social Change,” 1975) has a small section on gospel music that describes early religious music as being “heavily interlaced with ragtime and blues figures...and these phrasings were part of a common stock in black music at the time.”⁶⁶

Mellonee Burnim and Portia Maultsby address the secular identity of instrumental accompaniment, and behavior in gospel music. “From Backwoods to City Streets: The Afro-American Musical Journey” (1987) points to the resonance between the Black sacred and secular musical performance in terms of sound quality, and style of mechanics and delivery - and the music

⁶⁴ See Portia Maultsby, Afro-American Religious Music: A Study in Musical Diversity (Springfield, OH: Hymn Society of America, 1981), Portia Maultsby, Influences of the Roberta Martin Era on Popular Styles of Black Music (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1982), Anthony Heilbut, “The Secularization of Black Gospel Music,” in Folk Music and Modern Sound ed. William Ferris and Mary L. Hart, 101-115 (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1982), Paul Oliver Songsters and Saints: Vocal Tradition on Race Records (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Horace Boyer (1985), Bernice Johnson Reagon We’ll Understand It Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), and Jerma A. Jackson, Singing in My Soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁶⁵ Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 179.

⁶⁶ Ricahrd Raichelson, “Black Religious Folksong: A Study in Generic and Social Change” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1975), 403. Some of Raichelson’s comments seem quite subjective and speculative at times.

must not be viewed, according to the authors, as separate entities. They propound that Black musical genres “are in a continual state of cross-pollination,”⁶⁷ so a mutual exchange exists between sacred and secular. Even though this article does not necessarily address gospel piano, it provides methodological and conceptual approaches that are applicable in understanding the “secularity” or “oneness” of the gospel piano style.

One enigmatic individual, in particular, who embodied this state of “cross-pollination” was Thomas A. Dorsey. Serving as a blues pianist for Ma Rainey and others for a number of years, he infused blues elements into gospel music. Michael Harris’ The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church recounts how Dorsey synthesized his secular roots with his reestablished religious convictions (two warring traditions) to form a hybrid syntax – “gospel blues.” With diverse primary sources, and synthesized secondary sources on black religion, Harris substantiates his sagacious and dialectical argument: that Dorsey’s need for musical expression, and the requirements for a successful marriage of the assimilationists of the mainline Black Protestant denominations and the disenfranchised proponents of “bush,” slave religion, emerged at a crucial historical moment. Harris focuses on the first 40 years of Dorsey’s life and his crucial role in shaping the black gospel style; and, historical and musical coverage is even and extensive. Of interest for gospel piano scholarship, is the musical coverage of: 1) Dorsey’s gospel and blues music; and 2) how traditional hymns are “gospelized”; and 3) how improvisation (especially blues-based improvisation) works and changes a printed song into gospel blues. Thus, Harris purports that Dorsey’s song, “Precious Lord,” explicitly displays his ability to successfully combine sacred elements (text) with secular elements (music).

⁶⁷ Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia Maultsby, “From Backwoods to City Streets,” in Expressively Black: The Cultural Basis of Ethnic Identity ed. Geneva Gay and Willie L. Barber, 109-36 (New York: Praeger, 1987), 133.

Not only are Dorsey's secular influences evident in his compositional techniques, but they are also evident in his piano techniques. According to Timothy Kalil, the gospel piano style developed as a result of Blacks migrating to the North, of which, Thomas A. Dorsey was the catalyst. "The Role of the Great Migration of African Americans to Chicago in the Development of Traditional Black Gospel Piano by Thomas A. Dorsey, circa.1930 (Illinois)" posits that the Northern areas where Blacks settled were cultural oases of blues, gospel, and jazz; therefore, the music was interrelated in essence, and in some musical characteristics. Kalil maintains that Dorsey developed the traditional gospel piano style from a melange of Sanctified church music, Chicago's blues and jazz, and Baptist hymns –and piano transcriptions of some of these elements are provided. The work highlights Dorsey's piano style (and the piano style of his protégées) which was disseminated through the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses, traveling singers/evangelists, and the media. While some of Kalil's analyses are insightful, this work, as a whole, suffers from uneven coverage, unclear definitions, lack of codification of the gospel piano style, and sporadic musical examples.

Not only did Dorsey play an important role in shaping and defining the important characteristics of the gospel piano style, but others took part; yet, meager information exists. Roberta Martin, one of Dorsey's protégées, toured with him in the early 1930s in order to demonstrate his "new" type of gospel song to the staid, black Baptists and Methodists of Chicago. For example, Boyer (1979) discloses that Roberta Martin's piano style was ear-marked by her harmonic and dynamic nuances.⁶⁸ Allgood (1990) further reveals that other gospel pianists patterned their style after Martin's, which was characterized by playing percussive octaves in her

⁶⁸ See Horace Boyer, "Contemporary Gospel Music," Black Perspective in Music 7 (1979): 32-33.

left hand, and chords and melody in the right hand.⁶⁹ Not only does Irene V. Jackson's dissertation offer extensive biographical information on Roberta Martin, but it also mentions her piano accompaniment practices in the section entitled "A Stylistic Consideration of a Performance by the Roberta Martin Singers." "Afro-American Gospel Music and Its Social Setting with Special Attention to Roberta Martin" (1974) also highlights the influential role that Martin had on other pianists. Jackson asserts that

Thomas A. Dorsey influenced the piano playing of Roberta Martin who in turn taught Lucy Collier Smith, Willie Webb, James Cleveland (who influenced Aretha Franklin's piano) and others. What Martin created then, was a school -- a way of playing, singing and arranging this new music called gospel.⁷⁰

Boyer (1978) further corroborates this point.

Martin is credited with being the greatest teacher of gospel singers. For nearly four decades she accepted young singers and pianists as students in her group.⁷¹

In terms of constructing a genealogy of gospel pianists, this information implies that there was a coterie of musicians with Martin as the "guru," and offers important data about the dissemination of the gospel piano style.⁷²

1.4.2.4 Pianists Gospel pianists established an evolution of the gospel piano style as well as a "canon" of gospel pianists. Most scholars fleetingly mention pianists in their work, and as a result, very little is known about them;⁷³ therefore, it is the proposed task of this dissertation to conduct further research into their lives, and styles. Southern (1997) mentions gospel composers

⁶⁹ Allgood, "Black Gospel in New York City," 103.

⁷⁰ Irene V. Jackson, "Afro-American Gospel Music and Its Social Setting with Special Attention to Roberta Martin" (Ph. D. diss., Wesleyan University, 1974), 140.

⁷¹ Horace Boyer, "Gospel Music," *Music Educators Journal* 64/9(1978): 38.

⁷² Boyer (1978) lists some of her group members: Mildred & Evelyn Gay, Alex Bradford, Myrtle Scott, Myrtle Jackson, James Cleveland, Willie Webb, Robert Anderson, and Gloria Griffin - many of whom were pianists.

Locating pianists in different regions provides another way of approaching gospel piano research. Focusing on the historical development of gospel music from the 1930s to the present, Boyer opens “Tracking the Tradition: New Orleans Sacred Music” (1988) discussing Mahalia Jackson’s funeral in New Orleans (of which Jackson was a native) in order to establish the importance of studying gospel music in this particular geographical area. Boyer briefly highlights several pianists: Elliot Joseph Beale (1908-1985), who was one of the principal gospel musicians in New Orleans; Professor J. W. Williams (n.d.), a proficient gospel pianist who taught and played for the all-male, piano-accompanied group called the Wilson-Watkins Singer; James E. Gayle (1889-1963), who owned a music store; and Henry “Professor Longhair” Byrd (n.d.). Boyer also notes a group called the Cavalcade of Gospel Stars (existing from 1954 to 1971), which was “an all-star group because the membership included organists, pianists, and choir directors.”⁷⁵ DjeDje (1989) provides material on gospel pianists in the Los Angeles area.⁷⁶ Of import, is Gwendolyn Cooper Lightner who moved to LA in 1946. DjeDje credits

⁷³ Sometimes, names are not even given. For example, Queen Booker reveals that her church’s first pianist, in the mid-1920s, was a “blues/jazz musician, who could play only by ear.” See Queen Booker, “Congregational Music in a Pentecostal Church,” Black Perspective in Music 16/1(1988): 39.

⁷⁴ Anthony Heilbut, The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times, 4th ed. (New York: Limelight, 1985) also mentions younger, contemporary pianists: Twinkie Clark, Thomas Whitfield, Ricky Grundy, Jeffrey LaValle, and James Perry.

⁷⁵ Horace Boyer, “Tracking the Tradition: New Orleans Sacred Music,” Black Music Research Journal 8/1 (1988), 143.

⁷⁶ Pianists mentioned are: Don Lee white, Luther Carpenter, E. L. Young, Benjamin Ballinger, Cecil W. Dandy, Albert A. Goodson, Raymond Raspberry, Robert Anderson, Doris Akers, Dorothy Vernell Simmons, J. Earle

her with introducing gospel piano playing in LA; also, DjeDje lists some of the people she studied with, the churches and artists she played for, and mentions that she taught people in LA. Both of these articles are invaluable for gospel piano research, because they situate gospel pianists in geographical areas other than the meccas of New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia.

In the appendix of Boyer's master's thesis (1964), a partial list of gospel music com-posers, performers, agents, and recording and publishing companies provides rudimentary information about the "background" components of gospel music which are rarely discussed or mentioned in gospel scholarship; furthermore, it furnishes the scholar with basic information in reconstructing a historical narrative on gospel piano. (But once again, he does not explain how the data was gleaned to compile the list.) Under the rubric of performers, Boyer lists twenty pianists/organists along with the soloists or groups that they accompanied. A larger list of gospel pianists divided into three sections, appears in Boyer's 1995 monograph: Early Period (Development), Middle Period (Refinement), and Late Period (Virtuosity). Even though Boyer does not disclose the premise he used to erect these categories, it nevertheless establishes a superficial framework that a gospel piano scholar can employ in evaluating and grouping gospel pianists and their styles.

Likewise, Willa Ward-Royster's How I Got Over: Clara Ward and the World-Famous Ward Singers (1997), also lists pianists who accompanied the group in the appendix section. Originally presented as part of the Abraham Lincoln Lecture Series at the University of Nebraska, Bernice Johnson Reagon's If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me (2000) provides biographical and performative information of gospel pianists Thomas Dorsey, Roberta Martin, Pearl Williams-Jones, and Richard Smallwood in her Chapter on "Twentieth Century Gospel."

Hines, Cora Martin Moore, Billy Preston, Robbie Preston Williams, Maurice McGehee, and Samuel Spann. This article foreshadows the article in California Soul (1998).

1.4.2.5 Aesthetics/Identity While many gospel scholars incorporate musical analysis or description, there are other scholars who approach gospel music from other vantage points. Their theoretical focus incorporates aesthetics and identity. This is another aspect that should be incorporated into the study of the gospel piano style because it places the musical object within a cultural/ethnic hermeneutic.

Pearl Williams-Jones was one of the first scholars to broach the aesthetics of gospel music by placing it a conceptual and theoretical framework that emphasized it as a unique manifestation of Black culture. In “Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystallization of the Black Aesthetic,” Williams-Jones conceptually bases a Black aesthetic definition on the cultural tradition and ideals of West Africa; thus, gospel music retains the most noticeable African-derived aesthetic features. Although the article focuses on the singing style, Williams-Jones emphasizes that “instrumental as well as rhythmic accompaniment in gospel is an integral part of the performance, just as in African music.”⁷⁷ Williams-Jones identifies fifteen aesthetic qualities⁷⁸ which stem from African music, and are retained in the continuum of African-American religious music. These are present, to a large extent, in gospel music’s performance, techniques, and form. I have noted that some of the aesthetic qualities that have implications for the research of the gospel piano style are: the use of antiphonal response, endless variation, percussive-style playing techniques, emphasis on dynamic rhythms, repetition, improvisation, communal participation, immediacy of communication, oral

⁷⁷ Pearl Williams-Jones, “Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystallization of the Black Aesthetic,” *Ethnomusicology* 19/3 (1975), 378. Gospel piano research should also take note of Wilson’s 1992 article which examines the significance of African timbre and sound texture in African-American performance; thus, this “heterogeneous sound ideal” also undergirds the use of vocal and instrumental timbre in gospel music.

⁷⁸ The fifteen aesthetic qualities are: 1) use of antiphonal response, 2) varying vocal tone, 3) endless variation on the part of the lead singer, 4) use of falsetto, 5) religious dancing or “shouting,” 6) percussive-style playing techniques, 7) handclapping and foot-patting, 8) emphasis on dynamic rhythms, 9) a dramatic concept of the music, 10) repetition, 11) improvisation, 12) communal participation, 13) immediacy of communication, 14) oral transmission of the idiom, and 15) functionalism of the music.

transmission of the idiom, and functionalism of the music. Overall, Williams-Jones recognizes that gospel music is a reflection of an aesthetic determined not by Euro-American standards, but by the specific dictates and predispositions of African-American standards.

Building on the work of Williams-Jones, Mellonee Burnim equates the Black aesthetic with African-American ethnicity. Burnim's hermeneutical framework is guided by a perspective which asserts that

it is crucial to view the gospel tradition as a medium created by Blacks, for Blacks and subject only to meaningful criticism and analysis from the vantage point of a Black aesthetic. In this sense, gospel music is a symbol not only of religion, but a symbol of ethnicity among Black people in the United States.⁷⁹

From an initial reading of this statement, it appears as though Burnim supports a hegemonic and Afro-centric view of gospel music, but the issue that she confronts is beyond the periphery of African-American culture. While Burnim supports other analytical approaches, her displeasure (“bone of contention”) centers around “insufficient theoretical orientation and often inadequate, or inappropriate methodological application.”⁸⁰

Mellonee Burnim's scholarship is predisposed to folkloric and anthropological methods which virtually lacks any type of musical analysis. Burnim's 1980 dissertation, “The Black Gospel Music Tradition: Symbol of Ethnicity,”⁸¹ firmly establishes her position as a scholar who is concerned with the socio cultural and historical dimensions of gospel music as it relates to issues of aesthetics and identity; hence, a study of music as it appertains to, affects, and affirms African-American culture and cultural values. Furthermore, her position rests upon historicizing “the meaning and significance of Black gospel music through utilization of the thoughts, ideas and

⁷⁹ Burnim, “The Black Gospel Tradition”, 6.

⁸⁰ Burnim, “The Black Gospel Tradition”, 188.

⁸¹ Burnim's 1985 and 1988 articles are largely extracted from her momentous dissertation.

concepts held by carriers of the tradition.”⁸² In this ethnological study, based on fieldwork conducted at two churches within the same denomination (Apostolic) but with different membership sizes, Burnim seeks to determine the aphoristic magnitude by which gospel music symbolizes the essence of Black religion, and conveys and embodies Black culture: a distinctive, cultural, and aesthetic tradition peculiar to Blacks).

Using the sanctified church as the “field,” Glenn Hinson’s “When the Words Roll and the Fire Flows: Spirit, Style and Experience in African-American Gospel Performance (1989),” examines the ideas, philosophies, and experiences of people within the gospel music performance context/event. This ethnographic study describes “...principles which community members use to recognize, assign, and create meaning in gospel events (or ‘programs,’ as they are generally designated within the Black community).”⁸³ Gospel music is not the focus per se, but rather the ideational and performative contexts in which such music occurs. Hinson’s dissertation looks at the beliefs and experiences in an ethnographic and anthropological manner. One valuable aspect of this study is that Hinson spends a great deal of time explicating the (semantic domain) meaning of stock church and gospel phrases employed by insiders of the tradition. (Ex: “having church”, “having a good time in the Lord,” and “getting happy.”)

Thomasina Neely’s dissertation, “Belief, Ritual, and Performance in a Black Pentecostal Church” (1993), looks in-depth at the music of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) through analysis of tradition and modern forms. In particular, it examines how music in the Church of God in Christ “represents, reenacts, and transmits belief through various levels of ritual...[and how] Pentecostal belief is represented and organized through music and ritual behaviors based on the

⁸² Burnim, “The Black Gospel Tradition”, 22.

⁸³ Glen Douglass Hinson, “When the Words Roll and the Fire Flows: Spirit, Style and Experience in African-American Gospel Performance” (Ph.D., diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1989), viii.

emic or culture-bearer's cognitive, expressive, and evaluative views.”⁸⁴ Neely identifies primary church modes (religious symbols) as chanted prayers (prayer), the shout/sacred dance (praise), and sermons (preaching), all of which contain specific ritual modes and convey meaningful messages. Secondary performance modes (traditional and newly composed gospel), categorized because of their lesser degree of dominance within the liturgy, are developed from the primary (although modified by secularized musical trends, has the element of cultural innovation), and must adhere to spiritual and traditional roots of the church in order for them to be incorporated within the liturgical setting. This experience-centered ethnography is important because it solicits cognitive questions of musicians about the process of musical selection and creativity. Chapter 5, on “The Role of Musicians and Musical Instruments,” yields pertinent information on the training of musicians, COGIC organ style, musicianship skill, formal approach, profile of twelve COGIC musicians, spiritual approach, the role of prayer and the anointing, practice methods, and the role of musical instruments.

Following the same hermeneutical path as Henry Louis Gates, Samuel Floyd's The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States (1995) built on the use and signification of tropes throughout African-American music and culture. The paradigmatic tropes that he utilizes are: mythology; dance, drum and song; performance practices; ring shout; call and response; and cultural memory. The subjective concept of “cultural memory” provides another important analytical tool in discussing the codification of the gospel piano style. Floyd presents “cultural memory” as the “...non-factual and non-referential motivations, actions, and beliefs that members of a culture seem, without direct knowledge or deliberate training, to ‘know’ – that feel unequivocally ‘true’ and ‘right’ when encountered, experienced, and executed.

⁸⁴ Thomasina Neely, “Belief, Ritual, and Performance in a Black Pentecostal Church: The Musical Heritage of the church of God in Christ” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1993), iv.

It may be defined as a repository of meanings that comprise the subjective knowledge of a people, its immanent thoughts, its structures, and its practices; these thoughts, structures, and practices are transferred and understood unconsciously but become conscious and culturally objective in practice and perception.”⁸⁵ Thus, this conscious and unconscious cultural memory ensures continuity.

1.4.3 Hymnals

Hymnals in the African-American church date back to 1801, when Richard Allen published A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors that appealed to needs, and represented the favorites of the Black parishioners of the recently formed African Methodist Episcopal Church.⁸⁶ The first hymnal that incorporated gospel songs was the historic Gospel Pearls (1921), published by the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention. Since then, subsequent hymnals have included a few gospel songs.

In 1981, the landmark publication Songs of Zion made available, for the first time in a single source, a variety of religious song styles of the African-American tradition – gospel hymns (along with hymns by white composers), spirituals & jubilees (both folk and arranged), traditional gospel songs, and contemporary gospel songs. An outstanding feature that sets this hymnal apart from its predecessors, is its section on “Keys To Musical Interpretation, Performance, and Meaningful Worship.” This subjective section describes the roles of the director, accompanist (pianist and organist), and congregation; thus, it contains indispensable information for the gospel piano scholar.

⁸⁵ See Floyd, The Power of Black Music, 8.

⁸⁶ It should be noted that this hymnal and subsequent hymnals cut across denominational lines because of their appeal to the black Christian community.

The suggestions on instrumental improvisation cover the areas of rhythm, filling in empty space, modulation, chord progressions, and chordal embellishment. While the suggestions are good, they are not specific for certain songs, what chord substitutes for what and when.⁸⁷ Another important attribute of this hymnal is the presence of two versions of Charles Tindley's "Beams of Heaven." The first version (p. 10) reflects the traditional gospel hymn scoring, while the second version (p. 207) has piano accompaniment which incarnates the suggestions on instrumental improvisation. A study on the gospel piano style should employ this same type of approach of showing how the published version differs from the performed version.

1.4.4 Discographies

Discographies are important sources for identifying recordings of a particular performer or composer's works. In general, discographies provide more extensive and accurate information than the labels of musical recordings. Dixon and Godrich's Blues and Gospel Records, 1902-1942 includes a broad spectrum of black religious music compiled from the race record catalogues of the 1920s and 1930s.⁸⁸ Intended as a scholarly tool, as well as a guide for record collectors, this discography provides an indispensable source for researching gospel piano style. The index on accompanists leads to information on gospel pianists and the artists they accompanied, and records that one needs to access for further research. Hayes' and Laughton's Gospel Records: A Black Music Discography, 1943-1969 begins where Godrich and Dixon's ends with its gospel items; but

⁸⁷ William McClain, Songs of Zion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981). McClain's suggestions are: "Use augmented tonic and dominant chords; dominant chords; secondary dominant chords; diminished triads; dominant, augmented, and diminished seventh chords; ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords; chordal inversions; and altered chords. Flatted thirds, sixths, and sevenths are common. Delayed chordal resolutions and chord-pedals are also very common." p. xiii. This is written for the pianist who is thoroughly familiar with the gospel style.

⁸⁸ The black-owned "race" label of Black Patti and Black Swan are not listed.

its scope extends beyond the race record catalogues. Growing out of the Blues Unlimited magazine, this discography is liberal about inclusion - and information on gospel pianists can be easily accessed from the comprehensive list that appears at the end of the second volume. Accessing recorded data is paramount for the gospel scholar. Liner notes also contain little information about the performers, pieces, analysis, and dates. Recorded anthologies on, or containing gospel music, usually provide an assortment of early gospel music. Those of use to the gospel piano scholar are the anthologies with piano accompaniment.

1.4.5 Models of Gospel Piano Research

Noting the scarcity of gospel piano scholarship, and inappropriate and insufficient methodological approaches, this section examines one video and two books that could serve as potential models for gospel piano scholarship; and, they are quite interrelated.

A 1990 video performance of the “Faculty in Performance Series” at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, features Horace Boyer and David Jackson (head of the gospel program) in a showcase of the evolution of the gospel piano style. As Boyer gives a synoptic history of African-American sacred music, explains what elements are needed to play gospel piano (dexterity, ear), and discusses four types of gospel styles (the shout, jubilee, back-beat gospel rhythm, and ad lib), David Jackson plays piano examples that correspond to each gospel style. Then, Boyer chronologically and diachronically discusses several prominent gospel pianists: Arizona Dranes, Thomas Dorsey, Estelle Allen, Roberta Martin, Clara Ward, James Cleveland, Edwin Hawkins, and Andrae Crouch. For each pianist, Jackson recreates (aurally transcribes from recordings) their playing style with all of their idiosyncrasies and idiomatic nuances - virtually verbatim. Using the format of this video as a prototype for a study on the gospel piano style would be fruitful.

Since jazz scholarship is more developed and detailed than gospel scholarship, the gospel piano scholar can glean a lot from their methodologies and taxonomies. Billy Taylor's Taylor Made Piano (1982) explains the development of jazz piano within its historical and stylistic periods. For each chapter, Taylor furnishes musical examples and features relevant pianists. From this model, the gospel piano research can develop historic/periodic styles, discuss the musical characteristics, and highlight pianists who were leaders of, and employed these styles; thus, the gospel piano style is used as a means to show the development and evolution of gospel music as a whole.⁸⁹

The celebrated and heterogeneous publication of We'll Understand It Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers (1992) features six composers who were trailblazers and progenitors of gospel music. The composers presented in this publication - Rev. Charles A. Tindley, Thomas A. Dorsey, Lucie E. Campbell, Kenneth Morris, Roberta Martin, and William H. Brewster - establish a "canon" of gospel composers, that is primarily based on the sheet music (an urtext) and performance of their music.⁹⁰ Pertinent historical, biographical, sociocultural, ideological, and musical data are presented on each composer; moreover, the composers' songs are analyzed to illustrate the idiosyncrasies of their compositional style. Producing a work along the same lines of We'll Understand It Better By and By, but strictly on gospel pianists, would also provide meaningful and perspicacious insights about other lacking areas and dimensions of gospel music.

⁸⁹ One could also place the contents of the Boyer-Jackson video within the framework of Taylor's model.

⁹⁰ This type of history is important because many gospel performers were composers, and more importantly - because of the highly improvisatory nature of gospel music - the composers of many gospel songs are never known; and the same applies to gospel pianists.

1.5 IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH TO DISCIPLINARY CONCERNS

The immediate goal of this dissertation is to expand and extend the areas of research within gospel music, and to eradicate faulty musical generalizations that have existed up to now in gospel music research; also it is intended to have comparative value within the larger African-American musical continuum. This project represents an attempt to fill a research gap in musicological, ethnomusicological, ethnographical, and historical studies by establishing the gospel piano style as the main focus of study. Furthermore, its scholarly implications will add to the growing body of recent literature in the areas of popular music, cultural studies, aesthetics (transmission, resignification and reinterpretation), African Pianism,⁹¹ and cognition. It is hoped that the research is presented in such a way that scholars in disciplines outside the study of music (e.g. sociology, anthropology, African-American Studies) will find it accessible and pertinent to their own scholastic concerns. This dissertation is directed toward the academician in terms of my musical analysis, and

⁹¹ African Pianism explores how piano music throughout the African Diaspora 1) mirrors African instrumental techniques, 2) borrows material from traditional sources, and 3) uses rhythmic and tonal motives. Furthermore, it also seeks to expand our understanding of African music based on the techniques African composers employ in composition. Likewise in gospel music, the gospel piano style provides another lens for understanding more about African-American music. See Cynthia Tse and Akin Euba eds., Towards An African Pianism: Keyboard Music of Africa and the Diaspora (Richmond, CA: MRI Press, 2005). “This 2-volume work (1) provides a multifaceted study that underscores the significance of the Western acoustic piano in Africa and the Diaspora; (2) presents a basis for African pianism from an historical perspective; (3) introduces proponents of African pianism, not only from West Africa where its genesis appears to have been set in motion, but also by those from other regions of Africa and the Diaspora; (4) offers commentary on the situation in the arts in general and examination of African pianism in particular; (5) puts forth arguments about why African pianism should exist on its own terms and not as an extension or imitation of piano music in the Euro-American mode; and (6) demonstrates the indigenization of the piano in Africa, just as the violin and the guitar have been transformed, where they no longer ‘belong’ to any one culture or country since their integration into the artistic practices of local communities.”

towards the aficionado in terms of my terse and descriptive musical studies; also, the uninitiated gospel novice can glean important historical information about gospel's development, its luminaries, basic styles, and catalogues of music.⁹² With cultural diversity and interculturalism as hallmarks of post-modern America, my research has potential educational value in terms of generating and developing pedagogical materials for music curriculums at the secondary school and collegiate level.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The primary sources for my research consist of a corpus of available commercial recordings from the 1926 to 1960, field recordings, transcriptions and analysis of those recordings, and interviews with gospel pianists and personalities. I have transcribed and analyzed selected extant recordings of Arizona Dranes and Thomas A. Dorsey along with selected recordings of their protégées, other early gospel pianists, pianists with extensive recording careers, and pianists of prominent gospel groups and soloists. In particular, I have selected recordings (those available to me) that provide models and stylistic material to establish which musical traits are broadly shared or idiosyncratic of the collective and individual styles. In all cases, recordings are transcribed into conventional notation. Initially, my criterion for inclusion of various gospel pianists was exploratory and inclusive. Not only were recordings selected for their individual merit, but also for their potential contribution to understanding the larger mosaic of the gospel piano style.

⁹² This does not imply or assert that the academician is not interested in these issues.

Most of my ethnographic research took place in California (Bay Area), Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington D. C., and Pittsburgh. Interviews were conducted with: 1) pianists who had played for prominent gospel singers, 2) pianists who could play various gospel styles, and 3) persons who were knowledgeable about early gospel pianists. Interviews were conducted in a formal and informal manner, and contained direct and indirect questions. While conducting field research for this dissertation, I was quite reflexive about my role as an ethnomusicologist and practitioner of the tradition. While interviews were conducted with a set list of questioning, I also allowed my informants freedom to broach areas that were not a part of my set questioning. A few follow-up interviews were conducted in which my informants discussed, clarified, and responded to question that were generated following the first interview. This allowed me to corroborate and/or eliminate many of my assumptions and uncertainties – thus becoming a scholarly system of “checks and balances.” I believe that this particular tool enabled me to test certain hypotheses with real subjects vis-à-vis a priori knowledge; and, this interchange further bolstered my reflexivity and objectivity. Furthermore, interviews as primary source material yielded information regarding the social, cultural, and musical ethos of the period under investigation.

Secondary research sources used in this study include books, theses and dissertations, periodicals, newspaper and magazine articles, and album liner notes. At the Center for Black Music Research, I was able to overview an unpublished monograph (in the works) of James Furman.⁹³ I was able to look at the James Furman Collection. In this collection was an unpublished manuscript of a future monograph entitled Black Gospel Music: A History & Performance Practice, which he started in 1974. Part One, under the rubric of “What is Gospel and

⁹³ James Furman was born in Louisville, KY on January 23, 1937. He was a choral conductor and composer who taught at Western Connecticut State University from 1965 until his death in 1989. His mother’s name was Ollie Furman, and two brothers were Harold and LeRoy Furman. Information taken from Floyd, Samuel. International Dictionary of Black Composers, s.v. “James Furman.”

Where did it come from?” surveys the roots of gospel, starting from African tribal chants and extending until jazz, and shows their relationship to gospel music. Part Two, “What do Gospel performers do and How do they do it?,” provides musical examples and analysis with explanations of how the gospel sound is achieved.

The remainder of this study is divided in six subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the social, religious, historical, and musical developments that led to the inception and emergence of African-American gospel music. Additionally, facts concerning the widespread popularity of the piano within America, and more importantly, among the black community, and the ramifications this had for the development of gospel music are presented. After examining the historical development of the recording and radio industry and their impact on African American gospel music, Chapter 3 concentrates on the biographical aspects of Thomas Dorsey and Arizona Dranes, and other gospel pianists. Issues regarding sacred versus secular in gospel music are set forth in Chapter 4, along with an exploration of secular pianistic styles. Perhaps the core contention of this dissertation, the identification of those musical elements that are endemic to the foundation and development of the gospel piano style, is found in Chapter 5. A detailed musical analysis of Dranes’ and Dorsey’s gospel pianistic output, and subsequent gospel pianists is provided in relation to the theory of troping. Instead of attempting to construct a concrete exegesis of the gospel piano style, I outline some of the salient musical characteristics as they emerge in the recordings and literature. The aim is to correlate these musical characteristics with others’ musical styles which characterize a particular gospel sub-style in general. Chapter 6 explores the multifarious musical and social roles of gospel pianists, and is ethnographic in content. Centering around modes of sociality and performance, material in this chapter does not continue along the theme of troping, and does not necessarily relate to Dranes and Dorsey in particular, but to gospel pianists in general. The

basis of the role evaluation is primarily obtained through interviews, and guided by historical, religious, and soci-cultural factors – all necessary components to determine the culture’s construction of meaning. The move from musical detail to human experiences and cultural sensibilities is centered and grounded in the informant’s myriad of perspectives. Chapter 7 provides a summary of this dissertation’s findings.

2.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF GOSPEL MUSIC

Gospel music is not only a genre of music but it is also a style of music, in that it can be performed in different ways, but within the same idiomatic context. Traditionally, gospel music has been discussed primarily as vocal music, but the gospel experience encompasses more than the singing. To name a few, it includes ritual, handclapping, movement (dancing, rocking), communal participation, and rhythmic instruments for accompaniment.

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF GOSPEL MUSIC

With its formal beginnings occurring around the same time as that of the blues and jazz (1900-1920), gospel music largely replaced the spiritual while drawing considerably from it.⁹⁴ Both spirituals and gospel music incorporate biblical and spiritual messages, speak of deliverance, and are very therapeutic and transcendental. Even though scholars, along with the general public,⁹⁵ have been responsible for propounding gospel music as an outgrowth or extension of the spiritual, they tend to grossly oversimplify the relationship to the extent that distinct features are eclipsed and

⁹⁴ I am referring to the traditional, folk spiritual, rather than the concertized spiritual, which sometimes had instrumental accompaniment; furthermore, it should be noted that early male gospel quartets usually performed a capella.

⁹⁵ Early record companies referred to all African-American religious music as spirituals.

unrecognized.⁹⁶ The chart below adumbrates some of the basic differences that set the spiritual apart from gospel music.

Table 2.1 SPIRITUAL V. GOSPEL

SPIRITUAL	GOSPEL
1. FUTURISTIC. Communicates the endurance of trials and tribulations with a reward in the next life to come. Looks heavenward and toward the next life for deliverance.	1. IMMEDIATE. Communicates the trials overcome and present joy experienced. Looks at present redemption and hope here on earth.
2. BIBILICAL TEXT. (Re-)Interpreted texts from the Old and New Testament that dealt with the deliverance of the Jewish nation (Israel), or the plight of various biblical personalities/heroes.	2. PERSONAL TEXT. Focus is placed on the individual's personal relationship with God and Christ. Very intimate text: "He walks with me", "I can feel Him in my hands", "Take my hand, Precious Lord"
3. COMMUNITY. Even though personal pronouns are used, the intent of the text projects the collective voice and highlights the emancipation of the collective group: "people", "we"	3. INDIVIDUAL. More focus is placed on the liberation of the individual: "I", "my", "mine"
4. ANONYMOUS COMPOSERS. Born out of the musical heritage of unknown enslave African-Americans.	4. KNOWN COMPOSERS. From the turn of the 20 th century, African-American composers assigned their name to their compositions.
5. ORAL DISSEMINATION. Originally shared among blacks during work or play on the southern plantation. Also perpetuated in the "invisible church" and plantation praise houses. First public collection of spirituals appear in 1867.	5. WRITTEN/ORAL DISSEMINATION. Gospel songs were written as a guideline by which performers would improvise on.

⁹⁶ For example, John Lovell stated "...gospel music is hardly anything more than an effort to give the spiritual a modernity in form, content, and beat." See John Lovell, *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 467. Furthermore, Nathan Davis states that "There was no early clear-cut definition that divided the religious spiritual from the gospels; even today, professional gospel singers, regardless of race or religious preference, rarely understand the difference." See Nathan Davis, *African American Music: A Philosophical Look at African American Music in Society* (Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 128. Gospel is often referred to as the Twentieth-century spiritual.

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|--|---|
| <p>6. RURAL VERNACULAR. Use of language reflects the environment it emanates from: river, valley, boats, rocks. Poetic language abounds with rich and, often, cryptic metaphors. Employed slave dialect.</p> | <p>6. URBAN VERNACULAR. Text employs everyday terms, expressions, and colloquialisms. Metaphors and images are very straightforward: “Jesus is a heart-fixer and mind-regulator.”</p> |
| <p>7. SORROW. Texts talk about woes, hardships, trials, and pain encountered.</p> | <p>7. JOYOUS. Joy is experienced here on earth and in heaven.</p> |
| <p>8. MODAL. A modal tonality characterizes the spiritual’s languorous and mournful quality. Minor, pentatonic, and major scales are also used.</p> | <p>8. TONAL. Employs standard and expanded functional harmony, and mainly utilizes major tonalities seasoned with blue notes, lowered 7ths.</p> |
| <p>9. HETEROPHONOUS. In performance, the single/unison melody is simultaneously sung with many melodic variations.</p> | <p>9. HOMOPHONOUS/POLYPHONOUS. Melody, sung in a chordal manner, is distributed among vocal parts: soprano, alto, and tenor.</p> |
| <p>10. A CAPELLA. Rhythm is maintained by handclaps, foot-tapping, and thigh-slapping.</p> | <p>10. ACCOMPANIED. The basic instrumentation includes piano, organ, drums, lead guitar, bass, and tambourine.</p> |
| <p>11. SMALL AMBITUS. Vocal range usually within an octave to tenth.</p> | <p>11. LARGER AMBITUS. Vocal range encompasses anywhere from a tenth to two octaves.</p> |

While the spiritual is based on a biblical text that communicates the endurance of trials with a reward in the next life to come, gospel music incorporates more of a vernacular text that communicates the trials overcome and the present joy experienced. Musically, the spiritual has a modal and heterophonic texture, while gospel music employs functional harmony and polyphony. Above all else, the distinguishing element that sets gospel music apart from the spiritual is its instrumental accompaniment.

2.1.1 Historical Foundations of Gospel Music

This section provides a terse overview of the development of the African-American sacred music tradition and culture from the seventeenth century until the present – with emphases on phenomena that generated the formal inception of gospel music (i.e.: the development of the African-American church, sacred and religious songs, birth and role of Pentecostalism, sanctified ministers and singers, male quartets, and early gospel composers and singers).

Many of the traditions that were brought from Africa were transformed by the institution of American slavery and the cross-fertilization of different cultures.⁹⁷ Enslaved Africans' traditions were not thoroughly eradicated, as some have suggested,⁹⁸ but dominant vestiges of their heritage and culture remained throughout, and after, their tenure of slavery. The vine of African tradition continued to be watered, nurtured, and refreshed for over two centuries by the constant influx of Africans from the motherland and other parts of the Americas, up until the close of the International Slave Trade in 1808. Even though Congress had issued its edict that officially banned the importation of slaves, many slave traders ignored its ruling and continued to smuggle in, countless scores of enslaved Africans on the “black market,” which aided in the continuance of African traditions (throughout the 19th century) among those who had been in America for years.

⁹⁷ In chapter 2, Davis discusses the concept of cross-fertilization. He explains it as the coming together of Western European and Western African music in North America, and the *mélange* of the two produced African American music; furthermore, he maintains that Africans adopted a new culture while simultaneously retaining their traditional culture. See Davis *African-American Music*, 4.

⁹⁸ Early scholars who suggested that enslaved Africans were devoid of their cultures were: Robert E. Park, “The Conflict and Fusion of Cultures with Special Reference to the Negro,” *Journal of Negro History* 4 (1919), 116-118; George Pullen Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals: Their Life Span and Kinship* (New York, 1943).

Precursors of gospel music date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From the beginning of slavery, cries, hollers, and shouts were essential to the enslaved African because they provided an outlet in helping them deal with slavery's oppressiveness. Music, along with dance and religion, provided a diversion from the injustices and atrocities of slavery. Over time, these shouts, cries, and hollers, in combination with European musical material, were central to the creation of the African-American spiritual, and eventually, gospel music.

During the colonial era in the 17th century, enslaved Africans lived on small farms and plantations with their masters which encouraged interaction between the two. In the north, slaves would often work simultaneously in the fields with their white superiors, share the same living quarters, and even attend church together. On the larger sugar and cotton plantations in the southern colonies, interaction between the two groups was more minimal.⁹⁹ Besides the normal daily contact encountered through work, the church was the first cultural, albeit religious, institution that provided the breeding ground for the amalgamation and exchange of European and African cultural material. Many white slave masters felt that the only way that they could redeem these "heathen savages", was by enslaving and converting them to Christianity which, in their eyes, would make them more submissive. Upon their arrival in America, most enslaved Africans would receive a Christian baptism.¹⁰⁰ For the most part, they were prohibited from

⁹⁹ Frazier mentions that large plantations were prevalent in parts of South America (particularly Brazil) and the West Indies; thus, African retentions were able to proliferate because of the minimal interaction. See E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1963), 2. Also see Davis, African American Music, 12 where he mentions that "...everything, from language to the eating habits, was governed or determined by the dominant culture...However, colonists borrowed as many songs and dances from the slaves as the African slaves did from Western European colonists."

¹⁰⁰ The first record of a slave woman being baptized dated from 1641. Laws were eventually enacted that maintained that slaves could not become free as a result of Baptism and acceptance of Christianity. See Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 6. [Frazier notes: See Helen T. Catterall (ed.), Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution, 1926), Vol. 1, p. 57. "The Virginia Act was passed in 1667: 'Whereas some doubts have risen whether children that are slaves by birth, and by the charity and peity of their owners made pertakers of the blessed sacrament of baptisme, should by vertue of their baptisme be made free;

expressing their culture, traditions, religious beliefs, and values. Religious indoctrination for the slave was not only sequestered to the household or plantation, but the masters would take their slaves with them to church. Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier has aptly noted that:

Not only did religion draw the Negroes into a union with their fellow men, it tended to break down barriers that isolated them morally from their white masters. Where the plantation tended to become a social as well as an industrial institution, the Negro slaves participated in the religious life of their masters. It was a part of the discipline on many plantations to provide for the religious instruction of the slaves. The house servants often attended the family prayers. As a rule the galleries in the white churches were reserved for the Negro slaves. The master, and more especially mistress, gave religious instruction to the slaves, and white ministers often preached to Negro congregations and supervised their activities. Thus, despite the vast gulf in the status that separated master and slave, participation in the same religious services drew the Negroes out of their moral isolation in the white man's world.¹⁰¹

Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) suggests that the "...African's belief in 'stronger gods' assuaged or explained slavery for the African slave and was, perhaps, a partial explanation for his rapid adoption of pre-missionary Christianity...[and]...because it was something the white man did that the black man could do also..."¹⁰² Yet, John Mbiti states that the African's conception of Christianity and "...Black Theology emerge[d] from the pains of oppression...[that was] full of sorrow, bitterness, anger, and hatred."¹⁰³

Music was the major highlight of the slaves' indoctrination to Christianity, for it was an area where they were allowed to freely participate. Psalmody was the predominant style of

It is enacted...that the conferring of baptisme doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom; that diverse masters, freed from this doubt, may more carefully endeavour the propagation of Christianity by permitting children, though slaves, or those of greater growth if capable, to be admitted to that sacrament.' " The state of Maryland enacted the same law in 1671 See also Lorenzo J. Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (New York, 1942), Chapter X.] Furthermore, some masters did not believe in converting their slave to Christianity, and some laws forbade the slaves from partaking in any type of religious service.

¹⁰¹ Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 9.

¹⁰² Leroi Jones, *Blues People* (New York: Morrow, 1963), 33.

¹⁰³ In John Parratt, ed., *A Reader in African Christian Theology* (Great Britain: Latimer Trend & Company, 1987), 49.

church singing in the seventeenth century, where melodies were set to lyrics taken from the biblical book of Psalms.¹⁰⁴ The *Bay Psalm Book* was published in 1640 in Boston, and was the first publication of any kind in the English colonies. The practice of lining-out first began with psalms, and later, it was used in the performance of hymns. Eileen Southern states that the “...procedure consisted in the precentor’s chanting one line (or two lines) at a time, ending on a definite pitch, and the congregation following with the singing of the same line, generally with some elaboration of the tune.”¹⁰⁵ The psalms were performed a capella, and embellishments of the tune reflected individual musicianship.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Church of England became more determined and systematic in their attempt to Christianize slaves.¹⁰⁶ The First Great Awakening was a call for colonists to awaken from their spiritual stupor and complacency. This religious revival was initiated by 1734 in the New England area by Johnathan Edwards.¹⁰⁷ The Awakening moved in new directions when a preacher by the name of George Whitefield arrived from England in 1738.¹⁰⁸ Besides renewing people’s interest in Christianity and the church, the First Great Awakening came with a fervent call for more lively, vivacious, and energetic songs

¹⁰⁴ Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1851) fosters the image of the pious, psalm-singing (spiritual?) slave. Tom, when he becomes old, meets his maker while singing a chorus of “Jesus Gonna Make Up My Dying-Bed.”

¹⁰⁵ Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 30.

¹⁰⁶ The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, chartered in England in 1701, was the missionary society that carried out the Church of England’s evangelistic mission. Their mission was to convert slaves to Christianity, and to even instruct them in reading and writing.

¹⁰⁷ Johnathan Edwards was perhaps the most famous preacher in the New England area who referred to The First Great Awakening as a “frontier revival.”

¹⁰⁸ Other preachers that were part of this evangelical revival were: Samuel Davies (whose proselytizing, like Whitefield’s, spanned the North and South), Shubel Stearns (founder of the foot-washing Primitive Baptist Church mainly preached in North Carolina), and the Tennenet brothers (who focused their preaching in New Jersey and Pennsylvania). See Walter Pitts, *Old Ship of Zion: The Afro-Baptist Ritual in the African Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 42.

to be used in worship services. People had grown bored with the dry and dreary psalm-singing. Prior to Whitefield's arrival, a new type of song appeared on the colonial horizon that gradually began to displace psalmody – they were called hymns. Initially penned by Dr. Isaac Watts in England, these hymns no longer utilized scriptural psalm text, but employed fresh poetic verses ground with biblical doctrine and religious sentiment. Hymns were constructed with the multiple verses/chorus structure, and incorporated lively tunes. In 1707, Dr. Watts published his Hymns and Spiritual Songs in England, and subsequently published The Psalms of David, Imitated in the Language of the New Testament and Apply'd to the Christian State and Worship in 1717. Hymnody offered people a new autonomy in the creation of religious song texts which eventually supplanted psalmody. By 1729, Watts' The Psalms of David and Hymns and Spiritual Songs (1739) were being published in the colonies, and many preachers used these hymns as evangelical tools, especially when ministering to the slaves; and, the slaves were quite fond of hymns.¹⁰⁹

In speaking of the Reverend Samuel Davies (1723-61), another prominent preacher (Presbyterian) during the First Great Awakening, historian and anthropologist Walter Pitts comments that while the "...slaves seemed uninterested in his gift of religious instruction, they relished Watts' hymns."¹¹⁰ The emotion, intensity, and uniqueness of the slaves' musical style impressed whites who interacted with them (i.e.: slave owners, missionaries, ministers, travelers), and was repeatedly documented in their correspondence, Reverend Samuel Davies, in a letter dated from 1755, highlighted how the slaves'

¹⁰⁹ Other hymn sources were John Wesley's Collection of Psalms and Hymns (1737) and Hymns and Sacred Poems (1739), and George Whitefield's A Collection of Hymns for Social Worship (1753, 1765). See Boyer, How Sweet The Sound, 6.

¹¹⁰ See Pitts, Old Ship of Zion, 76-77. Davies' his main area of evangelism to the slaves was centered around Virginia.

...torrent of sacred harmony has poured into my chamber and carried my mind away to heaven...I wish, Sir, you and other benefactors could hear some of these sacred concerts. I am persuaded it would surprise and please you more than an Oratorio...”¹¹¹

In another letter dated August 26, 1758, Rev. Davies writes

...I can hardly express the pleasure it affords me to turn to that part of the Gallery where they sit, and see so many of them with their Psalm or Hymn Books, turning to the part then sung, and assisting their fellows who are beginners, to find the place; and then all breaking out in a torrent of sacred harmony, enough to bear away the whole congregation to heaven...”¹¹²

As the enslaved Africans began to learn these Europeanized hymns (as with psalmody), they did not forsake their own musical heritage, but chose to simultaneously negotiate and reinterpret European religious songs and musical practices to fit within their own African cultural framework.¹¹³ Slaves referred to the singing of hymns as “raising” a hymn. Instead of singing the hymn as it was written, blacks would have a devout leader intone one or two lines to a tune that was dissimilar to what the congregation would sing; and, the congregation would further embellish the hymn by adding individual ornaments (slides, bends, and slurs), melismas, vocal nuances, and held tones. For example, Olly Wilson has noted that the

...lined-out ‘Watts hymn’ (also referred to as the ‘long-meter hymn’) or lined-out psalm, which is an unaccompanied responsorial style of choral singing...clearly reflects the continuity of the heterogeneous sound ideal in black music. Most of the descriptions of this style of sacred song discuss the common usage of a diversity of vocal nuances, a musical texture in which individual voices are discerned within a mass of sound, and the prevalence of an unmetrical rhythm in which each individual choral member’s response varies in tempo, melodic contour, and vocal nuances that range from speech to song.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Eileen Southern, ed., Readings in Black American Music (New York: Norton, 1983), 28.

¹¹² Southern, Readings in Black American Music, 28-29.

¹¹³ This reflects what ethnomusicologist Nathan Davis refers to as “cross fertilization.” See footnote 4 above. Davis further states “...the slave had no other choice but to embrace whatever spiritual substitute he found, i.e., European music. Whereas Western European culture first served as a substitute for their own culture, it later took on a cultural life of its own, by contributing to the various forms of the new music – African American music.” See Davis, African American Music, 11.

¹¹⁴ Olly Wilson, “The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music,” in New Perspectives

As the slaves were introduced to European music (its structure, melodies, rhythms, harmonies), they selected what they needed in order to survive in their new environment, by seasoning it with their African heritage. (The presence of African musical practices throughout slavery has been discussed in detail by several scholars.¹¹⁵) Rhythm and dance were important in African musical practices that definitely influenced musical practices in America. Even though the drum was forbidden, slaves maneuvered and found substitutes for rhythmic survivals through the use of handclapping, foot stomping, body slapping, dry seed pods, gourds, sticks, oars, bones from an animal, agriculture instruments (hoes, blades), and domestic items (spoons, cups, tin buckets/cans, washtubs, washboards).

Blacks usually participated in at least one of four religious environments that existed from the late 1700s until the Civil War. They would either attend church (inter-racial, yet segregated) with their master, worship in their own churches or plantation Praise Houses under the leadership of white ministers,¹¹⁶ participate in the “invisible church”, or attend churches led

on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern, ed. Josephine Wright and Samuel A. Floyd Jr., 327-39 (Sterling Heights, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), 334. The meters were determined by the number of syllables per line. Common Meter – 8, 6, 8, 6; Long Meter – 8, 8, 8, 8; Irregular Meter – 6, 6, 8, 6.

¹¹⁵ For example: Melville J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past (Boston: Beacon, 1941); Melville J. Herskovits, The Interdisciplinary Aspects of Negro Studies (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1941); Richard Waterman, “African Influences on American Negro Music” in Acculturation in the Americas ed. by Sol Tax, 227-44 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952); William R. Bascom and Melville Herskovits, eds., Continuity and Change in African Cultures (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); Phillip Curtin, Africa Remembered: Narrative by West African from the Era of the Slave Trade (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967); Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans (1971, 1983, 1997); William Bascom, Shango in the New World (Austin, TX: African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin, 1972); Robert Farris Thompson, Flash of the Spirit: African & Afro-American Art and Philosophy (New York: Random House, 1983); Roger Abrahams & John Szwed, After Africa: Extracts from British Travel Accounts & Journals of the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries Concerning the Slaves, Their Manners, and Customs (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983).

¹¹⁶ Particularly in the South, slave owners would arrange special services for their slaves during which the white minister who preached to the slave owners in the morning would preach to the slave in the afternoon; and Southern state officials made sure, to the best of their ability, that black churches were tightly controlled.

by black preachers, but supervised by whites.¹¹⁷ From 1760 to 1790 Baptist and Methodist denominations became more deliberate about proselytizing blacks, which historian Carter G. Woodson refers to as ‘The Dawn of the New Day’ in the religious development of Blacks.¹¹⁸ This evangelistic mission, in particular, was geared toward the South.¹¹⁹ Many northern preachers and missionaries went to the South to convert slaves (and slave masters).¹²⁰ One way in which they attracted blacks, was through the revivals that the Baptist and Methodist denominations sponsored. These camp meeting revivals were conducted by white preachers who welcomed blacks to attend. Large numbers of blacks were drawn to these revival meetings, but according to Frazier, it was “...not until after the American Revolution that large masses of the Negro population became converts and joined the Methodist and Baptist churches.”¹²¹ A very small number of slaves attended church with their masters in the South.¹²² According to Frazier, “In the South the Negroes continued to join the Methodist and Baptist churches in large numbers

¹¹⁷ See Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 178-80.

¹¹⁸ Carter G. Woodson, The History of the Negro Church (Washington, D. C.: Associated Publishers, 1921), Chapter II.

¹¹⁹ Before 1760, southern slaves were mainly non-Christians, and most still practiced their own religion. Southern slaveholders were stricter about slaves becoming converted, and religious instruction varied from master to master. Slaves were kept under firm control, and it was not wise to allow them to congregate. Many believed that converted slaves would become too proud and not remain good servants. By 1770, the South is becoming known as the “Bible Belt,” mainly comprised of Baptists and Methodists.

¹²⁰ Northern church missionaries disciplined masters for killing and whipping slaves. Ironically, whites and blacks in the south experienced Christianization together.

¹²¹ Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 8.

¹²² Southern states that “Despite the publicity given to the slaves’ singing of psalms, relatively few slaves were actually allowed to attend religious services. As late as 1841, only about 5 per cent of the slaves in the South were members of the church, according to the Reverend Charles Jones.” Southern, Readings in Black American Music, 27.

and to worship in the segregated sections of the churches of their masters...[and] as Negro membership increased, the Baptist and Methodists too provided their Negro members with separate churches.”¹²³

Blacks were not permitted to establish their own churches until the 1770s.¹²⁴ Spurred by this Baptist and Methodist revivalism, the birth of the independent Black church did not commence until the latter part of the 18th century – a century and a half after Africans were first brought to America. Walter Pitts maintains that “The single most important outgrowth of the Great Awakening was that blacks who had been converted at the revivals formed their own independent congregations, thereby beginning the political, social, and economic autonomy of the Afro-Baptist church.”¹²⁵ It was the first institution controlled solely by Blacks. The first African-American church in America was organized in Silver Bluff, South Carolina in 1774. Another early, independent black church was the First African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia, founded in 1788. Blacks had a particular affinity for the Baptist church because of its: 1) autonomous government structure (no jurisdictional hierarchy); 2) baptism by total immersion; 3) democratic message of salvation and hope that was more palatable (equality of souls); 4) “folk” preachers who “...appealed to the poor and the ignorant and the outcast”; 5) emphasis on “feeling” (emotionalism) as a sign of conversion.¹²⁶

The enslaved Africans’ adoption of Christianity possibly revolved around the similar religious structure that was present in Africa: worshipping a higher power (God), being

¹²³ Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 25-26. Negroes conducted services according to their own preferences, though under white supervision.

¹²⁴ See Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 73-75.

¹²⁵ Pitts, Old Ship of Zion, 45.

¹²⁶ For the last three points, See Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 8.

possessed and indwelt by a spirit (Holy Spirit), and having a personal relationship with the deity (Jesus Christ); furthermore, the slaves were not totally divested from their indigenous religious worship style.¹²⁷ Outside of religious reasons, one of the slaves' main concern was in developing institutions and mechanisms that empowered and enabled them to minister to their particular needs. Thus Jones points out that "The Negro church, as it was begun, was the only place where the Negro could release emotions that slavery would naturally tend to curtail. The Negro went to church, literally, to be free, and to prepare himself for his freedom in the Promised Land."¹²⁸

Even though the enslaved Africans were constantly bombarded with European cultural practices, Mechal Sobel attests that africanisms still abounded because the slaves "...selected, squeezed, and shaped"¹²⁹ white Christian practices and ideologies in an effort to preserve their own African heritage. Alongside of the visible, established black church, was the "invisible institution" (invisible church) that had taken root among black slaves.¹³⁰ The "invisible church" was a clandestine and unifying institution that existed on the plantation among black from various African tribal backgrounds. Akin to the forms found in Africa, these meetings usually occurred at night in inconspicuous places far away from the eye and ear of the master and overseer (i.e.: slave quarters, brush/hush arbor, woods, thickets, rivers, ravines, gullies, lakes).

¹²⁷ W. E. B. DuBois was the first scholar to look at cultural links between Africa and the black Baptist church in his collection of essays, Souls of Black Folk (1903). He suggested that certain African practices had been transformed in black Baptist worship, such as the West African's sacred regard for water, which led to the institution of baptism by total immersion. Mechal Sobel's Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith (1979) is a historical account of the development of a black Baptist worldview hewn from an African system of philosophy and theology.

¹²⁸ Jones, Blues People, 48.

¹²⁹ Mechal Sobel, Trabelin On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1979), 45.

¹³⁰ See Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 16.

The tripartite purpose of the “invisible church” was 1) to provide an avenue for the maintenance of the slaves’ African religious practices in a pan-African ritual, 2) to exorcise the omens of injustice that were meted out by slavery, and 3) to reaffirm their humanity in the face of an inhumane society, through communal fellowship and emotional support. The slaves accomplished this purpose through the performance of prayers, shouts, songs, and dance, all African in character. Rites of passage marking life cycle events, such as birth, marriage and death, were also celebrated, which further bolstered continuity with the African past. Those who possessed some religious knowledge were usually sanctioned as the spiritual leader of the assembly. Not only did the slaves create a “new” religious construct suitable to their needs, but their africanisms moved candidly into the “visible” worship experience. While church leaders disallowed certain “heathen” practices (i.e.: drumming, dancing, use of certain musical instruments), religion in America was not completely devoid of them. In a sense, Christianity provided a refuge and haven for the retention and sustenance of certain African practices and beliefs. Lewis V. Baldwin explains that “Even though African slaves were spiritually transformed by their experiences in the New World, this in no way means that they completely abandoned all of the rituals and practices which had characterized their religious ceremonies in their ancestral homeland.”¹³¹ This statement is substantiated by that fact that many religious leaders, black and white, had difficulties in preventing africanisms from becoming a part of the religious services.¹³² Praise Houses were established by blacks as an extension of the church,

¹³¹ Lewis V. Baldwin, “Invisible” Stands in African Methodism: A History of the African Union Methodist Protestant and Union American Methodist Episcopal Churches, 1895-1980 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1983), 10.

¹³² For a detailed analysis and discussion on Africanisms within the Black religious context, see: W. E. B. DuBois, Some Efforts of the American Negroes for their own Social Betterment (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1898), The Negro Church (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1903), Chapters 1-3; Woodson, The History of the Negro Church (1921), Chapter 2; Benjamin Brawley, A Social History of the American Negro (New York: Macmillan, 1921); Melville J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past (1941), 207ff; Lorenzo Turner, Africanisms in the

and their African tradition. Praise houses were primarily found on southern plantations, and operated with the permission from their masters. Services were held in huts, cabins, slave quarters, and open fields. The praise house primarily existed to: 1) initiate newcomers into the community, 2) oversee and settle disputes, 3) legislate mores and morality, and 4) syncretize Christian and non-Christian elements. The praise house provided slaves with their own spiritual leaders, judicial system, and social, cultural, and religious governance. As a result, over half of the black adult slave population was members of the praise house instead of the Baptist or Methodist church. Praise house services were closely akin to those of the “invisible church.” One of the main experiences that both praise house and “invisible church” participants anticipated, was the ring shout.¹³³ At the praise house, the ring shout usually occurred after prayer meetings, after church services on Sundays, or on “praise nights;” and for the “invisible church,” it was performed whenever it was safe for the slaves to congregate.

The ring shout, for blacks, represented a clever way of maintaining their African traditions, and negotiating around the rules of the church; to the contrary, the ring shout represented an abominable intersection of “sacred” and “secular”¹³⁴ for many whites. For example, the Methodist church did not allow the playing of musical instruments¹³⁵ or dancing in their service, but they did allow physical exercise after prayer meetings. Slaves resurrected and reinterpreted the ring shout from their West African culture (circle dance), but now under the guise of Christianity. Performed in a counter-clockwise circle, slaves would link arms and

Gullah Dialect (S.I.: Ayer, 1949), 40; E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (1963); Roger Bastide, Peter Green and Geoffrey Parrinder, African Civilisations in the New World (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

¹³³ Only members of the praise house participated in the ring shout.

¹³⁴ Within the African cosmological tradition, there is no distinction between sacred and secular.

¹³⁵ Instruments were not normally used in religious services. The church usually cast dispersions on the banjo, corn songs, and fiddle and jig tunes.

shuffle their feet without crossing them.¹³⁶ Musical accompaniment was performed by three to four people who would sing, chant, clap their hands, stomp their feet, and play rhythmic idiophones; and, black songs and spirituals were preferred, rather than white hymns. With their feet hardly taken off of the floor, ring shout participants would begin with a slow, walking pace, and gradually increase into a faster pace. As the pace accelerated, there was a greater display of emotion. The ultimate goal of the ring shout was for the participants, motivated by propulsive rhythms and melodies, and other supernatural forces, to communicate with God and become filled with the spirit. This was a visible manifestation of whether one had truly experienced salvation. Emanating from the ring shout and the “invisible church”, religious expressions such as ecstatic shouting, screaming, holy dancing, jerking, and rolling, became synonymous with Black emotionalism. As a result, black’s expressive and emotive worship mannerisms and patterns began to influence white Christian beliefs and practices throughout the nineteenth century.

Although an exact date or time has not been affixed to the creation of the black spiritual, it was initially created away from the scrutiny of whites, in the fields, and in brush arbors of the “invisible church;” eventually, the spiritual became more public through the praise house, segregated camp meetings, and independent black churches.¹³⁷ The spirituals have not attributed to individual authors, but to the musical and spiritual genius of the slaves. The moniker, spiritual, was applied, because the lyrics were primarily based on biblical stories and precepts, and the slaves believed that the Spirit of God was the creative source.

¹³⁶ Crossing of feet was indicative of dancing.

¹³⁷ Even though evidence about the spiritual emerged after its inception, most scholars believe that it began to emerge in the early to mid 1700s. Its origin is also suspect because many utilized other monikers, such as plantations songs, slave songs, or jubilee songs, when referring to it. Jubilee songs, both sacred and secular, brought good news.

Ever'y Time I Feel the Spirit
Moving in my heart, I will pray

Ever'y Time I Feel the Spirit
Moving in my heart, I will sing

Through the spiritual, the enslaved blacks were creating a territory and space in which they had dominion and autonomy; thus, recreating themselves spiritually, philosophically, epistemologically, psychologically, and ontologically. The spiritual was aesthetic, as well as utilitarian and therapeutic. The enslaved were able to talk to and recognize the omnipotence of God, give thanks for daily strength and health, acknowledge their adverse situation (their “lot in life”), plead for help and deliverance, express their weariness and woes, comment on injustices, document their worldview, and rehearse for freedom; furthermore, they constructed a new Christianity, unlike the corrupt and hypocritical one that had been imparted to them by whites.

Birthered in the bosom of the slaves’ field hollers, cries, calls, and African heritage, and forged in the crucible of oppression, injustice, and the struggle to survive, the spiritual emerged as a sanctuary for the slaves’ faith, fortitude, and future. As the slave’s national anthem, the spiritual read like a history book chronicling the plight of a disenfranchised and destitute people. While black folk composers had an experiential and intellectual grasp of the Bible, the spiritual reshaped and syncretized biblical stories in light of the slave’s everyday experiences. The spiritual’s themes, ensconced with divine and didactic truths, employed cryptic and metaphoric language that reverberated themes between: deliverance and despair, optimism and oppression, victory and victimization, sorrow and salvation, triumph and tragedy, emancipation and enslavement, love and longsuffering, courage and consolation, transformation and transcendence, faith and fortitude, stoicism and struggle, resiliency and resistance, alienation and audacity, hope and healing, dignity and despondency, the day of reckoning and retribution,

mortality and immortality, and the eschatological and the ephemeral. The multitudinous themes found in the spirituals covered the gamut of human expression of an agonized people seeking to cleanse themselves of bitterness and degradation.

While little is known about the songs sung in the “invisible church” gatherings sequestered in brush, out of the master’s observation, it is believed that the slaves composed their own songs – hence, the birth of the spiritual. Black folk composers combined snippets from hymns, prayers, refrains, biblical passages, proverbial adages, extemporaneous sermonizing, and personal experience in creating a new song form. The spiritual was not a different version of a hymn, but rather, it was a refashioning and signify(ing) of verses and motives from an African perspective.¹³⁸ Even though some spirituals derived from European hymn texts, their execution were uniquely African in that they altered the tunes and melodies to conform to their African musical patterns.¹³⁹ These “sorrow songs,” with varied tempos, contained repetitive phrases that emphasized the most significant ideas, call and response structures that incorporated the community, and pentatonic melodies that reminisced of the African past; also, early African-American work songs, field cries, and hollers influenced the spiritual’s modal quality, slurs, melodic contour, rhythmic articulation, and use of altered scale degrees. The spiritual could be sung in a plaintive and mournful manner, or in a celebratory and joyful one. Performed communally and a capella, the spiritual was occasionally enlivened with clapping, hand waving, shouting, dancing, foot stomping, thigh slapping, and other physical body motions that produced cross rhythms.

¹³⁸ The African tradition predominantly favors improvising extant songs.

¹³⁹ This process is known as “africanization.”

Toward the end of the 18th century into the early part of the 19th century, there was a growing momentum for the establishment of more independent black churches – accompanied by encouragement and opposition from whites. In the North, African- American churches were born in reaction to the discrimination that free African-Americans experienced in White churches. Richard Allen, along with Absalom Jones, was the seminal force in establishing the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1794. After experiencing racial segregation in old St. George’s Episcopal Church in 1787, Allen, along with others, formed the African Free Society which led to the establishment of St. Thomas African Episcopal Church and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the first independent Black denomination.¹⁴⁰ The first hymnal compiled specifically for an independent black church was Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors, published in 1801 by Richard Allen. This hymnal, according to Eileen Southern, “...was the first hymnbook compiled by a black man for use by a black congregation. As a ‘folk-selected’ anthology, it indicates which hymns were popular among black Methodists at the beginning of the nineteenth century.”¹⁴¹ Furthermore, it highlights those hymns that had a special appeal for those in the general black community. Lyrics, and not melodies were included in this hymnal, so it is probable that the hymns were lined-out.

The Second Great Awakening of the 1800s (1800-1830) was an outgrowth of the camp meeting revivals that began in the 1780s. These revival services were so large that no building could accommodate the attendees, so outdoor campgrounds (woods, forest) were employed. The

¹⁴⁰ The AME church was initially under the auspices of white mother churches until the Supreme Court allowed the church to become totally autonomous. It was formally incorporated at its first general convention in 1816. The second independent black church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion, was in New York in 1796. Its charter was obtained in 1821.

¹⁴¹ Southern, Readings in Black American Music, 52.

first historic camp meeting was held in Logan County, Kentucky. From there, this revival movement moved westward across the Appalachian Mountains into the frontier areas of Western Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Western Pennsylvania and New York, and Ohio; eventually, the movement moved in all directions: North (Delaware, Maryland) and the deep South (South Carolina, Alabama). Revival services were spread out over several days to an entire week, and both Blacks and whites attended. By the 1830s, these meetings became more organized with stands, stage area, pulpit, and seats. This revival movement emerged at a critical time when independent Black denominations and churches were being established. By 1818, black Baptist and Methodist churches began sponsoring their own camp meeting revivals.

References to the existence of the Negro spiritual began to emerge during the Second Great Awakening and were noted by church leaders – often to their discomfort. It was one of the earliest forms of African-American music that attracted the attention and listening audience of whites; and during the antebellum era, African-American sacred music was more prone to being highlighted and chronicled than secular music. John F. Watson's Methodist Error or Friendly Christian Advice to those Methodists Who Indulge in Extravagant Religious Emotions and Bodily Exercises (1819) provides a description of the religious activity and singing of Blacks who attended revival meetings; furthermore, information is revealed about the conception and organization of the Negro spiritual. Watson reports:

We have too...merry airs, adapted from old songs, to hymns of our composing: often miserable as poetry, and senseless as matter, and most frequently composed and first sung by the illiterate blacks of the society...Such singing as has been described, has we know, been ordinarily sung in most of our prayer and camp meetings: sometimes two or three at a time in succession...In the blacks' quarter, the coloured people get together, and sing for hours together, short scraps of disjointed affirmations, pledges, or prayers, lengthened out with long repetition choruses. These are all sung in the merry chorus-manner of the southern harvest field, or husking-frolic method, of the slave blacks; and also very greatly like the Indian dances. With every word so sung, they have a sinking of one or other leg of the body alternately; producing an audible sound of the feet at every step, and as manifest as the steps of actual negro dancing in

Virginia, &c. If some, in the meantime sit, they strike the sounds alternately on each thigh.¹⁴²

Continuing, he states that

...I have known in some camp meetings, from 50 to 60 people crowd into one tent, after the public devotions had closed, and there continue the whole night, singing tune after tune, (though with occasional episodes of prayer) scarce one of which were in our hymn books. Some of these from their nature, (having very long repetition choruses and short scraps of matter) are actually composed as sung, and are indeed almost endless.¹⁴³

As stated earlier, the spiritual developed from an amalgamation of African and European musical sources, and it became the first indigenous, religious music of America; yet, the foregoing quotes unmistakably confirm that the attitude behind its creation was African- American.¹⁴⁴

Blacks' singing style had a profound affect upon camp-meeting singing. Practices found in the black's nightly songfests began to infiltrate the regular camp-meeting services. The Watson quote above reveals that songs were composed by combining isolated lines of text from various sources and "wandering verses."¹⁴⁵ Eventually, camp meeting song leaders began copying black performance practices by adding choruses and refrains to songs during camp meeting revival services. These spontaneously composed songs, with appealing lyrics and tunes, became known as camp-meeting hymns, or spiritual songs – different than the black spiritual.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Southern, Readings in Black American Music, 62-63.

¹⁴³ Southern, Readings in Black American Music, 64.

¹⁴⁴ Lovell, Black Song, 16.

¹⁴⁵ See Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 84-85. "Wandering verses" were additional refrains verses or short choruses that were randomly attached to orthodox hymn stanzas. Allen's 1801 hymnal was the first to include these "wandering verses."

¹⁴⁶ Southern reports that the term had been in use over a century (referring to the black spiritual), but acquired a different meaning.

Although more independent black churches (not under the strict control of whites) were established throughout the nineteenth century, a large number of southern slaves remained outside of the Christian church up until the Civil War.¹⁴⁷ Independent black churches were religious, as well as social, education, and economic institutions, offering a wide range of services and benefits.¹⁴⁸ Black preachers emerged as spiritual leaders and cultural disseminators. Set apart from their white counterparts, the black preaching style was entrenched in the African griot¹⁴⁹ tradition, reflecting the speech to song continuum. Black preachers would intone, moan, whoop, and sing while delivering their sermon, and use rhetorical phrases in a call and response manner to elicit feedback from the congregation.¹⁵⁰ Besides disseminating spiritual truths, black preachers were pivotal figures in the struggle for emancipation in the anti-slavery movement. Whites had to tolerate black churches because they were religious services; but, white slave owners preferred to use Christianity as a method of social control in brainwashing slaves to be

¹⁴⁷ Large scale adoption of Christianity did not occur until close to the end of slavery and the beginning of emancipation period. Slaves were aware of master's hypocrisy, and contrary to the beliefs espoused on Sunday; slaves adopted symbols of Christianity but not the hypocritical practices. Albert J. Raboteau's Slave Religion: The "Invisible" Institution in the Antebellum South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) provides a detailed history of the black Baptist church from the clandestine slave meetings to established congregations formed during the antebellum period.

¹⁴⁸ According to Southern, the AME church 1) set up Sunday Schools to care for children and to educate ex-slaves, 2) sponsored benevolent and moral-reform societies, 3) organized literary and debating societies/library rooms, and 4) displayed and fostered musical talent. See Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 82.

¹⁴⁹ In the West African tradition, griots (called Jali among the Mande) are an amalgamation of historian, musician, entertainer, storyteller, and wordsmith. As bearers and repositories of the oral tradition, griots are usually called upon to praise particular individuals at important events such as naming ceremonies, religious holidays, weddings, and affairs of the state; furthermore, they serve wealthy patrons, and as messengers for kings, announcing aristocracy. Known for their highly developed display of verbal and vocal artistry, griots intone and sing extremely long histories, genealogies, epic poems, and proverbs with florid and glorified statements.

¹⁵⁰ Example of rhetorical phrases are "Can I get a witness," "Can I get an amen," or "Do you hear me talking to you."

submissive and promulgating their pro-slavery ideology. As slave resistance and revolts increased many southern black churches were disbanded.¹⁵¹

The Negro spiritual took on an extremely impassioned character during the nineteenth century antebellum period. On the eve of Emancipation spirituals were widely performed in black communities, with each community reshaping the songs according to their needs and tastes, thereby contributing multiple versions of individual spirituals. As the Abolitionist Movement gained momentum, spirituals were employed to alert slaves of impending escapes on the Underground Railroad. Songs like “Steal Away” and “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” alerted slaves that a “conductor” was on the way, while songs like “Follow the Drinkin’ Gourd” gave directions.

The Negro spiritual gained national and international acclaim after Emancipation. Up until 1867, the spiritual was preserved through the oral tradition. Allen, Ware, and Garrison’s publication of spirituals in Slave Songs of the United States (1867) was a turning point in the dissemination of the spiritual, because now its perpetuity was ensured for subsequent, post-slavery generations. The Fisk Jubilee Singers of Fisk University first popularized the performance of Negro spirituals. In 1866, a group of students, with the consent of their white music teacher, George L. White, began singing their own music from slavery – spirituals. The group of nine presented their first concert in Nashville in 1867, and made subsequent short trips performing spirituals. Originally called the Colored Christian Singers, the group changed their name to reflect their newly emancipated status. With its meaning taken from the Bible, the

¹⁵¹ Lots of black independent churches were dissolved primarily in response to the Denmark Vesey uprising in 1822, and the Nat Turner Insurrection in 1831. Both revolt leaders were preachers. See Mary Kemp Davis, Nat Turner Before the Bar of Judgment: Fictional Treatments of the Southhampton Slave Insurrection (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), and Edward A. Pearson, ed. Designs against Charleston: The Trial Record of the Denmark Vesey Slave Conspiracy of 1822 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

“Year of Jubilee” referred to the period every fifty years when mortgaged land was returned to its original owners, debts were erased, and servants or slaves were released. For blacks, like the Israelites, the year of jubilee represented the time when slavery would be over; furthermore, spirituals became synonymously known as jubilees or jubilee songs.¹⁵²

The Fisk Jubilee Singers performed refined versions of spirituals (jubilees) in four-part harmony with European vocal arrangements before white audiences in America and Europe. In 1871, the Fisk Jubilee Singers embarked on a national tour to raise money for their school’s building program, and by 1873, they began traveling internationally to such countries as Ireland, Scotland, Switzerland, and Germany.¹⁵³ The attention that the Fisk Jubilee Singers generated led to the establishment of other jubilee groups (i.e.: Hampton Jubilee Singers 1872), and the development of the concretized or arranged spiritual. Arranged in the Western literate tradition, the concretized spiritual proliferated well into the 20th century.¹⁵⁴

By mid-nineteenth century, Blacks were familiar with singing 3 types of religious songs: “the lined hymn taught to them in the eighteenth century; the camp meeting spiritual, learned during the nineteenth century; and their own spiritual, a new form forged from European and African tradition.”¹⁵⁵ Following on the heels of the 2nd Great Awakening, the Protestant City-

¹⁵² Jubilee songs have been used to designate rejoicing songs of freedom, special celebrations, religious narrative songs, a body of black religious folk songs, the style that the songs are performed in and the groups that sing these songs. Rick (1977), Raichelson (1975), and Tallmadge (1981) give more detailed information about how the term has been used.

¹⁵³ See Davis, *African American Music*, 127.

¹⁵⁴ Harry T. Burleigh, was the pioneering African-American who produced arrangements for spirituals that widened their appeal and extended their use to concert singers and the general musical public. Burleigh had a penchant for setting his arrangements in the manner of art song. Other prominent black composers of arranged spirituals were: Nathaniel Dett, J. Rosmand Johnson, Carl Diton and N.Clark Smith. Instrumental arrangements of spirituals were published by: Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (24 piano arrangements); Clarence Cameron (for violin and piano). African-American solo artists who featured the spiritual in their repertoire were Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, and Roland Hayes.

Revival Movement of the 1850s produced hymns that were more exciting and inspirational than that of earlier hymnody. Gospel songs, and early uses of the term, were first associated with this urban revivalism.¹⁵⁶ Songs used in Sunday School were now accompanying this urban revivalism, and were known as “gospel hymns” by the 1870s. Established in 1824 in Philadelphia, the American Sunday School Union sought to systematically and religiously educate Americans; and, music was used as an instructional tool.¹⁵⁷ Isaac Watts’ hymns from his Divine and Moral Songs (1720) were initially used, but many found the lyrics too somber and gloomy. So, a new breed of white composers began creating new hymnody that combined more positive, theological issues with lighthearted music – which had an enormous appeal among those with minimal education. Lowell Mason was one of the earliest composers to compile a collection of hymns for Sunday School (Juvenile Psalmist, 1829); but the leading pioneer was William B. Bradbury (1816-1868), who composed a number of popular Sunday School hymns with cheerful titles.¹⁵⁸

Held in major cities such as Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia, these Protestant City Revivals featured a preacher and their musical associate – both of whom were white. One of the earliest evangelistic duos of preacher and singer was Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) and singer/songwriter, Ira David Sankey (1840-1908). Sankey, who performed before and after Moody preached, would accompany himself on a small, portable reed organ as he led

¹⁵⁵ Pitts, Ole Ship of Zion, 82.

¹⁵⁶ The term, “gospel” refers to the first four books of the New Testament, which recount the life of Christ.

¹⁵⁷ The Sunday School phenomenon began in 1780 when Robert Raikes began classes for children in Gloucester, England. Soon, Sunday Schools were established in America, and they experienced amazing growth in the 19th century: 1824, less than 100,000; 1831, over 600,000; 1851, 3.25 million; 1875, over 6 million.

¹⁵⁸ Bradbury was known for such popular hymns as “Jesus Loves Me” (1862) and “He Leadeth Me” (1864). Other popular hymn composers were: Thomas Hastings, William Gustavus Fischer (“I Love to Tell the Story”, 1869), and Fannie Jane Crosby (“Jesus Keeps Me Near the Cross”, 1869 – “Blessed Assurance”, 1873).

congregational singing or sang solos.¹⁵⁹ Moody and Sankey gained popularity in the 1870s because Moody would preach sermons and Sankey would sing songs that were intended to “...implant the gospel in the hearts of people.”¹⁶⁰ Songs by white composers such as Isaac Watts, Lowell Mason, Fannie Crosby, and Philip P. Bliss were used. The lyrics employed simple, common language, a single religious theme (i.e.: salvation, Christ’s atonement, heaven), repetitive key words and phrases, and reflected a joyful mood. Musical elements consisted of basic harmonic progressions, (I, IV, V), simple, major-key melodies, repetitive rhythmic patterns (dotted quarter/ eighth), strophic forms, and the standard verse/chorus pattern. The novelty and vitality of the lyrics, coupled with its lilting music, were more personal and relevant to the needs of the people; also, nineteenth century Protestant revivalists were usually tolerant of religious ecstasy.

These hymns became known as “gospel songs,” in that one could not only preach the gospel, but one could *sing* the gospel. Moody and Sankey’s advertisement slogan proclaimed that “Mr. Moody will preach the gospel and Mr. Sankey will sing the gospel.”¹⁶¹ Gospel songs were used to communicate the evangelistic message of salvation and hope. The label, “gospel song”, gained further consumption after the tradition of Phillip P. Bliss’s Gospel Songs, A Choice Collection of Hymns and Tunes, New and Old, For Gospel Meetings, Sunday School

¹⁵⁹ Cynthia Steeves has noted that “Though Sankey accompanied himself on harmonium, the wax cylinder recordings have piano accompaniment. It is not known whether Sankey himself is playing or whether someone else is but he would certainly have had to approve of the style. It is simple, almost organ-like in its four-part accompaniment, with short introductions and no decoration. The top voice of the accompaniment doubles Sankey’s voice throughout.” See Cynthia Dawn Steeves, “The Origin of Gospel Piano: People, Events, and Circumstances that Contributed to the Development of the Style and Documentation of Graduate Piano Recitals” (DMA, University of Washington, 1987), 39.

¹⁶⁰ The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, s.v. “gospel music.”

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

(1874)¹⁶² and Bliss and Sankey's Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs (1875).¹⁶³ The white gospel song represented the culmination of a number of earlier musical influences: singing schools/societies,¹⁶⁴ hymnody, camp meeting revivals,¹⁶⁵ the Sunday School movement, YMCA movement, emerging urban revivals, and popular, secular music of the day.¹⁶⁶

Other evangelists who patterned themselves after the Moody/Sankey tradition were: Samuel Porter Jones, Benjamin Fay Mills, John Wilbur Chapman, Reuben Archer Torrey, and William Ashley Sunday. These preachers, along with various evangelistic singers, had a profound impact on the rise of gospel hymnody. Charles Alexander, an evangelistic song leader who worked with Torrey and later with Chapman, "...eliminated any barriers of formality in revival services: he did not, like Sankey, preface his solos with a prayer or assume a mood of pious solemnity. Alexander led the singing with wide sweeping motions of his hands and preferred piano to organ accompaniment."¹⁶⁷ While with Reuben Archer Torrey, Alexander was accompanied by Robert Harkness¹⁶⁸ on piano beginning in 1902.¹⁶⁹ Alexander and Harkness

¹⁶² This was probably the first use of the term "gospel music" in print.

¹⁶³ Other composers were Daniel Webster Whittle (1840-1901) also an evangelist; Daniel Brink Towner (1850-1919); George Coles Stebbins (1846-1945)

¹⁶⁴ Singing Schools surfaced in the 1720s (in the North) as a means of improving the quality of congregational singing. Over time, psalmody tunes had become slow, altered, and ornamented with shakes and flourishes. These schools emphasized singing the correct notes and rhythms at the exact tempo.

¹⁶⁵ Songs were rife with the stanza/chorus structure.

¹⁶⁶ For example, George Frederic Root's "The Little Octaroon" (1866) served as the music for the hymn "Ring the Bells of Heaven" (1866).

¹⁶⁷ The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, s.v. "gospel music."

¹⁶⁸ Robert Harkness (1880-1961) is credited as being the first person to play the piano in the White Gospel style. (See Steeves, "The Origin of Gospel Piano", 56). Harkness developed a correspondence course in 1939 entitled Home Study Correspondence in Evangelistic Hymn Playing (later compiled in a book in 1941 entitled Harkness Piano Method) that taught people the fundamentals of White Gospel accompaniment.

later traveled with evangelist Wilbur Chapman, and continued their partnership until 1916. Bill Sunday and song leader Homer Rodeheaver coupled together in 1909 and further aided in the development of gospel hymnody.¹⁷⁰ In particular, the duo published collections of gospel songs that were popular among African-Americans.¹⁷¹

A large number of those in attendance at these urban revivals were African-Americans. Many of the hymns that were disseminated at these meetings became favorites in the African-American church community. African-Americans were fond of such hymns as “His Eye Is on the Sparrow”, “Brighten the Corner Where You Are,” “Pass Me Not”, and “Old Rugged Cross.” These white hymns eventually influenced and fostered the development of African-American gospel hymnody around the turn of the 20th century. Historian Walter Pitts, in positing that the African-American’s acceptance of white gospel songs paralleled their acceptance of their new social position within American society, has stated that

During Reconstruction Afro-Baptists sang these new songs, called ‘Sankeys,’ composed in varied meters. Just as many freed men and women changed their old slave names and former gloomy styles of dress, and took up new social activities, so black Baptists adopted these white-inspired songs as a symbol of their new free status... The antebellum Negro spiritual, while still sung in the Afro-Baptist ritual, was pushed aside as a stigma reminding blacks of their

¹⁶⁹ Steeves’ dissertation (1987) examines the origin of the white gospel piano style as evidenced in the playing of Robert Harkness. Information on other prominent white pianists who accompanied revivalists Ira Sankey and songleader Charles Alexander is included. Steeves posits that the white gospel piano style was disseminated via worldwide revival meetings and that “since there was no precedent for the use of the piano in the church, the style in which the piano was played was an amalgam of elements. Perhaps at first it was related to organ playing but then became more pianistic, influenced by the popular musical styles of the day: ragtime, band marches, music halls, and Tin Pan Alley. It has been throughout its history a style in which improvisation is a primary feature.” (4) The white gospel piano style is “described as a florid improvisation, utilizing octaves instead of single notes, filling in chords whenever possible, and adding arpeggios, chromatic scales, and countermelodies. It was used to accompany any type of singing: choral, congregational, and solo, although its primary use was for congregational singing. The playing was meant to be heard above the singing, not just for its own sake, but in order to help the singers with pitch and rhythm and to add excitement to the singing.” (61) Although the white gospel piano style was improvised, Harkness adhered to strict harmonic rules so that parallel octaves and fifths were avoided, and never violated the original harmonic structure. Other important features included passing tones, use of different registers, countermelodies, octave-chord bass parts, and arpeggiated bass.

¹⁷⁰ Rodeheaver also followed the song leading pattern instituted by Alexander.

¹⁷¹ See Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 452-53.

recent condition of servitude. The new meter music, or Sankey, was an emblem of hope, 'a transitional form that bridged the slavery and Reconstruction periods and persisted in evidence until the beginnings of the twentieth century,'¹⁷²

African-American gospel hymns were not mere imitations of white gospel hymns, but rather, black composers recalled and juxtaposed their African and indigenous African- American roots (on the white gospel paradigm) as black gospel's predominant creative substance. African-American gospel music assumed a character of its own, nurtured by its African musical heritage, which informed its conceptual, aesthetic, and performative framework.

One of the earliest African-American composers who played a seminal role in the development of gospel songs was the Rev. Charles Albert Tindley (1851–1933). Tindley was one of the many blacks who attended those urban revivals in the 1870s and 1880s. While Tindley, like other Blacks, enjoyed white hymnody, it was not enough to assuage the demons of injustice that continued to plague post-reconstruction Blacks. As with the rural spiritual that communicated the slaves' struggle for emancipation, Blacks were in dire need of a "new" urban song that would express their desire for equality.

Disappointment came quickly, however, with broken Reconstruction promises and the passage of the repressive Black Codes, which prevented blacks from voting or owning property and forced the homeless into prison chain gang labor. A new music was called for. Charles Albert Tindley, an ex-slave Methodist preacher, realized the futility of singing white hymns as an expression of hope for black people since white America had no intention of extending the rights and privileges of citizenship to them. Combining the Sankey tunes with the newly emerging blues form – which in itself was a socioeconomic protest – Tindley directed his songs to the black masses by using 'the musical and verbal language of the poor, struggling, often illiterate black Christian at the turn of the century'. By the turn of the twentieth century, rural blacks began their migrations from the fields to urban centers first in the South, then in the North. Rural fieldhands moving to the city, faced with a new set of problems, did not want to hear white hymns while they were praising God. They wanted to stomp their feet and clap their hands as they had done during the hush harbor...¹⁷³

¹⁷² Pitts, Old Ship of Zion, 83.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

Rev. Charles A. Tindley, pastor of the East Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church¹⁷⁴ in Philadelphia, acquired popularity in the first two decades of the twentieth century for writing inspirational songs that correlated with his sermons. As a “modern spiritual composer,” Tindley paraphrased and extracted biblical passages, stories and doctrines, and reshaped them to reflect the sundry circumstances encountered by blacks. Shrouded in urban black vernacular, Tindley’s gospel songs were the first to “...combine the folk sentiments and tunes of spirituals with the conventionalized lyrics and melodies of white evangelism.”¹⁷⁵ Besides utilizing black vernacular, Tindley’s compositional style also differed from the white gospel style in terms of the predilection for pentatonic melodies, open space for interpolation of blue notes, and improvisation of the text, melody, harmony, and rhythm.¹⁷⁶ Some of Tindley’s songs that became (and still are today) all-time favorite among African-American churches were “Leave It There,” “We’ll Understand It Better By And By,” “Stand By Me,” “The Storm is Passing Over,” “I’ll Overcome Some Day”, and “Beams of Heaven.” Tindley’s style set the precedent for subsequent Black gospel composers such as Lucie Campbell, Thomas A. Dorsey and William Herbert Brewster.

The first national hymnal that contained gospel hymns composed by African-Americans was the Gospel Pearls, published in 1921. This hymnal, like Richard Allen’s 1801 hymnal, was important because it “...turned the mainstream black Baptist hymnody away from an almost exclusive reliance on the white hymns of the eighteenth century and gospel songs of the

¹⁷⁴ Formerly called the Bainbridge Street Methodist Episcopal Church, East Calvary was later renamed Tindley Temple in 1924 when the newly built sanctuary was dedicated.

¹⁷⁵ See Anthony Heilbut, Introductory notes to “Black Urban Hymnody Gospel” for *Brighten the Corner Where You Are: Black and White Urban Hymnody*, New World Records NW224, 1978.

¹⁷⁶ For a complete discussion of Tindley’s style, and other points of convergence and difference, see Boyer (1992a) which carefully illustrates the similarities and differences between Tindley’s gospel song and white gospel hymnody.

nineteenth and incorporated more of the music of the black tradition.”¹⁷⁷ In 1924, the Baptist Standard Hymnal was compiled, and it, along with the Gospel Pearls, became the standard hymnal for legions of black churches for many decades.¹⁷⁸

Thomas A. Dorsey, heralded as the “Father of Gospel Music,” expanded on Tindley’s gospel prototype, and eventually developed it into a distinct style that divorced it from the spiritual and hymn traditions. Dorsey became acquainted with gospel hymnody through various evangelistic revivals he attended as a young man. Although Dorsey was raised in a religious home (his father was a Baptist minister), he served as a pianist for several blues artists (Ma Rainey, Tampa Red) during his young adult years. After composing blues songs for a number of years, Dorsey was inspired to compose gospel songs after hearing Rev. A. W. Nix¹⁷⁹ sing “I Do, Don’t You” at the National Baptist Convention in 1921. “At his performances at National Baptist Convention meetings, Nix’s incorporation of microtonally flattened notes and other trademarks of the bluesmen into his music vitally influenced a generation of black gospel musicians.”¹⁸⁰ Dorsey became totally committed to only composing gospel music after he experienced a terrible illness at the age of twenty-six. Dorsey is credited with coining the term “gospel” and he did a lot to promote it around the country. Many preachers and churchgoers alike objected to Dorsey’s gospel songs because they believed that one could only preach the “gospel,” not sing it. His most celebrated gospel composition was “Precious Lord,” birthed during one of Dorsey’s most dreadful and agonizing points in life – the death of his wife and

¹⁷⁷ Paul Harvey, Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 132.

¹⁷⁸ Both hymnals were compiled by Arthur Melvin Townsend, a physician and hymnologist from Nashville, TN.

¹⁷⁹ A. W. per Southern 1997, and W.M. per Harvey 1997.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Harvey, Redeeming the South, 132.

infant child. Other Dorsey compositions that became immensely popular and loved in most African-American churches include: “There Will Be Peace in the Valley”, “If You See My Savior,” “Little Wooden Church on a Hill,” “Sweet Bye and Bye” and “If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again.”

Dorsey formed the first gospel choir in Chicago at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1931. With this choir, Dorsey was able to experiment with and showcase his songs. By 1932, Dorsey established his own music- publishing house that supported African-American gospel composers in the distribution of their music. As Dorsey began to promulgate his songs nationally, Sallie Martin soon joined him as his business manager and song demonstrator. She was also co-founder with Dorsey in 1932 of the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses.

Dorsey’s gospel songs were appealing to many because they were colored with the blues. Yet he encountered opposition from many ministers because they claimed that his songs had a “jazzy” beat that was too “worldly.” Even though he was accused of bringing the “devil’s music” into the church, his songs were full of joy and hope. After Dorsey’s songs were introduced and endorsed at the National Baptist Convention in the 1930s, the national body gained interest in his songs, and requests for them dramatically increased. Historian Paul Harvey further propounds that

Thomas Dorsey’s performance of his tunes at meetings of the National Baptist Convention in the 1930s were so affecting that gospel music soon came to be synonymous with urban black religious culture. Gospel grew into a widely appreciated (and, very early on, highly commercialized) form of music that profoundly influenced the later course of twentieth-century American popular song.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Since Thomas Dorsey first stretched the boundaries to create gospel music, choirs, quartets, groups, and powerful vocalists have been singing this same music, albeit in different styles and places.

Gospel music was performed in many different ways in its nascent years. The earliest gospel groups were the male quartets who were extremely popular for their acapella style. When Dorsey's gospel songs began to gain popularity in the 1930s, male jubilee quartets began replacing the spiritual by incorporating gospel songs into their repertoire.¹⁸² Some of the earliest professional male gospel quartets were the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet, Soul Stirrers,¹⁸³ Norfolk Jubilee Quartet, Dixie Hummingbirds¹⁸⁴, Fairfield Four,¹⁸⁵ Kings of Harmony,¹⁸⁶ Blue Jay Singers,¹⁸⁷ Swan Silvertones,¹⁸⁸ Five Blind Boys of Mississippi, and the Sensational Nightingales.¹⁸⁹ Their appeal among black and white audience alike centered around their rhythmical performances with

¹⁸² Jackson states that "Traditionally, spiritual arrangements sung by jubilee quartets developed from a combination of three musical sources: harmonized European-influenced ensemble singing of jubilee choirs, barbershop quartet singing style, and call-and-response forms of black folk spirituals and work songs." Joyce Marie Jackson, "The Performing Black Sacred Quartet", 57.

¹⁸³ The Soul Stirrers were one of the most popular quartets led by the great Rebert H. Harris, who developed the vocal ad lib by employing repetitive sounds, rather than words. His protégée, Sam Cooke (who he started, training at 10 years old), joined the group later and eventually crossed over to secular music where he popularized Harris' techniques. Cooke was the first gospel notable to successfully crossover to secular music, and he became quite an icon of American popular music.

¹⁸⁴ Organized in Greenville, SC in 1928, James Davis was founder and manager

¹⁸⁵ Group was organized out of the Fairfield B.C. in Nashville, TN. Even today, they are still very popular, and have maintained their vocal prowess.

¹⁸⁶ Formed in late 1930s from Sunday School students in Starlight B. C. in Bessemer, AL. Original name was BYPU Specials. From Heilbut, record notes, 1978.

¹⁸⁷ Their first recording in 1932 included a Dorsey composition – the first to be recorded

¹⁸⁸ Claude Jeter, who was known for his powerful falsetto singing which became emulated throughout the music industry, led this group.

¹⁸⁹ Their leader, Rev. Julius Cheeks was an innovator in the performance practices and mannerisms that quartets were known for – "working the audience". His spirited performances included him leaving the stage and walking the aisles.

finger snapping and thigh patting, resonant and sonorous harmony, polished and virtuosic vocal stylings, and onomatopoeic sound effects; and, they sang acapella or were accompanied by guitar. Male gospel quartets were extremely popular from the 1920s to the 1940s, and in fact, they were influential on the development of popular music and American popular culture.

The first appearance of a female gospel group occurred in 1927 when Thomas Dorsey formed a female trio to sing his songs while he accompanied them on the piano. By the late 1930s, Dorsey's female group format was being duplicated by others throughout the country. Female groups readily emerged during the "Golden Age" of gospel, a period from 1945 to 1960 when a number of gospel groups were active on the "gospel highway."¹⁹⁰ Prominent female groups during this time were: Clara Ward & the Ward Singers, The Davis Sisters, Dorothy Love Coates & the Gospel Harmonettes, and the Angelic Gospel Singers. Concurrently, mixed groups (comprised of males and females) also appeared with the piano as their primary accompanying instrument. The first gospel mixed group was the Roberta Martin Singers, followed by the Sallie Martin Singers. The Caravans, led by Albertina Walker, was known for their all-star line-up of luminaries who eventually branched off to launch their own solo careers: Dorothy Norwood, James Cleveland, Cassietta George, Bessie Griffin, Inez Andrews, Shirley Caesar and Delores Washington.

The individual soloists were instrumental in promulgating gospel music during its formative years. Perhaps the best-loved and known female soloist was Mahalia Jackson. After a brief stint with a gospel male group (Johnson Gospel Singers), she became a featured soloist at the National Baptist Convention of America who demonstrated Dorsey's gospel songs. Other female soloists were Rosetta Tharpe, Willie Mae Ford Smith, Bessie Griffin, and Mary Johnson

¹⁹⁰ Anthony Heilbut coined this term. See Anthony Heilbut, Introductory notes to "Black Urban Hymnody Gospel" for *Brighten the Corner Where You Are: Black and White Urban Hymnody*, New World Records NW224, 1978.

Davis. Females, with their strong and soulful voices, usually accompanied by the piano, predominated as soloists in the 1940s. It was not until the 1950s that male soloists began to achieve prominence (i.e.: Brother Joe May, Cleophus Robinson, and Prof. Alex Bradford).

In the mid to late 1940s and early 1950s, African-American gospel music reached what historian Anthony Heilbut has termed, its “Golden Age.”¹⁹¹ During this time, there was a plethora of soloists, quartets, and small groups (male, female, or mixed) who began to record, receive radio play, and travel throughout the country performing at revivals,¹⁹² programs and anniversaries in store-front and large churches, tabernacles, concert halls, and auditoriums.¹⁹³ By the early 1940s, the piano (outside of the voice) was recognized as the staple instrument in gospel music, and its position became further solidified throughout the remainder of the “Golden Age.”

Although Dorsey organized the first gospel choir in 1931, it was not until the 1950s that gospel choirs became widely accepted in most churches, usually with piano and organ accompaniment. Choirs began to replace the male quartets in terms of overall popularity. Comprised mainly of women and highlighting their ranges, the gospel choral style emphasized 3-part harmony – soprano, alto, and tenor. One of the major innovators in the mid 1950s who helped to shape the gospel choral style was Mattie Moss Clark, who became the national music director for the Church of God in Christ. James Cleveland was another choir innovator who established the Gospel Music Workshop of America, a convention that provided a network for gospel singers and

¹⁹¹ See Anthony Heilbut, The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times, 4th ed., (New York: Limelight, 1985).

¹⁹² Pittsburgh gospel pianist Ruby Gould recalls that (in reference to Mary Johnson Davis), “Before I went to California with her, she would sing around in different places, you know, revivals...Back in those days they would have a minister to come, and then they’d have a gospel singer.” Ruby Gould, Personal Interview with Author.

¹⁹³ Most of the gospel extravaganzas were hosted by local gospel promoters: Joe Bostic (New York), Lonnie Williams (New Jersey), and Erskine Fausch (New Orleans).

musicians. Edwin Hawkins' 1969 recording of "O Happy Day" inaugurated a pivotal juncture in gospel music. With its bouncy beat, polished arrangement, expanded use of harmony, and soulful accentuation, "O Happy Day" sold over a million copies and made Edwin Hawkins a "household" name. Not only did "O Happy Day" seal contemporary gospel music's fate, but it popularized gospel choirs, and brought a great influx of new fans.

2.1.2 History of the African-American Church in the First-Half of the Twentieth Century - Denominational Differences

The history of the African-American church has been dealt with sufficiently by several scholars, and will not be pursued here.¹⁹⁴ Some of the essential elements of that history must be mentioned, however, in order to provide a contextual and historical framework for the consideration of the religious issues that are intrinsically related to the development of the gospel piano style. The African-American Church has been the bedrock for gospel music. Although not initially accepted among the staid denominations, it was nurtured in the African-American folk churches. Among the earliest and most important proponents of gospel music, however, were the Holiness and Pentecostal churches that developed in the 1880s in the Southern states.

The Black church is not a post-Civil War, post-Emancipation phenomenon, but as noted earlier, its roots extend back to the religious practices of slaves from the 17th and 18th centuries.

¹⁹⁴ See Woodson, The History of the Negro Church (1921); Frazier, The Negro Church in America (1963); John Blassingame, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Lawrence Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness (1977); Albert Raboteau, Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution (1978); Mechal Sobel, Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith (1979); Arthur E. Paris, Black Pentecostalism: Southern Religion in an Urban World (University of Massachusetts Press, 1982); Sterling Stuckey, Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

After the Civil War, more independent black congregations began reappearing in the South. Beginning in the 1880s, new denominations and denominational bodies were formed: 1880, National Baptist Convention of America; 1889, Church of the Living God; 1895, Church of God In Christ; 1896, Church of Christ (Holiness), USA. Founded during the height of Black Codes¹⁹⁵, Jim Crow, and Ku Klux Klan activities (1880-1910), these black denominations emerged as religious, as well as social institutions, ministering to a discriminated and disenfranchised people. Black Pentecostal and Holiness denominations were the visible counterparts of the antebellum “invisible church.” With members in pursuit of an immediate and personal experience with the Holy Spirit, these Pentecostal churches mirrored the past while simultaneously forecasting the future. Their intense and emotional worship experiences placed heavy emphasis on being filled with the Spirit of God, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), Spirit singing, holy dancing, handclapping, testifying, and shouting.¹⁹⁶ The free participation by all of the members gave these responsive and revivalistic services their distinct character – unlike the sedate forms of the Baptist and Methodist denominations. According to Don Cusic,

...black holiness churches feature a great amount of singing and dancing in their services, with half of the service usually comprised of music. These churches were the first to use musical instruments that churches have long considered ‘of the devil.’¹⁹⁷

Although they were viewed as profane among certain denominations, holiness churches welcomed every type of conceivable contrivance and available musical instrument with

¹⁹⁵ According to Davis, Black Codes were created laws that governed the interaction between blacks and whites in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Nathan Davis, Writings in Jazz, 4th ed. (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing, 1990), 42-43.

¹⁹⁶ The importance and significance of African survivals within Black religion in the New World has been the subject of much discussion and debate among anthropologists, sociologists, and historians alike. Even with the advent of Black Pentecostalism, definitive signs of African retentions surface: spirit possession, call and response (in preaching, testifying, singing, and shouting), glossolalia, holy/sacred dancing. See Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, 231.

¹⁹⁷ Don Cusic, Sound of Light (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1990), 87.

impartiality and amiability. These rhythmically infectious services included instruments such as piano, organ, guitar, drums, triangle, tambourine, trumpet, trombone, saxophone, wash- tub, and washboard, which “were probably first to join the spirited singing, supplementing and thickening the pulsing syncopations of handclaps, foot taps, and cried interjections.”¹⁹⁸

This attitude of musical acceptance ranks as one of the holiness movement’s most important legacies to Black sacred song. Forged in the fires of schism, it fostered a musical tradition that quickly set holiness and Pentecostal congregations apart from the broader community of saints. Though churchgoers in established denominations largely rejected the nascent sanctified sound, decrying it as heretical surrender to Satan’s wiles, the new churches held fast to their musical beliefs, citing Biblical precedent while claiming the world’s gifts as their own.¹⁹⁹

Furthermore, folklorist/anthropologist Glenn Douglass Hinson states that

Little evidence exists from the antebellum and Reconstruction years to indicate that saints considered the ability to play musical instruments a divine gift. For the most part, musicianship seems to have been judged either a worldly accomplishment or – as indicated by the myriad African American narratives of crossroads musical mastery – an endowment from Satan.²⁰⁰

Churches outside of the holiness fold tended to “draw the line” by only allowing keyboard instruments, “... thus maintaining a performative distance between them and their sanctified counterparts.”²⁰¹ One of the most well known and influential Pentecostal denominations was the Church of God in Christ, founded in 1895 by Reverend Charles Harrison Mason in Memphis, Tennessee; and, they were one of the earliest proponents of gospel music.

¹⁹⁸ Glenn Hinson, Fire in My Bones: Transcendence and the Holy Spirit in African American Gospel (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 97.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 101.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 106. “An endowment from Satan” is a reference to folklore that contends that musicians received their ability from contracting with the devil at the crossroads. They would give the devil their soul, and in return, he would give them the ability to play any tune.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 132.

Following Reconstruction, former slaves began migrating from rural areas to urban southern cities. Those blacks that had labored on the agrarian southern plantation, gradually became urbanized and industrialized, acquiring far different jobs, expectations, and lifestyles than what they had previously known. Realizing that they were still at the bottom rungs of the social and economic ladder, rural and Southern blacks began (by 1900) flocking to the cities of the industrialized North and Mid West in search of freedom from racial oppression and poverty; also, in the early part of the twentieth century, the United States' halt on European and Asian immigration triggered northern industrial cities to seek the labor of southern Blacks. As many as a half million blacks migrated from the South to the North from 1910 to 1920. With the demand for unskilled workers in the expanding Northern industries mainly created by World War I, this deluge of northern migration was also precipitated by 1) the continued declining southern agriculture industry,²⁰² 2) the infestation of the boll weevil, 3) floods, 4) social inequities, and 5) blacks' desire for work, educational opportunities, and a better life.²⁰³ After World War I, black migration to Northern urban areas continued at a rate greater than that of the post-emancipation movement to Southern cities. As a result, the black population in Northern urban cities almost tripled by 1930, going well over a million people; and, this mass exodus continued well into the 1940s, even after World War II.

As blacks migrated north to metropolitan areas, they brought with them their cultural, musical, and religious convictions and practices. The proliferation of these southern migrants descended on metropolitan centers such as New York (Harlem), Chicago (Southside), Philadelphia, Detroit, and Baltimore, and developed large communities. Faced with a new host

²⁰² The use of synthetic fibers was impacting cotton production, which in turn, impacted sharecropping.

²⁰³ Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 47. "Until the First World War about nine-tenths of the Negroes were still in the South and about four-fifths of those in the South lived in rural areas."

of problems (i.e.: lack of money, delinquency, drugs, prostitution, displaced and broken families, truant youngsters), these migrants relied on their faith to help them endure these urban vicissitudes. Their painful transition was further exaggerated and exasperated by the cold reception received from northern Black churches. The more staid, middle to upper-class Black denominations such as Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Congregational, Methodist, and some Baptist, did not welcome the new Southern migrants with open arms into their churches. For one, these middle to upper class northern Blacks were wealthier and in a different socio-economic group than their migrant brothers and sisters,²⁰⁴ and they were appalled and embarrassed by the southern black's ecstatic and emotional worship style – their behavior was antiquated and too earthy. Ironically, southern black migrants found northern black churches too impersonal, sober, “dead”, and lifeless – there was no “spirit.” Since northern black churches had no appeal, migrants sought to establish their own churches that mirrored the southern style of worship; and, they were mainly attractive to lower-class blacks.

Intent on constructing their houses of worship, Arthur E. Paris asserts that

These new urban dwellers were forced to reconstitute their religious traditions under the harsh socioeconomic conditions of the Depression. Without funds for new edifices, they had to take what they could get in the way of facilities,

²⁰⁴ The presence of southern migrants in the North produced a new social stratification (three distinct socioeconomic class systems) that existed among Blacks. See St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), Part III. Horace Boyer's 1973 dissertation shows that African American churches can be grouped into 4 categories: intellectual, conservative, emotional, and fundamental. These categories emanate from the education and economics of the membership, the content and delivery of the sermon, and the music (which complements these previous two factors). Furthermore, E. Franklin Frazier states “In a study of stratification in Negro churches in Chicago, it was found that church-going was not important for many persons of upper-class status and that those who attended church attended churches with services that were ritualistic and deliberative, the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational. The upper middle class was found to be affiliated with the same churches as the upper class with the important difference, however, that the upper middle class was more faithful in church attendance. Some members of the upper middle class also attended the Methodist and Baptist churches for social reasons. On the other hand, the members of the lower middle class were affiliated with churches which were described as semi-demonstrative, as there was emotional participation on the part of the members. This was indicative of their recent social ascension from the lower class for whom demonstrative participation in the church services is regarded as indispensable. In fact, some of the members of the lower middle class preferred to attend certain Methodist and Baptist churches for this very reason.” See Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 52.

acquiring buildings from fleeing Whites, or converting commercial space. Only those denominations with well-developed bureaucracies and resources could acquire land and edifices easily. These better-off churches were usually already established in the cities and served a middle and/or upper-class congregation, for example, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians.²⁰⁵

He further contends that

As a large and impoverished population confined mainly to ghettos, these Black migrants placed enormous pressures upon available institutional resources; and their choices in the market for church edifices were and continue to be severely limited. These pressures, coupled with their history, led to the storefront phenomenon among urban Black (and Latin) populations.²⁰⁶

Storefront churches multiplied particularly in and around metropolitan areas like Philadelphia, Detroit, and Chicago. While a number of these storefront churches were Baptist, the majority were autonomous sanctified and Pentecostal churches in which Black southern migrants, especially from the rural South, attempted to resurrect their free and demonstrative religious practices. In these storefront churches, members would

Worship in a manner to which [they] were accustomed...The preacher leads the singing of the Spirituals and other hymns with which the Negroes with a folk background are acquainted. The singing is accompanied by 'shouting' or holy dancing which permits the maximum of free religious expressions on the part of the participants.²⁰⁷

The predominant song form of the Pentecostal church was the shout, employing folk aesthetics of the black spiritual. Many of the shout's performance practices originated from characteristics of the "invisible church" such as short repetitive phrases, call and response, fast tempos, percussive melodies, physical body motion, and polyrhythmic accompaniment.

²⁰⁵ Paris, Black Pentecostalism, 26-27.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 27.

²⁰⁷ Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 54.

Table 2.2 SHOUT SONG

Call (Leader):	Have you tried Jesus
Response:	He's alright
Call(Leader):	Have you tried Jesus
Response:	He's alright

In their churches, one could still hear the musical vestiges and traditions of the rural South, while concomitantly adopting the gospel music of the urban north. The expressive worship services were compatible with gospel's musical style and conducive to its subsistence. Southern migrants could readily identify with gospel's message and music. The gospel songs supported new migrants spiritually, emotionally, musically, and psychologically during and after the Depression of the 1930s, expressing their frustrations, hopes, and dreams.

2.1.3 Cultural Critique of Religious Life

Gospel music's incorporation in mainstream churches did not come to fruition until the 1930s, and even that was minimal.²⁰⁸ The middle to upper class staid black churches stood as virtual mirrors of their white counterparts, producing objective, highfalutin, quiet, and expressionless music. It was customary to have anthems, arias, and hymns performed in the service, which was the direct antithesis of sanctified churches. From the early 1900s up until the 1930s, radio historian Norman Spaulding states that

Chicago's Black churches were a training ground and concert hall for religious singers. The churches were constantly holding musical programs and vying with each other in choir contests. Middleclass churches and lower-class churches featured quite different musical styles. The middle-class churches, modeling

²⁰⁸ For insight into the parochial attitudes toward gospel music in the 1940s, consult Katherine Lucille Small's 1949 Master's Thesis on "Influence of Gospel Songs on the Negro Church." John Work's 1949 article on "Changing Patterns in Negro Folk Songs" also reveals attitudes of the people about the displacement of the spiritual by hymns, arranged spirituals, and gospel music (known as "Dorseys").

themselves after white Protestant churches, developed a quieter style of singing hymns. From the turn of the century, there was a continuing clamor by Black pastors against the growing world of sin and entertainment in Chicago's Black community.²⁰⁹

In these affluent churches, the pipe organ was preferred to gospel-infused Hammond organ. Principal instruments had been piano and pipe organ in affluent churches. Storefronts maintained the piano and incorporated the electric Hammond organ. In Chicago, Rev. Clarence H. Cobb's First Church of Deliverance was the first church to incorporate the Hammond organ in its services in 1939. "It was not until the forties and the fifties that wide use of was made of drums, bass, guitar and organ. The sanctified church was always an exception to the rule and was an innovator in using the most diversified kinds of instruments."²¹⁰

Despite the infusion of Western European Art music in Black churches, the "original," earthy gospel sound survived and was maintained in the worship experiences of storefront churches. For example, while a written program, structured selections, European-stylized singing, and cerebral preaching governed Baptist services, the "move of the Holy Ghost," extemporaneous singing, African-derived singing, and interactive preaching (call and response with the congregation) governed holiness churches. When Dorsey was thrown out of Baptist and Methodist churches, sanctified churches accepted him and his music. In addition to the piano and organ that were usually found in Baptist church, the holiness churches included a host of the same instruments that were used in performances of blues, jazz, and other popular styles. Sanctified services, undoubtedly, had an intrinsically "worldly" quality to them. Holy dancing, shouting, and improvisational singing of the holiness church paralleled the dancing, loud talking,

²⁰⁹ Norman W. Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago, 1929-1963" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1981), 13.

²¹⁰ Raichelson, "Black Religious Folksong", 398-99.

and improvisational singing found in clubs. Ironically, holiness parishioners prided themselves on “living above sin” and not being “worldly” like the average Baptist and Methodist churchgoers. Members of Pentecostal denominations were taught to live in a state of holiness – being free from sin and its allure - in their dress, mannerisms, and social life. The women marked themselves by dressing “...in a ‘holy’ manner which mean[t] wearing plain black or white dresses and stockings, preferably of cotton, and if men [wore] neckties they [had to] be plain white or black.”²¹¹ Unlike the Baptist and Methodist members, Holiness parishioners refused to participate in “worldly pleasures” regarded as sinful and “carnal-minded.” They did not indulge in drinking alcoholic beverages, curse, swear, play cards, gamble, commit adultery, or dance, and they avoided the use of tobacco. Furthermore, in order for one to become a member, the convert had to go through a period of testing and tarrying in which they would manifest being filled with the Holy Spirit by speaking in tongues.²¹²

2.1.4 Gospel’s Musical Characteristics

Gospel music is a testament of African-Americans’ faith through the trials over come and the triumphs experienced. It has been the religious panacea for 20th century, urban Blacks, speaking hope in the midst of bleak circumstances. Ensnared in God’s redemption of mankind and the immediate and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, gospel songs are expressions of joy, religious conviction, and personal experiences. The language of gospel echoes the straightforward, urban vernacular of African-Americans, hence a testimony through song in

²¹¹ Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 57.

²¹² Ibid.

everyday terms. Noted as being a genre, as well as a style of singing, gospel music emphasizes the musical process – not what is sung, but how it is sung.²¹³ Gospel music is a dynamic musical genre. Throughout its brief 100-year history, gospel music has repeatedly reinforced African and African-American musical sensibilities, and even though gospel has developed through different styles and periods, these conceptual approaches have remained constant. When compared with other African-American musical genres, gospel is one of the only musical styles to contain a plethora of Africanisms and conceptual approaches.²¹⁴

The standard gospel hymn employs the basic Verse/Chorus structure, with each section varying in range from 8 to 16 measures. Many gospel songs are written in the **Call and Response** structure, which was maintained from the spiritual tradition; and, if the call and response structure is not part of the written score (mainly in the chorus), it may be a part of the performative context. Duple (4/4), triple (3/4), and compound (9/8) meters are used which stress dotted rhythms (dotted quarter – eighth note; dotted eighth – sixteenth note). **Rhythmic Contrast** is realized in performance, rather than on the printed score, through the emphasis on dynamic rhythms, additive rhythms, anticipated and delayed rhythms, cross rhythms of voices

²¹³ Olly Wilson explains the conceptual framework for producing African American music. He states that “The essence of their Africaness is not a static body of something which can be depleted, but rather a conceptual approach, the manifestations which are infinite. The common core of this Africaness consists of the way of doing something, not simply something that is done.” See Olly Wilson, “The Significance of the Relationship between Afro-American Music and West African Music,” Black Perspective in Music 2(1974): 20. The approach of “how” something is done is paramount in the musical analysis of Chapter 4.

²¹⁴ Olly Wilson's conceptual approaches (1974, 1984, 1992) provide a framework for interpreting African-American musical styles in relationship to African musical traditions. Pearl Williams-Jones (1979) was the first to connect gospel music with its African aesthetic and cultural traditions, by identifying fifteen africanisms that have been retained in gospel music: antiphonal response, endless variation, percussive-style playing techniques, emphasis on dynamic rhythms, repetition, improvisation, communal participation, immediacy of communication, oral transmission of the idiom, and functionalism of the music.

wondering you know, what are yall' enjoying. But that's one of the things I realized it was a black thing, and that it was just a part of us. I understand – you know! Uh, it's for emphasis, I believe, for us. But they'll say, 'Well you've said that, you know, ten times, let's go on with the message.' And so, they're listening for one thing, and we listen for something else.²¹⁶

While individual parts are apparent, this **Stratification of the Musical Texture** functions to create a composite – each part makes the whole. Adding instrumentation (with each instrument doing something different) provides another strata of musical material that further creates a **High Density of Musical Events**, where there is a constant “filling up” of the musical space.

Written in 4-part hymn style or simple, triadic chord progressions, functional harmony predominates gospel music. Basic harmonic progressions such as I – IV – V – I are commonplace, and are varied in performance. **Variable Scale Degrees** are rife in gospel music performance. Within gospel music, pitch is realized as an element of contrast rather than a valued absolute. While gospel songs are composed with a penchant for lowered thirds, fifths, and sevenths, improvisation serves as the basis for interpreting the skeletal melodies of the printed gospel score.

(Ex: ) Vocalists are expected to improvise the text melodically

with embellishments, ornamentations, melismatic passages, note bending, and blue notes. Textual improvisation/interpolations of declamatory words are used simultaneously. Not only is the vocalist displaying their own vocal creativity and technical prowess, but is also “painting the picture” (depicting the imagery) and “driving home” the text.” Personal expression and interpretation are always within an idiomatic context.

The earthiness of the gospel vocal style derives from the African-American folk, vocal tradition of field cries, field hollers, worksongs, spirituals, and early sacred singing. The

²¹⁶ See Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

Heterogeneous Sound Ideal²¹⁷ reflected in gospel music with a wide range of vocal nuances. In gospel music, it is characteristic for soloists to employ such vocal techniques as shouts, screams, ululations, groans, growls, glissando, hums, falsetto, different types of vibrato, and strained guttural tones all within the same piece or even, the same line or phrase. Consonants are short and distinct while vowels are long and intense. Changing the vocal color is an important aesthetic practice and is expected in gospel performance. It should not be perceived as gaudy or pretentious, but as meaningful and creative cultural communication. Many singers incorporate a uniformity of vocal colors, vowel sounds, vocal placement, head and chest tones, and sudden dynamics. Extremely high vocal ranges are mixed and contrasted with low chest ranges. The vocal timbre may range from lyrical to raspy, and the contrast may be employed suddenly. The insertion of timbral variation within gospel music provides a “soul focal point” for listeners and performers alike, heightens the emotional drama of the music, and transmits the intensity, spirit, and meaning of the text. As with the African-American style of preaching, rap, and the blues, a **Continuum Between Speech and Song** also exists in gospel music. There may be periods throughout the performance when the gospel singer begins to intone the text on one note (i.e.: the song sermon), or switch to a spoken, vocal exhortation in order to further convey the message of the song to the congregation. Moaning (and singing of onomatopoeic syllables and vocables) also functions to communicate spiritual and cultural sentiment. Other vocal practices found in gospel include employing extra-long held notes and switch-lead tactics between singers.

²¹⁷ Wilson’s “Heterogeneous Sound Ideal” is defined as the predilection to create a musical texture where timbres are dissimilar. This applies to instrumental music, as well as vocal music. Olly Wilson, “Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music” in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern*, eds. Josephine Wright and Samuel A. Floyd Jr., 327-39 (Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1992)

Music with multiple strata tends to engender and foster kinetic motion; furthermore, the spiritual component of gospel music constitutes that there is some type of response to message of “good news” in the music. **Physical Body Motion** is an integral component of the gospel music-making process, which mirrors the historical, black cultural customs and behaviors. Movement, within the gospel music experience, is viewed as creating sound and “moving” the congregation, whether it is through handclapping,²¹⁸ hand-lifting, hand-waving, foot-patting, rocking, swaying, jumping/leaping, kneeling, holy dancing, or facial expressions (closing of eyes, crying, or smiling). Choreographed and coordinated movements of choirs and groups encourage the congregation to participate and experience the multiple dimensions of the music. In speaking the of the importance of movement in gospel music, Thomas Dorsey stated “I like the rock. You know how they rock and shout in church. I like it. It’s a thing people look for now. Don’t let your singing group die, don’t let the movement go out of the music. Black music calls for movement! It calls for feeling. Don’t let it get away.”²¹⁹ Movement in the gospel experience is very infectious and hortatory. This “musical drama” consumes all in attendance and compels them in **Communal Participation** to merge together as one and create a “spiritual bond.”

Approaching the Music-Making Event in a Percussive Manner, whether vocal or instrumental, is a key aspect of gospel performance. Early gospel instrumentation (1920- 1950) consisted of piano and organ. Other peripheral instruments included tambourine, trumpet, trombone, saxophone, wash tub, washboard, and triangle. By the 1950s, the lead guitar, bass guitar, and drum set were being added. Electronic instruments, such as synthesizers were not added until

²¹⁸ In a duple meter, clapping occurs on beats 2 and 4, whereas in a triple meter, clapping occurs on beats 2 and 3. Clapping is preferred to snapping, the latter which is more closely associated with secular dancing.

²¹⁹ Thomas A. Dorsey, “Gospel Music,” in Reflections on Afro-American Music, ed. Dominique-Rene de Lerma (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1973), 190-91.

the 1970s. Clearly, much more can be said about the development of gospel music and its musical characteristics (to which we will return in Chapter 5), but the rest of this chapter will direct attention toward the history of gospel music as it directly involves the piano.

2.2 JUSTIFICATION OF PIANO AS AN APPROPRIATE FOCAL POINT FOR STUDY

The piano is an orchestra in itself, performing many functions. A rich and versatile instrument, the piano offers a range of possibilities to performer and composer alike: single notes, chords, clusters, glissandi, percussion, etc.

2.2.1 Brief History of Piano in America

The Piano was invented in 1709 in Germany. Like its predecessors, the clavichord and harpsichord, it too was recognized as a domestic instrument of the bourgeoisie. Throughout the eighteenth century, the piano grew in power, influence, and popularity among various classes and countries. No longer the exclusive property of kings, noblemen, and the aristocracy, the piano began to take rank in the homes of the rising middle class before the end of the eighteenth century.

The piano surfaced in America in the early eighteenth century and was popular among the upper class.²²⁰ By 1775, Johns Behrent, a German immigrant living in Philadelphia, made the first piano in America.²²¹ American piano making flourished into the nineteenth century, and eventually became the leader. Iron was an indispensable raw material in early 19th century America. Primarily used for railroad tracks, iron was eventually incorporated into the design of the piano. Alpheus Babcock of Boston, MA made the first square piano with a full iron frame in 1825. The “Father of American pianoforte making,” Chickering, made the first grand piano with a full iron frame in 1840. After immigrating to America from Germany, Steinweg established his own piano company, Steinway, in 1853, and his pianos became the predominant choice of pianists worldwide. American piano manufacturing effloresced after the Civil War - the five largest piano manufacturers in the world were all American.²²² Leading in sales and construction, more than half of the world’s pianos were made in America by 1900.²²³

In America, the prodigious rise in piano sales was motivated by a number of factors. American concert tours of eminent pianists in the late nineteenth century were used to promote piano sales, and to gain prestige for piano companies. Many virtuosi were switching to American pianos by 1867. Anton Rubinstein, Paderewski, and Liszt’s student Rosenthal (1898) promoted Steinway; Bauer promoted Knabe, and Carreno promoted Chickering.²²⁴ American

²²⁰ Founding father Thomas Jefferson, along with his wife, maintained musical activities through out his life. In 1771 he wrote to a London factory canceling a previous order for a clavichord and requesting a piano for his wife.

²²¹ Helen Rice Hollis, The Piano: A Pictorial Account of its Ancestry and Development. (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1984), 91.

²²² All three great piano manufacturers founded in 1853 have now passed out of family hands. Bechstein was taken over by the American Baldwin Company; Bluthner was nationalized by the East German government in 1972; and Steinway now belongs to the American media conglomerate CBS.

²²³ Cyril Ehrlich, The Piano: A History, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 28.

pianos were favored because of their powerful tone and amplitude needed in a large concert hall setting with an audience and orchestra. The popularity of the piano was further bolstered by the growth of American music schools: Peabody (1857), Oberlin (1865), New England Conservatory (1867).²²⁵ These schools trained pianists and cultivated high, performance standards by the 1860s. As a result of the development of virtuoso piano technique, pressure was placed on piano manufacturers by the late 1880s to produce high-quality instruments. “There were efforts to improve and refine piano action and tone a remarkable assortment of cabinet styles were designed small and large uprights as well. While new styles of piano composition were being created and performance techniques developed, the piano became more important to family and social life.”²²⁶

During the 1870s (piano’s golden age in America²²⁷), pianos were becoming cheaper to purchase. In particular, one could purchase cheap pianos at low prices, which motivated by the fact that other necessities of life had become more expensive.²²⁸ James Parton, in an article for *Atlantic Monthly* in 1867 asserted, “...almost every couple that sets up housekeeping on a respectable scale considers a piano only less indispensable than a kitchen range.”²²⁹ Ironically, keyboard instruments and sewing machines,²³⁰ in the decades following the Civil War, “...were

²²⁴ Ibid, 132.

²²⁵ Piano performance standards reached new heights with the emergence of other music schools in the 1920s: Julliard, Eastman, Curtis.

²²⁶ Hollis, *The Piano*, 61.

²²⁷ Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 10.

²²⁸ Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 521.

²²⁹ James Parton, “The Piano in the United States.” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Boston July 1867.

²³⁰ The sewing machine represented a triumph of American engineering and industrialization.

habitually thought of together – in a harmonious bracket. Not only were they sold in the same salesrooms, but house-to-house canvassers in the more sparsely settled communities often carried both articles on their wagons.’²³¹ Piano historian Arthur Loesser notes

In 1870 about one person out of every 1540 bought a new piano in the course of the year; by 1890 the rate had gone up to one out of 874; while in 1910 it reached one in 252 – pianos having crowded themselves more than six times thicker in forty years. Or, every working day of 1870 eighty persons bought a new piano; in 1910 twelve hundred persons did so, fifteen times as many, whereas the population had multiplied itself by no more than two and one half in a meanwhile.²³²

The piano was a symbol of respectability, a highly prized piece of furniture. Women would place draperies and decorations on the wood to camouflage the wood. After the piano began to incorporate glass in its construction, many considered it luxury merchandise. The upright piano began to supplant the square piano by the 1890s, which required less manufacturing materials. Located in the parlors of homes, the piano was the center of domestic entertainment. These parlor pieces consisted of popular and “classical” music.²³³ It was common for the family to cluster around the piano to play and sing the latest songs of the day, consisting of a single, vocal line with piano accompaniment. “Parodies were improvised and sporadic dancing engaged in, while silly-clever remarks and gestures sprinkled the air. This was

²³¹ Loesser, Men, Women and Pianos, 561. Will S. Hays of Louisville, KY who wrote and published in 1869 a “Song of the Sewing Machine” immortalized the close affinity of the sewing machine and the piano.

²³² Ibid, 521.

²³³ Popular music’s influence was even juxtaposed in standard piano literature: “Loesser detects a significant change in domestic piano music after 1890, from the *adagio* religiosity of ‘The Dying Poet’ towards the flirtatious amiability of Nevin and Moskowski. Ian Whitcomb identifies 1892 as the turning point in popular song, when gaiety replaced moral uplift. But tearjerkers continued to fill the piano stools, and in 1893 ‘Hearts and Flowers’ was published, the *ne plus ultra* of sentimentality whose *tremolando* strains epitomize an age.” See Erlich, The Piano, 132.

the American heyday of the piano – the time when the instrument was most useful, most esteemed, and when it gave the most substantial pleasure of which it was capable to the greatest number of people.’’²³⁴

The burgeoning of popular music provided another catalyst for the sale and popularity of pianos. Tin Pan Alley referred to the neighborhood around twenty-eighth Street in New York City’s theater district, a location where popular music was published beginning in the 1890s. The name refers to the sound of the battered, upright pianos that were used to demonstrate the music, and underscores the fact that the piano was a prominent figure in popular music; and, the term soon came to represent the entire popular-song business. Tin Pan Alley sheet music was sold at Ten-cent stores across the nation. By 1900, these stores would hire sale girls/pianists (also known as “song pluggers”) who would play the tune in the store before customers would purchase it.

Captured and trivialized by Tin Pan Alley, commercial ragtime gave a boost to piano sales. Ragtime was the first Black, popular music to be written and published in 1896. Originating in the Mid-West, ragtime came under international scrutiny at the world’s fairs in Chicago, Omaha, Buffalo, and St. Louis.²³⁵ Written by Scott Joplin, the “Maple Leaf Rag” (1899) was the most popular in sheet music sales – selling more than a million copies. Furthermore, ragtime became associated with the mechanical sound of the automatic player piano that threatened to supplant conventional pianos. The Aeolian Company produced the first automatic player piano (known as pianola) in 1898, which appealed to new and old customers

²³⁴ Loesser, Men, Wome, and Pianos, 548-49.

²³⁵ As the first pianistic form from the United States, ragtime migrated internationally and influenced composers in the Western European literate tradition such as Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Eric Satie, Igor Stravinsky, Darius Milhaud, and even the American-born Charles Ives.

alike. By 1904, "...there were more than forty different kinds of automatic piano on the American market."²³⁶ As an American phenomenon, "Pianolas were new and highly mechanical, welcome qualities in a society which embraced novelty..."²³⁷ Furthermore,

Conventional pianos were coveted for solidity and prestige, but they were bought for women: in America, even more than in England, playing the piano was a pastime for females and foreigners. The pianola appealed directly to men, in addition to embodying all the attributes of its predecessor. The advertisements have a clear persuasive message: a successful businessman is seated at the pianola performing to a lady in evening dress – 'Check up the successful people you know. Invariably you will find that they have music in their homes, generally a player piano.' There would be no more voiceless pianos. Amateur playing would be 'entirely done away with.'²³⁸

Around the turn of the twentieth century, thousands of pianos were in use in American homes, stores, and schools; also, pianos(ists) supplied music for nickelodeons (early motion pictures.)²³⁹ Most of the enormous expansion of the American piano market took place between 1890 and 1910. In 1900, the world was full of pianos just as today it is full of cars: 171,000 pianos were manufactured in the United States. At the 1904 American piano dealers' convention in New Jersey, company heads agreed that business was dreadful because too many pianos were being manufactured; thus, all agreed to burn the old antiquated pianos. 1909 marked the peak year of popularity of the piano in the United States when 364,545 pianos were purchased – all due to the rapidly dropping prices. The organ business was booming simultaneously because the lower price allowed it to be sold more readily than a piano. "If the 1920s were to be the last

²³⁶ Erhlich, The Piano, 134.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid, 134-135. "Reproducing piano" provided the actual performance of a specified artist rather than just a machine-made roll of the pianola. By 1920, leading pianists were recording on these instruments. The market for player pianos declined by the late 1920s due to the cinema craze, dancing, interest in athletics, cars, records, radio, and other pastimes. The last two were cheaper and infinitely more resourceful.

²³⁹ The shadows and figures shown on the screen needed an audible accompaniment. Organ music was eventually used later.

great ago of piano ownership, nowhere was this more extensive than in the United States: in their classic study of 'Middletown', the Lynds estimated that by 1928 there was a piano in the homes of more than half of America's city dwellers."²⁴⁰

2.2.2 Role and Popularity of Piano among African-Americans

Blacks' affinity with musical instruments has spanned the African and American continent alike. Early slave sources (diaries, journals, letters, newspaper ads, etc) are replete with information about the slaves' musical life. Dance music was extremely popular during the colonial era, and there is an overwhelming documentation of violinists and fiddlers. Slaves were also proficient on other instruments such as the French horn, fife, drum, trumpet, banjo, and flute. After the Revolutionary War, black became more familiar with the piano due to its accessibility and availability.

Urban, upper class blacks in the North were fond of the piano, which had a place in their social life. Among blacks, the piano was a coveted possession, a symbol of social emulation and achievement. Pianos even served as "status furniture". Many black households had a piano stationed in their parlor where musical soirees and parties would be held. The piano music consisted of sentimental ballads, genteel songs, virtuosic piano pieces, and piano arrangements of band music. Francis "Frank" Johnson, the popular trumpeter and bandleader, was the first

²⁴⁰ Erlich, The Piano, 176.

black to published music as early as 1818. Johnson composed a number of popular pieces that were published as piano arrangements "...that could be sold to the ever-increasing numbers of amateur singers and pianists in the nation."²⁴¹

By the latter part of the 19th century, the commercial success and publication of ragtime further bolstered the piano's prominence in black communities. Ragtime was very popular among blacks, and was frequently played at home, in bordellos, brothels, clubs, and bars. Other black piano styles such as barrelhouse, stride, boogie woogie, and jazz piano made the piano a fixture among Blacks, and in many cases, the lead instrument.²⁴² For blacks, the piano was a social instrument providing entertainment in a number of venues: home, clubs, rent parties, and church.

The incorporation of the piano and organ in churches was initially considered profane. In Eileen Southern's Readings in Black American Music (1983), she provides an excerpt from Daniel Alexander Payne's 1888 monograph Recollections of Seventy Years. As a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Payne recounts that instrumental music was introduced in the AME church in 1848-49. In arguing for the right of instruments in the church, Payne states in reference to the 148th and 150th division of Psalms that

If it be right to call upon all the works of God to praise him, why not call upon all the works of men to praise him? Man is a product of God's wisdom and power; therefore he should be called upon to praise God with his mouth. The instruments are the product of man's genius and skill. Why not use the sounds of these instruments to praise the Creator?" He further states that "There is not a Church of ours in any of the great cities of the republic that can afford to buy an

²⁴¹ Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 112.

²⁴² For example, the Georgia Committee on Inter-racial Cooperation commenced a seven-year study in 1927 on black and white rural homes in Greene County, Georgia. Of the 323 black homes included in the study, some 23 per cent had pianos or organs.

instrument which is without one; and there but few towns and villages where our Connection exists that are without an instrument to accompany the choir.²⁴³

Pianos, among the many other instruments, were staples in sanctified churches, dating back to the late 19th century. During this time, instruments were scarce in rural Southern churches; and over time, pianos could be found in these churches. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the piano has been the traditional instrument of worship in the Black church. The Black church has relied heavily upon the piano, and often times, it has served as the only instrument used in worship services, revivals, and concerts; furthermore, it has become the lead instrument/focal point that sets the mode for the particular event. It was almost a prerequisite to have a piano available at Black religious functions in order for people to lift their voices together. As it relates to gospel music, the piano was important in establishing female and mixed gospel groups. Since these groups sung in a three-part harmonic style, the bass line was replaced by the piano. Over time, many a capella male quartets began to include the piano (along with other instruments) in an effort to keep up with modern gospel practices. Although introduced in 1939 by Kenneth Morris, the Hammond organ did not receive widespread incorporation into gospel music until the 1950s, and it "...came into prominence in larger southern cities, and increasingly in the industrialized urban areas of the North."²⁴⁴ Yet, like the piano, it became an equally dynamic force within gospel music.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Southern, 1983 Readings in Black American Music, 68. Along with this instrumental approbation, Payne states that the piano should be admitted if executed with "scientific training." This reflects a predilection for skilled, and classically trained musicians, rather than "ear-based," secular training.

²⁴⁴ J. Wendell Mapson, The Ministry of Music in the Black Church (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1984), 121.

²⁴⁵ In regard to the scope of this dissertation, the piano is the only musical instrument examined.

3.0 BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHT OF KEY PIANISTS

3.1 ROLE OF RECORDING INDUSTRY/MEDIA IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOSPEL MUSIC

In establishing any type of historical narrative about the development of the gospel piano style, recordings are necessary because they allow the researcher to develop a musical analysis of the reproduced sound. The advent of the recording industry around the turn of the century helped to heighten the popularity of religious music, and eventually gospel music. The national dissemination of records helped blacks to reach outside of their own communities and break down the musical isolation imposed since slavery.

3.1.1 Brief History of the Development of African-American Recording Industry

The development of the record industry created a major medium for the exposure of Black musical styles. Edison patented the first cylinder phonograph in 1877, and by 1891, the Columbia Phonograph catalogue included a Negro section. Music historian Daphne Duval Harrison reveals “black were heard on records as early as 1895, when George W. Johnson

recorded 'Laughing Song' on an Edison phono-cylinder."²⁴⁶ Religious music was among the first recordings of African-Americans, predating the recordings of both jazz and the blues. Many of the cylinders from the 1890s of the Standard Quintette contained religious music. The Utica Institute Jubilee Quartet made other religious cylinder recordings. The first commercial recording was produced in 1897. In 1902, the Dinwiddie Colored Quartet recorded six, one-sided discs for Victor of jubilees and virtuosic, a cappella arrangements of spirituals and folk tunes ("Genuine Jubilee and Camp-Meeting Shouts"). Stemming out of the jubilee quartet singing tradition, the Dinwiddie Colored Quartet was sponsored by the John A. Dix Industrial School of Dinwiddie, Virginia, and was credited for having raised hundreds and thousands of dollars for the institution.²⁴⁷ In 1915 there were few blacks on record, but by 1916, the Chicago Defender (a black newspaper) began calling for more black recordings. With a circulation of 250,000, the Defender published articles about the new industry which agitated companies to record blacks.²⁴⁸

The commercial record industry began seeking out African-American traditional music and musicians by the 1920s. The black music-store owner, manager and song-writer, Perry

²⁴⁶ Daphne Duval Harrison, Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1988), 44.

²⁴⁷ Jubilee Quartets were popular at the turn of the century. Following the Fisk prototype, other black universities also sponsored jubilee groups, and "By the 1890s a second singing tradition had developed in southern black universities. Male jubilee quartets became featured groups within the choir and some even replaced the larger ensembles as the popularly favored group. The jubilee quartet singing movement reached a summit of activity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, when most black colleges and normal and industrial schools organized to help support and promote its institution. These university-affiliated jubilee quartets were the forerunners of the twentieth century gospel quartet." See Joyce Marie Jackson, "The Performing Black Sacred Quartet: An Expression of Cultural Values and Aesthetics" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1988), 52.

²⁴⁸ The Pace Phonograph Company (later changed to Black Swan Phonograph Company) was one of the first African-American record companies. Started in 1918 by Harry Pace, its mission was "for the purpose of making phonograph records, using exclusively the voices and talent of colored people...[and] ...to display our best singers and high class musicians [who] have had no recognition from the large white companies who furnish all the records that are supplied." See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 18. The company went bankrupt within 2 years because it did not keep up with the demands of the urban black community who wanted to hear blues and jazz.

Bradford composed a song entitled “You Can’t Keep A Good Man Down” that was intended to be recorded by the white, “torch singer” Sophie Tucker. When Sophie Tucker could not do it, the recording director of General Phonograph Corporation’s Okeh label, Fred Hager, got the African-American blues singer Mamie Smith to record it. The record, backed by a white studio orchestra, was released in the black community and sold well enough to warrant another recording from Smith. Mamie Smith’s second recording of “Crazy Blues” in 1920 was backed by her own, black jazz band (the Jazz Hounds) and supervised by Perry Bradford, a black music storeowner. Considered as the first “classic blues”²⁴⁹ recording, “Crazy Blues” had immediate, unprecedented success. The Okeh label launched “Original Race Records” in the summer of 1921, and later that year, race record sells hit the one hundred million mark.²⁵⁰ Not long after Okeh’s success, other record companies (“indies”²⁵¹ and national ones too) began to move in and capitalize on the race record industry.²⁵² Such “race record” companies included: Victor²⁵³ and Bluebird, Columbia and Okeh²⁵⁴, Brunswick and Vocalion, America Record Corporation (formed in 1929 from the merger of three smaller companies), Gennett, Champion, Black

²⁴⁹ The “Classic Blues” style grew out of the minstrel/vaudeville show. Classic blues features a female singer with a pianist or jazz band. Classic blues was also the public presentation of the African-American woman’s point of view, in a strong, assertive voice. See Davis, African American Music, 97.

²⁵⁰ According to Dixon, Godrich, and Rye (1997), these astronomical numbers (for that period) continued throughout most of the 1920s. See R. M. W. Dixon, John Godrich, and Howard Rye, Blues and Gospel Records, 1902-1943, 4th ed. (London: Storyville, 1997) xxiii.

²⁵¹ The term “indies” refers to independent record companies.

²⁵² See Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 365-66.

²⁵³ Victor was taken over in 1929 by the Radio Corporation of America, and in January 1933, an inexpensive label, Bluebird, was established. In 1930/31, Victor’s blues and gospel series number was in the 23500s. J.M. Gates recorded on Victor. See Dixon, Godrich, and Rye, Blues and Gospel Records, xxiv.

²⁵⁴ The merger of these two companies occurred in November 1926; yet, both companies were purchased by Grigsby-Grunow I February 1931, and then, the Brunswick Record Corporation in 1934 See Dixon, Godrich, and Rye (1997), xxvii.

Swan²⁵⁵, Black Patti²⁵⁶, Paramount, Merritt, etc. Conversely, with the impact of the Great Depression (1929-32) and the plummeting record sales, most small independent companies were struggling to “keep afloat”. Only the larger record companies were able to survive during this time, thus capitalizing upon and monopolizing the market.

As record sales were affected during the Great Depression, they were further exacerbated by the advent of radio broadcasting. Blacks attached such a high value to music and entertainment that many continued to purchase high levels of records. “The Census of Manufacturer figures showed that [record] sales climbed from 30,951,000 in 1931 to 349,900,000 in 1939. Blacks were buying a disproportionate number of recordings. Blacks probably continued to buy records because the majority of radio stations did not play blues.”²⁵⁷ Record sales rebounded to thirty-three million in 1938, and the industry was back in full swing. By the onset of World War II, every major record company had a subsidiary Race label.

The “Race Record” period (flourishing from 1921 to 1949) was a time when commercial recordings made by African-Americans were targeted toward the pre-war African-American audiences across the nation; and, they were initially promoted by Black newspapers in the 1920s.

²⁵⁵ Black Swan was the first black-owned and operated record company. W. C Handy, known as the “Father of the Blues,” and his former partner, Harry H. Pace “...incorporated the Pace Phonograph Company, with capitalization of \$100,000, in 1921, ‘for the purpose of making phonograph records, using exclusively the voices and talent of colored people.’ Pace, which later changed its name to Black Swan Phonograph Company, aimed to display ‘our best singers and high class musicians [who] have had no recognition from the large white companies who furnish all the records that are supplied.’” See Spaulding, “History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago”, 18. William Grant Still (musical director) and Fletcher Henderson (recording manager) turned down Bessie Smith because she was too “unrefined” in her singing. Even though Black Swan’s biggest star was Ethel Waters, the company went bankrupt within two years because of its failure to keep up with the demands of the urban black community who wanted to hear blues and jazz.

²⁵⁶ K. Mayo Williams, a Black man who served as the supervisor of race records for Paramount Records of Chicago until 1927, left to form his own label (Black Patti) that same year. Black Patti was the second Black-owned record company.

²⁵⁷ Spaulding, “History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago, 20. Also see Paul Oliver, Songersters and Saints, 273-74 for statistics regarding the disparity between those who owned phonographs versus radios.

As high as twenty percent of Blacks in America owned phonographs and concomitantly purchased “race records” in the 1920s.²⁵⁸ By the mid to late 1920s, record companies began seeking out traditional music through travels to the South; therefore, these “race records” comprised diverse African-American musical styles. By 1924, there was a shift from the urbane, classic blues to the less, sophisticated rural blues of the South, as black male artists became popular recording artists. Even though the Dinwiddie Quartet recorded in 1902, record companies did not actively engage in recording other sacred groups, again, until the mid-1920s. Religious quartets like the Norfolk Jubilee Quartette proliferated throughout the race record period and cornered their share of the market, as did other “sanctified” and “holiness” singers; thus,

the rise in the popularity of rural blues styles was accompanied by an upswing in spiritual singing quartets. The most important religious records were of sermons with singing, with sixty records of sermons put out by various companies from September 1926 to June 1927.²⁵⁹

As recording engineers went into the field to record the richly complex harmonies of gospel quartets, they also recorded sanctified singers, renowned preachers, and even “jack leg preachers.”²⁶⁰ Piano, other instruments and the congregation usually accompanied these preachers’ recordings. These black, charismatic preachers were noted as the first gospel recording artists: Rev. J. C. Burnett,²⁶¹ Rev. A. W. Nix,²⁶² Rev. E. D. Campbell, Rev. J. M.

²⁵⁸ See Jeff Titon, Early Downhome Blues: A Musical and Cultural Analysis (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1977), 23. Willa Ward relates that in the late 1920s, “My parents had a Victrola that provided all of us with lots of fun. I dearly loved the latest popular records...I learned to sing every song on every record.” See Ward-Royster, Willa, How I Got Over: Clara Ward and the World-Famous Ward Singers (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 12.

²⁵⁹ Spaulding, “History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago”, 19.

²⁶⁰ “Jack-leg preachers” were itinerant, street preachers, usually accompanied by a guitar or other occasional instruments.

²⁶¹ Recorded “The Downfall of Nebuchadnezzar” on Columbia (14166-D) in 1926.

²⁶² Recorded “Black Diamond Express to Hell” on Decca (F3850) in 1927.

Gates,²⁶³ Rev. F. W. McGee,²⁶⁴ etc. Many of the religious recordings made by popular preachers and singers of spirituals and gospel music were conspicuously more successful than urban and country blues performers during the race records' embryonic period.²⁶⁵ Up until 1941 (when the industry reached an all-time high of one hundred and twenty-seven million in record sales²⁶⁶) there had been a marked increase in gospel recordings, whereas, blues recordings were "...more or less in eclipse."²⁶⁷ As recordings by preachers declined in the early 1940s, gospel music experienced an immense rise in popularity as a myriad of independent recording labels appeared after World War II. Gospel music recordings sold in unprecedented numbers after World War II, which was ironically during the same time that R&B recordings were also exploding on the market. Hit gospel recordings included: Trumpeteer's "Milky Way" (1948)²⁶⁸; Clara Ward & the Ward Singers' "Surely God Is Able" (1949); Mahalia Jackson's "Move On Up A Little Higher" (1947), Roberta Martin Singers' "Only a Look" (1949), Bells of Joy's "Let Talk About Jesus" (1951), and Professor Alex Bradford's "Too Close to Heaven" (1953) – all million-sellers; Angelic Gospel Singers' "Touch Me Lord Jesus" (1947/9); the Georgia Peach's "Shady Green Pastures" (1946); Five Blind Boys of Mississippi's "Our Father" (1950); and the Pilgrim

²⁶³ A very popular preacher who made over 200 recording from 1926 to 1941.

²⁶⁴ Rev. F. W. McGee made his recording debut on Okeh early in 1927 ("Lion of the Tribe of Judah") which was mistakenly labeled "Rev. F. N. McGee." His recordings are comprised of powerfully exhortative preaching and spirited congregational singing. During the subsequent months of 1927, he recorded four more titles/sermons, but on the Victor label. Two of those sermons, "Jonah in the Belly of the Whale" and "With His Stripes We Are Healed" were eventually placed on a 78 that reportedly sold over 100,000 copies. By the end of 1927, McGee recorded another Victor session that produced another hit, "Babylon Is Falling Down."

²⁶⁵ "The rise in the popularity of rural blues styles was accompanied by an upswing in spiritual singing quartets. The most important religious records were sermons with singing, with sixty records of sermons put out by various companies from September 1926 to June 1927." See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 19. Also see Oliver, Songsters and Saints.

²⁶⁶ See Dixon, Godrich, and Rye, 1997, Blues and Gospel Records, xxiii.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ This record reached number ten on Billboard's R&B chart.

Travelers' "Mother Bowed."²⁶⁹ The popularity of gospel recordings catapulted gospel artists into venues outside of the four walls of the church. For example, the Apollo Theater presented its first all-gospel revue in 1955 consisting of the Soul Stirrers, the Caravans, the Swan Silvertones, the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Swanee Qunitet, and the Five Blind Boys of Mississippi, Alex Bradford and Christine Clark.²⁷⁰

3.1.2 The Development of Radio

By 1940, outside of the jukebox and Black newspapers, the radio was the primary vehicle for publicizing records in the Black community. Along with recordings, the radio was one of the first mass communication mediums that broadcast African-American musical and cultural sensibilities. The expansion of phonograph recording in the 1920s encouraged the development of radio. After the government relinquished its wartime control of radio, KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania became the U.S.'s first commercially licensed radio station on November 2, 1920. Within the next two years, licenses were granted to 564 more radio stations. Outside of recordings, radio was established as the prime medium for the conveyance of aural art, an important aspect of American culture socially, economically, and culturally. Throughout the twenties and early thirties, radio programs flourished with music as its predominant form of

²⁶⁹ See Giacomo L. Ortizano, "On Your Radio: A Descriptive History of Rhythm-and-Blues Radio During the 1950s" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio University, 1993), 176. He also makes a note about this passage. He states, "Heilbut, p. 295. Other hit spirituals during the R&B era included the Martin Singer's "Old Ship of Zion" (1949) and Rosetta Tharpe's "Strange Thing Happening Every Day" (1944).

²⁷⁰ See Jack Schiffman, Harlem Heyday: A Pictorial History of Modern Black Show Business and the Apollo Theatre (Buffalo, N. Y.: Prometheus, 1984), 195.

entertainment. Race records were played over radio beginning in the late 20s.²⁷¹ By the 1930s, record companies began to encounter competition from regularly scheduled radio broadcasts; furthermore, radio also threatened the revenues of print media.²⁷² Like other manufactured goods, radio sets became more available throughout the twenties, and were highly prized possessions. With

...radio's attraction as a new technological phenomenon, it only required the commitment of the initial purchase price for the radio receiver. It was, therefore, cheaper to make the investment in a radio set to hear live performances, than to suffer the expense of repeat record purchases."²⁷³ Alexander further notes that "although record sales declined during this period, 'race' records continued their volume of sales."²⁷⁴

The format and programming of radio began changing in the thirties when drama and comedy programs became one of the main forms of broadcast entertainment.²⁷⁵ "Little thought was given to news broadcasts. Americans loved entertainment radio, individually and collectively, gathering around it to listen as family groups to favorite shows."²⁷⁶ One of the most popular and longest running shows in radio's history was NBC's highly-rated program, "Amos 'n' Andy." First broadcast over Chicago's WGN on January 12, 1926, the show moved to

²⁷¹ Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 63. "Even though Okeh label recorded Mamie Smith's first commercial blues record in New York, Chicago rivaled New York as the radio and recording center of the country during the 1920's and 1930's." See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 21.

²⁷² Newspapers were financially sustained by advertisements, but with radio, entrepreneurs were provided with another medium by which they could market their goods to a wider array of consumers. See Madalin Olivia Trigg Price, "'Wings Over Jordan' and American Radio: 1937-1947" (Ph.D. diss., University, 1995), 9.

²⁷³ Kathryn Alexander, "The State of Contemporary Black-Oriented Radio in the United States" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1981), 82.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Alexander, "The State of Contemporary Black-Oriented Radio", 84-90

²⁷⁶ Price, "'Wings Over Jordan' and American Radio", 9

NBC's WMAQ in 1928; and, it continued for over some ten years on radio.²⁷⁷ This comedic drama consisted of a satire of two black, country men who had recently arrived in Chicago. Charles J. Correll (Andy) and Freeman Fisher Gosden (Amos), both white men, spoke in their version of black dialect and personified these characters via radio.²⁷⁸ Because of the show's financial success, many other radio stations engaged in broadcasting shows along the lines of the "Amos 'n' Andy" genre. Recognized as a continuation of trite minstrel caricatures, the reactions to the program ranged from hilarity (among whites), to protests of racism (among blacks who resented its derogatory portrayals).

Radio was ensconced and comfortably niched in American society as the new "organ" for entertainment, and the dissemination of ethnic, regional, and cultural styles of music; and it was also part of America's industrial growth. By the 1940s, radio continued to be an unchallenged, ever changing, and ever growing medium, even in the face of the television's arrival.²⁷⁹ According to media scholars, an estimated 8 million radios were produced in 1937, and 25 million households owned one."²⁸⁰

There were 11.9 million radios in 82.8 percent of American homes in 1940. By 1955, the figure had grown to 43.7 million sets in 96.2 percent of homes. Radio sales totaled 8.2 million in 1950, 7.1 million in 1955, 9 million in 1958, and 10.2 million in 1959. A comparison with television sales shows that radio sets sub-

²⁷⁷Early television offered few black images. In the 1950s, the show was broadcast on television with an all-black cast.

²⁷⁸ Amos 'n' Andy was a continuation of the minstrel tradition – yet, on radio.

²⁷⁹ With the demand for manufactured materials needed for the wartime effort in the early 1940s, television's popularity did not takeoff until after World War II. Between 1942 and 1954, the radio industry also experienced discontinued production because of the war. See Price, "'Wings Over Jordan' and American Radio", 1.

²⁸⁰ Price, "'Wings Over Jordan' and American Radio", 8.

stantially outsold television sets in all of those years. Television sales were 7.5 million in 1950, 4 million in 1958, and 6.6 million in 1959.²⁸¹

3.1.3 Radio and the Black Community

Radio became an important cultural medium in the Black community, for it "...was the most equalitarian of all Black mass media, placing no educational or literary restriction on the listener."²⁸² Through the public sphere of radio, Blacks were able to: 1) carve out "public" voices within their own community and the broader American public, 2) disseminate their concerns, perspectives, ideas, and cultural knowledge, and 3) display black popular culture (through music and language). Earl Hines and Lois Deppe (a vocalist who had aspirations of becoming a classical singer) claim to be the first Blacks on radio.²⁸³ Throughout the 20s into the 30s, it was commonplace for black jazz and blues artists to broadcast their live ballroom shows on radio. Bessie Smith, the classic blues star known as the "Empress of the Blues," broadcast from the 81 Club in Atlanta in 1923. Other popular musicians had their own shows: Louis Armstrong (1937), Cab Calloway (1941), and Nat "King" Cole (1946). During radio's nascent

²⁸¹ Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 46. Referenced from Christopher H. Sterling and Timothy R. Haight, *The Mass Media*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 43-50.

²⁸² Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 183. Spaulding has contended, "Black-oriented radio was the medium of the lower classes, whereas Black print media reflected the dreams and aspirations of middle-class Blacks. However, Black-oriented radio also appealed to middle-class Blacks with a separate category of programming for them." (p. iv) What is more interesting is "In Chicago, the illiteracy rate was highest among the new southern migrants between the ages of 25 and 45, the principal target group for many consumer items. Radio quickly outdistanced print media in making a steady audience of this group. This was not only due to illiteracy, but also to the fact that the existing print media failed to appeal to the tastes of the new group. The new medium and the new public together developed new styles, sensibilities, and preoccupations for the expanded Black urban masses. Thus, while radio was growing, the circulation of the *Chicago Defender*, like that of the other old-line mass Black newspapers, was falling." (p. 43) The notes in Bradley S. Greenberg and Brenda Dervin, *Use of Mass Media by the Urban Poor* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), showed that lower-income Blacks listened to radio more than any other socioeconomic group and that Blacks used phonographs 59 percent more than the general population. This greater use of electronic media was a contributing factor to the decline of Black print media.

²⁸³ See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 22.

years, black choirs and choral groups appeared on radio programs, and male quartets were hired by radio stations to introduce programs and promote products.²⁸⁴ Chicago's 80-voice Mundy Choirsters, led by vocal teacher James Mundy, began broadcasting in 1923 on Westinghouse's KYW radio station, followed by appearances on other local radio stations until the 1930s.²⁸⁵ The Eva Jessye Choir appeared on the "Major Bowes Family Radio Hour" as early as 1926.²⁸⁶ While the Hall Johnson Choir appeared on various programs from the late 1920s through the 1940s, other groups such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Howard University Choir appeared regularly on Sunday morning network broadcasts.²⁸⁷

The early acceptance of Black-oriented radio is indebted to the perseverance and determination of black disc jockeys. Jack L. Cooper, believed to be the first black disc jockey, began broadcasting as early as 1923 or 1924 from radio station WCAP in Washington, D. C.²⁸⁸ Cooper eventually moved to Chicago and was instrumental in the development of black radio programming. As a business, radio programming was (and still is) designed to attract listeners for advertisers.²⁸⁹ Not many broadcasters believed that a substantial profit could be made from broadcasting to a small, segmented audience, particularly from African Americans.²⁹⁰ Contrary

²⁸⁴ Rev. Archie Dennis, whose father sang in a quartet for radio station WPIT/WAMO in Pittsburgh, PA, remembers their theme song: "Have You Anytime for Jesus?" Dennis recalled for "...a total of 32 years they were on the radio every Sunday morning. And of course, in the projects – and tv was just coming in to its own – but, you could hear it all up and down the street. Everybody had on that radio station to get the gospel music. And of course, they had a segment on the radio every Sunday." Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

²⁸⁵ See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 33.

²⁸⁶ They also appeared on the "General Motors Hour" radio program. See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 23.

²⁸⁷ See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 26.

²⁸⁸ See Alexander, "The State of Contemporary Black-Oriented Radio", 99.

²⁸⁹ Programming refers to the arrangement or content of the material, which is broadcast.

to popular practice, Cooper, with the Black community as his targeted audience, eventually garnered support from the radio station managers at WSBC who gave him a time slot for his “All-Negro Hour” show. The “All-Negro Hour” was a variety show that premiered on November 3, 1929 and ran until 1935;²⁹¹ it featured recent black recordings, news, interviews with prominent Blacks, performances by choral groups, and choral concerts. Other programs produced by Cooper were mystery shows, comedy serials, and religious programs. Some of his most innovative programming included: the first Black daily news broadcast; “The Missing Persons Programs”;²⁹² being the first black sports announcer;²⁹³ and being the first to feature national advertising. Cooper’s programming success provided an avenue 1) for him to develop other shows throughout the greater Chicago area, 2) for black radio programs to spread across the country and 3) for the emergence of other black radio personalities.²⁹⁴ “Cooper was eventually joined by Jack Gibson (Chicago), Ed Baker and Van Douglas (Detroit), Bass Harris (Hammond, Indiana), Norfley Whitted (Durham, North Carolina), Al Benson (‘Chicago’s uncontested most popular disk jockey’) and Hal Jackson (the nations’ first full-time black announcer broadcasting from the nation’s Capitol over AM station WOOK).”²⁹⁵

²⁹⁰ Radio stations’ reluctance to feature programming geared toward the Black community revealed their inherent racism. This notion was already discredited by the lucrative and successful “race record” industry.

²⁹¹ According to Spaulding, “By 1947, he had increased his programming to 41 hours weekly over four stations and set up studios in his home to handle his heavy schedule.” See Spaulding, “History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago”, 71-72.

²⁹² Started in 1940, “The Missing Persons Programs” announced names of lost migrants from the South.

²⁹³ Cooper broadcasted the Chicago Giant’s Sunday ballgames from Comiskey Park.

²⁹⁴ DJ personalities attracted listeners, not the station. Blacks were strongly attracted to the medium’s promotion of these personalities. The success of this specialized programming led to a financial boom for many radio stations.

²⁹⁵ Alexander, “The State of Contemporary Black-Oriented Radio”, 101. Chapter 3 of Spaulding discusses how Al Benson was the antithesis of Cooper in that he “...introduced a southern lower-class street language and

Black radio historian, Kathryn Alexander has rightly observed that "...the gradual acceptance of 'race' music, afforded black musicians an entrée into the medium; and, as long as the music format prevailed, there were opportunities for Blacks in radio."²⁹⁶ African American musical styles, such as gospel (sacred music) and blues were the mainstays of American radio. Realizing that African-Americans were a viable market for exploitation in the 1940s, just like the 1920s "race records" phenomenon, many radio stations began devoting a few hours a day to black programming; needless to say, it was quite lucrative for white station owners. Black radio became the "mouthpiece" of Black America, representing a continuation of the "oral traditions."²⁹⁷ Although racial equity was not yet realized in America, Black radio popularized, introduced, and integrated Black culture in the larger American society via airwaves.²⁹⁸ Many African-American programs featured local talent in serials, variety shows, and religious services. After World War II, black programming expanded rapidly due to the second wave of massive migration of Blacks from the rural South to the urban North. "Black-oriented radio

played an early urban blues that revolutionized Chicago's Black radio programming. Benson influenced a generation of Black jockeys who improvised street talk and played the new urban blues and rhythm and blues." Benson appealed to the lower-middle class Blacks, the new middle class, and the growing youth market. See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago," 78.

²⁹⁶ Alexander, "The State of Black Oriented Radio", 83.

²⁹⁷ The oral tradition was manifested through the music, drama, and language. "The literature on the oral nature of Black culture has laid much stress upon the spontaneous and creative, or 'improvisational,' quality of such forms of expression as blues music and 'street talk.' The styles of the Black jockeys exemplified this improvisational quality. Whereas white jockeys read commercials and broadcast from written copy, the Black jockeys ad-libbed their shows and seldom used copy. In their spontaneous delivery, they popularized expressions from the street and generated new words and metaphors for the urban Black culture." One should note that the generative quality of Black language is similar to the improvisational character of good jazz. The jockey, like the good jazz musician, was not cliché bound. See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 124.

²⁹⁸ For example, "Americans began to use Black idiomatic expressions, often without realizing their source, as a result of the popularity of songs like 'Straighten Up and Fly Right,' 'Jive at Five,' 'It's Gonna Be Alright,' and 'Give Me Five.' Radio put the imprint of Black music and language into the minds and language of all Americans." Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 31.

programming, including religious broadcasts, totaled about 56 hours weekly in 1944.”²⁹⁹ Furthermore, Black-owned and operated radio stations began to infiltrate the industry by the late 1940s, and they dedicated their entire format towards African-American concerns. Atlanta-based radio station WERD was the first black-owned broadcast station, established in 1949. The birth of commercial radio stations solely devoted to programming for African-Americans started in 1947 with WDIA in Memphis, Tennessee. WDIA, established and developed by John Peppers and Bert Ferguson, started with an easy-listening format that included classical, country & western, etc. This initial programming format was not receptive among the black Memphis audience, so the owners eventually switched it to R&B exclusively.

3.1.4 Radio and the Black Church

One of the earliest developments in Black radio was in the late 1920s when black spiritual and gospel music was disseminated over the airwaves as radio stations began selling airtime to black churches.³⁰⁰ While major radio stations initially supported black church broadcasts, many black churches began paying for their own broadcast time on small, independent radio stations by the early 1930s. The “race record” industry in the 1920s had already taken an interest in recording sermons of black preachers,³⁰¹ and radio only helped to further propel the Black church’s worship experience and music into prominence. “The programs generally were remote

²⁹⁹ Spaulding, “History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago”, 47. He continues, “In 1956, the total was more than 400 hours a week, excluding religious broadcasts. By 1960, Black-oriented programming totaled more than 600 hours weekly. The phenomenal growth is attributable to the increase in advertising dollars spent in Black-oriented radio.”

³⁰⁰ See Spaulding, “History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago”, 102.

³⁰¹ Spaulding compares the disc jockey and the radio pastor (both recognized as cultural heroes) as being similar in style, language, metaphors, clichés, improvisation, and creative messages.

broadcasts directly from the churches, thereby retaining the spontaneity and authenticity of black religious music. In addition to spreading the faith, these programs served to increase church attendance, bolster the preacher's fame and prestige, solicit monetary contributions and promote the sale of religious items."³⁰² Reverend Samuel Crouch, pastor of the Wayside Church of God in Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, was one of the earliest black preachers on radio in 1924, while Reverend R. E. Granger, also of Fort Worth, was the first black pastor to have a nationwide broadcast in 1933.³⁰³ The membership in Reverend Louis Boddie's church, Greater Harvest Baptist Church, increased from 100 to 5,000 after he began broadcasting on Chicago radio station WAAF in 1932.³⁰⁴ Bishop R. R. Roberts, protégé of Charles A. Mason (founder of the Church of God in Christ), "...broadcast on WSBC as early as 1935 and continued to broadcast from the Roberts' Church of God in Christ Temple until his death in 1957...[and]...added 22 churches in Chicago from 1945 to 1960."³⁰⁵ By 1949, Reverend Clarence Cobb's radio audience was estimated at one million, and his church boasted of 20,000 members.³⁰⁶ Besides featuring these preacher's sermons, religious radio broadcasts placed a heavy emphasis on the music of their church choirs; and over time, the sermon became subordinate to the musical

³⁰² Ortizano, "On Your Radio", 217. Such religious items included holy water, patent medicines, holy cloths for healing, etc.

³⁰³ See Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 101.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 102.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 104. Roberts' son, Isaiah, took over the pastorate after his death and continued the radio broadcasts.

³⁰⁶ See Ebony, July 1949, p. 59. Reverend Cobb began broadcasting every Sunday on Chicago's WIND in 1930. "He started with nothing and within ten years had a congregation of over two thousand, a radio following of several times that number. He used all the props, good luck charms, healing, advice, electric guitars, several pianos, a swinging choir (gospel) and other resources. His support of Blacks in the very actions which most Black religionists condemn ensures his identification with them in their love of material success. Against the background of rollicking music and superb singing he comes on in a quiet manner as the counselor, addressing his audience in a unique way." See Joseph P. Washington, Jr., Black Sects and Cults (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 114.

selections by the choir. For example, Elder Michaux of Washington, D. C. had a swinging choir in the 1930s that was known for singing their popular theme song “Happy Am I.”

Studio-produced religious shows usually lacked the spontaneity of a “live” church broadcast and were not specifically designed for the black market, but were marketed as a religious program for the general audience. Religious programming also extended beyond the broadcasting of church services. Kathryn Alexander defines religious programs as those that “...include sermons or devotionals; religious news; and music, drama, and other types of programs designed primarily for religious purposes.”³⁰⁷ After listening to radio programming in Cleveland, Ohio which featured, and was geared toward certain ethnic groups (Polish, Czechoslovakian, Croatian, Italian), Rev. Glynn T. Settle believed that there was need for a Negro Hour.³⁰⁸ As pastor of the Gethsemane Baptist Church, Settle had a good choir and considered them to perform spirituals quite well. Determined to gain exposure for the choir, Rev. Settle entered them in amateur contests, and had them on other church’s programs. Rev. Settle contacted Worth Kramer who was the program manger at local, radio station WGAR in Cleveland (1450 on the AM dial), an affiliate of CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System). After successfully auditioning for Kramer, the choir aired their first broadcast of “The Negro Hour” on July 11, 1937.³⁰⁹ The choir became trailblazers when CBS began broadcasting the choir nationally as the “Wings Over Jordan” on January 9, 1938, and every subsequent Sunday

³⁰⁷ Alexander, “The State of Contemporary Black Radio”, 265.

³⁰⁸ See Price, “‘Wings Over Jordan’ and American Radio”, 19-20. Madalin Olivia Trigg Price’s 1995 dissertation, “‘Wings Over Jordan’ and American Radio: 1937-1947,” examines the “...history and origin of the broadcast; the historical context out of which it grew; characteristics of 1940s American domestic and overseas radio; and the broadcast’s dominant message. She examines the part radio played in American life during this time period, the political, social and economic context out of which this programming emerged, and the musical genre performed by the group – Negro Spirituals.” See Price, “‘Wings Over Jordan’ and American Radio”, 1-2.

³⁰⁹ See Price, “‘Wings Over Jordan’ and American Radio”, 21

morning thereafter until November 1947. By 1940, approximately 93 percent of the networks carried “Wings Over Jordan.”³¹⁰ This was pioneering black radio programming because, unlike “Amos ‘n’ Andy”, this was one of the first programs to feature blacks in a positive and lifelike manner.³¹¹ The general format consisted of the announcer (Wayne Mack) delivering the opening and network identification, followed by introduction of Rev. Settle who would greet the radio audience, tell the audience of the broadcast origination station, lead the scripture reading (choir would respond), and introduce the songs that the choir would sing. “For most of the half hour the choir sang folk songs, variously referred to as Negro Spirituals, sorrow songs or work songs.”³¹²

Black religious programming in Chicago stood as a prototype for other black-oriented stations throughout the country from the 1920s until World War II.³¹³ For one, there was a plethora of churches that broadcast every Sunday, and many featured choirs and choral groups gained national recognition. Along with the larger denominational churches, storefront churches flourished in Chicago, and many began broadcasting their services via radio; however, the music was different. Recalling information from Chapter 2, many southern migrants were attracted to

³¹⁰ See Price, “‘Wings Over Jordan’ and American Radio”, abstract p. 1.

³¹¹ Price also notes that the “Wings Over Jordan” broadcast may have been the first black-produced radio broadcast to receive recognition worldwide. See Price, “‘Wings Over Jordan’ and American Radion”, 15-16.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

³¹³ Norman Spaulding’s dissertation examines Black-oriented radio programming in Chicago from 1929 to 1953, which started earlier and developed faster than anywhere else in the county. Primarily crafted from interviews, Spaulding’s work looks at: 1) programming primarily designed for a Black audience; and 2) how the “...marketing strategies interacted with the cultural world of the Black community.” Spaulding, “History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago”, iii. Chicago represented one of the largest, urban Black radio markets in the country. Up until World War II, choral group and church choir programming appeared more frequently on Chicago radio than in any other black urban radio market.

storefront churches. Not only did they meet the spiritual, economic, and social needs of the southern migrant, but these churches also met the musical needs, which were reminiscent of “home.”

...Chicago had a birth of storefront churches, whose pastors preached a new style of religion that often broke with the traditional Protestant sermons and rituals. The majority of the new churches were small and pastored by a less educated group of ministers, who espoused a secular type of religion designed to appeal to the lower classes. Soon they were appearing on radio, which spread their message faster, popularized the new musical form of gospel sung in their churches, and helped build the reputations of many young charismatic radio-pastors.³¹⁴

These sanctified, storefronts did not maintain the “status quo” message or music of the larger denominational churches, but fostered their own, demonstrative style of worship. Elder Lucy Smith, a trailblazing and pioneering female preacher, established her own independent, sanctified church in 1930. Smith’s House of Prayer for All Nations Pentecostal Church began as a storefront, but through weekly radio broadcasts its membership grew; and, she was the first African-American woman to have an extensive broadcast. “Smith’s sermons included many references to her ability to heal the sick and help the poor. With little support from the middle-class, she built a church that rivaled the established churches, and her Sunday broadcasts over WSBC invited white and Black listeners to come for healing.”³¹⁵ Giving further credence to the impact and popularity of the radio broadcast phenomenon among Chicago churches, Archie Dennis recalls that in the 1950s

...a lot of the churches had broadcasts on Sunday. And it was a tradition in Chicagoto go from one church to the other because their choirs would sing. Every church had an hour. Like from 2 to 3 you’d go to this church, and from 3 to 4 you’d go to that church. And then maybe skip an hour, and another church. And we’d go to Greater Harvest. And we would go to Fellowship – Rev. Clay Evans’ church. And we would go to True Light, and...until night from 11 to 12, people would go to Rev. Cobbs’ First Church of Deliverance where Ralph

³¹⁴ Ibid., 167.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 103.

Goodpasteur was one of the musicians. And it was just a tradition. Sunday Chicago was the best place to be on Sundays, because of all of the wonderful music that you would get to hear.³¹⁶

3.1.5 Radio and Black Gospel Music

Gospel "...is a composed music that is culturally owned and orally transmitted... Its basic avenue of oral transmission is via the church choir box, record store and religious radio."³¹⁷ The rise of gospel radio programming occurred simultaneously along with black church programming. Gospel artists were able to establish their credibility within their own community through church programs, concerts, and recordings; and, radio also served as a medium to introduce gospel artists to an audience beyond their immediate community.³¹⁸ "Gospel performers of the 1940s and 1950s also built their followings through exposure on radio broadcasts. Usually, these singers would purchase the air time from their area's leading Negro-appeal radio stations."³¹⁹ Kip Lornell has noted in Memphis that gospel performers bought time from local Black stations such as WDIA:

³¹⁶ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

³¹⁷ Neely, "Belief, Ritual, and Performance in a Black Pentecostal Church", 285.

³¹⁸ "Radio made it somewhat easier for aspiring new artists to circumvent the dominance of the star system and win recognition with the public. The star system was suddenly upset as unknown artists, singing and playing new styles of music came into the public eye. Radio enabled millions of people to hear a large number of new records every day. The major companies, which had developed the star system, were overwhelmed by this new merchandising medium that spawned new artists and new musical styles every week. Radio and the record industry developed a symbiotic relationship in which the record companies furnished a product (entertainment) to the radio stations at no cost. In turn, the stations used the product at no cost to the record companies and thereby gave the companies free advertising." See Spaulding,, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 63-64.

³¹⁹ Ortizano, "On Your Radio", 175.

The cost of airtime during the early 1950s was about twelve dollars per quarter hour and most quartets willingly paid this fee because of the publicity the broadcasts brought to them. Only a very small percentage of the Memphis groups had records available, making radio their most important medium for exposure.³²⁰

Furthermore, radio exposure expanded gospel music's audience beyond its immediate community, promoted it commercially, and increased the demand for more gospel music on record. In the 1920s, race records were primarily promoted by black newspapers, but by the 1940s, black newspapers, the juke box, and radio were the primary arteries for promoting records within the Black community; furthermore, the radio served as the predominant mouthpiece. While radio contributed to the rise of Black independent record companies, it also made gospel music more accessible outside of the "four walls" of the church. Audiences were now able to listen to gospel music without necessarily being in a church or a sacred setting.³²¹ With the frequency of broadcasts of gospel music, radio served as another pedagogical tool in the hands of gospel apprentices and aficionados – they were able to constantly hear and learn the music.

Black disc jockeys played a seminal role in the dissemination of gospel music to the broader public. Referred to as "powerful gatekeeper[s] of Black musical traditions and culture,"³²² Black disc jockeys controlled the record play list in the early years of radio by picking music according to their tastes and their audiences'. Gospel music was the sacred music of choice for black disc jockeys.

The disc jockeys on Black radio acted as gatekeepers to censor out musical forms they considered impure or imitations. The Black jockeys sincerely felt that Black musical creations were superior to the music of whites, and the

³²⁰ Kip Lornell, "Happy in the Service of the Lord:" Afro-American Gospel Quartets in Memphis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 118.

³²¹ Another benefit involved gospel artists procuring more lucrative contracts and performing in "non-sacred" venues.

³²² Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 112.

majority of the artists they played were Black. The jockeys did not feel that their musical choices were discriminatory to white artists, but simply felt that white artists were poor imitators of Black performers.³²³

More black disc jockeys emerged on the scene by the late 1940s, and around this time, radio station managers began enforcing playlists extracted from the top, national record sales listed by Billboard Magazine. Some disc jockeys used popular gospel songs as their theme music for their programs. For example, the Angelic Gospel Singer's "Touch Me Lord Jesus" served as the theme music for over a decade for Ernie Young's radio program on Nashville, Tennessee's WLAC.³²⁴ Gospel music received tremendous airplay in Black urban and rural communities across the country starting in the 1940s into the 1950s; and, Rhythm n' Blues music was emerging as a musical force at the same time that gospel music was receiving airplay.

Broadcasting gospel music over the radio not only helped in disseminating the music, but it also impacted the black church community culturally and pedagogically. In recalling some of her earliest experiences of gospel music, scholar and performer Bernice Reagon Johnson remembers singing in her church's gospel choir that was organized by her sister Fannie, who also played the piano.

It was 1954 – gospel was everywhere...We loved gospel music, and the coming of our own gospel choir our own choir standing in white gospel robes (which my mother made), was so exciting! We learned our songs off the radio, and sometimes Fannie would order sheet music from the Chicago-based gospel publishing companies. Every Sunday morning the local radio station, WGPC, was reserved for Black gospel music. This is where we heard the latest hits on the radio. Mahalia Jackson was one of my favorite singers; the Five Blind Boys of Jackson, Mississippi, were my favorite quartet. I loved the music of the Roberta Martin Singers from Chicago, Illinois, and the Davis Sisters from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.³²⁵

³²³ Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 113.

³²⁴ Boyer, How Sweet the Sound, 113. Ernie Young, who was owner of Ernie's Record Mart in Nashville, was also the president of Nashboro Records. The Angelic Gospel Singers signed with Nashboro in 1955 and did a remake of "Touch Me Lord Jesus."

Rev. Archie Dennis, a former Roberta Martin Singer, recalls how the radio and records influenced his appreciation of gospel music.

AD: Wherever there was gospel, like WAMO. Uh, WPIT had sacred music, they didn't always gospel. But wherever they had Mary Dee – she was one of our djs for gospel music in the '50s and '60s...

IJ: Did you only listen to gospel on the radio?

AD: For the most part...

IJ: What other artists did you listen to growing up...name some of the groups? Or did you buy records or did you mainly listen to the radio?

AD: Yes...Let's see. Well, all the majors...The Harmonettes. I liked gospel music, I listened to quartets as well, but my dad bought those. But The Gospel Harmonettes, the Caravans, the Davis Sisters, the Roberta Martin Singers, and Mahalia Jackson, Robert Anderson, uh Brother Joe May in St. Louis – people like that, I really appreciated their music. And I would buy their albums. We had 78s, and then we went to 45s, and then the long-play. But they were the people that helped to inspire me.³²⁶

3.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Within the gospel music tradition, most composers are instrumentalists and performers of the style. In establishing the authority of the Visnupur gharana, a school of North Indian music, Charles Capwell illustrates and magnifies the fact that many of the performers were composers as well as scholars. He relates that “in music traditions that invest individuals or a repertory with an aura of authority, the significance of history lies in its ability to establish and recount the origin, acquisition, and transmission of that authority.”³²⁷ In reconstructing a history of the gospel piano style, one must look to the practitioners of gospel music in order to establish the

³²⁵ Bernice Johnson Reagon, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me: The African American Sacred Song Tradition (Abraham Lincoln Lecture)* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2000), 12.

³²⁶ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

³²⁷ See Charles Capwell, “The Interpretation of History and the Foundation of Authority in the Visnupur Gharana of Bengal,” in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, ed. Stephen Blum, et al. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 95.

transmission of that “authority” – hence, the transmission of history. The individual musician is important in shaping music, a musical style, and a musical history. Per Barry Ulanov, in his article on “Jazz: Issues of Identity” (1979), the individual is important in shaping music, a musical style, and a musical history. The two persons instrumental in establishing the African American gospel music, the gospel piano, and the gospel piano history were Arizona Dranes and Thomas A. Dorsey.

3.2.1 Arizona Dranes (1894-1963)

Information on Arizona Juanita Dranes³²⁸ is minimal and sketchy. She was born the third of five children³²⁹ on April 4, 1894 in Greenville, Texas, some forty- five miles northeast of Dallas. Her father was surnamed Dranes and her mother’s name was Cora Jones.³³⁰ While a still a young child, Dranes became blind as a result of an influenza outbreak. She became a student at the Texas Institute for Deaf, Dumb and Blind Colored Youths³³¹ in Austin, Texas from 1896

³²⁸ Also referred to as Juanita Arizona Dranes. Some recording sources refer to “Arizona” as a pseudonym for “Juanita.”

³²⁹ Her siblings were named Millie, Milton, Rome, and Bill.

³³⁰ Many sources cite Dranes’ birth in 1904 in Dallas, TX, along with other spurious dates. Taken from her death certificate, music critic Michael Corcoran sets forth April 4, 1894 as the date of Dranes’ birth. See Corcoran, 2005, 48-50. Furthermore, Corcoran’s 2007 article with the Austin-Statesman supplants previous information about Dranes being raised in the Dallas, with her now being raised in Austin. See Michael Corcoran, “First Recorded Gospel Pianist got her start in Austin: A Recent Discovery Rewrites What We Know about Arizona Dranes”. Austin American-Statesman March 1, 2007.

³³¹ Later, it became known as the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School. This new finding supplants previous scholarly postulations of her losing her sight as a result of the 1918-19 influenza epidemic that swept through the country. Historian Paul Oliver’s contention was that Dranes was likely exposed to the disease while in Memphis at the COGIC’s Convention.

until 1910.³³² While at the Institute, Dranes received musical instruction from Miss B. M. Boyd and Lizzie B. Wells.

Some time after 1910, Dranes moved to Dallas, Texas and was part of a rich musical and religious environment. She lived in the (now historic) uptown, State- Thomas neighborhood of Dallas, which was racially diverse. State-Thomas was not located far from the Deep Ellum district, which was a hotbed for blues and jazz in the 1920s and 1930s.³³³ From this environment, it seems highly plausible that these secular musical styles informed the forging of her unique brand of “sanctified” pianistic styling. Dranes cultivated a classically, idiomatic pianistic style that was reminiscent of the Texas barrelhouse and fast boogie-woogie piano music that emanated from the Deep Ellum district. As a member of the Church of God in Christ denomination,³³⁴ Dranes began singing and playing the piano in her community for various church programs and services, conventions, and convocations. By the early 1920s, her pianistic ability enabled her to travel throughout the South and the Midwest with various COGIC preaching revivalists, serving as their accompanist and song leader, and assisting them in the establishment of new churches.

Dranes’ experience from her missionary journeys further fortified her vocal and pianistic style. While living in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Dranes was encouraged to record her music by her pastor, the late Bishop Samuel Crouch. Typically, female vocalists from the Sanctified tradition tended to have very strong, raucous, and sonorous voices, which were necessary in

³³² The school’s enrollment record from 1896-1897 lists Dranes from Sherman, TX – a town within the same vicinity as Greenville, yet some 60 miles northeast of Dallas.

³³³ Deep Ellum was in a poor and uneducated section of town. Artists such as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Alex Moore, a Buster Smith played in this area. See Alan B. Govenar and Jay F. Brakefield, Deep Ellum and Central Track: Where the Black and White Worlds of Dallas Converged (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1997).

³³⁴ See Chapter 2 for a brief history of the Church of God in Christ.

order to facilitate that particular type of worship experience.³³⁵ Dranes' voice evinced penetrating emotion and the aforementioned qualities, and her pianistic style was a fusion of religious, ragtime, and barrelhouse techniques. After Okeh's talent scout Richard M. Jones heard the young, blind Dranes singing and playing piano in Dallas, Texas, he invited her to Chicago to record. Dranes eventually moved to Chicago in 1926 and began recording. After Dranes made her initial recordings for Okeh in June 1926, she eventually recruited Rev. F. W. McGee³³⁶ and his Jubilee Singers to provide the vocal background for her subsequent recordings in November 1926. The four songs that she recorded with them were call and response – the quintessential song structure of shout songs used in congregational singing in most Pentecostal churches. Her pre-Depression recordings reflect an amalgamation of fiery pianistic playing and spirited singing. Dranes was the first female pianist from the Church of God in Christ (and any denomination) to make a recording, and she also played for other preachers' recordings.³³⁷ After

³³⁵ See Chapter 2 for a thorough explanation of the Sanctified church service.

³³⁶ Ford Washington McGee was born on October 5, 1890 in Tennessee, but was raised in Hillsboro, Texas. McGee's parents were farmers, and his mother was a descendant of Booker T. Washington. (See Liner notes from "Religious Music: Ceremonial & congregational" vol. 1) McGee received degrees from Paul Quinn College (Waco, TX) and South Carolina State University, and became a teacher. He was also trained in the Methodist faith and became pastor of a Methodist Church. In 1918, McGee left the Methodist Church to become a part of the Church of God in Christ – of which he was attracted to its doctrine and energetic worship style. It was probably during this period, that Dranes and McGee met in Texas. By 1920, McGee abandoned his teaching career to pursue pastoring and preaching full-time. McGee was known as a faith healer and evangelist of the COGIC who traveled throughout Oklahoma, Kansas, and Iowa. Through his tent revivals, he was able to attract a large following and introduce many to COGIC doctrine and practices. McGee moved to Chicago in 1925 where he also continued his tent revivals. While in Chicago, he made many recordings of his sermons and singing which were accompanied by a quasi-dixieland band. Rev. McGee's popularity as a recording artist drew members to his congregation; by 1929, he had outgrown his tents and built a church.

³³⁷ Dranes served as song leader and pianist for other ministers such as Emmett Morey Page, Riley Felman Williams, and Samuel M. Crouch. See Horace Boyer, How Sweet the Sound, 36. Frazier, referencing the 'invisible church', mentions that "Another qualification which the slave preacher must possess was the ability to sing. From the beginning of religious expression among the slaves which was characterized by the 'shout songs', preaching on the part of the leader was important. This preaching consisted of singing sacred songs which have come to be known as the Spirituals... Usually, the singing of the Spirituals has accompanied the 'shouting' or holy dancing which has characterized this ecstatic form of religious worship among Negroes." See Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 18.

returning home to Sherman, Texas, Okeh summoned Dranes back to Chicago in 1928 to record six more songs. Dranes' recordings not only catapulted her to stardom, but they premiered music that became staples of the Church of God in Christ.

Dranes' lamentably brief recording career from 1926 to 1928 was plagued by illness, a number of missed opportunities, financial woes with Okeh, and the onset of the Depression. While she eventually fell into obscurity, she continued her pre-Okeh musical practices of playing at church and for groups, touring around the country, and remaining intimately connected to the Church of God in Christ; and she may have resided in Oklahoma City and Memphis for periods of time throughout the 30s and 40s. According to gospel historian Ray Funk, Dranes' last-known advertised concert was held in Cleveland, Ohio in 1947.³³⁸ By 1948, Dranes moved to Los Angeles, California, became a member of Emmanuel Church of God in Christ, and served as a missionary of the church until her death on July 27, 1963.

3.2.2 Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993)

The life of T. A. Dorsey has been documented in a number of sources.³³⁹ Michael Harris' work on Gospel Blues admirably recounts Dorsey's life, from which most of the following particulars emerge.

Thomas Andrew Dorsey, born in Villa Rica, Georgia in 1899, showed music promise as a young child. His attraction and enculturation to music was stimulated by his father, a Baptist revivalist preacher, and mother, an organist. After moving to Atlanta in 1910, Dorsey came

³³⁸ See Ray Funk's liner notes from Preachin' the Gospel Holy Blues (Columbia Legacy, CK 46779).

³³⁹ Information of Dorsey is gleaned from a number of sources: Paul Oliver, "Dorsey, Thomas A(ndrew)", in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol 5. Macmillan, edited by Stanley Sadie, 1980; Michael Harris, The Rise of Gospel Blues; Horace Boyer, How Sweet The Sound (1995); and Heilbut, The Gospel Sound.

under the influence of local, secular pianists – a move that would have an indelible mark on the rest of his musical career. By the age of 12, Dorsey began playing secular music professionally. Eventually, Dorsey began playing piano for traveling blues bands and minstrel “tent shows” under the monikers of “Georgia Tom and “Barrel House Tom.”

Dorsey moved to Chicago during World War I (1916) and studied music at the Chicago College of Composition and Arranging. During this time, he became an agent for Paramount Records and continued to play with blues artists and write songs. Dorsey formed his own Wildcat’s Jazz Band with whom Gertrude “Ma” Rainey (“Mother of the Blues”) performed. Other celebrated artists who Dorsey traveled and played for were: Tampa Red, Les Hite (Whispering Serenaders), Bessie Smith (“Queen of the Blues), and Lionel Hampton. Dorsey’s penchant for arranging and composing music produced such songs like “Riverside Blues,” “She Can Love So Good”, and “You Rascal You”.

Dorsey’s participation and association with “secular” styles of music did not impinge on his lifelong connection with religious music. He was drawn to revival meetings, attended “Colored Night” at a Sunday-Rodeheaver revival,³⁴⁰ and had acquaintances with the famous, fiery black preacher J. M. Gates. At one of annual meetings of the National Baptist Convention that Dorsey attended (Philadelphia), he heard gospel songs by such composers as Charles A. Tindley and Lucie Campbell. Inspired by what he heard, Dorsey abandoned his brash and bawdy secular lyrics, but not the jazz and blues- influenced rhythms that were so akin to Tindley’s style, and began writing religious music. His first gospel hit in 1926 was entitled “If You See My Savior.” Ironically, another one of Dorsey’s gospel song entitled “Someday, Somewhere” was composed in 1928 during the same time that he composed other successful,

³⁴⁰ The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, s.v. “gospel music.”

secular one entitled “Tight Like That.” From the beginning, Dorsey was interested in marketing and promoting his music among the religious community. Mahalia Jackson’s biographer, Laurraine Goreau, notes that Dorsey

...spent a 2-cent stamp for a Baptist magazine with church addresses, borrowed money to print 500 sheets of his first song, *Some Day, Somewhere*, sent out 3400 inquiries – and the gospel mail order business was born: in his bedroom.³⁴¹

After Dorsey met the young Mahalia Jackson in 1928, she began singing Dorsey’s songs on the street corners of the Southside. Goreau continues that,

He asked Mahalia to sing his songs. And would she sell them? He’d give her something. Sure, Mr. Dorsey. ‘She was the only singer who would take my music, then, but Mahalia would stand on a street corner and demonstrate it; then we’d sell a batch: 10 cents each. She was actually about the only gospel singer, besides Sallie Martin when she came in.’ That was in 1929.³⁴²

The first signs of Dorsey’s hard work began to come to fruition by 1930, when two of his gospel songs (“If You See My Savior” and “How About You”) were introduced and warmly received at the National Baptist Convention meeting in Chicago. But even with national attention, Dorsey still struggled to introduce and sell his music in most churches because it was considered anathema. Many church leaders opposed Dorsey’s “rollicking” and “bluesy” accompaniment, rather than the vocal parts – it was considered too “worldly.”³⁴³ Even in the face of opposition, and at times wanting to return to secular music, Dorsey became more determined to uphold the “banner” of gospel music.

After a near terminal bout with an illness, Dorsey devoted himself totally to gospel music by 1929. Dorsey continued composing gospel songs and also organized the first black gospel

³⁴¹ Laurraine Goreau, Just Mahalia, Baby (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975), 56.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ The 1944 article by Arna Bontemps, “Rock Church Rock,” discusses the early history of Dorsey, and the reception of his performing gospel music in churches

choir at Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1931; and then in 1932, Dorsey began serving as the choral director of the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago.³⁴⁴ In one way, these positions provided Dorsey with the impetus for writing more songs, and they also provided him with an “artists-in-residence forum” to display his music. During the early 30s, he made a small number of recordings of his gospel compositions: “If You See My Savior (1932) and “If I Could Hear My Mother Pray” (1934). Dorsey’s most memorable song “Precious Lord” was penned in 1931/32 as a response to the death of his wife and child.

Dorsey organized the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses³⁴⁵ in 1932, with the express purpose of providing a forum for the performance of gospel music, teaching the mechanics of gospel music performance, and disseminating it on a national level. Dorsey’s music was propagated not only by the NCGCC, but also through his own gospel music publishing house which he also founded in 1932. Dorsey still continued to sell his sheet music around the country along with the assistance of such singers as Theodore Frye (1899-1963), Willie Mae Ford Smith (1904-1994), Sallie Martin (1896-1988), and Roberta Martin (1907-1969) which inspired the performance of gospel music among churches and younger singers.³⁴⁶ Dorsey was recognized as a great songwriter whose oeuvre included over 500 religious songs by the time of his death in 1993.

³⁴⁴ Dorsey held this position as Minister of Music for over 50 years - until 1983.

³⁴⁵ This organization is still in existence today – maintaining the mission that Dorsey envisioned from the beginning.

³⁴⁶ Dorsey toured from 1932 to 1944 promulgating gospel around the nation. During this time, he trained countless singers, served as an accompanist for several singers (accompanied Mahalia Jackson from 1937-1946; see Boyer, 1978), and gave hope to other composers who picked up the “gospel torch” (i.e.: Roberta Martin, Herbert Brewster, Sallie Martin, Kenneth Morris).

3.2.3 Protégés

Arizona Dranes' affiliation with the Church of God In Christ brought her in contact with a number of musicians and singers alike, many of whom she directly impacted their music. From COGIC singers like Ernestine Washington, Jessie Mae Hill and Laura Henton,³⁴⁷ to sanctified guitarists like Rosetta Tharpe, and Baptists like Mahalia Jackson Alex Bradford.³⁴⁸ Rosetta Tharpe, also a member of the COGIC denomination, credited Dranes as a predominant influence on her rhythmically infectious and vocally strident style. Likewise, Dorsey decisively influenced numerous musicians in Chicago, through his National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses, and through the National Baptist Convention. Dorsey influenced a coterie of singers and pianists who in turn influenced and trained other musicians in the "Dorsey" tradition. This coterie included such gospel artists as: Willie Mae Ford Smith (gospel singer), Mahalia Jackson (singer), Clara Ward (singer/pianist), Roberta Martin (pianist/singer), James Cleveland (pianist/singer/composer), and Gwendolyn Cooper Lightner (pianist), to name a few. While the focus of this dissertation centers on the trailblazing and ingenuity of Dranes and Dorsey, it in no way seeks to insinuate that other pianists were not crucial in the creation and circulation of the gospel piano style. Furthermore, it is clear that Dranes' and Dorsey's protégés were eventually catapulted into luminous and esteemed positions within gospel music.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Henton was noted for singing "Heavenly Sunshine by the Baptist, gospel composer Lucie E. Campbell.

³⁴⁸ From Liner notes "Religious Music: Ceremonial & congregational" vol. 1. Heilbut reports that Bradford heard Arizona Dranes sing "Thy Servant's Prayer" in his home town at the "America Back to God Day." See Heilbut, 1985, 149-50.

³⁴⁹ Biographical information for the following gospel artists was culled from a number of sources: Horace Boyer, How Sweet the Sound, 1995; Dupree, African-American Good News (Gospel) Music, 1992; and Heilbut, The Gospel Sound, 1985.

Roberta Martin (1907-1969)

A legend in her own right, Roberta Martin was a pivotal and key protégée of Dorsey who became a mobilizing and influential force in gospel music; additionally, Martin was profoundly influenced by the sanctified piano style of Arizona Dranes. Born in Helena, Arkansas but raised in Chicago from the age of ten, Martin began charting her musical course as a concert pianist (Fig. 2). She studied western classical piano music at Northwestern University and the American Conservatory of Music, and made a living accompanying silent-movies. When gospel music was in its embryonic period, Roberta Martin began playing for the Sunday School at Pilgrim Baptist Church. Her attraction to Gospel music was sealed when she heard Bertha Wise and her Singers perform at Pilgrim. Not long afterwards, Martin came under the tutelage of Thomas A. Dorsey at Ebenezer Baptist Church by serving as the pianist for the junior choir that he and Theodore R. Frye directed. This opportunity was a defining moment that changed the direction of Martin's life. From out of that Junior Choir, Martin and Frye formed their own gospel group (Martin-Frye Quartet) with four young men from that Junior Choir: Norsalus McKissick, Willie Webb, Robert Anderson, and James Lawrence (who was soon replaced by Eugene Smith). Upon Frye's departure, the group became known as the Roberta Martin Singers in 1936. With this male group, Martin advocated a heterogenous choral sound, in which each singer's individual voice could be ascertained during performance – a stark difference from the homogenous gospel quartet sound.

The group produced their first recording in 1939, and Martin became one of the first to establish a mixed gospel group by including female voices in the 1940s. Anchored by her

smoothly rich alto voice and classic piano style, the Roberta Martin Singers introduced a polished and refined sound to the gospel music.³⁵⁰ With the omission of the bass voice,

the unique harmonic sound created by this particular voicing was mellow and smooth, with dynamic nuances that ebbed and flowed and a timing that was almost imperceptibly 'behind' the beat...[and] the blending of male and female voice in complementary fashion was accomplished by the superior musicianship each singer brought to the group.³⁵¹

For over some thirty years, the group's members have included such gospel greats as: Eugene Smith (who sang with Martin from 1947 until her death in 1969), Norsalus McKissick, Romance Watson, Archie Dennis, Sammy Lewis, Lucy Smith Collier, Delois Barrett Campbell, Louise McCord, and Bessie Folk.

Martin is credited with being the greatest teacher of gospel singers. For nearly four decades she accepted young singers and pianists as students in her group. Among the famous gospel musicians who started as members of the Roberta Martin Singers are Willie Webb, Delores Barrett, the Gay Sisters (Mildred and Evelyn), Myrtle Scott, Myrtle Jackson, Robert Anderson, Gloria Griffin, Alex Bradford, and the Rev. James Cleveland.³⁵²

With a recorded oeuvre of over 100 songs, the Roberta Martin Singers' most popular recordings include, "Old Ship of Zion," "Only A Look," "Grace," "God Specializes," and "God is Still on The Throne." Not only did the Roberta Martin Singers create and model the classic gospel sound, but Roberta Martin aided in engineering and modeling the classic gospel piano accompaniment throughout the 1940s and 50s. Echoing that same sentiment, Rev. Charles Walker states,

I think with Roberta Martin, gospel music playing began to really crystallize its own style. When you heard Thomas Dorsey, you knew that was honky-tonk, that was the blues. But with Roberta Martin, we have the beginnings of a distinctive gospel idiom.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Boyer, How Sweet The Sound, 67.

³⁵¹ Pearl Williams-Jones, "Roberta Martin: Spirit of an Era", 258.

³⁵² Boyer, "Gospel Music", 36. Delois Barrett became known as Delois Barrett Campbell.

Boyer sums up the significance of her contributing by noting that “Roberta Martin played gospel with the nuances of a Horowitz, the inventions of an Ellington, and the power of an Erroll Garner, all the while playing ‘straight from the church.’”³⁵⁴

Roberta Martin was a prolific gospel composer who launched her own publishing company in 1939, the Roberta Martin Studio of Music. She was renowned for producing distinctively classic arrangements of hymns, spirituals, and newly-composed gospel music; and, her publishing company also featured the music of other budding gospel composers varying from James Cleveland to Alex Bradford. By the 1950s, Martin focused her energies in Chicago and allowed “Little” Lucy to serve as the Roberta Martin Singers’ accompanist when they traveled. Along with her husband, James Austin³⁵⁵, they taught music at the studio and operated their publishing business. Her gospel sheet-music business was very lucrative, at a time when gospel choirs sang with sheet music and songbooks – which she shipped all over the country. Roberta Martin was the embodiment of an autonomous gospel production/business - laying claim of her entrepreneurial stake in multi-faceted ways: 1) she published her own songs, 2) her group only sang her songs published by her company, and 3) she always sold her company’s published music at their performances. She served as the music director at Chicago’s Mount Pisgah Baptist Church from 1956 until 1968. Martin’s musical legacy was so pervasive and far-reaching within the African-American community, that her funeral was attended by over 50,000 people, and the United States Postal Service honored her with a commemorative stamp in 1998.

³⁵³ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

³⁵⁴ Boyer, 1992, Well Understand... 286.

³⁵⁵ She met and married “Little Lucy’s dad (James Austin) in 1947, and they adopted a boy named Sonny. James Austin, who played in a band, took over managing the Music Studio by the 1960s.

Thomas Shelby (1900 -1972)

Thomas Shelby was a protégé of Lucie Campbell, serving as the pianist for the Good Will Singers of the National Baptist Convention. Campbell was instrumental in helping to develop Shelby's pianistic style, even though she played a "plunking" piano style; and, she even helped to finance some of Shelby's education. Shelby played in Memphis for a number of years before moving to Detroit to serve as minister of music for Rev. C. L. Franklin's New Bethel Baptist church for over forty-five years.³⁵⁶ While there, Shelby served as Aretha Franklin's first piano teacher.

Kenneth Morris (1917 – 1988)

Kenneth Morris is primarily recognized in gospeldom as a composer and publisher, but he was also a pianist and organist. Morris was born and raised in New York, and began playing piano for his church's Sunday School and youth programs. With jazz exorcising its clenching grip in post-war New York, Morris became a jazz musician; also, he attended the City College of New York and Manhattan Conservatory of Music. While performing with his jazz ensemble in Chicago, Morris became ill and decided to stay in Chicago to recuperate – this decision led to him remaining in Chicago for the rest of his life. Morris' career in gospel music began when he replaced Charles Pace in 1937 as the staff arranger for Lillian E. Bowles publishing house. From the experience gained there, he teamed up with Sallie Martin in 1940 to establish the largest gospel music publishing house, Martin and Morris Studio of Music. Their venture secured Sallie Martin as one of the wealthiest black gospel artists of the postwar period. As the "Dean of

³⁵⁶ See Boyer, *How Sweet The Sound*, 133.

African-American Gospel Composers,”³⁵⁷ Morris composed over 300 songs. Some of his most beloved compositions are “Just A Closer Walk With Thee” (1940), “Christ is All” (1946), and “Yes, God is Real” (1944).

While in Chicago, Morris served as a music director of Rev. Clarence Cobb’s First Church of Deliverance, where he first introduced and played the Hammond organ in 1939. Later, he would introduce the Hammond on Mahalia Jackson’s 1947 recording of “Move on Up A Little Higher.”³⁵⁸

Willie Webb (1919-1997)

Heralded as a fine singer, pianist, and composer, Willie Webb was considered to be the first great organist in gospel music. Webb, when he was a young child, migrated to Chicago from Mississippi. As a young man, he began singing gospel music in the Junior Choir under Roberta Martin and Theodore Frye at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Chicago. He sang with the Martin-Frye Quartet and eventually the Roberta Martin Singers. Mentored early on by Roberta Martin, he began to accompany the Roberta Martin Singers on organ along with Martin, and on piano whenever Martin did not play.

After his tenure with the Martin Singers, Webb launched out and formed an all male group, and then a mixed-group known as the Willie Webb Singers. With this group, Webb is credited with being responsible for introducing Alex Bradford to the broader gospel community. Following Martin’s model, Webb, too, used his group to introduce and showcase his

³⁵⁷ Reagon, We’ll Understand It Better By and By, 309.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 311.

compositions. His popular compositions were “Every Day and Every Hour”, “He’s All I Need” and “I’m Bound for Higher Ground.”

Throughout his career, Webb played for Evangelistic Temple Church of God In Christ under the pastorate of Elder A. A. Childs, True Light Baptist Church under Rev. B.F. Paxton, and Fellowship Baptist Church. In the 1950s, he accompanied Mahalia Jackson along with Mildred Falls. Their Falls-Webb Ensemble recorded the “Come On Children, Let’s Sing” album. During the late 1940s, Rev. Charles Walker, a then young and budding musician, remembers being enthralled by Willie Webb:

IJ: So what would you say about Willie Webb?

CW:And see, when I started playing for Myrtle Scott, Willie Webb was organist at Fellowship. The very first performance I played for Myrtle Scott was at Fellowship Baptist Church in the late ‘40s – somewhere around ‘47, ‘48, or ‘49. That was when I was introduced personally to Willie Webb and heard him play – and I was mesmerized, kind of harmonically. His organ playing was smooth. And as I was saying that Roberta Martin was developing a distinctive gospel sound, Willie Webb’s organ playing to me, was a distinctive gospel organ sound that was advanced. You didn’t hear anybody else doing on the organ what Willie Webb did. It was, as in the piano-pushing boundaries, his organ-playing was pushing the boundaries, but it was distinctively gospel.

IJ: And his style – talk about his style?

CW: Ooooooh. It was a beautiful style with flare and harmonically well thought out – cerebral without losing soul. When I listened to him, you knew there was genius intellect behind the creative exercise, and that there was also spiritual fire. It was the best combination of any organist that I can recall.

IJ: Best combination?

CW: Of the cerebral and the spirit. And I’ve heard a lot of organists, and he was the epitome of the mélange of – usually a cerebral organist was not as equally fiery, or the fiery one was not as equally cerebral. But he was both. Whenever he played, you knew that there was a strong mind, a genius mind behind the things he did – and he did it almost effortless. So he was great.

IJ: Now did Willie Webb play like a COGIC or sanctified musician?

CW: Oh yes, but it was smooth.

IJ: But he was smooth? Driving but smooth?

CW: Ooooooh, yeah, like silk...His was symmetric. While it’s driving you crazy, there was a symmetry and order with his playing. I’m telling you, one time I was playing and what he was doing was so fantastic, I lost what I was doing (laugh) – you know, listening to what he was doing.

Margaret Wells Allison (1921-)

Margaret Allison moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from McCormick, South Carolina when she was four years old. As a young child, her family worshipped at Little Temple Pentecostal Church. Allison began studying the piano at age twelve and became the pianist at B. M. Oakley Memorial Church of God in Christ. She became involved in a gospel chorus called the Spiritual Echoes, where she “learned how to arrange for female voices, compose songs, play and sing at the same time, and introduce a song to an audience.”³⁵⁹ From the members of the Spiritual Echoes, Margaret Allison organized the Angelic Gospel Singers in 1944 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The members consisted of herself, her sister Josephine McDowell (tenor), and two friends, Lucille Shird and Ella Mae Norris. After receiving a warm reception from Pentecostal congregations in Philadelphia, the Angelic Gospel Singers performed in the Carolinas, and then began touring nationally within the gospel circuit, as well as their denominational circuit.

When gospel promoter and songwriter Otis Jackson heard them, he was so impressed that he took them to a local Philadelphia record producer, with whom they recorded their very first record on the Gotham Record label. Allison’s arrangement of Lucie E. Campbell’s (a Baptist composer) “Touch Me Lord Jesus” (1949) was an instant success, selling over 100,000 copies. The Angelic’s recordings of “Jesus, When Trouble Burden Me Down” and “Glory to the Newborn King” were also popular, but never rivaled the success of “Touch Me Lord Jesus.” With all of the members hailing from the Carolinas, the Angelic Gospel Singers captured that time-honored southern church musical ethos in their style; namely, a heterophonous texture, note-bending and sliding, meaningful repetition, and a percussive approach. The Angelic Gospel Singers represented a female-type of

³⁵⁹ Boyer, How Sweet The Sound, 112.

quartet singing, and Allison was noted for her leads and her wonderful “down-home” piano style.

According to Johnny Lloyd, Philadelphia gospel singer and historian,

...She just gets down. [Mimicking a piano] “Domp-domp-domp-domp-domp-domp...Domp...She has a true traditional sound. You can tell she’s from uh an era in gospel that’s long gone or have been forgotten by many...There’s something about her playing where she has uh—She has a discipline in it and yet uh...It’s like between the Baptists—me [laughs] uh...and the Pentecostal. She’s like in between there...”³⁶⁰

Archie Dennis, formerly of the Roberta Martin Singers, adds that

Her playing and all was outstanding, because you always knew the Angelics when they sang because of the way they sang and the way she played...She played like they sang if that makes sense. She was fitted for them if you know what I mean. And even now, years later, when you hear them on the radio, my mind goes back, and you know who it is. Before anybody says the Angelics, you know...”³⁶¹

Although the Angelic gospel Singers worked with numerous gospel artists, their greatest collaboration was with the Dixie Hummingbirds, with whom they toured together and recorded several singles.³⁶² Besides being the founder, Allison operated as the lead singer, pianist, manager, and mainstay for the Angelic Gospel Singers. Personnel changes began to occur in the 1950s with the departure of Shird and Norris, and Bernice Cole was added in 1951; by 1961, a man was added (Thomas Mobley).

Clara Ward (1924-1973) - WARD SINGERS

The Ward Singers were organized in 1947 by Mother Gertrude Ward. Born in South Carolina on April 19, 1901 to Hannah and Dave Murphy, Gertrude grew up at the Ebenezer Baptist Church

³⁶⁰ Johnny Lloyd, Personal Interview with Author.

³⁶¹ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

³⁶² Such songs were “In The Morning When the Dark Clouds Roll Away” and “Wondering Which Way to Go.” They recorded a total of six singles together.

in Anderson, South Carolina. After meeting and marrying her husband, George Ward, the couple moved to Philadelphia in the early 1920s. After relocating, the Wards gave birth to three children; Willarena, George Jr. (who died at six months), and Clara. In 1931, Gertrude Ward served as a soloist for the Senior Choir, a Sunday School teacher, and secretary for the Baptist Young People's Union at the Ebenezer Baptist Church of Philadelphia. After leaving Ebenezer, Gertrude Ward continued her church affiliation at the Faith Tabernacle Baptist church where she served as a soloist and organized the Eureka Glee Chorus.

Prior to organizing the famous Ward Singers, Mother Ward received a vision from the Lord in 1931 instructing her to quit her domestic work and to begin singing the gospel. The Consecrated Gospel Singers, organized in 1933, was a family group consisting of Gertrude Ward, and her daughters Clara and Willa (on piano). At their first anniversary celebration in 1934, Thomas A. Dorsey and Sallie Martin accepted the invitation to participate on the program – which was their first appearance in the northeastern part of the country. This gospel trio created quite a stir on the east coast and throughout the South, but their 1943 performance at the National Baptist Convention in Chicago, Illinois catapulted them into a national sensation. By 1943 Clara began leading the group musically while Mother Ward remained the business and managing “force.” Two additional singers, Henrietta Waddy and Marion Williams, a powerful singer from Miami, were added by 1947, and the group became known as the Ward Singers. It was also at this time that they began recording. Marion Williams swiftly became the star, and was legendary for her vocal pyrotechnics that included octave-spanning leaps into falsetto.³⁶³

With Williams' voice as the trademark of the group (and the addition of Kitty Parham and Frances Steadman), the Ward Singers soared to success with their first, million-seller hit,

³⁶³ As source of inspiration for rocker Little Richard.

“Surely God Is Able” – the first group in gospel music to achieve such acclaim. Throughout the group’s tenure, other members included: Robert Banks, Ethel Gilbert, Jessie Tucker, Buddy Mack Simpkins, Esther Ford, Vermettya Royster, Thelma Bumpess, Martha Bass, and Christine Jackson. Some of the group’s other successful recordings were: “I’m Climbing Higher and Higher,” “Packin’ Up,” and “Traveling Shoes.” Mother Ward eventually established a total of three groups that operated under the monikers of the Clara Ward Specials (began in 1951) and the Ward Singers, of which she kept saddled with engagements.³⁶⁴ Gertrude Ward also opened a publishing company, The Clara Ward House of Music, which served as the primary organ for disseminating the Ward’s sheet music. The Ward Singer’s legacy rests in Gertrude Ward’s ability to assemble phenomenal musical talent that combined to produce superb musical material, and creative and pioneering arrangements. Besides the male gospel quartets who employed switch-lead tactics, the Ward Singers was the first female gospel group to use this feature in their arrangements.

As the subject of constant criticism from religious purists, the Ward Singers donned extravagant clothes and performed gospel outside church venues. In an industry flanked by the dictum of “it not being about form or fashion,” the Ward Singers “pushed the ‘decorum’ envelope” in many ways. They wore colorful choir robes, ornate gowns, sequined dress, flashy jewelry, heavy makeup, elaborate hairstyles and wigs, and towering heels - the total antithesis (according to the more “sanctified” denominationalists) of how “saints” should present themselves. The attire was equally rivaled by their flamboyantly, commercialized antics that were perceived as buffoonery and denigrating, not only to gospel music, but to the broader African American musical tradition.

³⁶⁴ One group was headed by Gertrude Ward, one by Willa Ward, and the other by Clara Ward.

Throughout the '50s and '60s, the Ward Singers inspired audiences at colleges and universities, jazz and cultural festivals, fairs, and supper clubs. They were one of the first gospel groups to appear at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival. Some of these concerts were hosted at notable clubs such as the Copacabana, Village Vanguard, Bitter End, Blue Angel and Village Gate in New York, the Stardust, Desert Inn, and Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, the Troubador in Los Angeles, the Jazz Workshop in Boston, the Embassy in Toronto, the Forty Thieves in Bermuda, and the Chevron Hotel in Sydney, Australia.³⁶⁵ Of the Ward Singers, Rev. Herbert Brewster remarked that they had taken gospel music "Out of the Amen corner, onto the street corner!"³⁶⁶ The group made television appearances with Dennis Morley, Mike Douglass, Mary Griffin, Joey Bishop, and even on the Robert Goulet Special, Johnny Carson, and Ed Sullivan Show. Their film appearances included "Spree" and "A Time to Sing," which featured a stirring performance of Clara singing "Blessed Assurance."

Clara Ward was born in Philadelphia on April 21, 1924. She sang her first solo at the age of five at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Philadelphia and began playing piano at the age of eight.³⁶⁷ According to her sister, as a young child, Clara exhibited

³⁶⁵ Gospel News Journal 8/4&5 (1973): 14-15. (Personal copy)

³⁶⁶ Record Liner notes. Mary Katherine Aldin, June 1994 The Clara Ward Singers: Meetin' Tonight!. Vanguard reissue LP 9101 and LP9135.

³⁶⁷ "We were especially ecstatic one Christmas, after we had been 'playing' the windowsill as if it were a keyboard, when Santa brought a toy piano. We plunked that thing to death. Although I had learned to read notes in school, I couldn't play an instrument, but I sure played at playing the ivories. We pretended to be turning sheet music for each other. The one playing would swing her arms back and forth with such gusto, she would almost lose balance, but would manage a graceful sway on the up and down swing. The page turner always put quite an artful effort into that as well. We couldn't have played harder at a real concert. A few years later, during one of several times we lived with Aunt Clara and Uncle Hamlin, the one thing that had us mesmerized was their lovely player piano. Hamlin and Clara's son, James Burton, played piano, vibes, guitar, and organ, and Clara and I loved to listen to him. But the big thrill was when he put one of the many popular music rolls in the player piano. We watched in awe as the keys magically depressed and all the wonderful music poured out. This was really our first introduction to the mechanics of piano playing. We memorized the key depressions in sequence and practiced them so that, in

...a special quality and natural talent for Gospel music. Those tiny fingers stretched and maneuvered to work that F sharp to the max. Eventually I taught Clara what I had learned and there was no stopping her after that.³⁶⁸

Throughout the 1930s, Clara accompanied the North Carolina Junior Quartet (under the management of Mr. McCrae), and the Rev. James C. Edwards "...who sang weekdays at several churches and broadcast radio concerts on Sunday nights from the New Central Baptist Church."³⁶⁹ On a grander gospel scale, Clara also served as an accompanist for Mary Johnson Davis and the Bertha Wise and her Male Chorus. By the early 1940s, Willa Ward reports that

Clara's singing and playing abilities rapidly gained in intensity and complexity throughout her girlhood, aided by the ten-inch, 78-RPM records of the era, which we played on a hand-cranked Victrola phonograph. Two of her singing idols were Queen C. Anderson and Clara Hudson, known as the 'Georgia Peach.' The piano playing of blind Arizono Francis, who recorded as early as (p. 61) 1936 for the golden Gate label, was full and pulsatingly vital. It served to reinforce and fine-tune Clara's development of a like style that was hers from the beginning.³⁷⁰

As Clara's musical skill developed, she assumed the musical helm of the Ward Singers and became its driving creative force. Under the watchful, unerring eye of her mother,³⁷¹ Clara received wide acclaim as a gifted singer, songwriter, director, and pianist. When Marion Williams joined the Ward Singers as a soloist, Clara began accompanying the group more on piano. Her piano style was greatly influenced by Thomas Dorsey and Arizona Dranes.

"How I Got Over," written by Clara Ward, was her most popular solo recording to reach gold status like "Surely God Is Able." The Ward's House of Music was opened in 1953 in

time, we could play some of the simpler tunes. When we picked out melodies by ear, though, we played only on the black keys." Ward-Royster, How I Got Over, 13.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 36-37.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 37.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 60-61.

³⁷¹ Clara experienced a great deal of pressure from her mother's dogged tenacity and business acumen.

response to the public's high demand for Clara's compositions and arrangements. Other compositions included "Come in the Room," and "When He Spoke." Clara Ward's influence was pervasive inside and outside of the church. A young Aretha Franklin was stimulated to pursue a singing career after hearing Clara Ward sing Thomas Dorsey's "There Will Be Peace in the Valley" at a funeral in Detroit. After suffering a stroke and subsequent heart attack, Clara Ward died on January 16, 1973. In 1998, the United Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp of Clara Ward which honored her contribution to gospel music.

Willa Ward Royster (1921-)

Ward's parents purchased their very own Lester piano in the 1930s while they lived at 1908 North 18th Street in Philadelphia. It was at this point that her parents were able to afford piano lessons for her. In regards to gospel music, Willa Ward-Royster relates that she "just picked it up at my Aunt Clara's house. She had a piano...I picked it up then. And I learned how to read music when I was nine."³⁷² Ward-Royster learned gospel from simply absorbing her musically rich environment at church and home, for her parents and aunt and uncle sang in the church choir.

"I could hear a song and could just play it .Like the people would, uh, get up and testify once a month at Communion and they'd start singing a song and we could just hear it and pick out the key and play it."³⁷³

Willa began playing gospel music in 1935 at the age of fourteen, accompanying her mother. She states that "My first professional job of that sort, at fourteen, was with Anna Smallwood and the choir at Christian Hope Baptist Church, for which I was paid \$1.50 a week.

³⁷²Willa Ward-Royster, Personal interview with author.

³⁷³ Willa Ward-Royster, Personal interview with author.

And when Mom supplemented her income by giving hour-long vocal lessons (at fifty cents an hour), I had the job of accompanying her students.”³⁷⁴ Ward-Royster went on to play for other churches in the Philadelphia area: Mt. Sinai Baptist, St. Joseph Baptist, Mutchmore Memorial Baptist, and All Thankful Baptist.

With a lighter touch than Clara’s, Willa was the initial pianist for the Ward Singers. As a child, Ward-Royster loved listening to the radio and to records, and always had a fondness for secular music. Her music idols were James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, and Erroll Garner. Years later, Willa studied piano with jazz great James Weldon Lane.³⁷⁵ She began playing classical, popular music, show tunes, blues and jazz in white supper clubs in 1958, after she was “excommunicated” from the church because of her aforementioned secular activity.³⁷⁶ In 1963, Willa organized her own gospel group who did a variety of music, and even performed three times at Radio City Music Hall.

Evelyn Starks (1922-)

Both Evelyn Starks (piano) and Mildred Miller (lead, soprano) decided to form a group from some of the 1940 National Baptist Convention choir participants that met in Birmingham, Alabama. They chose Odessa Edwards (contralto), Vera Conner Kolb (first soprano), Willie Mae Newberry (alto) and originally called themselves the Gospel Harmonizers.³⁷⁷ This newly formed group gained local acclaim as radio singers over the air waves of WSGN, and by

³⁷⁴ Ward-Royster, How I Got Over, 37.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Willa Ward-Royster, Personal Interview with Author.

³⁷⁷ When married, their names changed to Evelyn Starks Hardy, Mildred Miller Howard, and Willie Mae Newberry Garth.

traveling with evangelist Bishop Williams and Arizona Dranes.³⁷⁸ Eventually, they changed their name to the Original Gospel Harmonettes per the suggestion of a record producer. Dorothy Love Coates joined the group as lead singer in 1950. Known for their shouting, visceral, quartet-like style, the Original Gospel Harmonettes became “drum majors” by which others followed. “Odessa could mc like nobody else. She would set up a song, and you’d “get happy” before they ever sang it. She had a way of communicating. And you would have thought she was a preaching lady the way she presented it.”³⁷⁹ Not only did they influence other gospel artists, but they also influenced secular artists like Little Richard.

In their early years, Starks served as their pianist who composed and arranged all of their songs. She was noted for her sanctified manner of playing. Because of family obligations, Starks stopped touring with the group in 1953, but still participated on recordings. By 1955 she returned to teaching public school,³⁸⁰ and Pickard replaced her as pianist. Her arrangement of “No Hiding Place” appeared on the 1990 movie soundtrack of Ghost.

Jeff Banks (1927 – 1997)

Jeff Banks came of age in gospel music as an accompanist for the legendary Mary Johnson Davis.³⁸¹ Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Jeff Banks, along with his brother and sister

³⁷⁸ Darden, People Get Ready, 252.

³⁷⁹ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

³⁸⁰ Most of the Harmonettes were teachers: Vera Kolb and Odessa Edwards.

³⁸¹ Mary Johnson Davis (1899-1982) was a formidable gospel singer throughout the 1930s and 1940s who influenced such artists as Mahalia Jackson and Clara Ward. Before forming the Mary Johnson Davis Singer in the mid-1940s, she organized the Davis-Wise Gospel Singers in the early ‘40s, consisting of Bertha Wise, E. Clifford Davis (her husband – himself a gospel composer), and herself. Recognized as a pure and powerful soprano with artful control, Davis only recorded three times throughout her career. According to Johnny Lloyd, in 1955 Mary Johnson Davis relocated and married Rev. Benjamin J. Small (pastor of New St. John Baptist Church) of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She also became vice-president of the Philadelphia Victory Choral Union, which was organized

(Charles and Lucie), Bernice Johnson (Davis' sister), John Walters Davis (Davis' stepson),³⁸² Robert Ross,³⁸³ Frances Stedman, and Thelma Jackson were members of the Mary Johnson Davis Singers. The Banks began singing with the group in 1947, with Jeff as the accompanist. Of Davis' impact as a soloist, Johnny Lloyd states that

...although I don't remember that time because that was the 30s...I'm told by Eugene Smith of Chicago of the Roberta Martin Singers that they were awesome...He said that when he first met Mrs. Davis in the 30s—he said to Roberta Martin...He said 'oh that lady is too pretty to sing gospel.' And he said 'she killed us.' 'We', he said 'we could not sit in our seats. She tore the church up.' And of course she was in her late 30s then.³⁸⁴

By 1953, Jeff and his brother Charles left Davis' group to launch out on their own as the Famous Banks Brothers. They enjoyed success with their recording of "I've Got A Witness" and solidified a style³⁸⁵ that would be mimicked by other male duos. Even though both Banks brothers became ministers and eventually organized their own churches, they remained intimately connected with gospel performance practice. After Charles Banks began pastoring Greater Harvest Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey, Jeff moved with him to serve as his minister of music. From out of Greater Harvest Church, Charles formed the 60-voiced Back Home Choir in 1957, which began recording on the Vee-Jay label in the 1960s. Jeff would accompany the choir on piano,

by Mrs. Dorothy Pearson. Of Mary Johnson Davis, Lloyd recalls that "I think that I vividly remember I had to be about five...And she was singing "Come Ye, Disconsolate"...and as a five-year-old, I didn't know why these folks were hollering around me...All I know is that this woman And she was elegant...very elegant...And-and a beautiful lady—a beautiful lady...And uh she sang "Come Ye, Disconsolate"...and well it was over! When she was over, it was over, because the Spirit had fallen. And they had a time getting it back together to go on with the program. She was known for that song." Johnny Lloyd, Personal Interview with author.

³⁸² Following in the footsteps of his father as a gospel composer, John Walters Davis wrote "Tired Lord, My Soul Needs Resting."

³⁸³ Ross went on to experience great success with the Banks Brothers.

³⁸⁴ Johnny Lloyd, Personal Interview with author.

³⁸⁵ Their style included: harmony a third above the melody; call and response;

and many times Charles would get on the organ and play.³⁸⁶ Jeff went on to found and pastor Revival Temple Holiness Church of God in Christ³⁸⁷ (and became a bishop) in Newark, and organized its choir in 1976 that eventually produced several recordings well into the 1990s on the Malaco label. Archie Dennis, long-time friend and colleague of the Banks, remembered that they were

...fine people, but they both could have been comedians had they not been in ministry. And that's something that stands out. They loved people, you know, and uh, it it showed. And I don't recall a sermon that I've heard Bishop Banks preach, but that sense of humor and loving people is the thing that really stands out in my mind.³⁸⁸

Gwendolyn Cooper Lightner (1927-)³⁸⁹

After completing high school in her native Brookport, Illinois, Gwendolyn Cooper Lightner attended Southern Illinois University (Carbondale) and the Lyon and Healy Music School (Chicago). Lightner was professionally trained in Western art music, and was not initially interested in performing. While in Chicago, Lightner established connections within the gospel community and began singing with and accompanying the Emma L. Jackson Singers. When Lightner relocated to California in the mid-'40s, she accompanied the Echos of Eden Choir under the direction of Prof. J. Earle Hines at the St. Paul Baptist Church. She, along with Hines was instrumental in developing this 100-plus voiced Echoes of Eden choir into a choir patterned after the Chicago style – full aspirated sound, three-four part harmony, and spirited singing. Her piano accompaniment could be heard on the Sunday evening broadcasts of the St. Paul Baptist

³⁸⁶ Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

³⁸⁷ The church's name was eventually changed to Revival Temple Center of Deliverance.

³⁸⁸ Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

³⁸⁹ Biographical information obtained from Djedje, 1998, chp. 4.

Church that reached some million listeners. The choir was known for their 1947 recording of Dorsey's "God Be With You" which is the benedictory staple of African American churches.³⁹⁰ "Lightner's piano style, which was different from that used by early performers of gospel in Los Angeles, made such an impact that Eugene Smallwood stated that

...she's about the best. She really is the one who put the 'ump' in gospel playing. Others played it as they saw it, but she's the one whose fingers interpreted the soul of the gospel music...She's about the 'Queen of Gospel' when it comes down to playing.³⁹¹

Lightner opened her own music studio (Los Angeles Gospel Music Mart) and taught many how to play gospel music. Lightner worked with Thurston Frazier at Mount Moriah Baptist, pastored by Rev. Earl A. Pleasant. Lightner organized the Voices of Hope community choir in 1957 (originally organized for a March of Dimes Fundraiser) along with Thurston Frazier, which became a nationally recognized choir with their two recordings on Capitol Records. From 1968 to 1972, Lightner served as Mahalia Jackson's accompanist.

Alex Bradford (1927-1978)

Considered an important cornerstone in gospel music, Alex Bradford was born in Bessemer, Alabama in 1927. As a youngster, he was very active in his local gospel community, and he sang with the Protective Harmonizers in 1940. After serving in the armed forces, Bradford relocated to Chicago and became a part of the gospel community that was nestled there. In his nascent years in Chicago, Bradford wore many "hats." He joined the Willie Webb Singers as a soloist in 1949, was featured in concert by Robert Anderson, was employed as an artist and talent scout for Specialty Records, and served as Mahalia Jackson's secretary and traveling companion. He

³⁹⁰ Boyer, How Sweet The Sound, 183.

³⁹¹ DjeDje, "Gospel Music in the Los Angeles Black Community", 51.

formed his own all-male group, the Bradford Specials, in 1950, and by 1953, had released his biggest million seller gospel hit entitled “Too Close.” The Bradford Specials could vacillate between husky baritone sonorities and highly explosive coloratura falsettos, all the while with demonstrative choreography and antics.

Equally versed as singer and pianist, Bradford occasionally accompanied Roberta Martin, Mahalia Jackson, and Bessie Griffin. His pianistic work loomed the greatest throughout the '50s with his group, and the early '60s with his work with choirs. Bradford served as the choir director of Newark, New Jersey's Abyssinian Baptist Church Choir which recorded several albums that he sang and played for – many times, switching and playing celeste. Laden with fiery precision and creative effervescence, Bradford had a inherent, natural pianistic style that emitted almost effortlessly from his person. White producers approached Bradford about starring in the Broadway gospel musical *Black Nativity* in 1961. This resonated with the animated Bradford, who became very familiar with the stage as a young child. He also appeared in the musical “Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope” of which he won an Obie Award, and composed all of the music for Vinnette Carroll's “Your Arms Too Short to Box With God.”

Cora Martin Moore (1927 – 19?)

Born to Lucius and Annie Claude James Moore in Chicago, Cora Martin Moore was adopted by Sallie Martin as a young teenager. In 1940 Sallie Martin (1896-1988)³⁹² formed the Sallie Martin Singers with Willie Webb, Eugene Smith and Roberta Martin. After personnel changes, Moore joined the group in 1942 as its featured soloist. After she relocated to California in 1947, the Sallie Martin Singers consisted of herself, Doris Akers, and Cora Martin. Cora, along with

³⁹² Because of her close work over the years with Thomas Dorsey, Sallie Martin was known as the “Mother of Gospel.” See Boyer, 1995, 64.

Doris, served as the accompanist for the group. Their 1948 recording of “Just A Closer Walk With Thee” on Capitol Records enjoyed smashing success on sheet music.

While in California, Martin-Moore attended the St. Paul Baptist Church and sang in the Echoes of Eden Choir as a featured soloist. It was not until 1958 that she became the director of the Eden of Echoes Choir. She earned a bachelor’s degree from California State University at Dominguez Hill, worked as a disc jockey, and owned a studio and record shop.

Dorothy Love Coates (1928 – 2002)

Born Dorothy McGriff on January 30 in Birmingham, Alabama, she began playing piano for her church at the age of ten. Dorothy had a rich musical background in which she helped to organize and sing with the Royal Travelers and the McGriff Singers (family group) as a teenager. She was even childhood friends with gospel legend Alex Bradford. Dorothy dropped out of high school in order to work as a domestic to provide financial help for her family. In 1944, she married Willie Love of the Fairfield Four, and by 1951, the marriage was dissolved.

Dorothy filled-in with the Gospel Harmonettes throughout the early 1940s,³⁹³ and became a permanent member when they requested she join them for their recording session with Specialty records which generated national attention.³⁹⁴ An accomplished singer, songwriter, and pianist, Coates was renowned for her dynamic showmanship, hard hoarse-voice singing, and powerful vocal exhortations. The Gospel Harmonettes’ most memorable songs include: “I’m Sealed,” “Get Away Jordan,” “99 and Half Won’t Do,” “That’s Enough,” “No Hiding Place,” and

³⁹³ Dorothy’s participation was halted because of the attention her daughter Cassandra (who had cerebral palsy) needed.

³⁹⁴ The Harmonettes’ first recording session (1949) with RCA in New York did not enjoy any commercial success. Boyer, 1995, 214.

“You Must Be Born Again.” The energy and comportment that the Gospel Harmonettes brought to the “gospel highway” was electric, eclectic, and often emulated. Dorothy Love Coates,

She had a way - you know she wrote the songs that she sang for the most part – but she had a way of skipping when she would go, and uh, we’d never seen anybody do that. And it wasn’t until Shirley Caesar started “Running for Jesus”, you know that kind of thing, that we saw somebody, uh emote like that, and demonstrate like that. But uh, they were all in a category of their own.³⁹⁵

After the group retired around 1958, Coates married Carl Coates of the Sensational Nightingales in 1960, occupied herself with taking care of her family, and championed civil rights causes. Coates reassembled the group by 1961 (with a few personnel changes) to go on tours and make special appearances at festivals, universities, etc; and occasionally, she would step in as pianist. As a composer, Love admired the compositional style of Rev. W. H. Brewster. And like her idol, Coates’ compositions included abundant lyric that were spiritually, socially, politically, and historically conscious. She used her celebrity to usher social causes that were important to the broader black community. Many gospel and secular artists troped on and appropriated her compositions. Coates even appeared in the 1990 film “The Long Walk Home” and Oprah Winfrey’s “Beloved” (1998).

Lucy Smith Collier/”Little Lucy” (1928-)

Lucy Smith Collier was born in 1928³⁹⁶ in Chicago, and affectionately called “Little Lucy” in deference to her grandmother. Little Lucy’s religious and musical background was influenced by her grandmother, Elder Lucy Smith, pastor of Chicago’s All Nation’s Pentecostal Church. Little Lucy began picking out melodies on the piano by age 4, and by age 5, she began singing on her grandmother’s radio broadcast. Because of her musical aptitude, she began to take piano

³⁹⁵ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

³⁹⁶ Heilbut (1985) lists 1925.

lessons with Roberta Martin by the age of ten. After mastering the piano, Little Lucy transferred her knowledge to the organ, and by twelve years of age, she was the organist for her grandmother's church.³⁹⁷ While still a young girl at her grandmother's church, Little Lucy formed a gospel trio with Gladys Beamon and Florence Watson.

Little Lucy sang with the Roberta Martin Singers, and also accompanied the group on organ while Roberta Martin played piano. Adapting her accompanimental style after Roberta Martin, who was her step-mother and mentor, Little Lucy was, in a sense, Martin's "direct musical descendant." While her pianistic style was greatly influenced by Roberta Martin, she was also inspired by the gamut of classical music piano literature. Anthony Heilbut says her "instrumental and compositional style melded gospel ballad, popular ballad, and light opera."³⁹⁸ When Martin began to curtail her travel with the group in the late 1940s, Little Lucy became the official pianist – she too, became an "organ" for transmitting gospel piano style. As Rev. Charles Walker, former organist for Rev. Clay Evan's Fellowship Baptist Church, recalls of Little Lucy, "...[she] had a smooth style. And you could hear a kind of advanced harmonic structure in her playing. Uh, even more advanced, in my opinion as I remember, than Roberta Martin."³⁹⁹

Like Martin, Little Lucy was also a composer of gospel songs – but not the same volume as Martin's: "He's So Divine," "He'll Never Let Go His Hand," and "Oh, What A Time!" In the mid-'50s, Little Lucy formed the Lucy Smith Singers, which included Gladys Beamon, Sarah McKissick, Catherine Campbell, and herself. As one of Chicago's most sought-after musicians,

³⁹⁷ Boyer, How Sweet the Sound, 78-79.

³⁹⁸ Heilbut, The Gospel Sound, 1985,

³⁹⁹ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

Little Lucy recorded an instrumental organ album, “Little Lucy Smith At The Organ Plays Your Favorite Gospel Hymns”, on the Savoy label. Collier has influenced such gospel pianists as James Cleveland and Richard Smallwood. Even though she has not played much since having her stroke, she still maintains some activity on the gospel music circuit (i.e.: singing at festivals, concerts, church programs).

Herman Stevens (1928-1970)

Recognized as one of the finest organists in the New York area, Prof. Herman Stevens served as organist at Faith Temple Church of God in Christ where Bishop A. A. Childs was pastor. In 1952, he organized his own group, the Herman Stevens Singers who traveled primarily on the East coast. Stevens also served as the staff organist for the Savoy record label. Not only did he play for recordings, but he also accompanied gospel group, like the Davis Sisters, Ward Singers, and Willa Ward’s Group, on the road.

Curtis Dublin (1928-1965)

Curtis Dublin served as the pianist for the Davis Sisters of Philadelphia (his cousins) beginning in 1947. Playing at extremely fast tempos and having a “Pentecostal” touch/drive, characterized Dublin as a pianist who could dismantle a piano. Jazz-influence harmonies, blue riffs, and a strong blues sense were other hallmarks of his style. The Davis Sisters (Ruth – “Baby Sis,” Thelma, Audrey, and Alfreda) were raised at Philadelphia’s Mount Zion Fire Baptized Holiness Church where they began singing at the pastor’s request, and at revivals for their mother who was an evangelist. After Ruth returned from her tour of duty in the military with stronger spiritual convictions, she formally organized them as the Davis Sisters in 1945. With the help of Gertrude Ward, the Davis Sisters were established as a professional touring group by the late ‘40s, and

became known as “house wreckers” who would “steal the show.” The Davis Sisters were a microcosm of the Pentecostal music experience. The lead singer, Ruth Davis, had a unique delivery and superb sense of timing, and colorful stage antics. Her vocal style, rife with falls, microtonal slurs, moans and interpolations, was reminiscent of early classic blues singers. During performances, the song texts were parallel with and further exaggerated by Ruth Davis’ antics. The Davis Sisters had a “hard-hitting” style and powerful sonority equal to that of a choir. Some of their most popular recordings were “Jesus,” “Reign in Jerusalem,” “He’ll Understand,” “Plant My Feet on Higher Ground,” “Jesus Steps right In” and “Twelve Gates to the City.” Imogene joined by 1952, followed by Jackie Verdell in 1955. Curtis Dublin’s accompaniment, described as a “style midway between the sanctified church and the nightclub,”⁴⁰⁰ provided the pianistic counterpart of the spiritual anticipation and fervor found in the sisters’ vocals. Dublin died tragically in an automobile accident in 1965.

Raymond Rasberry (1930⁴⁰¹ – October 1995)

Born in Akron, Ohio on March 10, 1930 to Gertrude and Raymond, Rasberry began playing the piano by the age of eight years old. Growing up in a Pentecostal church, Rasberry learned how to play by ear, and gained a lot of pianistic experience fairly quick. By age 11, Rasberry began playing for the Mt. Zion Baptist Church His pianistic skills were further sharpened by studying gospel music and European art music privately, and by attending the Cleveland Conservatory of Music.⁴⁰² By the late 1940s, Rasberry started accompanying singer/pianist Wynona Carr. After

⁴⁰⁰ Boyer, How Sweet The Sound, 115.

⁴⁰¹ Boyer lists Rasberry’s birth date as 1928, and Djedje lists it as 1932. See Boyer, 1995, 229 and Djedje,, California Soul, 168.

⁴⁰² Djedje, California Soul, 168.

completing high school, Rasberry moved to Cleveland to continue accompanying Carr with her various projects – and her radio broadcast in particular. Rasberry’s acclaim as a pianist began to spread, and he relocated to Philadelphia and began accompanying the Clara Ward Specials.⁴⁰³ Mahalia Jackson, Bessie Griffin, and Marion William were some of the other gospel greats he had the opportunity to accompany. During the early 1950s, Rev. W. T. H. Brewster, Jr.,⁴⁰⁴ pastor of the Olivet Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, PA, contracted him to direct and play piano for his Sunday afternoon broadcast choir.⁴⁰⁵

While in Cleveland, Rasberry organized the Raymond Rasberry Singers in 1954. This group of five men⁴⁰⁶ soon began recording for Vee-Jay and then moved to Savoy. They were recognized for their hard-driving style and high-singing male voices, even before Alex Bradford was acknowledged for his high falsetto exhortations. One of his singers, Carl Hall, was known for being able to “stand with any of the female gospel singers and hit high notes all day long.”⁴⁰⁷ Some of the group’s popular recordings were “No Tears in Heaven” and “Deliverance Will Come.” Highly respected for his pianistic prowess, Rasberry had a virtuosic, deliberate, and clean style in which “he could play the piano on or off the score.”⁴⁰⁸ Of Rasberry, Rev. Archie Dennis, Jr. remembers that

⁴⁰³ Frances Steadman, Personal Interview with Author. See Chapter 6 for more discussion of his impact with the Clara Ward Specials.

⁴⁰⁴ He was the son of Rev. W. H. Brewster from Memphis, Tennessee.

⁴⁰⁵ According to Rev. Archie Dennis, Jr., Rev. Brewster recruited singers from around the Pittsburgh area to sing in his mass choir for the broadcast from two to three o’clock every Sunday afternoon. Rasberry would drive in from Cleveland every Sunday to accompany and direct the choir.

⁴⁰⁶ A female singer was added in the 1960s.

⁴⁰⁷ Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

⁴⁰⁸ Dwayne Watkins, Personal Interview with Author.

AD:... you knew the song because he played it in such a way that you knew before they ever sang what he was playing... One thing about Raymond, he would take his time. He would play the whole song through before the group would sing it. I mean, he played well, and he knew it. And of course it was his group, and so it was his composition, and so he would take his time and play the song through and then the group would sing. But uh, and he would talk, he didn't sing that much, but he would bridge the songs with uh,

IJ: with and exhortation yeah,

AD: yeah, yes. Yes. Very laid back, very easy going. Very laid back. Had a very soft voice. And he spoke that way, very softly and all. Had a philosophy of his own. You know, didn't try to be grand or that kind of thing, and talked against it, you know. But uh, was a great musician. A great musician.

Rasberry was equally respected as a formidable gospel composer. His most beloved composition, "Only What You Do For Christ Will Last," has become a mainstay of black church hymnody. When the original Rasberry Singers disbanded in 1966, Rasberry moved to New York, and eventually moved to California where he organized his first and only all female Rasberry Singers in 1974.

Robert Wooten (1930-2008)

Born in Chicago the fourth of five boys to Flora and John Henry, Robert Wooten was the famed director of the Wooten Choral Ensemble for more than fifty years. In 1956 Wooten received a B. S. in music education from the Chicago Musical Conservatory, and married his wife Frances that same year. He later went on to earn a M. S. in music education from Roosevelt University in 1968. Wooten worked as an educator and administrator in the Chicago Public School System until his retirement in 1994.

Wooten organized his first gospel group while still a student at Morgan Park High School, and followed with the establishment of the Wooten Choral Ensemble that was based out of Beth Eden Baptist Church in Chicago by 1949. Beginning in the early '50s, Wooten was legend for having huge gospel concerts that featured his Wooten Chorale Ensemble, who were stellar in their

presentation of a variety of choral genres (gospels, hymns, spirituals, and anthems) and famous gospel artists. Throughout his career, Robert Wooten accompanied many of the gospel greats, from Roberta Martin to Mahalia Jackson, and served as the organist and director of Rev. Louis Boddie's Greater Harvest Baptist Church, where he played along with Edward Robinson.

James Cleveland (1931-1991)

Born December 5, 1931 to Rosie Lee and Benjamin Cleveland, James Cleveland was introduced to Chicago's Pilgrim Baptist Church through his grandmother who sang in the choir. After choirmaster Thomas Dorsey discovered his singing ability, James Cleveland began singing as a boy soprano, and eventually sang his first solo by age eight. Dorsey's guidance during Cleveland's formative years proved to be indelible. Cleveland continued to nurture his love of gospel music under Dorsey's tutelage, and by teaching himself how to play the piano. Since his parents had meager financial means and could not afford music lessons, let alone a piano, Cleveland began practicing on a makeshift, inaudible piano that he constructed out of a windowsill. He was greatly influenced by Roberta Martin who served as the pianist for Dorsey at Pilgrim Baptist Church, and consciously learned her style. After Cleveland taught himself to play the piano, he eventually began studying gospel piano techniques with "Little" Lucy Smith⁴⁰⁹ – a direct musical descendant of Roberta Martin. As a teenager, Cleveland joined the Thorne Crusaders Gospel Singers in 1946 as the lead, high-tenor which led to him straining and eventually damaging his vocal chords.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ See Southern, *Biographical Dictionary*, 74.

⁴¹⁰ Known as the "Crown Prince of Gospel," his strained gravelly singing voice gave him the secondary tag as "The Louis Armstrong of Gospel."

In 1950, Cleveland became the pianist, and sometime third lead, for the Gospel-aire, a short-lived gospel trio led by Norsalus McKissick and Bessie Folk. From there, Cleveland was recognized by Roberta Martin and began composing for her publishing company. While James Cleveland looms as a key figure in the latter third part of the 20th century (1960s onward), he received his first “big break” in gospel music when he served as a member, singer, arranger, writer, narrator, and accompanist for the Caravans. Organized in 1952 by the formidable Albertina Walker (who was also influenced by Dorsey), the Caravans was a mixed gospel group from Chicago, Illinois. Albertina Walker, known as the “Star-Maker” and “Queen of Gospel,”⁴¹¹ was adept at discovering and promoting talented gospel artists who, at some point, traversed through her group.⁴¹² Cleveland began playing for the Caravans in 1953, and by 1956, the Caravans were the definitive “movers and shakers” in gospel music. While off and on with the Caravans until 1958, Cleveland worked with other groups such as The Meditation Singers of Detroit, The Gospel All-Stars of Brooklyn, and his own, Gospel Chimes (1959). Known for influencing Aretha Franklin’s piano style, and countless others, Cleveland’s piano style, while grounded in tradition, had a funky edge and “bite” that ignited those whom he accompanied.

Cleveland’s celebrity began to skyrocket beginning in the late-‘50s when he began to do more work with gospel choirs: namely, the Angelic Choir of Nutley, New Jersey, the Voices of the Tabernacle of Detroit, Michigan, and his own Gospel Chimes and Cleveland Singers. While the Voices of Tabernacle’s “The Love of God” (1959/1960) was remarkable for its lilting

⁴¹¹ An appellation she has maintained since Mahalia Jackson’s death in 1972.

⁴¹² Inez Andrews (1957-1962, 1964-1966), Shirley Caesar(1958-1966), ⁴¹² Bessie Griffin (1953-1954), Dorothy Norwood (1956-57, 1964-1966), Cassietta George (1954-1956, 1958-1966), Sarah McKissick (1956-1958), Ora Lee Hopkins (1952-1954), Nellie Grace Daniels (1952-1954), Delores Washington (1958-1966), James Herndon (pianist after Cleveland), and Elyse Yancey (1952-1954). After Caesar left the group in 1966, Walker employed Loleatta Holloway as the lead singer. Eventually, Holloway went on to pursue a career in R&B and disco. , and James Cleveland (1953-1956; 56-58)

balladry, the Angelic Choir's "Peace Be Still" (1962) took the gospel choral world by storm. Record sales skyrocketed as countless adherents troped on his choral styling. In 1968, Cleveland formed the Gospel Music Workshop of America which was a gospel convention that operated in the same manner as Dorsey's National Convention of Gospel Choir and Choruses. GMWA provided Cleveland with a platform that charted the course of gospel music from the 1970s onward. He went on to organize and lead such groups as the Southern California Community Choir, and the L.A. Messengers. In 1970, he became the founding pastor of the Cornerstone Institutional Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California. Hailed as the "Crown Prince" and "King" of Gospel, Cleveland produced more than fifty albums, received eight gold and five Grammy awards, and was the first gospel artist to land a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame.

Maceo Woods (1932-)

Maceo Woods is a phenomenal gospel organist who is known for making the organ "talk." A native of Chicago's south side's Morgan Park, Maceo Woods was born on April 23, 1932 to Fred and Rosa Woods. Woods received his formal education in Chicago, and eventually abandoned dreams of a legal career to study music at the Chicago Conservatory of Music. While a teenager, Woods formed the Maceo Woods Male Chorus from members of the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church of Chicago; and this chorus eventually evolved into the 8-member, Maceo Woods Singers. Woods signed on with Vee-Jay Records in 1952 as a staff musician. Vivian Carter (owner of Vee-Jay) hosted radio show on WWCA in Gary, Indiana on which Woods occasionally played interludes. One day in 1952, she surreptitiously recorded Woods as he was "fooling around" with "Amazing Grace", and began using it as the new theme to her show. It became such a

requested item that Vee-Jay released it as a record in 1954, and it became a best-seller. Woods' "Amazing Grace" recording is celebrated as one of the most soulful soundscapes of the African-American church.

Woods received his call into the gospel preaching ministry in 1959 while serving as the minister of music at Hyde Park Bible Church. By 1960, Woods was being installed as pastor of Christian Tabernacle Baptist Church, where he has served ever since. Even as a pastor, Woods remained a force within the gospel music community by producing recordings with his Christian Tabernacle Choir, and by sponsoring annual gospel concerts at Chicago's DuSable High School (and other Chicago venues) which featured some of gospel's renowned artists.

Herbert "Pee Wee" Pickard (1933 –)

Renowned pianist of the first order, Herbert "Pee Wee" Pickard emerged on the nationally level as the pianist for Dorothy Love Coates and the Original Gospel Harmonettes. He began playing organ in 1953 while Evelyn Starks played the piano. When Starks could no longer travel and sing with the group because of her family obligations, Pickard replaced her as pianist by 1955. Pickard, a native of Detroit, received a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Wayne State University and taught for some years in the Detroit Public School System. He also worked for the Ford Motor Company as a design analyst.⁴¹³ After leaving the Harmonettes in 1956, he played with several gospel groups and then returned to work with them again in 1964. Throughout his career as a gospel pianist, he has worked with James Cleveland and Detroit's Voices of Tabernacle, organist Alfred Bolden, Jessy Dixon, etc. He also conducted The Voices of Thunder, Detroit's 100 voice male chorus from Greater New Mount Moriah Baptist Church.

⁴¹³ Biographical information taken from James Furman's unpublished monograph. Center for Black Music Research.

Although the moniker “Pee Wee” reflected his physical stature, he was a giant when it came to the gospel piano style and held in high esteem.

One guy in particular his name was Pee Wee...And this guy was so fluent with his piano playing – what you call these arpeggios, and the stuff that Liberace was doing in his classical style, he was actually incorporating that into the gospel style. So everybody was mesmerized by his – it was almost like somebody was playing a harp, the way he would play the piano...⁴¹⁴

Edward Robinson (1933-)

Like so many other gospel pianists, Edward Robinson did not study music formally but just began to teach himself how to play. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Robinson’s family moved to Chicago, and not long afterwards, he began playing for Rev. Louis Boddie’s Greater Harvest Baptist Church. Robinson’s piano style, one that was florid and virtuosic, yet soulful and hard-driving, attracted the attention of Mahalia Jackson whom he accompanied for seventeen years. Rev. Charles Walker, Mahalia Jackson’s cousin, remembers of their musical chemistry and interaction that:

CW: ...Now Mahalia loved him, cause he’d be all over the piano...One time Mahalia said ‘boy, where you going?’ (laugh)...Now Edward wouldn’t be so over-bearing that he became a soloist, but I mean, he’d be going forth. (laugh)

IJ: And if Mahalia gave it to him, then he gave her a little bit?

CW: (laugh) Yeah, that’s right. When they start rising up, I mean he

IJ: He would rise up?

CW: (laugh) that’s right.

Throughout his extensive musical career, Robinson has also accompanied the Caravans, Sam Cooke, Robert Anderson, Albertina Walker, Robert Anderson, Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, and Gladys Knight.

⁴¹⁴ Silvester Burkes, Personal Interview with Author.

Mildred Falls (19? – 1972)

Recognized as Mahalia Jackson's premiere pianist, Mildred Falls began accompanying Jackson in the 1940s. A short woman who walked with a limp, Falls was considered as Mahalia's musical right-hand, in that she

...is perhaps the only pianist who completely understands and anticipates Mahalia's shifting moods and rhythms. By Chicago choir standards her chordings and tempos were old-fashioned, but they always induced a subtle rock exactly suited to Mahalia's swing.⁴¹⁵

Her piano styling, which was inextricably and tacitly linked to Mahalia's vocal idiosyncrasies, gave Mahalia the freedom to change lyrics, ad libs, and time, as needed. Further explaining the importance of Falls' value to Jackson, gospel aficionado/historian Johnny Lloyd exclaims the following in an interview:

JL: --Mahalia's uh musician...I like Mildred. Anybody who can play behind Mahalia had to be a good musician. You know why?

IJ: Why?

JL: Cause Mahalia's timing was atrocious [laughs]. Really! If—

IL: There are a lot of two beat—two beat little phrases.

JL: I-I cannot explain...Sometimes I wonder how Mildred Falls kept up with her but yet...She knew what to place where to make it work. If you just sit and listen, Mahalia's beat was...I don't know [pause]...Like uh [sings] "Didn't it rain children? Talk about rain. Oh my Lawd...Didn't it?" That is a popular beat...That was not Mahalia's beat. I think that's what set her aside from other uh styles or something or gospel singers because she had something about her...But Mildred Falls knew what to put musically in to make it work...And uh that was important...I liked her playing.⁴¹⁶

In the '50s, Falls would team up with Ralph Jones on organ as the Fall-Jones Trio, and accompany Jackson. Falls traveled with Jackson around the world, was a confidant, "personal assistant," and friend. Due to arthritic problems, Falls retired as Jackson's pianist in the late '60s.

⁴¹⁵ Heilbut, The Gospel Sound, 68.

⁴¹⁶ Johnny Lloyd, Personal Interview with Author.

Louise Overall Weaver (? – 1993?)

Louise Overall Weaver was a Chicago organist who served as minister of music for the then 44th Street Baptist Church under Rev. Elijah Thurston for over some forty years. Having played the pipe organ for a number of years, Weaver was known for having brought a smooth and sophisticated classicism to the Hammond organ – a pipe organ approach. This style piqued the interest of Mahalia Jackson, of who she accompanied for a number of years. She also accompanied the Roberta Martin Singers. Reflecting on Weaver's influence, Rev. Charles Walker remembers:

...from a child, my parents would go to 44th Street for their radio broadcast, and they would permit me to sit right behind the organ so I could watch. And it was just exciting to watch. She was graceful too in her playing, and she was cute – she was so short.(laugh) She wasn't much taller than the organ. And she'd get up there and she was masterful. You always knew she had full control of the situation, in her playing. And that choir was outstanding – I mean they did some beautiful things.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁷ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

4.0 SACRED & SECULAR ISSUES

One can assume that Dorsey's storied background precipitated the fusion of "worldly" qualities with gospel music, but the secular versus sacred issue in African American music is not a twentieth century phenomenon. This dichotomous and dialectical issue has been endemic to the musical, as well as, social and religious fabric of the African-American experience in the United States. Traditional West African society did not separate secular activities from sacred ones; with no distinction between the two, they stood in ontological harmony. The ordinary and extraordinary were experienced concomitantly as a part of one's life.

The African perspective did not separate the sacred and secular, as had the European worldview after the Renaissance and the scientific revolution. According to theologian Dwight Hopkins, to Africans 'nearly all experience was religious, from the naming of children to beliefs regarding when to plant and how to hunt and fish.' African religion was communal, not solely individual. The goal of African spirituality, in its theological view, is to create group solidarity, beginning with God and proceeding through the ancestors to the community and the immediate family. Connected with the communal perspective was the sense of the importance of leadership that characterizes all kinds of African social institutions, including religion.⁴¹⁸

So, a symbiotic and congenial exchange of secular and sacred existed among Africans prior to coming to America. This provides one (of many) explanation(s) as to why they experienced a total "culture shock" (on all levels) upon their arrival in America.

⁴¹⁸ Janet Duitsman Cornelius, Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 13.

Slaves were gradually introduced to a legalistic form of Christianity by their masters. Along with this, the slaves' African cultural practices were frowned upon by the white Protestant colonialists, and even considered heathenish. As a result of white Protestantism influence, dancing, certain instruments, and secular songs became viewed as sacrilegious; but within the African world view, these were functional, cultural elements that embraced one's entire life. Lynne Fauley Emery, in her book on Black Dance in the United States, noted that

Dance was frowned upon by many Protestant churches in the South, yet the need to worship in this way had not been eradicated from the plantation slave. The Afro- American was forced to improvise and substitute to fulfill needs acceptably and the Black religious dance in this country was improved to fit within the structure of the Protestant church. While not actually dances the Shout and Ring Shout were certainly substitutes for the dancing common to African and West Indian religious ceremonies.⁴¹⁹

Slaves maneuvered around protestant prohibitions by defining dancing as “the crossing of feet.”⁴²⁰

By the mid-1700s, legislation banning certain instruments like the drums was instituted in some southern states because of its use among slaves to communicate with one another. Additionally, as censorious exhortations of white evangelists of the first and second Great Awakenings against instruments abounded, it began to resonate with many slaves. For example, the fiddle, an instrument long associated with recreational dancing, hoe-downs, and celebrations, was branded as an instrument of the devil.

Dozens of antebellum accounts tell of fiddles who laid down their fiddles, or banjo players who spurned their banjos, when they ‘got religion’...For these believers, musical instruments were playthings of the devil, tools of secular

⁴¹⁹ Lynne Fauley Emery, Black Dance: From 1619 to Today, 2nd rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Book Company, 1988), 120. See p. 122 for the edict of no crossing of feet.

⁴²⁰ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the ring shout phenomenon practiced in the “invisible church” and praise house.

pleasure whose very association with worldly ways forever cloaked them in condemnation. They had no place, the saints asserted, in a faith that called on believers to set themselves apart from 'the world.'⁴²¹

While many slaves readily accepted (or were pressured to accept) these proscriptions, there appears to be a softening of attitudes after the Civil War as blacks experienced a modicum of "freedom." Folklorist Glenn Hinson contends that

...some evidence suggests that the censorious attitude may not have been as homogeneously prevalent as early reports imply. One indication of attitudinal diversity lies in the existence of church-sponsored bands in the immediate post-war years, bands which boasted a host of 'worldly' instruments yet which regularly played for church functions. Elder songsters in west-central Alabama, for example, tell of brass ensembles organized in, and even taking their names from, local churches; specializing in sacred songs, these bands were said to have formed immediately after the Civil War (Ramsey 1960:67, 72). Reporting a parallel tradition in North Carolina, Black churchgoers in that state's mountainous southwestern counties describe church-sponsored 'Sunday School marches' led by ensembles of fifes, drums, jawharp and fiddle; one resident, who was born only thirteen years after the war's close, counted these marches among her earliest memories, noting that even her parents—both former slaves—deemed the 'an old tradition' (Stewart 1978). The bands that made music for these events, and for other church functions, were based in the Baptist and A.M. E. Zion churches, each of which hosted what local churchgoers now characterize as a 'shouting' congregation. The saints in these churches, and in their Alabama counterparts, most certainly did not renounce musical instruments; instead, they openly welcomed them, with the Carolina churchgoers even going so far as to endorse the fiddle—the very instrument most often condemned by African American believers as the 'devil's box'...One can only wonder how many other sanctified believers shared this attitude of musical acceptance. Whatever the answer, those who did undoubtedly sowed some of the seeds which were to later blossom in the instrumental praise offerings of the holiness church.⁴²²

The founding of the sanctified churches and denominations undoubtedly caused a musical renaissance among black Christians who readily incorporated instruments in their worship services that were long considered "worldly."

⁴²¹ Hinson, *Fire In My Bones*, 92-93. Makes references to Levine, *Black Culture Black Consciousness*, 177ff; Dena Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals*, (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago, 1977) 207-15, and George Robinson Ricks, "Some Aspects of Religious Music: An Ethnomusicological Study with Special Emphasis on the Gospel Tradition" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1960), 85ff. The same fiddler usually played for both secular and sacred events.

⁴²² Hinson, *Fire In My Bones*, 94-95. Also see Frederic Ramsey Jr., *Been Here and Gone* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1960), and Epstein, *Sinful Tunes*, 148, 211f, 215.

Whatever the impetus for change, there can be little doubt that early holiness congregations met ardent resistance for their musical stance. For saints who denounced the piano as an 'idol box' and spurned the guitar as the 'devil's plaything,' the incorporation of instruments in worship was tantamount to capitulation to 'the Adversary' (see, e.g., [p. 100] Barber 1966:128; Work 1949:138). Holiness churchgoers countered this criticism with Biblical citations and a new interpretation of music function. Their reformulation contended that any music in the devil's hands originally belonged to the Lord; its inclusion in worship, thus, was an act of holy reinstatement, simply restoring the music to its original, God-given purpose.⁴²³

Along with this restoration of musical instruments as "legitimate" tools of praise, dance and clapping was also included. Secular dancing was acknowledged as sinful, but when it came to the worship experience, it became sanctified.⁴²⁴

Although the term "jubilee" was a reference to the type of spiritual songs popularized by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, it was also noted as a body of songs that brought good news, and could be secular or sacred.⁴²⁵ Jubilee groups modeled after the Fisk Jubilee Singers proliferated after the Civil War, and many incorporated secular songs in their repertoire; and, some even performed in secular venues such as the minstrel show. Hence, the Dinwiddie Colored Quartet's 1902 recording of "Down on the Old Camp Ground," according to Dick Spottswood, was "...part of a tradition of mixing churchly and secular sentiments in a loosely structured floating-verse scheme, an approach subsequently adopted in the blues."⁴²⁶ During the "Race

⁴²³ Hinson, *Fire In My Bones*, 99-100.

⁴²⁴ Historian Albert Murray highlights the ritual and musical similarities that existed between the "Saturday Night Function" and the "Sunday Morning Service." Many times, the same musician played for both venues. While Sanctified churches denounced secular dancing, blues music, and the general merriment that accompanied the "Saturday Night Function," the Sunday Morning Service ironically had its own dance, bluesy music, and "merriment" that mirrored the previous night. He posits that since blues musicians were primarily conditioned by church music (or began as a church musician) rather than blues music, that the Saturday night response is the same as the one evoked on Sunday morning. See Albert Murray, *Stomping The Blues* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1976), Chapter 3 "The Blues Devils and the Holy Ghost."

⁴²⁵ See Davis, *African American Music*, 129.

⁴²⁶ See liner notes of Anthony Heilbut, Liner Notes, *Brighten the Corner Where You Are: Black and White Urban Hymnody*, New World Records Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc. NW224, 1978.

Records” period, many blues artists donned religious songs and spirituals as a part of their repertoire. For example, Charley Patton, a Mississippi delta blues exponent, recorded religious and secular songs; Blind Willie Johnson, a contemporary of Blind Lemon Jefferson, performed blues that were idiomatic and full of intense religious fervor.⁴²⁷ Many church members objected to this hypocritical recording practice, and preferred personal commitment and conviction over professional content.

Within the Black church, secular and sacred issues were being contested constantly. After the first wave of black migration from the south to the north, northern black churches began to experience (what many considered) the “best” and “worst” of black “southern church culture” at an unprecedented rate.⁴²⁸ In Chicago, for example, many black pastors were crusaders against the growing vices, ills, and entertainment in the black community,⁴²⁹ while other pastors began to preach a gospel that resonated with social issues.⁴³⁰ Northern black churches had traditionally been more conservative than southern ones. Black churches, middle- or lower-class, were the spiritual and cultural repositories of the Black community. Besides training religious singers and musicians, the church also trained secular musicians through their various

⁴²⁷ For example Blind Willie Johnson’s recording of “Dark Was the Night” reminisces of a religious moan commonly found in the African American churches.

⁴²⁸ Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier posits that the dynamics surrounding and resulting from the migration of Blacks from the South to Northern metropolitan areas: 1) destroyed the family organization/structure; 2) created social unrest/looseness; 3) changed the mental outlook of Blacks; and 4) instituted “secularization” into the church.⁴²⁸ Frazier defines secularization in the church as “...the Negro churches lost their predominantly other-worldly outlook and began to focus attention upon the Negro’s condition in this world.” Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 51. This secularization of the church evinced itself through the adoption of a class system, tolerance of card playing, dancing, and theatre-going, and an interest in community and political affairs. Also see Chapter 4 “Negro Religion in the City” (pp. 47-67) and subtopic on “The Secularization of the Churches” (pp. 49-52).

⁴²⁹ Spaulding, “History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago”, 13.

⁴³⁰ “The upheavals in Chicago’s Black churches involved not only a turn to secular dogmas, but also a change in the style of sermons and music. Father Clarence J. Cobb epitomized the new style pastor. Drake and Cayton described Cobb as the ‘alter-ego of the urban sophisticate who does not wish to make the break with religion, but desires a streamlined church which allows him to take his pleasures undisturbed.’” Ibid., 169. While Spaulding goes on to talk about Clarence Cobb, he does not mention in detail how the music was affected.

services, musical programs, and contests (as they are today). For example, R&B guitarist T-Bone Walker reports that he was first introduced to boogie-woogie and blues in a sanctified church in Texas.⁴³¹ Middle-to-upper-class churches tended to feature more sedate musical styles and a quieter style of hymn singing that mirrored white Protestant churches.⁴³² On the other hand, lower-class churches featured highly emotive and musically rich services. Conflicts arose when the two mixed. In particular, northerners took umbrage to the influx of “secular” ways that southerners introduced in terms of language and deportment. In the book Just Mahalia, Baby, author Lorraine Goreau recounts when Mahalia went to sing at another church when she was part of the Johnson Singers (a gospel group formed out of the Salem Baptist Church in Chicago, and one of the first groups to travel throughout the city):

Halie held herself inside the quartet as best she could – over and over they practiced at Hannah’s – but in her solos the spirit was irresistible. In the first big church at which she let loose – sang of and to the Lord with her whole heart, being and body as she’d been accustomed – Halie got her next major shock. The pastor rose in wrath. Blasphemous! Get that twisting and that jazz out of his church! Halie ignited. ‘This is the way we sing down South! I been singing this way all my life I church!’⁴³³

“Secular” kinetic displays like this further alienated and marginalized gospel’s acceptance in northern churches. Yet sociologist E. Franklin Frazier synthesizes that

The Gospel Singers...do not represent a complete break with the religious traditions of the Negro. They represent or symbolize the attempt of the Negro to utilize his religious heritage in order to come to terms with changes in his own institutions as well as the problems of the world of which he is a part.⁴³⁴

⁴³¹ Levine, Black Culture, Black Consciousness, 80.

⁴³² Leroi Jones equates the upward mobility among black with the repudiation of African-American identity and culture. According to Jones, in the nineteenth century, the “house niggers” along with their freedmen counterparts (including black church officials) formed the assimilated black middle class. By the twentieth century, this assimilationist posture was entrenched and rampant in northern black churches to the extent that it shunned southern blacks who brought their cultural vestiges from slave society. See Jones, Blues People, 125-26.

⁴³³ Lorraine Goreau, Just Mahalia, Baby, 55.

⁴³⁴ Frazier, The Negro Church in America, 75.

The intrinsic worldly quality of gospel music is multifaceted. Its music speaks of the blues, ragtime, and while its lyrics speak of common, everyday emotions and situations. Armed with the vernacular of urban blacks, Dorsey's brand of gospel music reached people at a visceral level, and recharged religious music with the swinging rhythms of blues and jazz. Many of his songs reflected the popular music and melodies of his day.⁴³⁵ Along with Sallie Martin, Dorsey traversed the "sacred" waters of traditionalism to find entry for gospel music into the black church; and their efforts often yielded them "tongue-lashings" from the pulpit, and literally "closed" doors in their faces. "Old guard" conservatives, seeking to maintain their bastions of "proper" music, considered this blending of the sacred (spirituals and hymns) and the secular (blues and jazz) blasphemous – simply "the devil's music" that needed to be shunned.

Another aspect of gospel's worldliness manifested itself through the activities of its practitioners. This convocation of the sacred and profane in gospel music flowed in a myriad of directions. Rev. Charles Walker, pianistic prodigy and cousin of Mahalia Jackson, recalls that

What was interesting is that, Thomas Dorsey used to play for Ma Rainey the blues singer. And when he'd present me at Pilgrim, you'd think it was at a nightclub or something. I mean, he'd go through this big buildup (in shouting voice) 'now, the piano virtuoso, Charles Walker, hey' (laugh)! And I was scared to death (laugh)!⁴³⁶

Dorsey was the first to charge admission to a "Battle of Song" gospel concert;⁴³⁷ Mahalia Jackson also followed this model by charging admission to her concerts. Sister Rosetta Tharpe, known for her rollicking and infectious guitar playing, was one of the first gospel artists

⁴³⁵ Regarding Dorsey's music, Willa Ward-Royster recounts that "...the music, it could've been a popular song. It could've been. I know one song he made that was called "I'll Let Nothing Separate Me From His Love" (she sings), and the popular words was "Call Me Sweet Heart, Call Me Darling, Call me Dear." Willa Ward-Royster, Personal Interview with Author.

⁴³⁶ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

⁴³⁷ "Grand Music Festival" held at DuSable High School, June 7, 1939. Roberta Martin sung "What A Friend We Have In Jesus." See Songs of the Roberta Martin Singers, Vol. no. 1 (1951)

to perform in non-sacred venues and with secular artists. In the late 1930s, she played in clubs and recorded with jazz bands like Lucky Millender's. This exposure led her to be featured at John Hammond's December 23, 1938 "From Spirituals to Swing" concert at Carnegie Hall. Furthermore, she scored gospel's first crossover hit with her hard-swinging "Rock Me." The African-American church was saturated with its intolerant and unyielding "gatekeepers" who even forbade those who had any type of secular association within their hallowed walls. Willa Ward-Royster, of the famed Ward Singers, recounts that she was "thrown" out of church in 1958 because she played piano in night clubs.

They said we don't, we don't care to have you play for the church anymore because you might hurt the church by playing popular music. So then we went to Zion after they threw me out, we went to Rev. Sullivan's church, on Broad and Venango. So he got up and told the people what had happened and he said he was glad to have me and uh, some of his best friends were popular - Lena Horne, uhm Louie Armstrong, Lionel Hampton and people like that...It was his friends everybody's friend's. All they did was sing different words. Instead of singing 'I love the Lord,' they would sing 'I love *you*.' I didn't see nothing wrong with that.⁴³⁸

Through mass mediation, gospel artists in the 1940s and 1950s began appealing to the non-church audience. The general public's attraction to gospel was fueled by artists' exposure on television, radio, recordings, and non-traditional -traditional venues (clubs, cafes, hotels, festivals, etc). This secularization of gospel also catapulted it in the international spotlight with performances for international dignitaries, and in highly prominent concert halls.

Gospel slowly but surely became a commercial enterprise. Gospel artists were being billed alongside of popular artists in "secular" venues. As discussed in chapter 3, Clara Ward and the Ward Singers were simultaneously idolized and decried for their elaborate outfits, perfectly coiffed hairdos/wigs, and vivacious performances. Furthermore, they maintained many concert dates in supper clubs, jazz and blues festivals, and at a Las Vegas nightclub review in the

⁴³⁸ Willa Ward-Royster, Personal Interview with Author.

1960s which was considered anathema. On the other hand, Mahalia Jackson throughout the course of her career was offered thousands of dollars to sing in night clubs, but her religious convictions would not allow her to partake. The only secular settings that she succumbed to were “reputable” concert halls and like venues. Although wholeheartedly committed to gospel music, Mahalia Jackson was ironically known as a “great blues” singer throughout Europe. Professor Alex Bradford’s theatrical performances of gospel eventually led to his participation in Broadway’s first gospel production of Langston Hughes’ “Tambourines to Glory” (1963).⁴³⁹

The church’s response to the secularization of gospel was mixed. In reference to Black churches in Chicago, Norman Spaulding notes that “With secularization, the once sharp divide between religious and secular music began to diminish. In the early days, there was a feeling that a church musician should play only religious music and not perform any secular music. Often, Black musicians would perform as jazz or blues artists and then suddenly join the church and play only religious music.”⁴⁴⁰ The musical implications regarding “stylistic purity” are not as straightforward as Spaulding has indicated, because musicians did not forsake their musical past when they began playing in the church, but instead brought their stylings and techniques into the gospel tradition – and vice versa.

Gospel music’s secularization and commercialization directly influenced popular music by the late 1940s – namely Rhythm & Blues. Rhythm & Blues was a two-pronged moniker that

⁴³⁹ According to historian Walter Pitts, “Hollywood’s interest in the black church began much earlier. In 1929 King Vidor directed the first all-black cast in *Hallelujah*, and *Green Pastures* appeared seven years later. In the 1970s and 1980s we saw gospel extravaganzas such as *Black Nativity*, *Purlie*, *Your Arms Too Short to Box with God*, *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, and a revival of *Amen Corner* on Broadway. During the same period two films – *Cotton Comes to Harlem* and *The Blues Brothers* – featured gospel extravaganzas... In the late 1980s the television industry showed the weekly sitcom *Amen*, whose characters and plots seemed very far removed from the reality of the black church. It seems that no Christmas season can pass without a gospel mass choir in a televised special. Even the relatively new medium of the musical video has found use for gospel backgrounds to enhance the appeal of its stars.” See Pitts, *Old Ship of Zion*, 7.

⁴⁴⁰ Spaulding, “History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago”, 171

referred to popular, post World-War II African-American music on record that was initially intended for distribution in black communities; namely, a rhythm side that targeted younger Black with doo-wop groups like the Platters and Coasters, and a blues side that targeted older migrant Blacks from the South with artists like Bo Diddley, Howlin' Wolf, and B. B. King. For one, the male gospel quartets were the forerunners of R&B doo-wop groups. These Rhythm & Blues groups patterned their vocal stylings, harmonies, arrangements, and performance practices after gospel quartets.⁴⁴¹ Providing more context of this musical "migration," gospel historian Joyce Marie Jackson explains that

Most members of the first rhythm and blues vocal groups were gospel performers before shifting to its secular counterpart. Many of the young rhythm and blues singers had been former lead singers of established gospel quartet groups. Most quartet singers' crossover occurred in the 1950s...Sam Cooke from the Highway QCs and the Soul Stirrers; Johnnie Taylor, also from the Soul Stirrers; Lou Rawls from the Pilgrim Travelers; Wilson Pickett from the Violinaires; Roscoe Robinson and Joe Henderson from the Fairfield Four; Brook Benton from the Bill Langford Quartet; David Ruffin from the Dixie Nightingales; and Joe Hinton and O. V. Wright from the Spirit of Memphis.⁴⁴²

Groups named after birds, royalty, flowers, musical references, and cars erupted on the music scene: Ravens, Robins, Cardinals, 5 Keys, Chords, Five Royales, Imperials, The Jacks, Clovers, Cadillacs, and El Dorados, to name a few. With R&B chart-topping songs like "Crying in the Chapel" (1953) by the Orioles, the line between gospel and black popular music became almost indistinguishable. In the wake of R&B's popularity on recordings and radio,⁴⁴³ artists and

⁴⁴¹ Some of gospel's shared characteristics include: use of gapped scales, rhythmic complexity, overlapping of leader and chorus, choreographed body movements, pyrotechnical vocal exhortations that alternate with harmonized crooning, melismatic improvisations, moans, and extended repetition of short melodic phrases.

⁴⁴² Joyce Marie Jackson, "The Performing Black Sacred Quartet", 87. (References to Maultsby 1981:5; Seroff 1982: 20; Broughton 1985: 102). While the list is legion, other include: Clyde McPhatter, the son of a Baptist minister, became the lead singer of the Dominoes; the Royal Sons became the Five Royals; the Gospel Starlighters (with James Brown) became the Blue Flames; Chuck Jackson formerly sang with Raspberry Singers. Note: After Sam Cooke left the Soul Stirrers (although previously with the Highway QCs), his number-one pop hit, "You Send Me," garnered unprecedented popularity among black and white audiences alike.

groups raised in the gospel tradition began to leave the church to pursue more lucrative R&B careers. For the most part, when they did decide to “go secular” all of the way, their gospel careers were instantly over; and, gospel audiences tended to be very unforgiving and unreceptive towards backsliders.⁴⁴⁴

The gospel “sound” became evident in popular music. Hank Ballard and his hard-edge R&B group the Midnighters, juxtaposed gospel-based harmonies over driving blues in his 1954 hit, “Work With Me Annie”.⁴⁴⁵ Some crossover artists did not necessarily change their style, but would simply change the lyrics. However, it was the Georgia-born pianist and singer Ray Charles who skillfully mastered the appropriation of the gospel aesthetic. Recognized as the forerunner and father of Soul, Charles would take familiar gospel songs and hymns, change the lyrics, and re-signify them under the appellation R&B. Charles’ 1954/5 hit “I’ve Got A Woman” was based on Alex Bradford’s “My Jesus is All the World to Me,” and “This Little Girl of Mine” (1955?) was a remake of Clara Ward’s “This Little Light of Mine;” furthermore, his 1958 recording of “What I’d Say” reproduced the fiery, call-and-response music so prevalently found in the sanctified church.⁴⁴⁶ The popularity of Charles’ musical amalgamation catapulted the popular music industry to designate and give their approbation of a new popular music genre

⁴⁴³ A number of post-war, independent black recording labels (i.e.: sun, Savoy, Imperial, King, Stax, Apollo, Chess, Specialty, and Atlantic) were the first to record R&B. Likewise, black radio disc jockeys such as Al Benson and Vernon Winslow served as the first promoters and salesmen of R&B – also responsible for ushering it into the public “ear.”

⁴⁴⁴ Exceptions were Aretha Franklin who still was able to record a successful gospel album in 1972 “Amazing Grace.”

⁴⁴⁵ Other earlier Rhythm & Blues recordings that evinced a strong gospel influence were: Cecil Grant’s “I Wonder” (1945), Roy Brown’s “Good Rocking Tonight” (1947), and Wynonie Harris’ “All She Wants To Do Is Rock” (1949).

⁴⁴⁶ Other gospel-appropriated songs were: “Lonely Avenue” (1956), which imitated the Pilgrim Travelers’ (gospel quartet) original arrangement of “How Jesus Died” by James Whitaker; “Hallelujah I Love Her So” (1956) was based on Dorothy Love Coates’ “Hallelujah I Love Him So.”

called Soul. It was a diverse musical patchwork that was not limited to any particular musical medium. While Soul Music resisted a precise definition in that no harmonic or bass pattern emerged as standard or schematic, it did however coalesce characteristics of R&B and doo-wop with conspicuously stronger gospel influences. Soul's earthiness and quasi-religious quality denoted its name.

As with Soul, gospel even concomitantly impacted jazz during the late 50s Hard Bop period. Hard Bop, a response and reaction to the 1950s Cool Jazz period that had extracted the zest and emotion out of jazz, incorporated gospel-derived elements.⁴⁴⁷ Also known as "Soul Jazz," Hard Bop reasserted and returned to the primary African-American roots of jazz, recognized as blues, work songs, spirituals, and gospel. Hard Bop incorporated musical elements that were found in gospel music such as hard and highly percussive attacks, full instrumental range, use of basic 7th chord, blistering energy, blues-centered quality, and symmetrically singable melodies. Even the titles of many Hard Bop pieces evoked religious sentiment: Joe Zawinul's "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy"; Horace Silver's "The Preacher" & "Sister Sadie"; and Oliver Nelson's 1966 arrangement of "Down By The Riverside."

The gospel quartets' influence extended beyond their immediate time period to spark the imagination of subsequent rhythm and blues musicians of the 60s and 70s. "Nevertheless, by the 1960s the practice of secularizing gospel standards had become common place. In 1964, no fuss was made over James Brown's transformation of 'O Mary Don't You Weep' into 'Oh Baby

⁴⁴⁷ Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) refers to Hard Bop as the "Reassertion of Afrocentricity in the face of the 'White' features of Cool." Southern further elucidates this point by explaining that "Some black jazz performers felt that jazz had been drained of its vigor and emotion by an overuse of superficial effects, that jazz should move back to its primary function of communicating directly with listeners." See Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 492-3.

Don't You Weep,' a record that reached number twenty-three on Billboard's pop chart."⁴⁴⁸ Most of the popular artists of the 60s and 70s were formally gospel singers who "grew up in the church:" Dionne Warwick, Aretha Franklin, Billy Preston, Temptations and the Four Tops, to name a few. Ashford and Simpson (Nicolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson) formerly sung and recorded with the mixed vocal gospel groups called The Followers. Furthermore, there are examples of artists like Al Green, who began in the church, left the church, and then returned; and through all of that transition, his musical, lyrical, and silky singing style has not changed much, except for his putative addressee.

So the question remains, is there really a difference between sacred and secular? The autonomy, and particularly the sacredness, of gospel music has been an important issue to many gospel scholars. The 1979 article on "Contemporary Gospel Music" expounds Boyer's concern: because of gospel's widespread reception in the 1960s and 70s (in secular venues), will it no longer belong to Blacks, just as jazz is not exclusively "owned" by Blacks anymore? As a result, Boyer modestly cautions of the hazards of allowing gospel to become too commercial and lose its "meaning." Ethnomusicologist and gospel scholar Mellonee Burnim provides an answer to Boyer's query by positing that the *ritual* dimension of gospel performance most clearly distinguishes it from other African American music traditions. She also sets forth that the

ritual dimension of performance is the major factor which distinguishes gospel music from secular music traditions within the black culture...performances of gospel music are governed by an underlying religious or spiritual intent. When this religious dimension of gospel music is lost or negated, the real meaning and significance of this music genre is lost as well.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁸ Ortizano, "On Your Radio", 180-181.

⁴⁴⁹ Mellonee V. Burnim, "The Performance of Black Gospel Music as Transformation," Music and the Experience of God ed. Mary Collins, et al., (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, Ltdl, 1989), 60.

For many, ritual space is just as important as the text in setting the sacred apart from the secular.

Gospel artist Rev. Shirley Caesar proclaims that

it's not the music that really makes it gospel...we have to always listen to the lyrics. And it's the lyrics that's going to bring deliverance.⁴⁵⁰

Synthesizing the issue from a spiritual vantage, folklorist Glenn Hinson performs a balancing act on the sacred/secular tightrope by inferring that

...if the sounds of secular music rightfully 'belong' to the church, then any musical borrowing from the worldly sphere can be justified as spiritual reclamation. This belief, in turn, implicitly grants the church's blessing to musical change. On one hand, it gives sacred artists doctrinal support for expropriating the evolving, popular styles of the secular world; on the other, it frees these artists from the recriminations of those older churchgoers who invest tradition with a sense of spiritual uprightness.⁴⁵¹

In "From Backwoods to City Streets" (1987), the authors maintain a conceptual view of African American music as an ongoing "process that provides a logical and systematic framework for gospel music performance, and that tangibly links gospel to its cultural and musical roots." Gospel's influence of, and influence by secular music is part of a perpetual continuum. Since the boundary between the sacred and the secular is constantly negotiated in gospel, an abstract line exists in theory. As African-American music scholar Guy Ramsey has noted, "...black gospel music has relied on the audience's ability to recognize that some kind of mixture or boundary crossing is taking place when they hear a performance." While the criteria for making the sacred/secular distinction changes over time, the distinction itself has remained firmly grounded within gospel music.

⁴⁵⁰Jeffers, Glenn, "Why Gospel Music is So Hot," Ebony Jul/2002.

⁴⁵¹ Hinson, Fire In My Bones, 100-101.

4.1 SECULAR MUSICAL INFLUENCES FOUND IN THE GOSPEL PIANO STYLE

For African-Americans, 1880 to 1920 was a very important time in their history and culture. This post-reconstruction period fueled a surge of optimism that ushered in the development of African-American churches (as discussed in Chapter 2), schools (Piney Woods), colleges, organizations (e.g.: NAACP, National Urban League), and the flowering of African-American intellectuals (e.g.: Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Paul Lawrence Dunbar). During this period, there was a great migration North in search of better economic and social conditions; yet, African-Americans were still faced with the task of repressing negative stereotypes that had been long associated with slavery and minstrelsy (*Zip Coon*, *Sambo*, etc.). Furthermore, it must be noted that the diversity in African-American culture was (and still is) reflected in the diversity of its music: rural blues, black musical comedies, black spiritual (also concertized), band music, early jazz, ragtime, and religious music. The most important characteristic of the African-American musical is its diversity of expressions, styles, and genres – there is no monolith. Throughout the entire African-American experience, there has been a plethora of viable musical forms that have been created.

4.1.1 Blues

When surveying musical styles that emerged in the twentieth century, there is hardly one that is not tied to the blues. Leroi Jones declares that the “the national song form for America would be the blues,” for it “could not have existed if the African captives had not become American

captives.”⁴⁵² Recognized as a post-civil War/Reconstruction phenomenon, the blues’ date is unknown.⁴⁵³ Furthermore, the blues has been a part of the black musical continuum since Africans began arriving in America in 1619. The blues has been acknowledge to have begun on the southern plantation as field hollers, cries, calls, work songs, and early religious music; and all of these musical components are not coalesced until after the Civil War. Originally a collective music, by the end of the nineteenth-century, it became a music that reflected an individual sentiment within a collective predicament. Primary sources report it as a vocal and instrumental music (fiddle, guitar/banjo, harmonica) promulgated by itinerant musicians in the southern Delta area. Initially, the blues employed irregular phrasing and a various structural forms (8, 12, or 16 bars). Instrumental techniques like a drone (a repetitive ostinato-like figure used throughout the piece) and bottlenecking were used, and lyrics centered around rural and agricultural themes. Of course, the lyrics were flanked with double entendre words that were often rich metaphorically, allusively, and poetically. Proponents of this early style were primarily men such as Blind Lemon Jefferson, John Dudley, Fred McDowell, Robert Johnson, and Huddie Leadbetter (“Leadbelly). W. C. Handy, a black bandleader, was the first to publish a blues composition in 1912 entitled “Memphis Blues,” but it was a show tune that did not incorporate the earthiness of the blues.

Women blues artist began honing their craft in the vaudeville shows of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and became exposed to a larger audience through the Race Records explosion in the 1920s. Such classic blues artists were Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Mamie Smith. It is also during this time that the 12-blues form became standardized with a three-line, AAB, rhyme

⁴⁵² Jones, Blues People, 17.

⁴⁵³ The blues has been dealt with extensively by scholars such as Samuel Charter, The Country Blues (New York: Rinehart, 1959); Jones (1963); Charles Keil, Urban Blues (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); James H. Cone, The Spiritual and the Blues, (New York: Seabury Press, 1972); and Michael Harris (1992).

structure. (See Table 4.1) The Urban Blues period did not emerge until the 1940s, spurred by some three million African American migrating from the south to Northern urban cities from 1940 to 1960. Their migration was precipitated by a host of economic problems (fewer jobs because farms were becoming mechanized) and social problems (racism, social inequities). This period was characterized by 1) men playing amplified guitars and incorporating expanded instrumentation, and 2) lyrics rife with themes of modernization, city problems, industrial life, male/female relationships, and finances. Muddy Waters (“King of Urban Blues”), Howlin’ Wolf, Bo Diddley, and B. B. King were a few of the figures who dominated the Urban Blues scene from the 1940s onward.

The preeminent musical characteristic of the blues’ is its use of blue notes (lowered 3rd, 5th & 7th of the diatonic scale) and the blues scales. This defining characteristic, which is in a sense the soul and essence of the blues, runs contrary to the western principle of equal temperament, which constantly calls for perfect fifths and “tuned-up” thirds. Call and Response occurs in the lyrical structure with the AA being the statement (call) and the B giving the answer (response). Call and response also occurs between the voice and instrument due to the instrument providing a musical response to what the voice sings (calls) in the first two measures of each line; furthermore, the anthropomorphization of the instrumental voice is understood as an extension of the human voice. Like other African American musical styles, the blues employs rhythmic contrast, pentatonic melodies, pendular thirds, a wide variety of diverse timbres and nuances (slides, hollers, falsetto), and melismatic lines. Rather than a technique or employment of musical characteristics, blues is a feeling.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁴ See Jeff Titon, Early Downhome Blues: A Musical and Cultural Analysis, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

Table 4.1 12-Bar Blues Structure

(A)	I7	/	IV7	/	I7	/	I7
(A1)	IV7	/	IV7	/	I7	/	I7
(B)	V7	/	IV7	/	I7	/	I7

	A	A1	B
TEXT	Going to Kansas City Sorry but I can't take you	Going to Kansas City Sorry but I can't take you	There ain't nothing in the world A honky tonky woman can do
MEASURES	1 2 3 4	5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12
HARMONY	I I (IV)	IV I	V IV I (II V)
2	2	2	2
Text	Music	Text Music	Text Music

4.1.2 Ragtime

Ragtime's roots have been traced back to the leisure songs and musical practices among the slaves on the plantations: jig music, fiddle tunes, folk tunes, harmonic tunes, country bands, banjo music, country reels, and slave songs (work songs accompanied by fiddles, homemade instruments, bones,

jugs, wash tubs/boards, broom sticks, bottles – all of which the minstrel show imitated.) Ragtime also developed as an outgrowth of African-American dance practices such as the patten' juba, buck dance, cakewalk,⁴⁵⁵ etc. According to Eileen Southern, "...the music of fiddles and banjos, the percussive element being provided by the foot stomping of the musicians and the 'juba patten' of the bystanders. In piano-rag music, the left-hand took over the task of stomping and patting while the right-hand performed syncopated melodies, using motives reminiscent of fiddle and banjo tunes."⁴⁵⁶

Other musical influences on ragtime include minstrelsy and march music. The development of the minstrel show (imitation of Blacks by Whites in a pejorative manner), with its coon songs, cakewalk, black character pieces and patrols, also employed similar syncopated music that was used in ragtime; furthermore, there was a thin line that existed between coons songs and ragtime in the early years.⁴⁵⁷ Many minstrel show writers believed that syncopated rhythms were indicative of the laziness and shiftlessness of the Negroes. For decades, marching bands were enormously popular among African-Americans, especially in the Midwest region. The march was also distinguished as another progenitor of ragtime – mainly because of its sectioned form, tempo markings, and time signature. Ragtime's standardized form in AABBACCDD, which is similar to the march's form of AABBCDD (Ex. "Stars and Stripes Forever").⁴⁵⁸ Thus, ragtime represented a blending of African and European musical elements.

⁴⁵⁵ The cakewalk was a grand promenade type of plantation dance in which the couple performing the best steps and motions would "take the cake." Cakewalk rhythms ♪♪♪ and the delayed cakewalk rhythms ♪_♪♪ are found in ragtime. See John Hasse, ed., *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music* (New York: Schirmer, 1985), 304.

⁴⁵⁶ See Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 315.

⁴⁵⁷ See example of "I Met Dat Coon Tonight" (1892) in Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1983), 314-15.

⁴⁵⁸ In emphasizing the relationship between ragtime and march music, Nathan Davis highlights that "The French military march served as a guide for composers writing in the ragtime tradition. Such marking as 'In March

Ragtime originally developed in the Midwest area, in places like Sedalia, St. Louis, St. Joseph, Kansas City, Joplin, and Carthage. After the Civil War, a large number of African-Americans were attracted to places like Sedalia (a railroad center) and St. Louis (a river city) to work in the shops, yards, riverboat trade, and on the levees as roustabouts. Davis further substantiates that “ragtime initially was a guitar music, developed in the Mid-west wherever there were itinerant mining camps.”⁴⁵⁹ This music eventually moved from the guitar on the docks and camps, to the piano in the saloons, riverboats, brothels, honky-tonks, gambling joints, and clubs of the city ghettos. Itinerant pianists provided the most inexpensive entertainment in these venues for travelers and locals, rather than large orchestras or bands.

Ragtime was the first African American music to receive widespread popularity and commercial distribution. Performed at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, it attracted pianist over the country, and its impact was phenomenal. With this larger audience, ragtime was no longer restricted to the red-light districts, but it also gained entry into theaters, dance halls, hotels, restaurants, nickelodeons, parks, street parades, political rallies, and home parlors.⁴⁶⁰ Ragtime was accompanied by the established industry of Tin Pan Alley. Furthermore, it was adopted by instrumental ensembles, brass bands, minstrel and vaudeville groups, orchestras (e.g.: James Reese Europe’s Syncopated Orchestra), silent pictures, and classical

Tempo’ of ‘Tempo de Marcia’ were common on ragtime sheet music during the 1800s.” See Davis, Writings in Jazz, 46-47. Ragtime and marches shared common time signatures (2/2, 2/4, 3/4, or 4/4), except 6/8 which was only used for marches; furthermore, many early rags were explicitly called outright in the title or subtitle (Ex: March and Two-Step).

⁴⁵⁹ Davis, African American Music, 51.

⁴⁶⁰ The music was available to the public on piano rolls, through live performance by residents and itinerant pianist, and sheet music (which were booming). Although initially intended for performance by a band, William Krell, a successful white bandleader published the first, formal piano rag (entitled “Mississippi Rag”) in 1897. Later in the same year, the first African-American to achieve a ragtime publication was Tom Turpin, who published his “Harlem Rags” in St. Louis.

composers (e.g.: Erik Satie, Charles Ives, Igor Stravinsky, and Claude Debussy).⁴⁶¹ Its toe-tapping rhythms and the infectious melodies invaded and shaped the popular music of the day, because it was singable and danceable; and, it even inspired a new direction among music theater writers (Ex. Irving Berlin, Cole Porter).

Ragtime is a conscious and formal organization and restructuring of African and non-African elements. While using a structured European form, it communicated both African-American folk styles of playing and African-American conceptions of art music. Thus, ragtime was conceived and executed as a written, architectonic, piano form, which provides rhythm, harmony, melody, and timbre.⁴⁶² Its overall standard structure consists of 4 sections/strains, AABBAACDD, each 16 measures long; and, the D section is a Trio. Sometimes, the form may be varied: without the D section, or with an additional E section. Typically, some of the pieces may include an introduction, interlude, and/or coda that connect the various sections together.

The heart of ragtime is its emphasis on syncopation and cross rhythms in duple meters of 4/4, 2/4, or 6/8. The left hand plays an oom-pah rhythm that emphasizes beats 1 and 3 with single bass notes (sometimes octaves), while beats 2 and 4 play unaccented chords. Meanwhile, the right hand plays a loosely syncopated, treble melody that places accents all around the heavy beat in the left hand. Frequently, the right hand melody is suspended at the end of the phrase to avoid monotony. This approach to rhythm is different than the European concept, because

⁴⁶¹ Berlin comments that “Ultimately, ragtime is more than a musical style; it is the achievement of cultural independence and identity. At a time when many American art composers were seeking to loosen the ties of European musical dominance in order to find and assert a recognizable national language, the ragtime composer had already attained this end.” See Edward A. Berlin, Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 196.

⁴⁶² Although the majority of ragtime’s African American musical predecessors were not notated (except through sporadic and occasional transcriptions and publications), ragtime became a written/composed music.

European composers would employ it for only a short time and then return to their regular rhythms; therefore, ragtime is unique in that no one had done it, at extensive lengths, before the 1890s. There are certain African cross-rhythms that are replicated that are replicated throughout ragtime . A secondary rag, known as an additive rhythm, is produced when the syncopated melody does not reinforce the basic left hand beat, and this spawns cross rhythms – which can also be found in African rhythms ( = 3 + 3 + 2).

Functional, diatonic harmony is employed that underscores tonic, dominant, subdominant, and applied dominants in a major tonality. The A, B, and D sections are in the tonic key, and the C section moves to the subdominant. The harmonic motion generally changes about every measure, and it eventually picks up momentum by the final phrase. The harmonies are relatively simply (major, minor, augmented, diminished), and over time, the progressions and patterns become extended; and, there may even be an interchange of major and minor patterns. Furthermore, ragtime has a penchant for diminished 7th and flatted-sixth chords. The melodic line is usually triadic in its construction, containing pendular thirds, arpeggios, scalar passages, and chromaticism. Each section has a different melodic theme, and at times, there may be thematic unity.

Ragtime's most celebrated composer was Scott Joplin. Originally from Bowie County, Texas, Joplin was raised in Texarkana, Texas and eventually settled in Sedalia, Missouri around 1895. While employed at the Maple Leaf Club, Joplin composed the illustrious "Maple Leaf

Rag”⁴⁶³ that established Joplin as the “King of Ragtime.”⁴⁶⁴ The “Maple Leaf Rag” provides an archetypal model of classic ragtime – even though his later rags became more intricate and less syncopated. In this masterpiece, Joplin initiates the concept of classicism and perfects its form by successfully fusing serious and popular elements.⁴⁶⁵ It embodies the classic AABBACCDD form, consistent lyricism and brightness, and unrelenting syncopation.

Alive with announcement and expectation, the A section opens with a brilliant, arpeggiated, banjo-like motive that gives the piece its special snap and effervescence. The bass begins with a note-chord-chord-note pattern (oom-pah-pah-om) rather than the usual note-chord-note-chord pattern (oom-pah-oom-pah). Melodic beauty is achieved by motivic repetition which becomes halved each time: from 2 measures (mm. 1- 2), to 1 measure (m. 5), to a ½ bar (m. 7); also, the repetition is heightened by the different registers. The harmony is straight forward (with the fusion of chromaticism), and its motion speeds up at the end of the phrase (as in all of the sections, see Table 4.2).

The B section is rhythmically, more vigorous than the A. Joplin, being a master of melodic invention, carefully weaves a descending melody (intensified by octaves) in all of the rhythmic filigree; furthermore, this melodic line effectuates a secondary rag, comprised of three sixteenth-

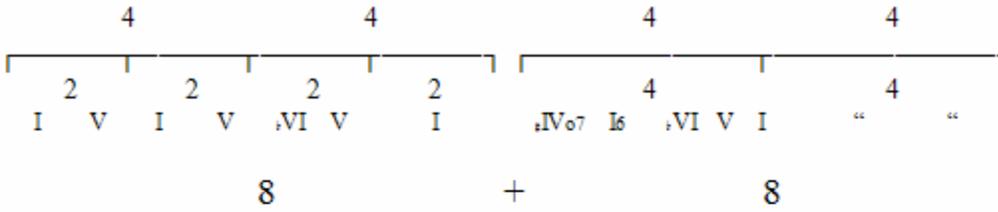
⁴⁶³ “Maple Leaf Rag” was written in 1897, even though it was not published until 1899 by the white music publisher, John Starks.

⁴⁶⁴ The “Maple Leaf Rag” enjoyed astronomical financial success, selling more than a million copies, of which Joplin received a one-cent royalty for every copy sold in addition to his fifty-dollar advance. See Hasse, Ragtime.

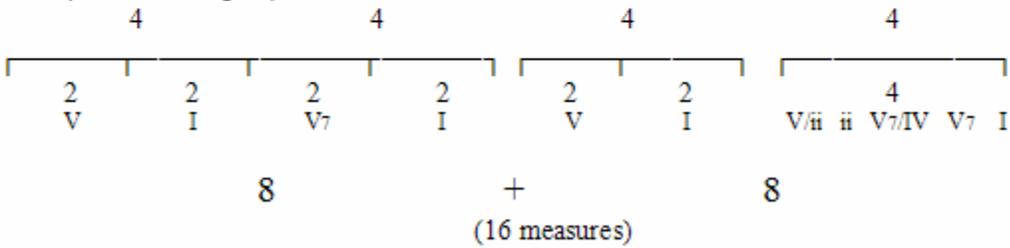
⁴⁶⁵ “Maple Leaf Rag serves as a model for many of Joplin’s pieces and for other composers’ pieces. Joplin’s other pieces that exhibit a strong affinity to the “Maple Leaf Rag” was “Cascades” (1904), “Sycamore” (1904), “Leola” (1905), “Gladiolus” (1907), and “Sugar Cane” (1908).

Table 4.2 "Maple Leaf Rag" Harmonic and Phrase Structure

AA (A-flat major)

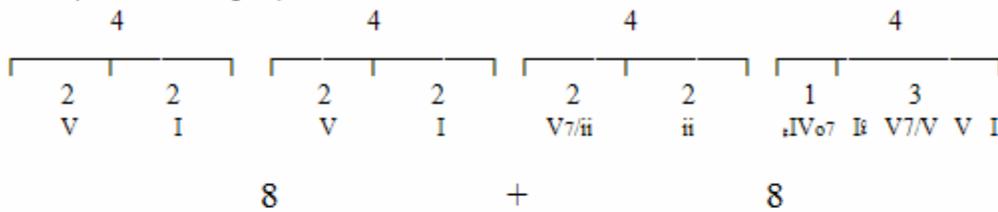


BB (A-flat major)

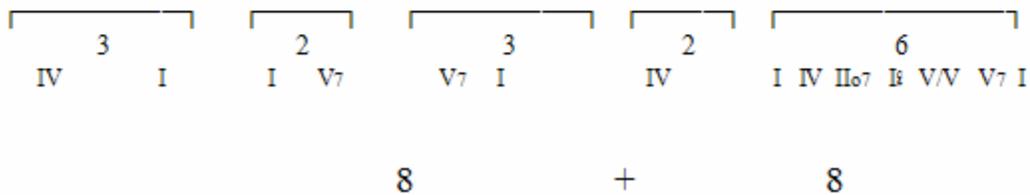


A (repeated)

CC (D-flat major)



DD (A-flat major)



notes apart. Billy Taylor maintains that Joplin "...insisted that each note of the melody be given its proper time value and that the ties be scrupulously observed was his way of indicating that rhythm is an integral part of Afro-American melodies, not something which is added later."⁴⁶⁶ To end this section, Joplin effectively uses descending, chromatic octaves (m. 12) at the climatic phrase to usher in the final cadence.

Opening with the subdominant (d-flat), the **C** section employs more lyricism and fluidity than the first two sections. Joplin thickens the texture by alternating chords with a single melodic line. Initially, the harmony is a bit skewed because the section begins on the dominant, and its 5th degree (e-flat, which is weak) is in the bass. Instead of using chromaticism (as he did in the **A** and **B** sections), he arrives at the climatic phrase (diminished chord with a high d-flat, m. 13) by setting an ascending bass line against an agile, treble melody (mm. 9-12). Joplin rounds out the form by returning to the home key in the **D** section. This smooth transition is generated by opening the section in D-flat major, and then slowly moving into A-flat major. The **D** section has longer melodic lines which are song-like, and the alternate bass patterns enrich its texture; and, the irregular phrases add to its rhythmic complexity.

Even though ragtime pianists had training in Western classical music,⁴⁶⁷ ragtime is recognized as part of the jazz continuum. While ragtime is composed and jazz is improvised, jazz largely drew from ragtime, of which many early jazz groups and soloists included ragtime pieces in their repertoires. Frank Tirro logically infers that "while recognizing a distinction between composed syncopated music – ragtime – and improvised syncopated music – jazz – we cannot definitively separate the two. Both musics were developing side by side in the same venues and

⁴⁶⁶ Billy Taylor, Billy Taylor's Taylor Made Piano (Dubuque, IA: W. C. Brown Co., 1982), 40.

⁴⁶⁷ Scott Joplin received free piano, sight reading, theory, and harmony lessons from a German piano teacher while he was a young child.

often with the same musicians, and some of the early jazz musicians loosely referred to their music as ragtime.”⁴⁶⁸ Most Stride, boogie woogie, and jazz pianists were previously ragtime pianists. Jazz scholar and educator, Gunther Schuller acknowledges this cross-fertilization of musical ideas, and asserts that “in due time ragtime piano became instrumentalized, and its even-note, slightly stiff syncopations and unimprovised, formalized patterns gradually loosened up and were absorbed in the main current of jazz.”⁴⁶⁹

4.1.3 Stride/Jazz Piano

Ragtime dominated the American piano music genre prior to World War I. Along with other African-American musical styles, it helped to form the foundation for subsequent musical genres. After ragtime, stride represents the first flowering of the jazz piano style. Stride was a resulting outflow, transformation, and treatment of ragtime in an improvisational manner. Commencing on the East Coast around 1905-1910, pianists began by adding extra notes to ragtime pieces and providing more right-hand variation and improvisation which replaced the strict right-hand motives. In stride, the L.H. maintains the “oom-pah” figure (bass octave on beats 1 and 3, mid-range chords on beats 2 and 4), but it is periodically interrupted with walking lines at the octave or tenth. The melodic and rhythmic realization of both hands creates rhythmic syncopation, additive rhythms (3+3+2) and cross rhythms (3 against 2). Overall, more chromaticism and virtuosity is present in both hands, and the tempo tends to be faster than ragtime. Stride’s form can range from two to five different sections.

⁴⁶⁸ Frank Tirro, Jazz: A History 2nd ed., (New York: Norton, 1993), 89.

⁴⁶⁹ Gunther Schuller, Early Jazz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 67.

Stride players enjoyed enormous popularity and “star” status in the black community – one reason because they were the focal point at many rent parties and “carving contests.” Many stride pianists like James P. Johnson, heralded as the “Father of Stride,” continued in the ragtime tradition of studying and composing music.⁴⁷⁰ Other important figures of stride were: Charles “Luckey” Roberts, Willie “The Lion” Smith, Willie “Egghead” Sewell, and Lemuel Keller. Stride was the basic building block of the jazz piano style.

From stride, jazz pianists honed their styles with more innovation and creativity. Early Jazz pianists such as Jelly Roll Morton and Fats Waller incorporated the “oom-pah” bass construction, single-note melodic lines, inner motivic lines, and a strong triplet-feel. Earl “Fatha” Hines, recognized as the father of jazz piano, created a style that expressed single-note melodic lines in octaves (“trumpet octaves), and long, musically coherent solo (melodic) lines that extended beyond basic arpeggios. These musical characteristics served as a model for subsequent jazz pianists. Other characteristics of the jazz piano style included expanded harmony, increased use of dissonance, counter melodies, and using “comping” chords in the left-hand.

4.1.4 Barrelhouse

As an outgrowth of banjo and guitar music from the Mississippi Delta and Texas counterparts, barrelhouse represents a primitive type of piano blues which was fast and rhythmically aggressive. The left-hand was similar to the ragtime bass-chord construction, and the right-hand was more improvisatory. With its name emanating from the rough-hewn shacks where poor, rural southern blacks went for entertainment, Barrelhouse was an amalgamation of ragtime and blues. Ragtime

⁴⁷⁰ Johnson was a composer of the musical “Runnin’ Wild”. He also wrote an orchestral piece entitled “From Harlem Symphony.” See Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 440, 446.

and barrelhouse overlapped in that, 1) many barrelhouse pianists would use published rags as improvisational material, and 2) many ragtime pianist usually started out as barrelhouse pianists in red-light districts. Barrelhouse eventually evolves into boogie woogie.

4.1.5 Boogie Woogie

Along with Stride, Boogie Woogie dominated post-World War I America, and caught the fascination of America in the '20s and '30s. With its roots in guitar-accompanied blues (banjo and gutbucket blues), Boogie Woogie emerged as a piano style that was the counterpart to the vocal blues style. Having originated from solo piano players from the Southwest region around 1918 - possibly from the honky-tonks of east Texas and southern Arkansas - boogie-woogie was known as “Texas piano,” “fast Texas piano,”⁴⁷¹ “honky- tonk,” “western piano,”⁴⁷² or barrelhouse style.⁴⁷³ As an instrumental blues-based music, boogie woogie centers around a continuous, ostinato bass pattern in the left-hand – known as the shuffle beat (Ex. 4.3). This quintessential repeated figure (), which acts as a substitute for a rhythm section to propel the music forward, is juxtaposed against improvised variations in the right hand. The right hand is based on short, repetitive riffs⁴⁷⁵ and rhythmic interpolations, and not so much on a melody; and this creates a rhythmic virtuosity

⁴⁷¹ Ross Russell, Jazz Style in Kansas City and the Southwest. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 74.

⁴⁷² Jones, Blues People, 114.

⁴⁷³ Marshall Stearns, The Story of Jazz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 69.

⁴⁷⁴ This rhythmic figure produces the “eight-to-the-bar” bass line.

⁴⁷⁵ Billy Taylor explains that these riffs as: sequential patterns; tonal repetitions; chromatic figures; polyrhythms; technical devices such as tremolo; and chordal incipits of seconds, thirds and fourths. Taylor, 1982, 58-59.

and independence between the hands. The rhythmic texture tends to produce a loud and percussive approach to playing. Initially the harmonic structure was freer and more extemporaneous, but over time, it was usually based on eight- or twelve-bar blues patterns.

Music Example 4.1 Four Standard Boogie Woogie Patterns



Perhaps boogie woogie's greatest realization and popularity was in urban areas like Chicago and Kansas City, along side the iconic juke joints and rent-party phenomenon.⁴⁷⁶ It was the most economical musical entertainment used to accompany "bump and grind" dances in these venues. Boogie Woogie exploded in the late '20s, and experienced a revival by the late '30s. Some of boogie woogie's greatest innovators and practitioners were: Meade "Lux" Lewis,⁴⁷⁷ Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, Jimmy Yancey, Jack the Bear, Cat-Eyed Harry, Clarence "Pine Top" Smith, and Cow Cow Davenport.

⁴⁷⁶ Davis, *African American Music*, 107. Jones, *Blues People*, 115.

⁴⁷⁷ Lewis' 1937 recording of "Honky Tonk Train" uses a number of established boogie-woogie cliches to simulate the sound and imagery of a train's engine (ostinato in left-hand), whistle (tremolo) and bell : tremolo for bells and horns, 3 against 2 rhythms,

Table 4.3 Secular Pianistic Musical Characteristics

	RAGTIME	BOOGIE WOOGIE	STRIDE (JAZZ PIANO)
<i>MANNER OF PUBLICATION</i>	Written	Improvised	Improvised
<i>RHYTHM</i>	Duple Subdivision	Triple Subdivision	Triple Subdivision
<i>FORM</i>	AABBACCDD	8 or 12 bar blues, with varied sections	12 & 32 bar forms, other varied forms
<i>LEFT-HAND</i>	oom-pah bass - chord	continued use of ♩♩ ostinato figure	parallel 10 ^{ths} , scalar patterns, walking lines
<i>RIGHT HAND</i>	strict melodic line	repetitive figures, rhythmic interpolations	virtuosic and florid melodic lines
<i>TEMPO</i>	medium tempo	faster tempo	mixed tempos

Blues, Ragtime, Boogie Woogie, Jazz, and Gospel pianists were in a sense, “cut from the same bolt of cloth,” yet stitched together to form a quilt; and the musical and social interrelations coalesce to form a quilt which represents a kaleidoscopic array of the African American pianistic tradition. As we shall see in the subsequent chapter, gospel has the same plaintive quality as the blues, the energy of ragtime and barrelhouse, the persistence of boogie woogie, and the grace of jazz.

5.0 MUSICAL ANALYSIS

5.1 TROPING

Eshu-elegba is one of the African pantheon of gods known as the trickster figure who interprets and translates the request and prayers of men. Known as the classical figure of mediation, Eshu-elegba operates as the interpreter of African culture, guardian of the crossroads, and master of style; and his cousin (so to speak) the Signifying Monkey functions as a symbol of antimeditation in black vernacular culture, representing the black trope of tropes.⁴⁷⁸ “Signifyin(g)” is about revising, alluding, and commenting on. Under its oral rubric, “signifying” is a term used to describe particular rituals of language used in the African-American community, like “playin’ the dozens”, and a general categorization of common rhetorical devices used by Blacks like sounding, marking, loud-talking, testifying, calling out (of one’s name), rapping.⁴⁷⁹ It is more than just trading insults or mimicry, but it is an effort to play with language in order to spin *new meaning* off of what has come before. You may have to “read between the lines” than what is on the face. More importantly, “signifyin(g)” directs listeners to shared knowledge, attitudes and values, and decoding the message depends on the “shared knowledge.”

⁴⁷⁸ Henry Louis Gates, The Signifying Monkey, 51.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, 52.

Henry Louis Gates' theory of "tropological revision" examines how a specific trope is repeated with differences throughout various texts, and this theoretical premise is also applicable for African-American musical styles.⁴⁸⁰ As with language and literature, so we see with music that "signifying" also has benefits of linking, connecting, teaching, celebrating, reviving spirits, sparking creativity and innovations. Gates communicates that

Signifyin(g) in jazz performances and in the play of black language games is a mode of formal revision, it depends for its effects on troping, it is often characterized by pastiche, and, most crucially, it turns on repetition of formal structures and their differences.⁴⁸¹

In other words, musical signifying is troping: the transformation of pre-existing musical material by playing with it, teasing it, or censoring it. Signifyin(g) can be a way of showing respect (reverence), poking fun (irreverence), or camouflaging; and, experience (cultural or practical) forms its foundation. One example of music as a signifyin(g) art is Gates' explanation of how "...black jazz musicians who perform each other's standards on a joint album" do it not as a critique "but to engage in refiguration as an act of homage."⁴⁸² Beyond simply borrowing, and restating material, it is the *transformation of that material* that makes it interesting and different. The art of signifyin(g) comments on musical figures or motives, on the performance itself, on other performances of the same musical piece, and on other completely different works of music. For example, Ragtime troped on African American dance practices and European march music, while Jazz troped on Blues and Ragtime. Additionally, Spirituals troped on protestant hymns, while Gospel troped on hollers, hymns, spirituals, and blues.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, xxv.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, 52.

⁴⁸² Ibid, xxvii.

Likewise, signifyin(g) supplies an appropriate framework for analysis of the gospel piano style. Most of the musical characteristics and techniques of these secular pianistic genres (in Chapter 4) are openly reiterated and signified in the gospel piano style. A trope, as a literary device, is a figurative use of a word or expression – hence, a figure of speech. It is a specific packaged unit of meaning inextricably tied to musical and cultural understanding that one can expect. Tropes are understood as resources that are recycled throughout the music and culture. In the following musical analysis, a trope is recognized and acknowledged as a motive or an idiomatic musical expression. This analysis seeks to provide meaningful and perspicacious insight into the formal structure of the gospel piano style.

5.2 STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF KEY FIGURES

An analysis of Arizona Dranes and Thomas A. Dorsey’s pianistic styles determines to what degree their styles influenced other gospel pianists around the country. These two major tributaries represent the prototypic styles that feed into other streams of subsequent gospel piano styling. Careful study of early gospel recordings can yield important musicological information about pianists and their styles. Using recordings may invoke critique based on the fact that they tend to be highly produced – in that performers are many times at the “mercy” of producers and their wishes – but they are invaluable for the musical and cultural snippets that shine through. Producing transcriptions and critical analyses of these recordings establish a foundation and dialectic for the development of gospel piano style. Each pianist’s entire recorded output is not highlighted here, but selected recordings that feature one’s pianistic style and the general development of the gospel piano style. The analytical interpretation offered herein seeks to take

seriously the worldview of the insider and to postulate a theoretical interpretation beginning at that point.⁴⁸³ Building on the work done by Burnim and Williams-Jones, this musical analysis promotes and promulgates the “Black aesthetic” as a tool for hermeneutical analysis. I am not intent on marginalizing other approaches, but I am concerned with elevating a “Black aesthetic” as a legitimate and crucial tool of investigation. In regards to providing transcriptions, Don Michael Randel remarks, in reference to popular music, that “notation surely ranks first in importance, and it...has often been the basis for the initial sorting of all possible music.”⁴⁸⁴ While it may be construed that I am employing positivistic methods, I always manage to highlight the musical element’s significance (situate it within its African and African-American context) as it relates to the African-American musical experience (along the African to African-American musical continuum): predilection for the pentatonic scale, melodies with emotional contours, heavy accents, and rhythmic dexterity. While the use of the term “gospel piano *style*” is understood as a musical object, it is also understood as a cultural object. According to ethnomusicologist Christopher Waterman,

...style not as ‘a collection of tunes’ but rather as a constellation of values that form the bases of discrimination between what is music and what is not music, between what is proper music and what is improper music, between what is our music and what is someone else’s music, between what is good and meaningful music, and what is bad and inept music’...then it becomes clear that the

⁴⁸³ This analysis extends beyond Kalil’s analysis (1993). See Timothy Michael Kalil, “The Role of the Great Migration of African Americans to Chicago in the Development of Traditional Black Gospel Piano by Thomas A. Dorsey, circa. 1930 (Illinois)” (Ph. D. diss., Kent State University, 1993). While Kalil has already provided numerous transcriptions of gospel pianists, the ensuing analysis attempts to situate the musical analysis within a different hermeneutical construct. My analysis considers more pertinent cultural elements.

⁴⁸⁴ Don Michael Randel, “The Canons in the Musicological Toolbox,” In *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*, eds. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman, 10-22 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 11. In his subsequent remarks on popular music, he expresses that “Popular music...threaten musicology’s most ingrained habits...’ the work itself’ is not so easily defined and certainly not in terms of musical notation. The composer/author is not always clearly identifiable and does not leave the kind of paper trail that our tools can investigate readily. Rhythm, timbre, and performance styles...tend to overwhelm harmony and counterpoint as significant elements, with the result that traditional musicological discourse quickly takes on a dismissive cast with respect to popular music.” Randel, “The Canons in the Musicological Toolbox,” 15.

irreducible object of ethnomusicological interest is not the music itself...but the historically situated human subjects who perceive, learn, interpret, evaluate, produce, and respond to music.⁴⁸⁵

5.2.1 Arizona Dranes

The inauguration of Arizona Dranes' recording career in 1926 signals one of the first major announcements of the gospel piano style. Dranes' known recording oeuvre includes the following (Table 5.1):⁴⁸⁶

Table 5.1 Dranes' Recording History

CHICAGO, JUNE 17, 1926

* *With Sara Martin and Richard Jones on vocal along with Arizona Dranes*

9737-A-OK 8330 **In That Day** Herwin H-210, Roots (Austria) RL 328

9738-A-OK 8353 **It's All Right Now** Herwin H-210, Roots (Austria) RL 304, Matchbox MSEX
2003/2004

9739-A-OK 8352 **John Said He Saw A Number** Herwin H-210

9740-A-OK 8352 **My Soul Is A Witness For The Lord** Herwin H-210, Columbia (US) G
30186 eqv.

* *Dranes Piano Solo*

9741-A-OK 8380 **Crucifixion** Herwin H-210, Parlophone PMC 1174 eqv., Stash ST-112

9742-A-OK 8353 **Sweet Heaven Is My Home** Herwin H-210, Roots (Austria) RL 304

CHICAGO, NOVEMBER 15, 1926

* *With F. W. McGee and Jubilee Singers*

9877-A-OK 8438 **Bye And Bye We're Going To See The King** Herwin H-210

9878-A-OK 8419 **I'm Going Home On The Morning Train** Herwin H-210

9879-A-OK 8419 **Lamb's Blood Has Washed Me Clean** Herwin H-210, Matchbox MSEX
2003/2004, Rosetta RR 1303

9880-A-OK 8438 **I'm Glad My Lord Saved Me** Herwin H-210

Table 5.1 Continued

⁴⁸⁵ Christopher Waterman, "Juju History", 66.

⁴⁸⁶ Several plausible recordings have been attributed to Arizona Dranes on various recorded collections and anthologies when the pianist was unknown. See *Arizona Dranes: Complete Recorded Works In Chronological Order, 1926-1929*, 1993, Document Records DOCD 5186. Even spurious recordings show her influence.

CHICAGO, JULY 3, 1928

** With Coley Jones possibly on the first 4; female vocalists*

400980-A-OK 8600 **I Shall Wear A Crown** Herwin H-210, Historical HLP-34

400981-A-OK unissued **God's Got A Crown** Herwin H-210, Library of Congress LBC-1

400982-B-OK unissued **He Is My Story** Herwin H-210, Historical HLP-34, Columbia (US) KG
31595 eqv.

400983-B-OK 8646 **Just Look** Herwin H-210, Blues Classics BC 18

400984-A-OK 8600 **I'll Go Where You Want Me To Go** Herwin H-210, Blues Classics BC 17

400985-B-OK 8646 **Don't You Want To Go?** Herwin H-210

The June 17, 1926 recording of “**In That Day**” encapsulates numerous idiosyncratic pianistic elements (see Music Example 5.1). After a brief 4-bar introduction, the overall structure consists of the basic strophic, A/B, Verse (8-bar)/Chorus (8-bar) form (see Table 5.2). For the most part, the harmonic structure is very straightforward consisting of I, IV, or V9 in the key of F Major (Table 5.3). The verse fundamentally moves from I to V, and the chorus moves from IV to I; furthermore, the pervasive, oscillating movement between the root and the 5th in the left-hand (bass), helps to propel the harmonic and rhythmic motion forward – regardless of the root. Throughout the entire piece, the dominant V9 chord never utilizes the 3rd degree (E natural). The only time a dominant chord employs the 3rd is for the I7 chord, which operates as a secondary dominant. The harmony further informs the type of scale employed in this piece – a blues scale. The basic blues scale includes the lowered 3rd, 5th, and 7th, and sometimes a raised 5th, as is the case in this piece (see Music Example 5.2).⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁷ For a discussion of blue notes and the blues scale, see Nathan Davis, [African American Music](#), 20-21.

Music Example 5.1 "In That Day" (1926)

Transcribed by J. Johnson
piano, Arizona Dranes

"In That Day" (1926) leaf 4

$\text{♩} = 104/108$

Verse I

passing on that up and down way this is one song that always runs
 through my mind

Verse II

time of day?? crown that'll never fade away I'll be home a city that's made on
 high in that

CHORUS

day in that day when the mist have rolled a way in that

Music Example 5.1 Continued

In that Day, Cont' 2 of 4

17 day in that day 18 no more sorrow no more pain in that day 20 pres-sy

Verse 2

21 on the upper way Don as my savior say said he would't suffer for righteous sake ?? IF I can have a crown

26 back for his bride someday I'll be here in that city made of His hand in that day

CHORUS 2

27 in that day when the

28 mist have rolled a way in that day in that day no more sorrow no more pain in that day

Piano Interlude

37

Music Example 5.1 Continued

In That Day Cont' 3 of 4

41

46

50

54

trials every day when He calls my savior to come soon I'll con-tin-ue and o bey always watch'ng fast ad

pray for His 59 coming to catch away his groom. in that day in that day when He

63

mist have rolled a way in that day in that day no more

CHORUS 3

VERSE 3

press'ng on the up ward way heav'n

ir ornaments

Music Example 5.1 Continued

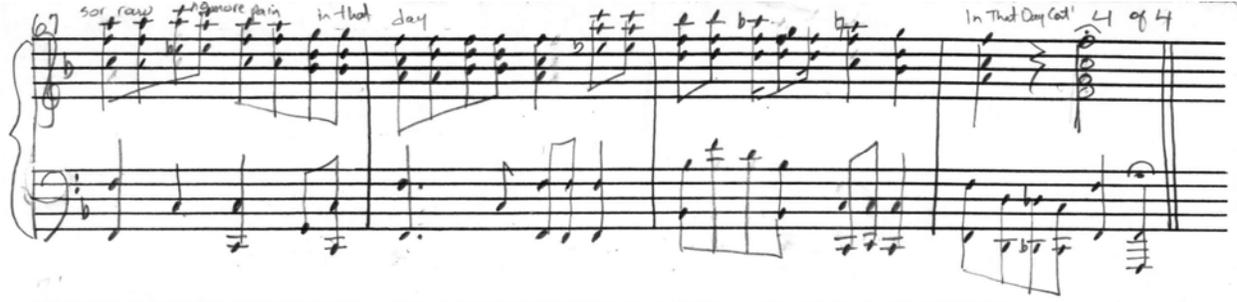


Table 5.2 “In That Day” Overall Structure”

INTRODUCTION	A (VERSE 1)	B (CHORUS 1)	A (VERSE 2)	B (CHORUS 2)
4 mm	8 mm	8 mm	8 mm	8 mm
mm. 1-4	mm. 5-12	mm. 13-20	mm. 21-28	mm. 29-36

PIANO INTERLUDE 1 (A Verse/ B Chorus)	A (VERSE 3)	B (CHORUS 3)	CLOSING INTERLUDE
8 mm / 8 mm	8 mm	8 mm	2 mm
mm. 37-52	mm. 53-60	mm. 61-68	mm. 69-70

Dranes’ pianistic style basically outlines the melodic line (in the right hand). Both singing and playing are approached in a highly *percussive manner*.⁴⁸⁸ The melody exudes an affinity for the major/minor tonality with its fluctuation between the major 3rd and the minor 3rd

⁴⁸⁸ Singing in a percussive manner includes singing with strongly punctuated, rhythmic accents. By “declamatory,” I am referring to a punctuated and percussive playing style.

from the beginning (mm. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, etc.), and continues throughout the piece. Since the right-hand predominantly follows the melodic, vocal line, the harmony compensates for these *variable*

Table 5.3 "In That Day" Harmonic Outline

VERSE			
(A1)	/ I /	/ I /	/ I /
(I I _o 7/V I I)	(I I _o 7/V I I)	V9	(I IV6 I I) (I I _o 7 I I)
(A2)	/ I /	/ I /	/ I /
(I I _o 7/V I I)	(I I _o 7/V I I)	V9	(I IV6 I I7) (I I _o 7 I I7)
CHORUS			
(B1)	/ IV /	/ I /	/ V9 /
		I7	(V9 I7)
(B2)	/ IV /	/ I /	/ I /
		/ I I7 I ₄ ⁶ V9	(I IV6 I I) (I I _o 7 I I)

Music Example 5.2 Blues Scale

$\flat 3$ $\flat 5$ $\sharp 5$ $\flat 7$

scale degrees (lowered 3rds) in the melody by changing the I chord to a I_{dim}7, and sometimes a

♭VI7 (ex.: mm. 9, 10). (See harmonic outline in Table 5.3 for the actual harmonies performed throughout the measure.) In the places where the melodic, vocal line is not adhered to, the right hand is working in conjunction with the melody creating a type of *call & response* during the rests in the vocal line (ex.: mm. 14, 16).

Rhythmic contrast forms the capstone of “In That Day” with its divisiveness, syncopation, rhythmic anticipation, and cross rhythms. Throughout the entire piece, the rhythm is very divisive at the eighth-note level, creating a perpetual motion. Whether in the right or left-hand, there is hardly a measure where the eighth-notes are not dividing and engulfing every beat. Pianistic styles like Ragtime and Stride utilize a *fixed rhythmic group* (left-hand) against a *variable rhythmic group* (right-hand), and the same principle is at work in “In That Day.” The left-hand is primarily executed with half, quarter, and eighth-notes, except for measure 13 where eighth notes are replaced with triplet-figured grace notes. By the CHORUS 1, the left-hand becomes more active and divisive at the eighth-note level and more cross-rhythms are produced. More varied rhythmic patterns and combinations are apparent in the right hand (see Music Example 5.3). This rhythmic smorgasbord in the right-hand creates countless syncopated moments throughout the entire piece. The right-hand’s syncopation is particularly paramount in the PIANO INTERLUDE 1, where this is usually a showcasing of one’s pianistic ability, agility, and adeptness; furthermore, the right-hand playing is representative of what would be sung by the voice – a highlighting of one aspect of the *heterogeneous sound ideal*.⁴⁸⁹ When the right-hand enters after the left-hand on the IV chord in the chorus (mm. 13, 29, 49), the syncopation produces an off-beat, loping feel. Roles are reversed in measure 16 when the left-hand enters

⁴⁸⁹ This aspect of the Heterogeneous Sound Ideal occurs when a musical instrument imitates the human voice. See Olly Wilson, “The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music” (1992).

Music Example 5.3 “In That Day” Right-Hand Rhythmic Figures

		 (mm. 2, 3, 38)	
	 (mm. 7, 11)		 (m. 6)
 (mm. 14, 18)			 (mm. 36, 37, 40)

after the right-hand, which creates a cross rhythm because of the displacement (irregular movement) of the bass line. Other examples of these left-hand-imposed cross rhythms are in measures 17-18, 39, 42-43, and 63. In Ragtime, this is referred to as the secondary rag because it communicates a two-against-three feel. (The interrupted flow of the bass line can also be found in Stride.) The rhythm also has an effect on the harmonic movement, which creates another level of syncopation. The left-hand has a penchant for anticipating the harmony by an eighth-note. The right hand’s syncopation anticipates the harmony by an eighth or sixteenth-note throughout the entire piece. The piece is further driven by the accelerating tempo.

Motives,⁴⁹⁰ passing tones, and fill-ins not only provide color and variation, but also serve to establish unity within the piece. The left-hand is laced with persistent, parallel octaves, which is a common characteristic of Barrelhouse and Ragtime. A *descending 1-6-5* (f-d-c) or *1-6-6-5* (*f-d-d-c*) *motive* is a recurring feature in the left-hand. This motive provides another option to

⁴⁹⁰ For the purpose of this dissertation, when “motive” is used, it employs both motive and motif qualities. A motive “refers abstractly to a musical figure that combines with other figures to make phrases,” and a motif that refers to “a characteristic or stereotypical musical figure that recurs frequently.” See Earl Stewart, *African American Music: An Introduction* (New York: Schirmer, 1998), 145.

the bass' constant oscillation between I and V, offers harmonic variation for the I chord, serves as a filler during vocal rests, and operates as the piece's unifying agent. Besides measure 44 where Dranes substitutes an ascending 1-2-3-4 (f-g-a-b_b) motive, this 1-6-5 motive is rife and ubiquitous. The right-hand maintains a chordal style throughout the entire piece except for a brief descending riff in measure 8 which is a reiteration of the 1-6-5 motive. By the A2 part of VERSE 2 (m. 25), the right hand enlarges the ambitus by playing an octave higher for the balance of the piece. This produces a very polarizing and stark sound – a hallmark feature of Barrelhouse.

Dranes' next recording from the June 1926 date, entitled **"It's All Right Now,"** introduces new accompaniment practices (see Music Example 5.4). An eight-measure harmonic structure is retained in both the verse and chorus (Table 5.4). Unlike "In That Day" which has a strong diatonic tonality, "It's All Right Now" radiates a dominant (7th) tonality throughout; and, the constant employment of the ♭7th is a major characteristic found in the Blues (Table 5.5). The I chord is predominantly presented as a I7 or as a Io7, and the same applies for the IV and V chord. Another new accompaniment practice at work is the parallel octaves in the left-hand bass line that drop like bombs in an almost persistent, ostinato-like manner. This ostinato-like bass line practice is reminiscent of Boogie Woogie, which usually maintains a characteristically incessant, chordal ostinato in the left-hand against varied rhythmic patterns in the right-hand; however, parallel octave bass ostinatos are also employed too.⁴⁹¹ The INTRODUCTION

⁴⁹¹Boogie Woogie and Barrelhouse style of piano playing was prevalent in Texas. Blues songster T-Bone Walker confessed that he first heard Boogie-Woogie in a Dallas, Texas sanctified church. See Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness, 180.

establishes the rhythmic pulse and effervescence that permeates the entire the piece. This ostinato-like bass line serves as the motive that unifies the entire piece and propels the motion

Music Example 5.4 "It's All Right Now" (1926)

Handwritten musical score for "It's All Right Now" (1926). The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It includes piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The piano part features a prominent, rhythmic bass line. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "many years I wandered / my sav-our's be-side me w/a heart I do not fear they - me with / His I cannot tell you why For His my lov-ing sav-our is all right now His all right now His". The score is marked with circled numbers 1, 5, 9, and 14. Annotations include "Trans. by Idella Johnson", "Arizona Dranes Piano", and "CHORUS!".

Music Example 5.4 Continued

18 2 of 4 It's all right now!

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a song. It consists of five systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are: "all right now for Je-sus is my savior its all-right now its all right now its". A "PIANO INTERLUDE" section is marked between measures 20 and 27. Measure 27 is the start of "VERSE 2". The score ends with a double bar line and a wavy line indicating the end of the piece.

all right now for Je-sus is my savior its all-right now its all right now its

PIANO INTERLUDE

VERSE 2

Music Example 5.4 Continued

Handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of six systems of staves. The score includes various annotations and section markers:

- System 1:** Starts with a circled measure number 39. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). A circled measure number 39 is written above the first staff. A box labeled "CHORUS?" is written above the second staff. The phrase "It's all right 'bout'" is written above the final measure of the system.
- System 2:** Starts with a circled measure number 43 written above the first staff.
- System 3:** Starts with a circled measure number 47 written above the first staff. A box labeled "Interlude?" is written above the second staff.
- System 4:** Starts with a circled measure number 51 written above the first staff. The word "broken" is written below the first and second measures of the first staff.
- System 5:** Starts with a circled measure number 55 written above the first staff. A box labeled "VERSE 3" is written above the second staff.
- System 6:** Starts with a circled measure number 59 written above the first staff.

The score is written in a grand staff format (treble and bass clefs) with various musical notations including chords, single notes, and rests.

Music Example 5.4 Continued

Handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of five systems of staves. The score is written in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 4/4 time signature.

- System 1:** Labeled "4 of 4 (21)" at the beginning and "CHORUS 3" in a box. It ends with the instruction "H3 All Right cont".
- System 2:** Labeled "64" at the beginning and "INTERLUDE 3" in a box.
- System 3:** Labeled "74" at the beginning.
- System 4:** Labeled "77" at the beginning.
- System 5:** Labeled "80" at the beginning. It includes a section with notes marked "6va" and a section with notes marked "(mistaken chord)".



Table 5.4 "It's All Right Now" Overall Structure

INTRODUCTION	VERSE 1	CHORUS 1	PIANO INTERLUDE 1	VERSE 2
8 mm	8 mm	8 mm	8 mm	8 mm
mm. 1-8	mm. 9-16	mm. 17-24	mm. 25-32	mm. 33-40

CHORUS 2	PIANO INTERLUDE 2	VERSE 3	CHORUS 3	CLOSING INTERLUDE
8 mm	8 mm	8 mm	8 mm	8 mm
mm. 41-48	mm. 49-56	mm. 57-64	mm. 65-72	mm. 73-81

Table 5.5 "It's All Right Now" Verse/Chorus Harmonic Outline

(A1)
 / I7 / IV7 I / I7 / V7 /
 (I I_o7)

(A2)
 / I7 / IV7 I / I7 / I₄⁶ V7 I /
 (I I_o7)

forward (Music Example 5.5). With such strong linear and harmonic movement of 1-5-6-7-1 (a-e-f-g-a), this bass line motive effervesces of rhythmic anticipation, and lively and colorful variation for the I chord (a).

the additive rhythmic figure $\text{♪} \text{♪} \text{♪}$, realized as 3+3+2, which creates a 3 against 2 cross rhythm (secondary rag) in conjunction with the left hand. An “oom-pah-pah” call and answer is created in PIANO INTERLUDE 3 when the right-hand’s $\text{♪} \text{♪}$ rhythm is set in contrast to the divisive eighth-notes of the left-hand (see mm. 75-76). Operating as her own “producer”, it appears that Dranes’ pianistic organization is methodical, intentional, and knowledgeable. By differentiating between the verse, chorus, and piano interlude, not only does she sculpt an overall shape and signal the various sections of the piece, but she also discloses her incisive understanding of the piano’s role within gospel. The pianist shares an equal responsibility with the vocalist to communicate the “story.”

Dranes’ first piece that includes background, vocal accompaniment is “**John Said He Saw A Number.**” This shout type of song is a staple of the Pentecostal church and is ensconced in call & response (Table 5.6).⁴⁹² An eight-measure chorus in 2/4 coupled with a repetitive ostinato bass line forms the crux of this piece.

Table 5.6 "John Said He Saw A Number" Call & Response

Call:	John said he saw a number	Response:	Way in the middle of the air
(mm.)	1 2		3 4
Call:	John said he saw a number	Response:	Way in the middle of the air ⁴⁹³
(mm.)	5 6		7 8

⁴⁹² See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the shout song. For additional information, see Horace Boyer, How Sweet the Sound (1995).

⁴⁹³ Call and response is endemically built in this 8-bar structure on two levels. The first, and most obvious, being Dranes’ provision of the call with the background singers answering in response. The next level involves the first four measures operating as the call to the second four measures’ response; furthermore, the background singer’s melody lends to the first line ending on a higher pitch (call), and the second line ending lower (response).

On the June 17, 1926 recording date, Dranes recorded two piano solos entitled “**Crucifixion**” and “**Sweet Heaven Is My Home.**” The fact that these two solos were recorded helps situate the gospel piano style as a genre. Even with the variety of rhythmic patterns, both pieces possess a delicate, “loping” feel, which is primarily engineered by the move away from the thunderous 1-5-6-7-1 bass motive, and back to the 1-6-5/1-6-6-5 motive.

“**Sweet Heaven Is My Home**” is based on a 32-measure song form (AABA) in B-flat major, and provides a good example of the Texas Barrelhouse piano style (see Music Example 5.3). The verse comprises the first 16 measures (A1 and A2), and the chorus answers with 16 measures (B1 and A2). The form alternates throughout between the verse and chorus, except for the initial chorus which is performed twice (see CHORUS 1A of Table 5.7). The CLOSING presents a hodgepodge of verse and chorus material that extends beyond the normal sixteen measures to twenty-four – an additional eight measures.

The major harmonic movement in “**Sweet Heaven Is My Home**” includes the basic I, IV, VI⁴, IV7, and V7; other harmonic options appear below in parentheses (see Table 5.8). As much as two-thirds of this piece centers around the I which, as previously noted, frequently interchanges with the I_{dim}, and sometimes the ii; both of which qualify as passing chords. Dranes also provides variation for the I through the application and manipulation of the descending 1-6-5 or 1-6-6-5 bass motive. For the most part, the motive operates in a manner that propels the harmonic motion to the I, and sometimes to the V (ex.: mm. 1-4, 8, 10-11, 19). This motive can appear in one measure (ex.: mm. 9, 10, 19, 33, 83), over the course of several measures (mm. 17-18, 91-92, 136-137), or in a rearranged manner (mm. 26-28, 92-93). Measures 24 - 26 group the motive in a syncopated manner creating an additive rhythm with the

Music Example 5.6 "Sweet Heaven Is My Home" (1926)

♩ = 160 Arizona Dranes, piano solo "Sweet Heaven Is My Home" (1926) Trans. by Idella Johnson

Handwritten musical score for "Sweet Heaven Is My Home" (1926) by Arizona Dranes, piano solo, transcribed by Idella Johnson. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 160. It features piano accompaniment with various chords and ornaments. The score is divided into sections: "Intro" (measures 1-4), "VERSE 1" (measures 5-16), and "CHORUS" (measures 17-21). Chords are written in Roman numerals, often with accidentals and superscripts. Ornaments (trills) are indicated with "3" and a trill symbol. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Chords and ornaments shown in the score include:

- Intro: I, I⁶, V⁷, I, IV⁶, IV⁶, IV⁷, I, I, V⁹
- Verse 1: (ii I^b), (IV⁶), (IV⁶ V⁷)
- Verse 2: I, I, IV⁷, (V V^{maj7} V⁷)
- Verse 3: I, I, V⁷, V⁷
- Verse 4: (I^b I), (ii I⁶)
- Verse 5: I, I, IV⁷, I
- Verse 6: (IV⁶/V⁷ I^o), (I^o)
- Chorus: I, I, IV⁷, I, I, V⁹

Music Example 5.6 Continued

3 of 4 (85) VERSE 3

(89)

(94)

(99)

mm 102-17

(CHORUS 3)
(2:23)

(110) CLOSING

(122)

Table 5.7 "Sweet Heaven Is My Home" Overall Structure

INTRODUCTION	VERSE 1	CHORUS 1	CHORUS 1A	VERSE 2
4 mm	16 mm	16 mm	16 mm	16 mm
mm. 1-4	mm. 5-20	mm. 21-36	mm. 37-52	mm. 53-68

CHORUS	VERSE 3	CHORUS 3	CLOSING
16 mm	16 mm	16 mm	24 mm
mm. 69-85	mm. 86-101	mm. 102-117	mm. 118-141

Table 5.8 "Sweet Heaven Is My Home" Harmonic Outline

VERSE

(A1)

/ I / I / IV7 / I /
 (I Io I) (I ii I6) (IV7 IV65) (I V7)

/ I / I / V7 / V7 /
 (V Vmaj7 V7)

(A2)

/ I / I / IV7 / I /
 (I Io I) (I ii I6)

/ I / I⁶ V7 / I / I /
 (I IV Io)

Table 5.8 Continued

CHORUS									
(B1)	/	IV	/	IV (IV7)	/	I (I I ₆ I)	/	I	/
	/	I	/	I	/	V7	/	V7	/
(A2)	/	I	/	I	/	IV7	/	I	/
	/	I	/	I ₄	/	V7	/	I (I ii) (I IV6)	/

right-hand. Syncopation is engineered by the bass when the I's placement, which is expected on beat 1, is anticipated or delayed (ex.: mm. 28-30).⁴⁹⁵ A major piano technique that Dranes uses effectively and in abundance is the broken chords that oscillate back and forth in a "long-short" triplet time (mm. 11, 27, 75). CHORUS 2 is a variation that creates a *call and response* between the right-hand's chords and the left-hand's arpeggiation; even though the bass motive is broken up by rests, it still maintains a descending contour (mm. 72-74). The downward movement of the bass line prevails throughout, but ascending bass lines intermittently thrust to the surface in VERSE 1 (m. 6), CHORUS 1 & 1A (mm. 29-30, 36), and CLOSING (m. 119, 121, 130). Conventional harmonic practice infers that the 1st and 5th degrees are strong, consonant degrees of the scale, but in "Sweet Heaven Is My Home," the 6th degree (and ♭6th - G/ G_♭) is elevated to a

⁴⁹⁵ In these measures since the entrance of the I is anticipated, it seems as if Dranes creates a measure of 2/4.

significant position because of its emphatic accents on beat 2 (ex. mm. 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 19, etc.) – thus highlighting the importance of thirds above and below the tonic in gospel music (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9 Third Relationships

B – flat (Tonic)	Upper Major 3rd D
	Upper Minor 3 rd D – flat
	Lower Minor 3rd G
	Lower Major 3 rd G – flat

The harmonic framework of the CLOSING is an intermingling of the harmonies from the verse and chorus that essentially centers on the I and remnants of the bass motive (see Table 5.10). The seemingly chaotic and ambiguous direction of the bass line creates tension and a quasi-secondary rag in measures 135 through 137 as the piece hastens toward the end. It is as if Dranes shuffles the notes of the bass motive to affect a climactic ending.

The “loping” or “oom-pah” feel in “**Sweet Heaven Is My Home**” (which is a pervasive feature in Ragtime) is produced by an oscillating and skipping bass line, and by a sporadically alternating bass-note/chord construction in the left-hand (ex.: mm.14-15, 21-22). Additionally, the use of rests, arpeggiation, and anticipation and delay of the bass line also contribute. Lowered 3rd and 6th grace notes appear in both right and left-hands from measures 7 – 10 that help to generate a blues-feel. By measure 11, the blues-feel becomes firmly established where

Table 5.10 "Sweet Heaven" - Harmonic Structure of CLOSING

/	I	/	I	/	I	/	I	/	
/	V7	/	V7	I ₄ ⁶	V7 /	I	/	I	/
/	I	/	I	/	I	/	I	/	
				(I	Io)				
/	I	V7	/	I	/	I	/	I	/
			(I ₄ ⁶	Io I)	(I Io I Io)	(I Io I)			
/	IV	/	IV	/	I	/	I	/	
						(Io	I)		
/	V7	/	I ₄ ⁶	V7 /	I	/	I	/	

eighth-notes become reinterpreted as a quarter-eighth triplet ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \overline{\text{♩}} \overline{\text{♩}}$). This oscillating chordal figure becomes a staple throughout, even to the extent that it becomes the incessant rhythmic figure of VERSE 3, and at the beginning and ending of the CLOSING. These rolling, broken chords recall boogie woogie practices. Another way that the blues-feel is communicated is through the use of lowered 3rd neighboring notes (mm. 1, 15, 70, 128); and, this is Dranes' first piece where individual blues lines/riffs occasionally surface in the right-hand (mm. 100, 124). The right-hand's register during the first eight-five measures primarily remains in the upper

octave (A2), except for occasional visits an octave higher which function as a *response* to a *call* (ex.: mm. 11, 27, 75). All of VERSE 3’s right-hand part is executed in a higher octave register. Dranes’ next recording session on November 15, 1926 produced four songs that were accompanied by Rev. F. W. McGee and his Jubilee Singers.⁴⁹⁶ All four songs were in the typical *call & response* shout style, with the vocal accompaniment nestled somewhere between heterophony and homophony. “**Bye And Bye We’re Goin g To See The King**”, in the key of A-flat, includes Dranes’ trademark, syncopated 1-5-6-7-1 bass line, a walking bass line to the IV chord, divisive right-hand accompaniment that maintains close alignment with the melodic contour, and stratification of the treble piano register. The 8-measure harmonic outline is straightforward,⁴⁹⁷ and as in previous pieces, it incorporates dominant seventh and diminished chords (closer towards the end). The piece is in 4/4, but the ending eighth measure is halved to 2/4; here, Dranes institutes a recurring, *inner-voice motive* that is varied in a descending or oscillating chromatic manner (see Music Example 5.7). Historian Horace Boyer confirms that

Dranes filled in the space between the accented beats with octave and single note runs. The right hand’s playing was characterized by repeated notes and chords and few – but well-chosen – single-note motives (runs), while the left hand played octaves.⁴⁹⁸

Music Example 5.7 Inner-Voice Motive

or

Descending “5-to-3”

Oscillating

⁴⁹⁶ For more information on Rev. F. W. McGee, see Chapter 3.

⁴⁹⁷ I / I / IV / IV I /
I / I / I[♯] V7 /(2/4) I /

⁴⁹⁸ Boyer, How Sweet the Sound, 38.

“I’m Going Home on the Mornin g Train” (F major) incorporates neighboring chromatic and diminished chords in the right-hand while the left-hand maintains a constant rhythmic motion at the half or quarter-note level. This piece uses the *descending 1-6-5 bass motive*, and occasional secondary rags (cross-rhythms) are created when the left-hand elongates the rhythm when approaching the 6th (d) in the bass. Overall, the piece has slower and more syllabic accompaniment.

“Lamb’s Blood Has Washed Me Clean” has an 8-measure verse and 8-measure chorus structure that centers heavily around the I.⁴⁹⁹ The right-hand accompaniment dominates and provides most of the rhythmic drive for the piece, and the left-hand primarily operates on the I, between the I and V, and employs the *descending 1-6-5 motive*. Every time the IV chord is reached in the chorus Dranes begins with a syncopated riff/motive or some variation of it (see Music Example 5.8).

Music Example 5.8 "Lamb's Blood Has Washed Me Clean" - IV Riff/Motive

⁴⁹⁹ The harmonic structure is:

VERSE:	/	I	/	I	/	I	/	I	/	
CHORUS:	/	I	/	I	/	I ⁶	V7	/	I	/
	/	I	/	I	/	IV	/	IV	/	
	/	I	/	I	/	I ⁶	V7	/	I	/

The *descending 1-6-~~b~~6-5 motive*, divisive right-hand accompaniment that maintains close alignment with the melodic contour, and oscillation between the I and Idim chord, as seen in the previous pieces from the November 1926 recording session, are maintained in “**I’m Glad My Lord Saved Me**” (see Music Example 5.9). Eight-measure harmonic structures form the verse and chorus, with most of the harmonic emphasis on I (see Table 5.11). Initially, the left-hand plays a syncopated rhythm (♩ ♩ ♩) that helps to counter the syllabic, quarter and half-notes of the right-hand. The eighth-notes are relaxed in the vocal lead line (mm. 9, 13) and are realized as quarter-eighth triplets (♩♩ = ♩♩♩), as previously seen in “Sweet Heaven Is My Home.”

Table 5.11 "I'm Glad My Lord Saved Me" - Harmonic Outline

CHORUS							
/	I	/	I	/	IV	/	I /
/	I	/	I	/	I	/ I [♯] V9 (I [♯])	I /
VERSE							
/	I	/	I	/	I	/	I /
/	I	/	I	/	I	/ V9	I /

Music Example 5.9 "I'm Glad My Lord Saved Me" (1926)

Arizona Dranes, piano "I'm Glad My Lord Saved Me" (1926) Trans. by Idella Johnson 1 of 2

$\text{♩} = 176$

INTRODUCTION

CHORUS

Lead

Choir

Piano

When I get to hea-ven gar-nen Stay there p? there

stay there p? there

? there when I get to hea-ven gar-nen stay there cause - my Lord saved me oh

? there when I get to hea-ven gar-nen stay there cause - my Lord saved me

I I IV I I I I IV

I I I I I I I I

Music Example 5.9 Continued

I'm Glad My Lord...Cont. 2 of 3

(17) VERSE

Chorus
 re-a-son-ly praise my Sav-ior's name
 He took me out from
 Chorus
 Cause me Lord saved me

Chorus (mm 17-24)

(30)

son & shame but my Lord saved me
 but my Lord saved me

Chorus Verse Chorus
 Chorus Verse Chorus
 Chorus (mm 33-40) Verse (mm. 41-48) Chorus (mm. 49-56)

female voice: Hallelujah

(57) PIANO INTERLUDE

(61) male voice: undoubtly

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "I'm Glad My Lord...Cont." (page 2 of 3). The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of music. The first system (measures 17-24) is labeled "VERSE" and "Chorus". It features a vocal line with lyrics "re-a-son-ly praise my Sav-ior's name" and "He took me out from", a piano accompaniment, and a separate vocal line with lyrics "Cause me Lord saved me". The second system (measures 30-56) continues the vocal lines with lyrics "son & shame but my Lord saved me" and "but my Lord saved me". It includes a piano interlude section (measures 33-40) and a verse section (measures 41-48). The third system (measures 57-60) is a "PIANO INTERLUDE" for the piano. The fourth system (measures 61-64) is for the male voice, with the instruction "male voice: undoubtly". The score is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C).

Music Example 5.9 Continued

66 female voice: Glory 3 of 3

71 male: nothing but my Jesus

76 female: Jesus female: Je sus

81

Chorus	Verse	Chorus	Verse	Chorus	Chorus	Chorus
mm. 81-88	mm. 89-96	mm. 97-104	mm. 105-112	mm. 113-120	mm. 121-128	mm. 129-136

As the piece progresses, the right-hand introduces more syncopated patterns, particularly in the piano interlude. The right-hand motive that was heard in the chorus of “Lamb’s Blood Has Washed Me Clean” and in the piano interlude part of “John Said He Saw A Number”, reemerges here in the piano interlude of “I’m Glad My Lord Saved Me” and continues through the balance of the piece (see Music Example 5.8); and as in the aforementioned pieces, it, too, appears on the IV chord. The piano interlude also yields an *inner-voice “shout” motive* (Music

Example 5.10) in the right-hand that tropes on the 1-6-5 bass motive (mm. 63, 65, 71); and this motive, becomes prominent in the gospel piano style of subsequent “sanctified” pianists.

Music Example 5.10 Inner-Voice "Shout" Motive



Exhortative and emotive vocal shouts reflective of the Sanctified church experience surface during the performance of “I’m Glad My Lord Saved Me” which indicates the *broad continuum between speech and song*. Since the singers are not silent during the piano interlude, it becomes clear that they do not perceive it as a break or rest period, but as another conduit for continual praise – the piano as an exhorter. The almost hypnotic, repetitive playing of Dranes, would effect “possession” or holy dancing. She plays continuous, repetitive short, melodic phrases. The short melodic phrases by the chorus/background singers and varied improvisation of her skilled lead vocal part are necessary in producing an atmosphere conducive for “shouting” or “holy dancing” – hence, the survival of dramatic Africanisms that maintain a predilection for *physical body motion*.

Almost two years later on July 3, 1928, Dranes records another six pieces with a female vocal background and the addition of the mandolin (only on four pieces). **“I Shall Wear Crown”** and **“God’s Got A Crown”** (Music Example 5.11) are similar in that both have strong ascending (1-2-3-4) and descending (1-6-6-5) bass lines, intense perpetual motion, and periods of persistent eighth-notes; and, both pieces maintain the same harmonic structure for the chorus and verse. Motivic riffs are paramount in “God’s Got A Crown.” The recurrent *descending “5-to-3” motive* (Music Example 5.4) is used to reinforce the I at the end of phrases (mm.4, 8, 12,

Music Example 5.11 "God's Got A Crown" (1928)

1 of 3 Arizona Dranes, piano/vocal "God's Got A Crown" (1928)
Trans. by Tabetta Johnson

$\text{♩} = 112$ Intro

9 CHORUS I
God's got a crown way up in hea-ven for me no-bo-dy can wear like mine

13
(inaudible)

Music Example 5.11 Continued

God's got A Crown cont!

VERSE - SOLD!

15 2 of 3

no - bo - dy crown wear like mine must Je - sus bear the

18

cross a - lone and all - the world go free no thud a cross for

22

e - very one, and there's a cross for me

CHORUS 2

mm 25-32 (0:53)
m 32 is 2/4

57 PIANO INTERLUDE 2

VERSE 2 mm. 33-40 m. 40 is 2/4 (1:11)	CHORUS 3 mm. 41-48 m. 48 is 2/4 (1:27)	PIANO INTERLUDE 1 mm. 49-56 (1:45)	
--	---	--	--

Music Example 5.11 Continued

Handwritten musical score for piano accompaniment, measures 66-80. The score is written on grand staves with treble and bass clefs. Measure numbers 66, 71, 76, and 81 are circled. Annotations include "female voice: Glory" and "3 of 3" above measure 66, "male: nothing but my Jesus" above measure 71, and "female: Jesus" above measure 76. The notation includes various chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines.

Chorus	Verse	Chorus	Verse	Chorus	Chorus	Chorus
mm. 81-88	mm. 89-96	mm. 97-104	mm. 105-112	mm. 113-120	mm. 121-128	mm. 129-136

16), and to fill in the accompaniment as an inner motivic line (mm. 11-12). What had been previously understood as the $Io7$, becomes understood as having a more blues-like quality (see mm. 12-13, 17-18). Dranes explodes into the upper treble register with a chordal variation of the melody in PIANO INTERLUDE 1. Blistering sixteenth-notes introduce PIANO INTERLUDE 2 and are finally quelled by a typical Dranesian, additive rhythm – characterized by a delayed entrance that creates a 4+4+3 accent (m. 59 = ♩ ♩ ♩).

Upon a cursory listening of Dranes' piano style in "God's Got A Crown," one might naturally assume that she was influenced by the ragtime craze that was ignited not too far from Chicago – in Sedalia, Missouri. But it is most likely that her formal years in Texas, being exposed to the Sanctified church and Texas Barrelhouse music, impacted her musical language and style, and were already established prior to going to Chicago.⁵⁰⁰ Yet, it is unquestionably clear that certain ragtime motives (tropes) are present ("signified") in her piano style. For example, the syncopated, rhythmic motives in "God's Got A Crown" are similar (in essence) to the ones employed in Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" (see Chapter 4). The syncopation in measures 2, 3, and 7 of "God's Got A Crown" can be compared to Joplin's punctuating, octave E-flats in measures 1-4, and 5; and, Dranes' measure 5 can correlate to Joplin's measures 10-11 (14-15). To corroborate this assertion, Boyer states that Dranes'

...piano playing was a combination of ragtime, with its two beats to the bar feel, octave passages in the left hand, exaggerated syncopation in the right hand, and heavy full and ragged (syncopated) chords of barrelhouse piano, and the more traditional chords of the standard Protestant hymn.⁵⁰¹

With a change of meter from duple to triple, "**He Is My Story**" (Music Example 5.12 & Table 5.12) appears to represent a shift away from Dranes' typical, hard-driving sanctified style. The compound meter of 6/8 naturally places the strong beats on 1 and 4. Reminiscent of ragtime, Dranes uses an "oom-pah-pah" in the left hand, and ascending octaves leading to the I or IV (mm.8, 10, 12). The declamatory and strophic playing occurs in the middle of the register, is slightly smoother, and employs chords that closely follow the basic contour of the melody which is basically

⁵⁰⁰ See Davis, African American Music. Ragtime began as a guitar music on mining camps, and was eventually appropriated on the piano. It can be surmised that as the mining camps moved West, more people were introduced to ragtime; furthermore, the barrelhouse style originated in the Southwest area (Texas, Arkansas), and it, an adaptation of ragtime.

⁵⁰¹ Boyer, How Sweet The Sound, 37-38.

Music Example 5.12 "He Is My Story" (1928)

"He Is My Story" (1928)

1 of 2

Song by Arizona Dranes
Piano, Arizona Dranes
Trans. by Idella Johnson

$\text{♩} = 72$ (Intro.)

① 2 3 4

⑤ 6 7 8 9

⑩ 11 12 13 14

⑮ 16

Verse	Chorus
mm. 17-32	mm. 33-48

I I IV⁷ I I I V⁷ V⁷ I I IV⁷ I I I I⁴ V⁷ I

Music Example 5.12 Continued

298

Chorus 1
mm. 49-64

INTERLUDE

He (S) My Story cont'

65

68

71

74

77

80

Verse 2
mm. 81-96

Chorus 2
mm. 97-112

Table 5.12 "He Is My Story" - Overall Structure

INTRODUCTION	VERSE 1	CHORUS 1	CHORUS 2
16 mm	16 mm	16 mm	16 mm
mm. 1-16	mm. 17-32	mm. 33-48	mm. 49-64

PIANO INTERLUDE	VERSE 3	CLOSING CHORUS
16 mm	16 mm	16 mm
mm. 65-80	mm. 81-96	mm. 97-112

maintained throughout. (Note: The mandolin doubles on the melody for the most part.) “He Is My Story” provides a lucid example of how Country & Western music influenced and was influenced by gospel music – a borrowing and melding of ideas.

The IV and V chords are always dominant (Table 5.13). The I chord is flavored with inner, motivic chromaticism leading to the 3rd degree in one of three ways (Music Example 5.13): a) ascending to (m. 76); b) oscillating around (mm. 4, 14, 12, 16, 68, 78); or c) as an appoggiatura (m. 80). The piano interlude outlines the melody with an infusion of rhythmic divisiveness while still incorporating her signature hemiola/additive rhythm technique. The 6/8 meter exudes a strong sense of 3, but Dranes’ melodic grouping reinforces 2 – of which she divides  into  in m. 67.

The final three recordings from this 1928 date are the characteristic call & response in form, and all abound with the previously discussed musical characteristics. As “**Just Look**” alternates harmonically between the I and V, Dranes communicates call and response through her syllabic and rhythmically divisive accompaniment. The piano interlude of “**Don’t You**

Table 5.13 "He Is My Story" - Harmonic Outline

VERSE/CHORUS

(A)	/	I	/	I	/	IV7	/	I	/	
(B1)	/	I	/	I	/	V7	/	V7	/	
(A)	/	I	/	I	/	IV7	/	I	/	
(B2)	/	IV7	/	I	/	I ³	V7	/	I	/

Music Example 5.13 Inner Lines - Chromaticism

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The staff is divided into three measures by double bar lines. The first measure, labeled 'a) Ascending', contains a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B-flat4, C5, D5. The second measure, labeled 'b) Oscillating', contains: C5, B-flat4, C5, D5. The third measure, labeled 'c) Appoggiatura', contains: G4, A4, B-flat4, C5. The notes are written as quarter notes.

Want To Go?”, as is typical of Dranes, is rhythmically looser and more varied than during the vocal sections. **“I’ll Go Where You Want Me To Go”** offers a smorgasbord of Dranes at her best within the sanctified tradition. Set at a feverishly “sanctified” tempo (♩ = 126), **“I’ll Go Where You Want Me To Go”** is full of riveting rhythms, incandescently infectious inner motives, ostentatious chromatic oscillations, bombastic bass execution (lines), and dynamic register exchanges.

5.2.2 Thomas A. Dorsey

While heralded as the “Father of Gospel Music,” Thomas A. Dorsey’s body of gospel recordings with him playing the piano, are markedly miniscule. His blues recordings outnumber his gospel recordings nearly 10 to 1. (Dorsey recorded “I’ll Tell It Wherever I Go” in 1973, on which he provided the piano accompaniment for Sallie Martin’s vocals.⁵⁰² This recording is not included because it extends beyond the delimitation of this work.) His four pre-1960 recordings are:

Table 5.14 Dorsey's Gospel Recordings

<u>NEW YORK CITY, MARCH 17, 1932</u>
<i>*With Scrapper Blackwell on guitar and vocal along with Thomas A. Dorsey</i>
How About You 11510-A-Vo 1710
If You See My Savior 11511 - -Vo 1710
<u>CHICAGO, MARCH 22, 1934</u>
<i>*With The Gospel Singers on vocal along with Thomas A. Dorsey</i>
If I Could Hear My Mother Praying Again CP-1026-2-Vo 02729
Singing In My Soul CP-1027-1-Vo 02729

The piano accompaniment in “**How About You**” (Music Example 5.14) appears to mark time in a fairly standard manner. Its lilting quality is divisive at the quarter and eighth-note level.

After a 4-measure Introduction, the form alternates between three verses and choruses, both, which maintain the same 16-measure harmonic structure. Unfortunately, Dorsey’s piano accompaniment is overshadowed by his singing and Blackwell’s guitar accompaniment, which makes it difficult to render a complete transcription. From what is audible, it appears that the voice executes more blues notes (lowered 3rds in mm. 5, 8, 12, 18) than the piano accompaniment. Of

⁵⁰² PRECIOUS LORD: Recording of Thomas A. Dorsey, Columbia CK57164, 1973.

Music Example 5.14 "How About You" (1932)

Transcribed by Idella Johnson

"How About You" (1932)

Thomas Dorsey, pianovocal 1 of 2

$\text{♩} = 138$ INTRODUCTION

Vocal

How well - Do I re-men - ber how Je-sus brought me though

Piano

I I⁷ IV

Vocal

I prayed & walked the floor - a night or - two -

Piano

I I vi V⁷

Vocal

I said Lord take & - use - me - thats all - that I can

Piano

I I⁷ IV⁷

note are the pentatonic linear runs (mm. 23, 43-44) that peek out at the end of phrases. The first pentatonic line highlights the 1-2-3-5-6 degrees of the scale, and the second one highlights 1-2-3-5-7 (dominant) scale degrees.

“**If You See My Savior,**” while springing from the same fountain as “How About You,” has a subtle swing/blues element (see Music Example 5.15). When eighth-notes are performed, they are infused with the standard blues, triplet ($\text{♪} = \text{♪♪♪}$). The harmonic structure is a 16-measure AABA song form, known as the gospel blues⁵⁰³ (see Table 5.15). Like Arizona Dranes, Dorsey utilizes here the *descending “5-to-3” motive* in measure 3 (see Music Example 5.7) – not only is it played by the piano and guitar, but it is also sung (or some variation of it) in the response of Scrapper Blackwell. Dorsey also continues the linear, descending runs in subdominant and dominant tonal areas (see Music Example 5.16).

One month later, Dorsey reentered the recording studio to record “**M & O Blues – Part I**” (Music Example 5.17). This recording provides insight into the panorama of Dorsey’s pianistic idiosyncrasies at the time of his 1932 gospel recordings – and a clear chasm emerges. Aside from it being the blues, what is strikingly different about “M & O Blues” (vis-à-vis the abovementioned 1932 gospel songs) is its: 1) intense bluesy “swagger;” 2) strong triplet presence; 3) abundant use of blue notes; 4) dynamic rhythmic variation; 5) crooning chromaticism (m. 23); 6) repetitive

⁵⁰³Boyer traces gospel’s root in blues, spirituals, and late 19th century country blues, to its formulation of its 16 bar chorus in the 1930s. See Horace Boyer, “Gospel Blues: Origin and History,” in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern*, eds. Josephine Wright and Samuel A. Floyd Jr., 119-50 (Sterling Heights, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1992). Boyer explores further evolution of harmonic structure and stylistic techniques, gives numerous music examples, and concludes that despite new directions of contemporary gospel, this genre will continue to flourish.

Music Example 5.15 "If You See My Savior" (1932)

♩ = 144-152
 ♩ = $\overset{3}{\text{J}}$

"If You See My Savior" (1932)
 Thomas A. Dorsey, piano
 Scrapper Blackwell, guitar

Trans. by Idella Johnson

① INTRO

② VERSE 1

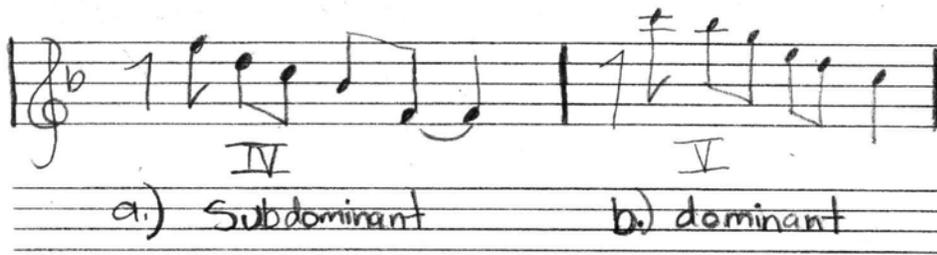
③

Table 5.15 "If You See My Savior" - Harmonic Outline

VERSE/CHORUS

(A)	/	I	/	I7	/	IV	/	IV	/
(B1)	/	I	/	I	/	V7	/	V7	/
(A)	/	I	/	I7	/	IV	/	IV	/
(B2)	/	I	/	I $\frac{6}{4}$	/	V7	/	I	/

Music Example 5.16 Runs/Lines



chords; 7) hint of the $V7^b13$ chord in m. 2; and 8) hard driving blues responses that explode during the vocal rests (mm. 7-8). An *ascending* “5-6 1” motive, which is embedded in a motivic line in measure 23, becomes omnipresent in the gospel piano style (Music Example 5.18).

Dorsey’s 1934 gospel recordings rivet with self-confidence, and represent a reconciliation of the duality of his musical background. Whereas his 1932 recordings illustrate his ability to compartmentalize his dual musical heritage, his 1934 gospel recordings reflect the coalescence of blues and gospel. “Singing In My Soul” and “If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again” encapsulate numerous characteristics of Dorsey’s gospel piano style.

“**Singing In My Soul**” incorporates elements of Blues and Ragtime which were so popular during the first half of the twentieth century (Music Example 5.19). The listener is initially confronted with the classic, ragtime left-hand (“oom-pah”). While it permeates the entire song, there are times when it is abandoned for walking bass lines (mm. 14-16, 27-28); and, the walking bass lines become faster (mm. 62, 64) by CHORUS 2. While the left-hand is fixed, the right-hand operates with more variation. A signature, ragtime syncopation (♩ ♩ ♩) appears in various manifestations (mm. 4, 12, 22), and rhythmic anticipation parallels what transpires in the vocal line (mm. 9-10, 17-18). These components lend to the overall swinging feel throughout the piece.

Music Example 5.17 "M & O Blues" (1932)

M & O Blues (1932)

♩. = 88

Thomas A. Dorsey, piano "Georgia Tom" Trans. by Idella Johnson 1 of 2

Intro

1st Stanza

my baby's gone

And she won't come back no more

my baby's gone and she won't come back no more

she left this morning

she caught that M & O

IV^b₅ V I IV⁷ I V⁷

Music Example 5.17 Continued

25 *Singing In My Soul Cant! 2 of 2*

29

33

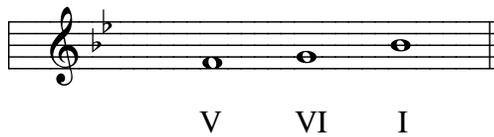
37 **VERSE 2** **CHORUS 2**

60

64 **VERSE 3**

CHORUS 3 mm. 95-100 | CHORUS 3a mm. 101-116

Music Example 5.18 Ascending "5-6-1" Motive



The harmonic landscape is enriched by the inclusion of a secondary dominant (see Table 5.16) – which has not been observed in this study so far. Additionally, in m. 3, a motivic *plagal cadence* (I - IV - iv - I) is introduced that occurs at the end of each VERSE and CHORUS⁵⁰⁴ (see Music Example 5.20). This cadence is characterized by the inner chordal movement that is juxtaposed against the stabilizing lower and upper notes (m. 3). The right-hand closely adheres to the melody, playing it as a single line or in a chordal style. Riffs constructed of oscillating half-steps (mm. 21-23) flirt with the blues tonality, as well as breaks and pentatonic runs (mm. 59-60).

“If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again” (Table 5.17) is a continuation of the musical practices found in “Singing In My Soul.” Pentatonic, octave runs resound in the right-hand, and are centered around the tonic (see Music Example 5.21). Both pieces present a cornucopia of bass lines that become idiomatic within the gospel piano style (see Music Example 5.22).⁵⁰⁵ In “If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again,” Dorsey utilizes broken octave movement to move to key tonal areas in the bass line (i.e.: Music Examples 5.22d&e).

⁵⁰⁴ Hints of this plagal cadence appear in Dranes’ style (see “In That Day” – Music Example 5.1 and Table 5.3), but it seems to become standardized with Dorsey.

⁵⁰⁵ Many of these lines, or some variation of them, were also seen in Dranes’ analysis.

Music Example 5.19 "Singing In My Soul" (1934)

"Singing In My Soul" (1934)
Thomas A. Dorsey, Piano
Trans. by Idella Johnson 1992

① **INTRO** $\text{♩} = 162$

⑤ **VERSE 1**

⑨

⑬

⑰

⑳ **CHORUS 1**

Handwritten musical score for "Singing In My Soul" (1934) by Thomas A. Dorsey, piano. The score is in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of an Intro (measures 1-4), Verse 1 (measures 5-16), and Chorus 1 (measures 17-20). The score is written for piano with treble and bass clefs. Chord symbols (I, IV, V7, I7) are written below the bass line. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 162. The score is transcribed by Idella Johnson in 1992.

Table 5.16 "Singing In My Soul" - Harmonic Outline

VERSE

(A1)									
/	I	/	I7	/	IV	/	I	/	
/	I	/	II7 (V7/V)	/	V7	/	V7	/	
(A2)									
/	I	/	I7	/	IV	/	I	/	
/	I	/	I ₄ ⁶	V7	/	I	/	I (I7)	/

CHORUS

(B)									
/	IV	/	IV	/	I	/	I	/	
/	I	/	I	vi (V7/V)	/	V7	/	V7	/
(A3)									
/	I	/	I7	/	IV	/	IV	/	
/	I ₄ ⁶	/	II7	V7 (V7/V)	/	I (I - IV - iv - I)	/	I	/

Music Example 5.20 Gospel Plagal Cadence

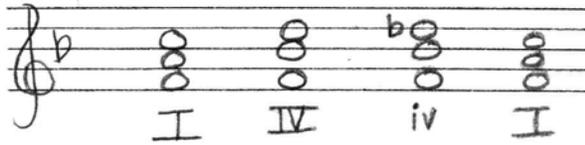


Table 5.17 "If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again" - Harmonic Outline

VERSE

(A1)

/ I / I7 / IV / I /

/ I / I II7 / V7 / V7 /
(V7/V)

(A2)

/ I / I7 / IV / I /

/ I / I / V7 / I /

CHORUS

(A3)

/ I / I7 / IV / I /

/ I / I / iv / V7 /

(A2)

/ I / I7 / IV / I /

/ I / I / V7 / I /

Music Example 5.21 "If I Could Hear My Mother..." - Pentatonic Run

Music Example 5.22 Bass Movement

5.3 DELINEATION OF GOSPEL PIANO SUB-STYLES

The gospel piano style is not monolithic, but is a conglomeration of different styles of gospel piano playing. Providing a categorization of different styles allows the reader to understand 1) the multi-dimensionality of gospel music and gospel piano, and 2) how Dorsey and Dranes impacted pianists' realization of these styles. Various appellations and categories of the gospel piano already exist and have been proposed by many scholars.⁵⁰⁶ In this dissertation, the following sub-styles are illuminated (Table 5.18):

Table 5.18 Gospel Piano Sub-Styles

1. **Pre-Gospel Stride** – maintains some of the “oom-pah” left-hand construction of ragtime with a swinging triplet feel; ♩ = 116.
2. **Gospel Stride** – Beats 1 and 3 are emphasized on the left, lower side of the piano; Beats 2 and 4 are subdivided in the right, upper-register; Predominant left- to-right synchronous, sweeping motion with (♩) ♩ ♩ ♩ rhythmic feel; ♩ = 50-69.
3. **Modified Gospel Stride** – same rhythmic divisiveness as stride, but without constant left-to-right-sweeping motion; ♩ = 63-72.
4. **Fast Stride** – ♩ = 132-152 or ♩ = 108-132.
5. **Fast** – Syncopated and percussive approach to playing; the divisively fast- driven rhythm maybe realized at the dotted-quarter, quarter, or eighth-note level; Metronome markings range from: ♩/♩ = 100-132; ♩ = 176-higher; ♩ = 116-126.

⁵⁰⁶ Boyer's (1978, 1984-5, 1992) categories consist of: fast, slow, ad lib (without rhythm), gospel blues, gospel ballads, lining out, jubilee, and shout of which he provides text and names of compositions that exemplify these song types. Brooks (1973) provides examples of the following religious song types: spiritual, hymns, Pentecostal praise songs, composed sacred songs, gospel songs, holy rock songs. Cheston's (1989) categorization of gospel piano accompaniment styles is based on tempo: fast, slow, and ad lib.

Table 5.18 Continued

6. **Fast Shout (Pentecostal Praise)**⁵⁰⁷ – Techniques like fast gospel, but at an excessively fast tempo; usually in duple meter; divisive left-hand octaves; ♩ = 184-higher.
7. **Slow Stride** – Legato playing with repetition and reiteration; Greater use of rhythmically-divisive fill-ins; ♩ = 32-50.
8. **Slow Gospel Blues** – 16-bar gospel blues form; utilization of blues-infused motives; ♩ = 48.
9. **Slow** – more legato playing; repetition and reiteration; greater use of arpeggiation and fill in motives; rhythmically divisive; ♩ = 48-54.

The subsequent recordings that are examined align with these categorizations in the following manner (Table 5.19):

Table 5.19 Songs Grouped According to Sub-styles

PRE GOSPEL STRIDE	Unknown-Hudman (1930); Unknown-Washington (1943)
GOSPEL STRIDE	Lightner (1947); Allison (1947); Martin (1949-Old Ship); Starks (1951); Ward (1952)
MODIFIED GOSPEL STRIDE	Cleveland (1955); Williams (1958)
FAST STRIDE	Allen (1937); Smith (1950); Dublin (1955-He'll Understand & Oh Sinner); Dublin (1953 Jesus Steps Right In); Dublin (1952, Stand By Me)

⁵⁰⁷ Just as Ragtime was viewed as an outgrowth of dance practices among Southern Blacks, the gospel piano style is seen, in one way, as an outgrowth of religious worship patterns – shouting, holy dancing.

Table 5.19 Continued

FAST	<p>♪ - Unknown-Hill (1927); Banks (1949); Martin (1947-Didn't It Rain)</p> <p>♩ - Martin (1950-Satisfied); Falls (1958)</p> <p>♩ - Starks (1953); Cleveland (1952) Pickard (1955); Rasberry (1955)</p>
FAST SHOUT (PENTECOSTAL PRAISE)	Unknown-McGee (1927); Dublin (1952-When I Rise); Dublin (1952-Bye and Bye); Williams (1958)
SLOW STRIDE	Martin (1947-Yield Not); Unknown-Griffin (1950); Rasberry (1951); Collier (1959)
SLOW GOSPEL BLUES	Falls (1946)
SLOW	Martin (1947-Precious Memories); unknown-Cleveland (1959/60)

Most gospel music is written in meters such as 2/4, 4/4, and 3/4, of which a triplet subdivision undergirds each quarter-note beat; therefore, pieces in 4/4 are interpreted in 12/8, 3/4 in 9/8, and 2/4 in 6/8.

5.4 MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOSPEL PIANO STYLE

Arizona Dranes ended her recording relationship with Okeh in 1928, yet her musical prowess and presence still impacted countless gospel performers, particularly through her denominational affiliation with the Church of God in Christ. Dranes' distinctive piano style could best be described as an amalgam of the Texas Barrelhouse tradition and Ragtime. Other Pianists during

Dranes' era was Elder Charles Beck, who played a ragtime-style of piano accompaniment and accompanied Elder Curry, who played a ragtime-like guitar style.⁵⁰⁸ Recordings of Rev. F. W. McGee (6/1927), Jessie May Hill (12/1927), the Texas Jubilee Singers (12/1928), Rev. Joe Lenley (12/1929), and the Southern Sanctified Singers (4/1929) have been attributed to Dranes because they are synonymous with and strongly reflect her pianistic styling. Recordings made of their sermons and singing, were usually accompanied by piano, other instruments, and the congregation.

Unknown Pianists – 1927, 1930

The pianist accompanying Rev. McGee on “**He is The Savior For Me**” (1927) uses octaves and broken chords in the right hand against a ragtime “oom-pah” bass line (Music Example 5.23).

Music Example 5.23 "He Is The Savior For Me" (1927)

⁵⁰⁸ See Paul Oliver, *Songsters and Saints: Vocal Traditions on Race Records* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 174. “Elder Charlie Beck was apparently a member of the Elder Curry congregation which also recorded for Okeh at this time and was probably affiliated with the Church of God in Christ. Beck’s energetic singing and piano work are clearly modeled on the influential Arizona Dranes, heard in volume 1 of this series. Beck made gospel records into the late 1940s, several of which featured his trumpet playing.”

The opening octaves conclude with a “5-6-7” motive that is revisited throughout the song. The single bass does not maintain the root, but alternates between the I and V. This rocking piano playing highlights relentless syncopation, flirtatious blue-notes (Music Example 5. 24), breaks, cross rhythms, assailing octaves, descending pentatonic lines, and inner motivic tropes (Music Example 5.25). The piece is unified by the *descending* “5-to-3” *motive*, a hallmark of Dranes’ style, and an *ascending* “3-to-5” *motive* (Music Example 5.26) that consistently appears through out the entire song.

Music Example 5.24 "He Is The Savior For Me" - Blue Notes



Music Example 5.25 "He Is The Savior For Me" - Inner Motivic Trope



Music Example 5.26 "He Is The Savior For Me" - Ascending "3-to-5" Motive



Jessie May Hill was a member of the same denomination as Arizona Dranes. As a soloist within the Church of God in Christ, Dranes frequently accompanied Hill. Even though the pianist on Hill’s 1927 recording is unknown, a strong Dranes pianistic influence is present. The harmonic

motion in this 1927 “**Untitled**” song is initially articulated by perpetual eighth-notes in both hands (Music Example 5.27). As time passes, the right-hand follows the contour of the melodic line, and inner motivic lines emerge (Music Example 5.28). The right-hand plays the melody in the introductory measures of “**Sunshine In The Shadows**” while the left-hand accompanies with a typical ragtime left-hand (Music Example 5.29). Due to the quality of the recording, it becomes hard to decipher when the piano (or guitar) plays the chords. Interestingly, the guitar plays a bass line (Music Example 5.30) that is analogous to the ones found in Dorsey’s bass lines (see Music Example 5.22f).

Music Example 5.27 "Untitled" (1927)



Music Example 5.28 "Untitled" - Inner Lines



Music Example 5.29 "Sunshine In The Shadows" (1927)

"Sunshine In The Shadows" (1927) Trans. by Idella Johnson

Music Example 5.30 "Sunshine In The Shadows" - Bass Line

Clara Hudman Gholston, known as the “Georgia Peach,” was noted for her outstanding recordings with Rev. J. M. Gates of Atlanta, Georgia, and for performing Thomas Dorsey’s compositions with male quartet accompaniment.⁵⁰⁹ The loping, “**Lordy Won’t You Come By Here**” (1930) exhibits an underlying and unwavering triplet presence that parallels the “swing” feel found in jazz and blues (Music Example 5.31). Characteristics of Dranes that emerge are the use of

⁵⁰⁹ Her immense contralto lead – mixing head and chest tones – on “There’s Something About the Lord Mighty Sweet” (1930) with the Gates ensemble, is noted as the first modern gospel recording. Hudman was celebrated in Atlanta for her rendition of “Daniel in the Lion’s Den.” She married her pastor, Rev. T. T. Gholston after his wife died, and this split the church. As a result, they relocated to Detroit, and eventually she moved to New York when they separated. In New York, Hudman joined a Pentecostal church and began recording for Apollo Records. Hudman was featured in 1940 at Radio City Music Hall’s Gospel Concert, which was modeled after Hammond’s 1939 Spiritual to Swing Concert.

Music Example 5.31 "Lordy Won't You Come By Here" (1930)

"Lordy Won't You Come By Here" (1930) trans. by Idella Johnson

14 15 16

2 3 4 5

6 7 8 9

10 11 12 13

need - ed time oh now is the need - ed time oh now is the

the middle register of the piano,⁵¹⁰ the continual “oom-pah” construction in the left-hand, a chordal melody in the right-hand, occasional leaps an octave higher, and a melodically infused chordal motive that connect phrases (mm. 7-8).

Estelle Allen – 1937

“**God’s G onna Separate th e W heat fro m th e T ares**” (Music Example 5.32) is a fast gospel piece sung by a young Mahalia Jackson with Estelle Allen on piano. Allen’s accompaniment is an assortment of African-American pianistic styles – Blues, Ragtime, Boogie-Woogie, Stride, and Gospel. The piano accompaniment begins very grand and straight, but as soon as Mahalia Jackson enters with her vocal part, Allen’s accompaniment is immediately ignited with a bluesy triplet-feel - . This demonstrates the effect the soloist has on the pianist, and vice versa. For example, when Allen thunders repetitive octaves in mm. 11-12, it serves as an impetus that fuels Jackson as she sings her next phrase; furthermore, the end of m. 12 contains the classic *ascending “5-6-1” motive* (referencing to Dorsey) – which becomes standard in the gospel piano style (see Music Example 5.18).

The use of big, full chords in both hands signals an immediate departure from all of the previous piano examples up to this point. Allen opens with a resounding assault of major chords that traverse the piano; and as the song continues, she is not delimited to the middle register, but “stomps” across a 6-octave range in an almost pedantic and grandiloquent presentation. Measures 9, 10, and 25 illustrate Allen’s sweeping, stride style that negotiates these polarizing registers.

⁵¹⁰ “Gospel piano style had been developed based on the ‘rhythm section’ concept, in which the middle of the piano is used to support the singers by doubling the vocal line in harmony.” See Boyer, How Sweet The Sound, 50.

Music Example 5.32 "God's Gonna Separate The Wheat From The Tares" (1937)

♩ = 132
 $\square = \overset{3}{\square}$

"God's Gonna Separate The Wheat From The Tares" (1937)
 sung by Mahalia Jackson piano, Estelle Allen trans. by Idella Johnson

left

③

Gods' gon' separate the wheat from tares

⑦

⑪

⑮

⑲

I I⁶₄ vi II⁷ V⁷

Music Example 5.32 Continued

[HORUS] "God/Gonna Separate" cont
2 of 2

⑳ CHORUS 2

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CHORUS 3 VERSE 2 CHORUS 4
mm. 55-70 mm. 71-86 mm. 87-102

While not always following the melody exactly, Allen will adhere to the syncopated and anticipated melodic rhythm at times (mm. 5, 6, 17). Allen pulls away from the classic, “oom-pah” left-hand in favor of more linear and octave bass lines (mm. 13-20). Boogie-Woogie practices appear when Allen uses a walking 1-3-5-6-1 line in m. 29, and a standard ostinato accompaniment during Jackson’s sustained note (focal point) at the beginning of VERSE 1 (mm. 37-40). Both hands are homorhythmic in mm. 37-40, and instead of remaining on the I chord, they oscillates between the I and $IV\frac{6}{4}$ chord – building on Dranes’ I – $Io7$ oscillations, and foreshadowing the new choice for accompanying faster pieces. Furthermore, during these measures, Allen’s erudition as a skilled pianist shines through with her insertion of a 2/4 measure to compensate for the irregular timing of the soloist.⁵¹¹

Sevenths dominate the harmonic structure (Table 5.20) and the internal movement. The classic *plagal cadence*, as seen in Dorsey’s accompaniment (Music Example 5.20), rounds out the **A1** and **B2** lines. When the harmony screams $V7$ for four measures at **B1**, Allen does not deviate from it in any way, but uses the V as a pedal point that creates tension to be defused by the soloist. Unabashed inner lines leading to the $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$ glisten as 1) blues counterpoint to the vocal line, and 2) counterpoint between the two hands (mm. 14-15) – as if telling their own story. These inner motivic lines trope on the *descending* “5-to-3” *motive* and are quickly countered with an *ascending* “5-6- $\flat 7$ ” (see Music Example 5.33). On the I chord, Allen approaches the $\flat 7^{\text{th}}$ from above, and on

⁵¹¹ According to gospel impresario Johnny Lloyd, “While Mahalia was a great singer, she was known for her atrocious sense of timing.” Johnny Lloyd, Personal Interview with Author.

Table 5.20 "God's Gonna Separate..." - Harmonic Outline

CHORUS

(A)

/ I / I[♯] V7 / I / I /
 (I I IV iv)

(B1)

/ V7 / V7 / V7 / V7 /

(A1)

/ I / I I⁷ / IV7 / I /
 (V7/IV)

(B2)

/ I[♯] vi / II⁷ V7 / I / I V7 /
 (V7/V) (I I IV iv)

Music Example 5.33 "God's Gonna Separate..." - Motivic Counterpoint Lines



{Descending "5-to-3" motive} {Ascending "5-6-7"}

the IV chord, she approaches the ♭7th from below – both approaches are very Dorseyean. [Note:

Allen's accompaniment of "Oh, My Lord," employs a palpable boogie woogie line (Music

Example 5.34), and approaches the ♭7th in the IV chord from above.]

Music Example 5.35 "My Record Will Be There" (1943)

$\text{♩} = 116$
INTRODUCTION
"My Record Will Be There" (1943)
1st Verse
vocal, Ernestine Washington
Piano, unknown
Transcribed by Idella Johnson

④ VERSE I
⑧
⑩
⑬
⑯

Music Example 5.36 "My Record Will Be There" - Boogie Woogie Bass Line



IV7

Mildred Falls – 1946, 1958

Mildred Falls' piano accompaniment of Mahalia Jackson on **"I'm Going To Tell Go d"** (1946) is a masterful exhibition of blues minimalism within gospeldom. The blues permeates this piece in terms of Falls' use of legato, expanded harmonic language, note choice, linear approach, phrasing, and nuance.

After the brief introduction, Mahalia Jackson begins the song with a hemiola that resets the tempo (Music Example 5.37). Falls uses stock phrases (mm. 12, 16 – Music Examples 5.38 & 5.39), motives, lines, and space to build the accompaniment. Falls takes great care weaving the "5-to-3" *motive* throughout the piece. For example, in m. 10-11, by the time Falls finishes the "5-to-3" *motive* in B-flat (beats 4-9), she begins another one in E-flat (beat 11 thru beat 13 of m. 11). Grace notes (m. 3), trills (m. 9), and blues-nuanced lines (m. 2, 7, 9) adorn the smooth-textured accompaniment. Allen, as a master architect, clearly illustrates how a linear accompaniment maintains the ethos of the gospel style. It appears that Falls does not allow either hand to dominate, but creates a delicate balancing act by allowing the right-hand to play a role in both treble and bass registers – thus, embodying what is meant by the heterogeneous sound ideal (see mm. 5-8). When the left-hand leads with a walking blues bass line in mm. 13-14, Falls' right-hand moves over placid chords in a seamless and legato manner. Falls uses space as a trope, and is not constrained to fill every musical "hole" with material. Economy and quality of expression are prominently featured, rather than quantity of musical activity. Furthermore, the

Music Example 5.37 "I'm Gonna Tell God" (1946)

"I'm Gonna Tell God" (1946)

vocal, Mahalia Jackson
piano, Mildred Falls
Trans. by Idella Johnson

1 of 3

INTRODUCTION

① $\text{♩} = 66$

② $\text{♩} = 66$

③

④

CHORUS

I'm gonna tell God

I'm gonna tell God

all a-bout it

one of the days Oh

Lord one of these ⑧ days

Yes I'm gonna tell God

all a-

Handwritten musical score for "I'm Gonna Tell God" (1946). The score is written on grand staves with treble and bass clefs. It includes an introduction and a chorus. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 66. The score includes various musical notations such as chords (Bb9, Eb, Ab, Eb9), dynamics (Fim), and articulation (accents). The lyrics are written above the vocal line. The score is numbered 1 of 3.

Music Example 5.37 Continued

11 but it ^{one of these days} ^{"I'm Going to Tell God" cont 2 of 3} oh ye-e-e-

12 es e-very tear Lord I had to

13 shed e-very time u yes my heart has

14 left yes I gon' tell God tell Him just how you been

Chord symbols: A^b7 , B^b9 , E^b7 , B^b7 , E^b7 , E^b9 , B^b13 , A^b7 , E^b9 , B^b13 , A^b7 , D^b13 , A^b , E^b9 , B^b13 , A^b7 , F^{min}

Music Example 5.37 Continued

Music Example 5.38 "I'm Gonna Tell God" - Broken Chordal Motive (m. 16)

Music Example 5.39 "I'm Gonna Tell God" - Gospel Motives (m. 12)

rich harmonic framework, saturated with 9th and 13th chords, provides the ballast for the succinct musical motion (Table 5.21). What this study refers to as the “*Gospel Dominant Chord*” – the v7^b13 chord – appears prominently in Allen’s accompaniment. Furthermore, Allen’s choice of notes are imbued with harmonic DNA because her motivic lines outline chords, triads (m. 9), and suggest strong harmonic movement. For example, the anacrusis to m. 1, and the first two notes

of m. 1 (B \flat & C) suggest a B \flat 9 chord. The E \flat and F on beat 7 of measure 8 suggest an E \flat 9. Like bebop pianist Thelonious Monk, Allen's terse note selection communicates much harmonic information – stark but substantive, and angular but abundant.

Table 5.21 "I'm Gonna Tell God" - Harmonic Outline

CHORUS												
/	I	vi	/	II7	V7	/	I	IV	/	I	V	/
/	I	I7	/	I7	II7	/	V7	ii	/	V7	/	/
/	I7	V7	/	I	I7	/	IV	/	I \sharp	V7	/	/
/	I	vi	/	II7	V7	/	I	IV	/	I	V7	/

While Falls' 1958 accompaniment of **"Didn't It Rain"**⁵¹³ is the antithesis of "I'm Going To Tell God," the blues quality and gospel clichés remain. This fast gospel song, which is simultaneously brazen and effervescent, incorporates bluesy-swing motives (Music Example 5.40), blatant 7ths, strong *ascending* "5-6-1" octaves, and the *gospel plagal cadence*.

Music Example 5.40 "Didn't It Rain" (1958)



⁵¹³ Mahalia Jackson recorded it in 1958 after such acclaim for her live performance of it at the Newport Jazz Festival.

Roberta Martin – 1947, 1949, 1950, 1955

Roberta Martin is celebrated for her lucid and articulate piano style; furthermore, she was a renowned pianist who introduced innovation through her distinctive arrangements of traditional hymns, spirituals, and new gospel compositions. “Yield Not To Temptation,” although written by the white hymn composer Horatio Richard Palmer, has been on those beloved hymns of the African-American church for its intimate text and use of triplets. Like the published hymn, Roberta Martin maintains the 6/8 meter, but improvises upon the notated text by infusing it with idiomatic gospel clichés.⁵¹⁴

The introductory measures of “**Yield Not To Temptation**”⁵¹⁵ are full of smooth nuances, and incorporates the “oom-pah-pah” technique in the left hand (Music Example 5.41). Anthony Heilbut says of this recording that Martin’s playing “...lopes along with artfully controlled swing.”⁵¹⁶ Martin sets the tempo and mood as she plays with more tone in the right hand while articulating and decorating the melodic line with single passing tones, neighboring tones, and appoggiaturas. The rhythmic framework consists of incessant eighth-notes, is flavored with a recurring “*long-short triplet*” motive (mm. 5, 6, 10) in the right-hand (Music Example 5.42) that accentuates and governs Martin’s 6/8 swing style; and this rhythmic motive heightens the emotional fabric of the piece. Martin plays predominantly in the middle register and maintains consistent

⁵¹⁴ Typical of gospel composers, Martin published her own arrangement entitled “He Will Carry You Through.”

⁵¹⁵ The soloist is a young, Delois Barret, who while still in high school, was discovered by Martin on a Sunday morning radio program. Delois, along with her sisters Billie and Rodessa, began singing in choir directed by their aunt in the early 1940s at Chicago’s Morning Star Baptist Church. Delois sang full-time with Roberta Martin for 18 years, and her light, coloratura-like voice, is credited with introducing operatic techniques into gospel music. During this time, Rodessa served as the choral director Chicago’s Galileo Baptist Church, and Billie furthered her singing after studying at the American Music Conservatory. In 1962, they formed the Barrett Sisters.

⁵¹⁶ Anthony Heilbut, Liner Notes, *Brighten the Corner Where You Are: Black and White Urban Hymnody*, New World Records Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc. NW224, 1978.

Music Example 5.41 "Yield Not To Temptation" (1947)

$\text{♩} = 104$ (Intro.)

⑤ (Verse) Yield not to temp-ta-tion For yielding is sin

⑨ each victory will help you some oha to win

Music Example 5.42 "Yield Not To Temptation" - "Long-Short Triplet" Motive

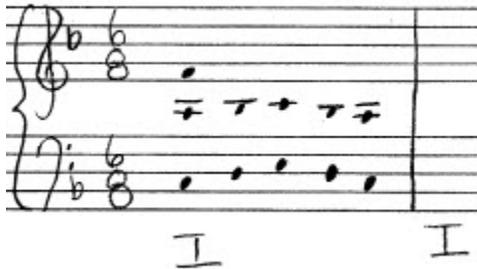
chord voicings - except for m. 13 in the second time through the verse. Martin maintains the melody on top of the chord which “sings” through, and enhances it with single-note fill-ins (m. 2, 10). According to Pearl Williams-Jones, “the piano playing was the foundation of the vocal parts, underscoring the group’s rich harmonies.”⁵¹⁷ Unlike Arizona Dranes, who emphasized rhythmic motives over melodic motives, Martin’s style incorporates both. In measure 4, Martin tropes on the Dorsey *plagal cadence* (measure 3 in Music Example 5.13) and establishes her own, which has become standardized in gospeldom, ad infinitum. Unlike Dorsey’s, which has inner chordal movement, Martin has single-note movement juxtaposed against the stabilizing lower and upper notes (Music Example 5.43). Martin did not limit her “*Inner Movement*” technique to cadential areas only, but she used them in the normal course of a song. For example, it seems that the “*Inner Movement*” technique in “**The Old Ship of Zion**” (1949) parallels the background vocal part – indicating how the vocals have affected the gospel piano style (Music Example 5.44). Another key feature of Martin’s style, was ending the song with arpeggiated chords, thirds, or sixths emanating from the piano’s middle register all the way to the top.

Music Example 5.43 Martin Cadence - Inner Movement

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a cadence. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The treble staff contains a melody starting with a dotted quarter note, followed by a triplet of eighth notes, and ending with a quarter note. The bass staff contains a bass line starting with a half note, followed by a triplet of eighth notes, and ending with a half note. Roman numerals 'I', 'IV', and 'I' are written below the bass staff, indicating the chord progression. The notation is handwritten and includes various musical symbols like stems, beams, and dots.

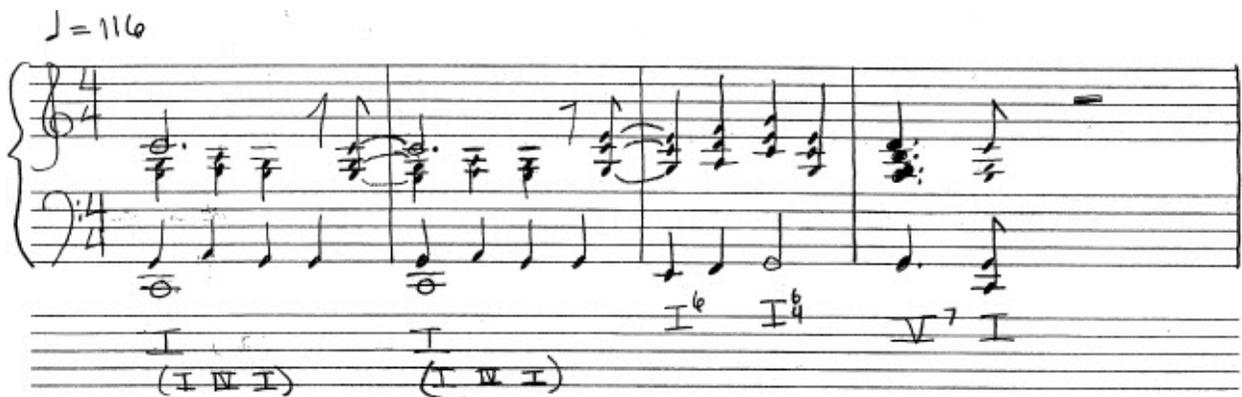
⁵¹⁷ Pearl Williams-Jones, “Roberta Martin: Spirit of An Era,” in *We’ll Understand It Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers*, ed. Bernice Johnson Reagon, 255-274 (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 258.

Music Example 5.44 "The Old Ship of Zion" - Inner Movement



Other recordings reveal other nuggets of Martin’s style. “**Didn’t It Rain**” (1947) provides an example of Martin playing a faster gospel song. Martin’s accompaniment echoes Arizona Dranes’, but also adds a sophisticated elegance that imbues the same “fire” as Dranes’. Martin’s accompaniment retains the fervor by punctuating the vocal line, and placing inner vocal lines against upper and lower stationary notes (Music Example 5.45). Dictated by the vocal

Music Example 5.45 "Didn't It Rain" (1947) - Fast Gospel



harmony, and as observed in Estelle Allen’s fast accompaniment (Music Example 5. 32), Martin oscillates between the I and V. With “**Satisfied**” (1950), Martin’s pianistic approach combines playing homorhythmically with the background vocal part, inserting *ascending* “5-6-1” lines (in

octaves), and maintaining an overall rhythmic drive. Whereas Dranes would repeat the same chord in the Tonic or Subdominant tonal area (Music Example 5.4 – “It’s All Right Now”), Martin (and Allen) differs by oscillating between the I and IV chord, or using neighboring notes (Music Example 5.46). Additionally, Martin tropes of Dorsey’s idiomatic bass movement.

Music Example 5.46 "Satisfied" (1950) - Fast Gospel

Handwritten musical notation for Music Example 5.46, showing two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system is labeled "I chord" and the second is labeled "IV Chord". Both systems are in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 124. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first system shows a treble clef with a whole note chord and a bass clef with a whole note chord. The second system shows a treble clef with a whole note chord and a bass clef with a whole note chord.

In the slow “Precious Memories,” (Music Example 5.47) Martin provides the counterpart to Dorsey, who has a penchant for descending lines (Music Example 5.16). Martin consistently uses an “*ascending melodic line*” when she moves from the V to I, which functions as a bridge. With this motive, Martin was able to clearly illustrate the percussive and legato qualities

Music Example 5.47 "Precious Memories" (1947) - Ascending Melodic Line

Handwritten musical notation for Music Example 5.47, showing a single system of piano accompaniment. The system is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 54. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The notation shows a treble clef with a whole note chord, followed by a half note chord, and then a quarter note chord. The label "V to I" is written below the notation.

of the piano. The “*broken chordal*” motives that move from V to I in Music Examples 5.48 – 5.51, are the same as the Falls’ motive (Music Example 5.38). A closer examination reveals that this “*broken chordal*” motive is a trope (expansion) of the flagrant “5-to-3” motive (Music Example 5.7). Thus, the “broken chordal” motive, a trope of a trope, becomes ubiquitous in the gospel piano style – indicating how a trope is appropriated and revitalized (recycled to create something new). Of Martin’s pianistic styling, Boyer states that

She emphasized the first beat of each musical unit in the middle of the piano and provided her own response by answering this beat with secondary beats at the upper ranges of the keyboard. One of her trademarks was bringing a song to a ‘ritard’ (slowing down) at the end, followed by cascading chords all the way to the upper extremes of the keyboard.⁵¹⁸

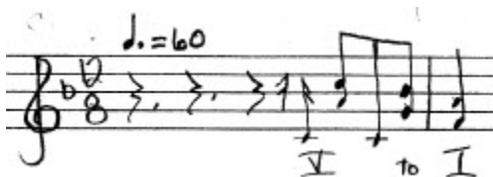
Music Example 5.48 "Precious Memories" - Broken Chordal Motive



Music Example 5.49 "Old Ship of Zion" (1949) - Broken Chordal Motive



Music Example 5.50 "I've Got A Home For You" (1954) - Broken Chordal Motive



⁵¹⁸ Boyer, How Sweet The Sound, 68.

Music Example 5.51 "I'm Saved" (1955) - Broken Chordal Motive



Gwendolyn Cooper Lightner – 1947

Gwendolyn Lightner's piano accompaniment of Prof. J. Earle Hines and the St. Paul's Baptist Church Choir on "God Be With You" (1947), which was their theme song, provides an example of the standard, *left-to-right* gospel accompaniment (Music Example 5.52).⁵¹⁹ Clearly stemming from Ragtime's "oom-pah" bass construction, Lightner's stratified accompaniment focuses on the left, lower-side, of the piano on beats 1 and 3, and on the right, upper-side on beats 2 and 4 – creating an almost constant left-to-right sweeping motion – illustrating a classic, gospel stride style. Beats 2 and 4 provide rhythmic fill-ins (Music Example 5.53) and basic subdivision of the (♩) dotted quarter note. There is also strong linear motion to the ♭7 degree of the scale (mm. 2 & 3, beat 3), and Lightner even uses it in a *plagal cadence* (Music Example 5.54). In this study, the first echo of an *ascending "5-6-♭7" motive* was hinted at in the opening of "He Is The Savior For Me" (Music Example 5.23).

⁵¹⁹ "God Be With You" was composed by Thomas A. Dorsey in 1940. In many churches, it replaced the standard benedictory "God Be With You," written by the white composers Jeremiah E. Rankin and William G. Tomer.

Music Example 5.52 "God Be With You" (1947)

"God Be With You" (1947)
Gwendolyn Lightner, piano

♩. = 6/8

God Be with You

5-6-b7 motive

Trans. by Idella Johnson

I V I I⁷

IV IV

Music Example 5.53 "God Be With You" - Rhythmic 1-5-6 Fill-In

Music Example 5.54 "God Be With You" - 7th With Plagal Cadence

*Margaret Allison – 1947/1949*⁵²⁰

In a manner more garish than Lightner's, Margaret Allison's piano accompaniment of "Touch Me Lord Jesus" (1947/49) could be deemed as the "poster-child" of Gospel Stride (Music Example 5.55). (Lucie Campbell, "Mother of the National Baptist Music Department – music director of the National Sunday School and Baptist Training Union Congress of the National Baptist Convention of America composed "Touch Me Lord Jesus" in 1941.) Sweeping from one side of the piano to the other, Allison's accompaniment is laden with the *ascending* "5-6-7" motive (mm. 5, 6 – Music Example 5.56), octaves mirroring the melody (m. 4), repeated octaves and chords (m. 12), and duplicated chords in the middle and high register. The "5-to-3" motive is at work in piano's melody line (mm. 9-10), and embedded in chords (m. 1-2, 9-10). The 3rd degree is also approached in measure 7 leading to 8 with an ascending chromatic line.

The rhythmic framework conveys the classic gospel stride rhythm (Music Example 5.57). In the gospel stride style, call and response is inherently effectuated through the register and rhythm. Beats 1 and 3, anchored by low bass notes and right-hand chords, represent the "Call". Beats 2 and 4, accompanied with higher left and right-hand chords, represent the "Response." With the right-hand predominantly responsible for all of the subdivisions, the left-hand's role is to mark the ↓ beats. The right-hand's rhythm is simpler on beats 1 and 3 ("Call"), and more divisive on beats 2 and 4 ("Response"). Allison's gospel stride rhythmic subdivision is in essence, the same as Martin's on "Yield Not To Temptation" (Music Example 5.41). The only difference is that Martin subdivides the eighth-note into triplets (♪ = ) , whereas Allison sub-divides the eighth-note into sixteenths (♪ = ). In m. 11, the rhythm is briefly interrupted with a cross-rhythm that is

⁵²⁰ "Touch Me Lord Jesus" boasts a recording date of 1949, but Allison claims that it was recorded in 1947

Music Example 5.55 Continued

Handwritten musical score for "Touch Me Lord Jesus" in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of three systems of piano accompaniment and vocal lines. The lyrics are: "will doubt thee never Touch Me Lord Jesus cast", "cleanses me", "cleanses me dear SAVIOUR", "make me wholly", and "thine". Chord markings include I, V7, IV, IV7, and VI7. A handwritten note "2 of 2" is written above the first system.

Music Example 5.56 "Touch Me Lord Jesus" - Ascending "5-6-flat7" Motive

Musical notation showing an ascending "5-6-flat7" motive in G major. The first measure shows the I chord (G major) with notes G, B, and D. The second measure shows the IV chord (C major) with notes C, E, and G. The notes G, B, and C are connected by a line, indicating an ascending motion.

Music Example 5.57 "Touch Me Lord Jesus" Gospel Stride Rhythm

Musical notation illustrating the Gospel Stride Rhythm in 12/8 time. The notation shows four measures of piano accompaniment. The first measure has a bass note (G) and a chord (G major). The second measure has a bass note (B) and a chord (G major). The third measure has a bass note (D) and a chord (G major). The fourth measure has a bass note (F) and a chord (G major). The notes are connected by lines, indicating a rhythmic pattern.

exaggerated by the bombshell bass. Allison is very cognizant of the text and shadows its rhythm in her accompaniment. Most of the text occurs on the first and last ♩ beat of each measure. The right-hand rhythmic accompaniment for beat one is always ♩ ♩ (except for m. 5), and ♩ ♩ for beat four. Another level of call-and-response is created between the piano accompaniment and vocal part. When the vocal part makes the “Call” on beats 4 through 1, the piano almost always provides the “Response” on beat 2 with the ♩ ♩ or ♩ ♩ ♩ rhythmic figure. By retaining the same ♩ ♩ ♩ rhythmic figure for beat 2, Allison is able to explode the *ascending “5-6-7” motive* on the IV chord with force every time. Allison rounds out the 16-measure song form with the I-IV-iv-I cadence.

Jeff Banks – 1949

Jeff Bank’s 1949 accompaniment of the Mary Johnson Davis Singers on “**I’ll Wait On the Lord**”⁵²¹ displays numerous developments within the gospel piano style (Music Example 5.58). As was en vogue at this time, the fast 4/4 meter is undergirded with a strong triplet subdivision. The harmony language is expanded by the use of the *Gospel Dominant Chord* (V7♭13 - m. 2 of intro), use of secondary dominants, and an advanced blues bass line. It appears (based on the quality of the recording) that the “oom-pah” construction is abandoned in favor of the use of octaves. The bass line underscores beats 1 and 3, with occasional movement on all four beats. When you combine the m. 3 of the intro and m. 8 of the CHORUS, it produces a composite blues bass line (Music Example 5.59). The harmonic accompaniment is punctuated by: ascending and descending chromatic lines on top of the chords (mm. 2-3 of intro), and

⁵²¹ Composed by Rev. W. Herbert Brewster.

Music Example 5.58 "I'll Wait On The Lord" (1949)

$\text{♩} = 132$ Intro "I'll Wait On The Lord" (1949) Mary Johnson Davis, vocal
 Jeff Banks, piano Trans. by Idella Johnson

Handwritten musical score for "I'll Wait On The Lord" (1949) by Mary Johnson Davis, transcribed by Idella Johnson. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 132 beats per minute. It consists of four systems of music.

System 1: Intro
 Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord symbols: I, vi⁷, II⁷ (F7/E), V⁷b³, I, I^b, IV, iv / #IV.

System 2: (Chorus Verse) and (2nd verse)
 Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord symbols: V⁷b³, I, I⁷, IV⁷, I (1st verse), V⁷b³. Measure numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 are indicated below the bass line.

System 3: (1st verse)
 Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord symbols: I, I, V⁷ II⁷ (V/V), V⁷b³ 3 3, I, I⁷, IV⁷. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 are indicated below the bass line.

System 4: (1st & 2nd chorus)
 Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord symbols: I (or V), I^b vi, II⁷ V, I I^b IV iv / #IV, V. Measure numbers 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 are indicated below the bass line. The text "verse (I vi)" is written below measure 12.

Music Example 5.60 "Give Me Wing" (1950)

"Give Me Wings" (1950) piano, prob. Bertha Smith
Trans. by Edella Johnson

$\text{♩} = 152$

INTRO

1 2

3 4

Music Example 5.61 "Give Me Wings" - Motivic Thirds

III V⁷ I

Table 5.22 "Give Me Wings" - Harmonic Outline

VERSE/CHORUS									
(A1)	/	I	/	I	/	I	/	I7 (V7/V)	/
(B1)	/	IV7	/	IV7	/	I	/	V7	/
(A2)	/	I	/	I	/	I	VIIo7	/	vi
(B2)	/	I ⁶	vi	/	II7	V7	/	I (I IV)	/

Unknown Pianist – 1950

Originally from New Orleans, Bessie Griffin began her professional career singing with the Southern Harps, gained recognition singing with the Caravans, and eventually emerged as one of the great female, gospel soloists. Her rich and lustrous contralto voice paralleled the voices of other great singers such as Bessie Smith and Mahalia Jackson. Griffin’s electrifying performance of “**Too Close**” was recorded live in Memphis, Tennessee, around 1950. Anthony Heilbut refers to this recording as Bessie Griffin’s greatest because it “demonstrates her capacity to upset an audience, whether spiritual or secular.”⁵²² The unknown pianist is equally soul-stirring for their symbiotic role in inciting this religious and euphoria riot.

⁵²² Anthony Heilbut, Liner Notes, *Precious Lord: Recordings of the Great Gospel Songs of Thomas A. Dorsey*. Columbia CK 57164, 1994, p. 10.

Quintessential Gospel Stride is performed by this unknown pianist on “**Too Close**” with rich harmonies, soulful rhythms, artful execution (Music Example 5.62). Since the song is slow, the pianist uses more syncopation and the pervasive “*long-to-short*” *triplet motive* to fill in the empty spaces – the antithesis of Falls’ 1946 recording which did not fill every space with chords, but crafted a linear style of slow accompaniment. The “*long-short triplet*” *motive*, first seen in Martin’s “Yield Not To Temptation” (Music Example 5. 42) appears throughout “Too Close.” With this motive usually occurring on the third subdivision of the beat, the pianist reiterates it consecutively in an oscillating manner in measures 4, 5, and 7 – a typical technique employed in slow 12/8 gospel songs. This choice seems to be incited not only by the pianist’s pianistic knowledge, but also by the crowd’s collective and continuous emotionally responsive critique. As the piece continues, the left-hand joins that right-hand with the reiterated “*long-short triplet*” *motive*, which evokes more emotion. Other accompanimental decorations include appoggiaturas, neighboring tones, oscillating motives (mm. 5, 8), the *ascending* “5-6-1” *motives* (m. 1), *ascending* “5-6-7” *motives* (m. 11), fuller chords incorporating the octave, and using upper and lower registers to hammer out reiterated octaves (mm. 3, 11). Vocal rest periods are charged with these idiomatic rhythms and techniques in the piano accompaniment, that it arouses and almost instigates the vocalists to surpass the musicality of her previous phrases. While the dominant 7th is redolent from every available musical crevice, the “*Gospel Dominant Chord*” (V7_b13) appears on the V and the I (as a secondary dominant V7_b13 of IV). Other altered harmonic language includes the II7_b9 chord.

Music Example 5.62 "Too Close" (1950)

"Too Close" (1950) piano, unknown Trans. by Idella Johnson

$\text{♩} = 96$

I'm too close to my Journey's end I'm

to close to turn back in a world of sin I would take

hally from this journey you I've gotta make it

I've gotta make it Yeah I'm to close to winning

Chord symbols: I, V⁷, V⁷b⁹, I⁷, I⁷ (V⁷/b⁹), V⁷, V⁷b⁹, I, V⁷, V⁷b⁹, I, V⁷, V⁷b⁹, I, V⁷, V⁷b⁹, I

Measure numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Raymond Rasberry – 1951, 1955

“I’m Sealed” (1951), accompanied by Raymond Rasberry, is one of the few songs that the Ward Singers recorded where the personnel is known. Rasberry’s slow gospel style is very pristine and sustained, with polished rhythmic punctuations and seamless register transitions. The harmony for “I’m Sealed” oscillates back and forth between the I and IV chord for most of the two A sections (Table 5.23). The left-hand plays gracefully sustained octaves while the right-hand follows the basic contour of the melody embellishing it with chromaticism and neighboring chords in a sixteenth-triplet rhythm (Music Example 5.63). Even when inserting the bridging “*ascending melodic line*” *motive* (see Music Example 5.47), true to his style, Rasberry embellishes it with the “broken chordal” motive - representing a juxtaposing of tropes on tropes (see m. 2 of Music Example 5.64).

Table 5.23 I'm Sealed" - Harmonic Outline

		CHORUS											
(A)	/	I	IV	/	I	IV	/	I	IV	/	I	V	/
(B)	/	I	VI	/	II7	/	V7	/	II7	V7	/		
(A)	/	I	IV	/	I	IV	/	I	IV	/	I	V	/
(B)	/	I	VI	/	II7	V7	/	I	IV	/	I	V	/

Music Example 5.63 "I'm Sealed" (1951) - Introductory Motive

Music Example 5.64 "I'm Sealed" - Accompaniment with background

In Bessie Griffin’s “More Like Jes us” (1955), Rasberry still manages to retain his fluid pianistic style accompanying a fast gospel song. In the vamp-like section (of A2) where the harmonic motion remains on the I (Table 5.24), Rasberry unleashes a fury of accompanimental options in the right-hand (Music Example 5.65a-c). Strong directional bass lines invigorate the left-hand with octaves or single notes, of which chromatic and scalar dominate (Music Example 5.65c).

Table 5.24 "More Like Jesus" - Harmonic Outline

VERSE/CHORUS

(A1)
 / I VI / II V7 / I IV / I V /

(B1)
 / I VI / II7 / V7 / II7 V7 /

(A2)
 / I / I / IV / IV IVo7 /

(B2)
 / I^b VI / II7 V7 / I IV / I V /

Music Example 5.65 "More Like Jesus" (1955) - Bass Lines

Handwritten musical notation for bass lines of "More Like Jesus" (1955). The notation includes a tempo marking of quarter note = 120, a key signature of two flats, and three sections:

- a) A simple bass line starting with a Roman numeral I.
- b) "Vamp Techniques" showing chordal patterns with fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and a Roman numeral I.
- c) "Scalar Bass Line" showing a descending scale with Roman numerals II⁷, V⁷, and I.

Evelyn Starks – 1951, 1953

Like Allison, Evelyn Starks' piano style is a solid representation of the gospel stride style. The Original Gospel Harmonettes recorded an arrangement of H. R. Palmer's popular hymn "**Peace Be Still**," of which their 1951 recording has a meter and tempo change (Music Example 5.66). Starks' piano style, grounded with a heavy octave bass and not decorated with a lot of embellishments or harmonic variation, adheres to employing the following musical tenets: *ascending "5-6-1" motive; "5-to-3" motive; gospel plagal cadence with inner movement; and repetitive octaves.* After Starks exchanges the slow 9/8 Verse for the fast 12/8 Chorus (mm. 27-28), Starks accompaniment, while rhythmically divisive, remains fairly polarized with the left-hand banging out octave bass lines (of which a Dranes' like 1-6-5-1 emerges), and the right-hand remaining on the 1, 5, and 6 scale degrees in the upper register. A 1-6-5-1 bass line anchors the fast and almost harmonically static accompaniment of the 1953 recording of "**Get On Board**" (Music Example 5.67). The I and IV dominate the harmonic structure and the piano accompaniment follows the general rhythm and harmony of the background vocals. (Note: Herbert Pickard plays the organ and adds more rhythmic and motivic variation than Starks – see below.)

Clara Ward – 1952

White, hymn composer Isaac Watts,⁵²³ wrote "**At The Cross**" which has been a staple in Black church hymnody. Clara Ward incubates "At The Cross" in the gospel tradition and produces a recording that encapsulates all of the hallmark features of the "*Gospel Stride*" piano

⁵²³ Tacit homage has been paid to by African Americans to the white, hymn composer Isaac Watts. Many of his hymn texts provided the verses in which slaves used in their creation of their lining-out of hymn tradition, colloquially known as the "Old Dr. Watts Hymns."

Music Example 5.66 "Peace Be Still" (1951)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the piano accompaniment of "Peace Be Still" (1951). The score is divided into three sections: Intro, Verse, and Chorus. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 69 for the Intro and Chorus, and quarter note = 144 for the Chorus. The score includes chord symbols and melodic notation for both hands.

Intro (measures 1-4): Treble clef: (bb) I⁶₄, V⁷, I (III), I. Bass clef: (bb) I⁶₄, V⁷, I (III), I. Chord symbols: (bb) I⁶₄, V⁷, I (III), I.

Verse (measures 5-12): Treble clef: I, I³/_{vi}, vi, V⁷, vi, II⁷, V, V⁷. Bass clef: I, I³/_{vi}, vi, V⁷, vi, II⁷, V, V⁷. Chord symbols: I, I³/_{vi}, vi, V⁷, vi, II⁷, V, V⁷. Section labels: [A]¹, [A]², [B], [C].

Chorus (measures 13-16): Treble clef: I, I I³, IV, ii, I⁶₄, V⁷. Bass clef: I, I I³, IV, ii, I⁶₄, V⁷. Chord symbols: I, I I³, IV, ii, I⁶₄, V⁷. Section label: [CHORUS].

style (Music Example 5.68). With a beginning motive exactly like the one from the “Surely God Is Able” recording of 1950, Ward weaves out a piano accompaniment that is both melodic and rhythmic. One key aspect of Ward’s accompaniment is its close alignment to the melody, which was probably affected by her dual role as singer too. Other melodic-like components include the “*ascending melodic line*” motive that bridges measures 9 and 10 (a Roberta Martin influence - Music Example 5.47), the *ascending “5-6-7”* motive (mm. 4-5), and arpeggiated flourishes (see m. 1 of intro). Ward maintains the *Gospel Stride style* with her divisive rhythm that includes the use of repetitive octaves (mm. 4, 8) and the “*long-short triplet*” motive.

Music Example 5.67 "Get On Board" (1953)

"Get On Board" (1953)
Original Gospel Harmonettes
Piano, Evelyn Starks

Trans. by
Idella Johnson

J. = 126
INTRO

①

④

⑮

3 10

9

Music Example 5.68 "AtThe Cross" (1952)

♩ = 152 Intro "At The Cross" (1952) piano, Clara Ward (Chorus) Trans. by I. Johnson At the

Cross and the cross where I first saw the light at the burden of my

head rolled away Oh it was there that by faith I received my

sight and now I am happy all the day Verse A-

Curtis Dublin – 1952, 1953, 1955

The Davis Sisters' pianist, the famed Curtis Dublin, was noted for his formidable and sprightly, blues-infused, and sanctified-driving piano style. Along with other pianists from out of the sanctified tradition, Curtis Dublin emerges as a Dranesian disciple. The Davis Sister's recorded "**When I Rise**" (1952) which is a fast "shout" song, archetypal of the congregational song from the sanctified church (Music Example 5.69). The ear-catching introduction begins with "train-like" chromaticism anchored by a pedal on the I – all of which creates a psycho-musical anticipation of something. Through the course of the song, *ascending "5-6-1" motives* explode off the harmonically rich $V7_{b13}$ chord, octave and single-note bass lines abound, and rhythms reminiscent of Dranes effervesce in both hands. With the I chord employing the B-natural, and the $V7_{b13}$ chord employing the B-flat, Dublin's tonality embodies that major/minor affinity found in Dranes' "In That Day" – yet, with different harmonies. The *inner-voice "shout motive,"* which was seen earlier in Dranes' oeuvre (see Music Example 5.10), becomes the life-blood of the fast-shout gospel piano style. Under the auspices of Dublin (Music Example 5.70), the "shout" motive is imparted with the "gut-wrenching" blues. The uniqueness of this motive resides in its harmonic plurality that enables it to be realized over any chord change. Unlike "When I Rise", the 1955 recording of "**He'll Understand & Say Well Done**" (composed by Lucie Campbell) contains a fast gospel stride style. It is full of "*broken chordal*" motives, *ascending "5-6- \flat 7"* motives, "*descending 5-to-3*" motives, repeated octaves, and rhythmically divisive melodic contours. The idiomatic bass movement in Music Example 5.71 builds on Dorsey's model found in Music Example 5.22.

Music Example 5.69 "When I Rise" (1952)

"When I Rise" (1952) piano, Curtis Dublin Trans. by Idella Johnson

♩ = 116 **INTRO**

rise *In the morning* *when I* *rise*

Music Example 5.70 "When I Rise" - Inner "Shout" Motive

(b7)

Music Example 5.71 "He'll Understand & Say Well Done" (1955) - Bass Lines

♩ = 116

V to I *I* *to V*

In “**Bye & Bye**” (1952), Dublin changes the tempo from a slow-moderate gospel stride in 12/8 (♩ = 160 / ♪ = 58), to a faster, shout style in 4/4 (♩ = 200). Dublin begins with a moderate-tempo gospel stride style in which he reinforces upper chords with accompanying lower chords, outlines blues motives, and uses a lot of upper neighboring tones, chromaticism, and repetitive octaves. The tempo change occurs at the beginning of the Chorus, where the lead soloist also changes – a typical switch-lead tactic. From here on, it is a “sanctified” music fest.

Dublin had a penchant for using “repetitive three-note” motives on IV chords as evinced in “**Stand By Me**” (1952). It seems that this motive functioned to release the static tension built up by the I chord (Music Example 5.72). The 1953 piano accompaniment of “**Jesus Steps Right In**”⁵²⁴ (Music Example 5.73) has a flirtatious, blues quality. This is achieved by Dublin producing “*long-short*” oscillations that grace over the lowered 3rd, and “repetitive three-note” motives that also contain the lowered 3rd (Music Example 5.74). While it appears that Dublin was a master of employing short motives, he would also incorporate longer lines in his accompaniment. In the introduction, Dublin plays a descending blues line (that begins with the “*shout*” motive) with the ambitus of a major 10th, as it leads into the “*ascending 5-6-1*” motive (Music Example 5.75). A 1-5-6 bass line (a trope of Dranes’ 1-5-6-7 bass line) accompanies the I intermittently throughout the piece (Music Example 5.76). In the blues-infused “**Oh Si nner**” (1955), Dublin unifies the accompaniment with an incessant use and troping of the “*ascending 5-6-1*” motive. The motive always occurs when moving from the I to the V chord, but with variation (Music Example 5.77a-c).

⁵²⁴ It was composed by Kenneth Morris in 1945.

Music Example 5.72 "Stand By Me" (1952) - Repetitive 3-note Motive

Handwritten musical notation for "Stand By Me" (1952). The piece is in 12/8 time with a tempo of quarter note = 108. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The notation shows a repetitive 3-note motive in the right hand, with chords labeled I and IV. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Music Example 5.73 "Jesus Steps Right In" (1953) - Long-Short "5-to-3" Blues Oscillations

Handwritten musical notation for "Jesus Steps Right In" (1953). The piece is in 12/8 time with a tempo of quarter note = 132. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The notation shows long-short "5-to-3" blues oscillations in the right hand, with chords labeled I. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Music Example 5.74 "Jesus Steps Right In" - Repetitive 3-note Motive

Handwritten musical notation for "Jesus Steps Right In" (1953) showing a repetitive 3-note motive. The piece is in 12/8 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation shows a repetitive melodic line in the right hand, with chords labeled IV. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Music Example 5.75 "Jesus Steps Right In" - Introduction

Handwritten musical notation for "Jesus Steps Right In" (1953) showing the introduction. The piece is in 12/8 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation includes a circled "1" at the start and a circled "4" above the second measure. Chords are labeled IV⁷ and I⁷. A handwritten note says "Down-like motive". The notation shows a repetitive melodic line in the right hand, with chords labeled IV⁷ and I⁷. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Music Example 5.76 "Jesus Steps Right In" - 1-5-6 Bass Lines



Music Example 5.77 "Oh Sinner" (1955) - Blues-Infused Ascending 5-6-1 Motives



James Cleveland – 1952, 1955

Dr. Issac Watts’ “We’re Marching to Zion” has been another long-time favorite hymn within the African-American church. The Meditation Singers’⁵²⁵ 1952 recording of “**Marching to Zion**” represents a classic gospel arrangement of Watts’ hymn. On this fast gospel song, the Meditation Singers are led by James Cleveland on vocal and piano. Cleveland’s piano accompaniment (Music Example 5.78) maintains the fast and perpetual rhythmic drive of the song with broken octaves on primarily every beat in the left-hand, and a rhythmic right-hand replete with neighboring motives, repetitive octaves, and ascending, Martinesque 5-6-1 fill-ins (Music Example

⁵²⁵ Organized by Earnestine Rundless in 1947, the Meditation Singers were the Detroit counterpart to the hard-hitting Philadelphia Davis Sisters. Original members included: Rundless (lead soprano), Della Reese, Marie Waters, and Lillian Mitchell.

5.70). Predominately claiming stake in the middle register of the piano, With Cleveland predominately claiming stake in the middle register of the piano(c1-c2), his accompaniment tends to be very “singer-friendly.”

Music Example 5.78 "Marching To Zion" (1952)

"Marching To Zion" (1952)
Meditation Singers
Piano James Cleveland
Trans. by Idella Johnson

♩. = 116

we're march-ing we're march-ing up to zi-on
that bab-tis-ta fill-ci-ty of God

Music Example 5.79 "Marching To Zion" - 5-6-1 Motives

a) b) c)

F7(b9) V I

Cleveland's 1955 accompaniment of the Caravans singing "Since I Met Jesus" at the Shrine Auditorium provides an example of the gospel piano style in a live performance (Music Example 5.80).⁵²⁶ "Since I Met Jesus", composed by gospel singer and pianist Alex Bradford, is a moderate-tempo gospel song in 9/8, and drive, rhythm, and heavy-handedness still exists in Cleveland's piano accompaniment. The introduction moves at a faster tempo, which is slowed down upon the singer's entrance. When the background singers enter at the chorus, the tempo speeds up to ♩ = 96. Cleveland's rhythmic divisions are at the eighth-note level and more rhythmic activity in the right-hand tends to occur on beats 7, 8 and 9. The divisive eighth-notes are extended over all nine beats when Cleveland occasionally employs a repetitive three-note motive (Music Example 5.81). Cleveland creates syncopation between the right and left-hands in mm. 4-6. Neighboring tones, broken chords, inner lines (m.3), and *ascending melodic lines* (Music Example 5.82) are maintained in the right-hand throughout the piece. The left-hand predominantly plays heavy bass octaves that are interspersed with intermittent chords and single notes.

Herbert "Pee Wee" Pickard – 1955

Herbert Pickard is known for having a very clean, contained and crisp piano style that explodes with piercing, yet smooth octaves that seem to come from out of nowhere. The fast "Ill Be With Thee" (1955) pulsates with a strong swing feel in which Pickard punctuates the rhythmic texture with idiosyncratic motives (Music Example 5.83). Part of the "cleanness" of his style comes from his quasi-maintenance of the melodic rhythm (mm. 3-6) in the lower

⁵²⁶ The Shrine Auditorium, located at 649 W. Jefferson Boulevard in Los Angeles, California, had a seating capacity of 6,444. This L. A. concert was promoted as the "First Annual Mid-Summer Festival of Gospel Music." Besides the Caravans, other featured groups included the Pilgrim Travelers, The Original Gospel Harmonettes, the Soul Stirrers, Brother Joe May, Ether Davenport, and Annette May.

Music Example 5.80 "Since I Met Jesus" (1955)

"Since I Met Jesus" (1955)
Song by Albertina Walker & Caravans
Piano, James Cleveland

J. = 84 Intro
J. = 72 Verse

The musical score is handwritten and consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system includes an introduction and the beginning of the verse. The introduction is marked with a tempo of quarter note = 84. The verse begins with a tempo of quarter note = 72. The score is written in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It features various musical notations, including chords, melodic lines, and dynamics. The piano part is characterized by a repetitive 3-note motive in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

Music Example 5.81 "Since I Met Jesus" - Repetitive 3-note Motive

The musical score shows a repetitive 3-note motive in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand. The score is in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. The right hand part consists of a series of chords, each containing three notes. The left hand part consists of a steady bass line with a few chords. The score is written in a simple, clear style.

Music Example 5.82 "Since I Met Jesus" - Ascending Melodic Lines

The musical score shows ascending melodic lines in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand. The score is in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. The right hand part consists of a series of notes that ascend in pitch. The left hand part consists of a steady bass line with a few chords. The score is written in a simple, clear style.

Music Example 5.83 "I'll Be With Thee" (1955)

"I'll Be With Thee" (1955)
Original Gospel Harmonettes
Piano, Herbert Picard

Trans by
Idella Johnson lofa

J. = 120

Intro

VERSE 1

VERSE 2

VERSE 3

Handwritten musical score for "I'll Be With Thee" (1955). The score is in B-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. It consists of an Intro and three verses. The tempo is marked as J. = 120. The piano part is by Herbert Picard, and the transcription is by Idella Johnson. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and chord symbols (I, IV, V, I7, IV7). The lyrics "I'll be with thee" are written under the vocal line in the first verse.

Music 5.83 Continued

I'll be with Thee cont' 2 of 2

29

35 CHORUS

39

45 VAMP

49 4mm

55 Ab Pedal

61

65

69

75

81

87

93

99

105

111

117

123

129

135

141

147

153

159

165

171

177

183

189

195

201

207

213

219

225

231

237

243

249

255

261

267

273

279

285

291

297

303

309

315

321

327

333

339

345

351

357

363

369

375

381

387

393

399

405

411

417

423

429

435

441

447

453

459

465

471

477

483

489

495

501

507

513

519

525

531

537

543

549

555

561

567

573

579

585

591

597

603

609

615

621

627

633

639

645

651

657

663

669

675

681

687

693

699

705

711

717

723

729

735

741

747

753

759

765

771

777

783

789

795

801

807

813

819

825

831

837

843

849

855

861

867

873

879

885

891

897

903

909

915

921

927

933

939

945

951

957

963

969

975

981

987

993

999

1005

1011

1017

1023

1029

1035

1041

1047

1053

1059

1065

1071

1077

1083

1089

1095

1101

1107

1113

1119

1125

1131

1137

1143

1149

1155

1161

1167

1173

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1191

1197

1203

1209

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1263

1269

1275

1281

1287

1293

1299

1305

1311

1317

1323

1329

1335

1341

1347

1353

1359

1365

1371

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1407

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2109

2115

2121

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3003

3009

3015

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3105

3111

3117

3123

3129

3135

3141

3147

3153

3159

3165

3171

3177

3183

3189

3195

3201

3207

3213

3219

3225

3231

3237

3243

3249

3255

3261

3267

3273

3279

3285

3291

3297

3303

3309

3315

3321

3327

3333

3339

3345

3351

3357

3363

3369

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3381

3387

3393

3399

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4005

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4119

4125

4131

4137

4143

4149

4155

4161

4167

4173

4179

4185

4191

4197

4203

4209

4215

4221

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4311

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register. He primarily uses the upper register for his octave motives and runs (mm. 7-8). Occurring on the I7, this octave motive moves between the 1, ♭3, 4, and 5 scale degrees for Verse 1 and 2. Pickard's high octaves resonate more because of the inclusion of the 5th (harmonic overtone). By the Verse 3, Pickard expands his pianistic boundaries more. For one, the opening of Verse 3 (mm. 19-20) signals something different with Pickard playing ascending chromatic accompaniment on the I chord – which follows the harmony and rhythm of the background vocalists. By mm. 22-23, the focal point climaxes on the blisteringly long octave run that seems to descending from the “heavens” with artful precision.

An exorbitant amount of variation is found in Pickard's piano style, which is the tool he manages to use in order to keep things interesting. In the Chorus, Pickard continues his high motivic octaves and some chromaticism (m. 42), but begins to use the right-hand to intertwine punctuating inner motivic lines in the bass register on the II7♭9 chord (mm. 37-38). When the singers change their words in the Vamp from the repetitive “God said He would be with me” to “lonely”, Pickard also breaks up the monotony of the 1-5-6-1 bass line by moving to a pedal on the A♭.

Eddie Williams – 1958

Eddie Williams' piano accompaniment style appears to emerge right out of the blues. On the 1958 Caravan's recording of the “**Mary Don't You Weep,**” Williams employs a blues-infused, octave motive that permeates the texture of the entire song (Music Example 5.84). Unlike foregoing pianists' use of repetitive single-note octaves, Williams' octave motive incorporates the following blue-scale degrees: 1, ♭3, 3, 4, ♭5, and 5; and, the 6 is occasionally included. Williams

Music Example 5.84 "Mary Don't You Weep" (1958)

"Mary Don't You Weep" (1958)
Caravans piano, Eddie Williams Trans. by Idella Johnson

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the song "Mary Don't You Weep" (1958). The score is written on two staves. The top staff contains the melody with lyrics: "weep oh masha dont you". The bottom staff contains the piano accompaniment with lyrics: "mo-own oh mary Dont you weep". The score includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 12/8. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 63. The piano part features a descending blues scale in octaves and various chords, including I, IV7, and I. The melody is characterized by a crying and plaintive blues octave motive.

consistently inserts the crying and plaintive blues octave motive in a higher register during the measure where the vocal background rests – reflective of the filling in the musical space. The motive acts as if it were “singing” its own solo, but more importantly, as if involved in a conversation in a call-and-response manner with the vocal background part.

The Caravans 1958 recording of “I’m Not Tired Yet” represents Williams pianistic treatment of an extremely fast gospel song (reminiscent of the Pentecostal shout style). True to his blues-tinged pianistic style, the introduction explodes with a descending blues-scale in octaves (Music Example 5.85) The harmonic rhythm remains centered around the I chord, of which inversions, neighboring chords (to the IV), and chromaticism (Music Example 5.86) are used in the right-hand; and, the lowered third figures prominently in the chordal harmony.

Music Example 5.85 "I'm Not Tired Yet" (1958)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the introduction of the song "I'm Not Tired Yet" (1958). The score is written on a single staff. It includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 12/8. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 224. The introduction features a descending blues scale in octaves.

Music Example 5.86 "I'm Not Tired Yet" - Chromatic Vamp Accompaniment



Lucy Smith Collier – 1959

“God Is Still On The Throne” (1959), written by Roberta Martin, was one of the Martin Singers’ most popular songs. Lucy Smith Collier’s pianistic style, a trope of Roberta Martin’s, represents a contoured, yet controlled, and delicate, yet demonstrative handling of 9/8 (Music Example 5.87). The rhythmic motion on the first two beats (1 & 4) tends to be very smooth, with an arpeggiated chordal flourish usually occurring on the second beat (beat 4) in a higher register. The third beat (and sometimes its anacrusis) is almost always divisive at the eighth-note level (or sometimes sixteenth). With the organ and drums carrying the predominate thrust of the rhythmic drive (♩ ♪ ♪♩ ♪♩), Collier’s accompaniment tends to be rhythmically controlled and concentrated simultaneously. Repetitive triplets (mm.1, 2, 10), seamless arpeggios, chromatic oscillations, and broken chordal snippets of the “5-to-3” *motive* (Music Example 5.88) adorn the right-hand with artful precision. Collier tropes on Roberta Martin’s style with the inner voice-movement on the *gospel plagal cadence*, and the *ascending “5-6-1” motive* (m. 8).

Music Example 5.87 "God Is Still On The Throne" (1959)

"God Is Still On The Throne" (1959)
 Roberta Martin Singers
 piano, Lucy Smith

Trans. by
 Idella Johnson

♩. = 42 **INTRO**

① **INTRO**

④ **VERSE**

⑦ still on the throne when in

⑩ You have the phone

Music Example 5.88 "God Is Still On The Throne" - "5-to-3" Motive

Unknown Pianist – 1959/1960

Under the direction of James Cleveland, Detroit's Voices of the Tabernacle Choir (from Rev. Charles Ashley Craig's Prayer Tabernacle Church) recorded a cover of the Soul Stirrers "The Love of God" in 1959/1960. As a big hit, this recording catapulted Cleveland's fame, and established his position as a leading force within gospeldom as a choir director and soloist. Fusing pop balladry and quintessential gospel elements, the slow, 12/8 "Love of God" also ushered in a new direction in gospel piano accompaniment (Music Example 5.89). The overtly expanded harmony incorporates major 7th harmonies (m. 2), dominant 13th chords (m. 1), and altered chords (V_b13_#9 – m. 9). Classic rhythmic realizations are maintained with strong dotted-quarter-note chords on beats 1 and 3 (7), and divisive eighth- or sixteenth-notes on beats 2 (4) and 4 (10). The left-hand employs octaves that mark the major beats, and operates homorhythmically with the right-hand at times (mm. 15-16). Furthermore, the right-hand outlines the choir part, punctuates the rhythm, delicately handles the "5-to-3" *motive* (m. 17), and fills in vocal rests with rhythmic and melodic variation (m. 4). The unknown pianist's⁵²⁷ pristine and polished style is inundated with flowery arpeggios (mm. 1,13), neighboring passing chords (mm. 8, 20), linear octaves (m. 14), chromatic parallel thirds (mm. 17, 25), and linear chromaticism (mm. 22-23) – all of which functions as a mirror for the disciplined choral sound.

⁵²⁷ Herbert Pickard served as pianist and Alfred Bolden served as organist during Cleveland's tenure; therefore, it is highly probable that they served as the musicians on this recording, but at best, remains tenuous and unfounded. Hayes & Laughton (1992) lists the pianist unknown, but Anthony Heilbut (1985) states that Herbert Pickard was the pianist. See Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound*, 211, and see Cedric J. Hayes and Robert Laughton, *Gospel Records: A Black Music Discography, 1943-1969*, 2 vols. (London: Record Information, 1992).

Music Example 5.89 Continued

2 of 2
"The Love of God"
Cont'

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Arpeggio

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Al of Verse

6.0 SOCIAL AND MUSICAL ROLE

As discussed in Chapter 1, Samuel Floyd’s “Cultural memory” is a subjective concept that provides an important tool in assessing the musical and social role of gospel pianists. Over and over again, it was reified in my field interviews. When asked what makes the gospel piano style unique, Rev. Archie Dennis, through “cultural memory”⁵²⁸, responds:

AD: I’m not a pianist, but I know it when I hear it.

IJ: And what is it that you have to hear, that you know is gospel?

AD:...That style that you have learned, so that when you sing certain songs from the ‘50s and ‘60s, you begin to play it in a certain way. That’s what I was reared up on. And I don’t know what you call it, but I know it when I hear it, and something happens when you hear it...One of the funny things about it is, pianists can play when they do that (sings)



now that can be a hundred songs...that’s the beginning of a hundred different songs in gospel.⁵²⁹

The following musical and social ethnographic analysis is based on field interviews conducted by the author and secondary sources (articles, books, etc.), and presented around four ideological constructs of 1) **Centrality**, 2) **Leadership**, 3) **Creativity**, and 4) **Authority**. Centrality refers to the essential role that gospel pianists have within musical and social settings. Leadership underscores the gospel pianists’ role as a leader within musical and social settings. Creativity highlights how gospel pianists use creativity to perpetuate the musical style, and are recognized as

⁵²⁸ See Chapter 1 for definition of “cultural memory.”

⁵²⁹ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

being “anointed” by God. Authority examines how pianists have an influential role both musically and socially. These constellations are not fixed but, rather, are interrelated and congruous. The two-fold purpose of the gleaned data not only historicizes the Golden Age of Gospel, but continues to have relevance for contemporary roles.

6.1 MUSICAL ROLE OF GOSPEL PIANIST

6.1.1 Musical Centrality

Instrumental accompaniment is a fundamental component of worship within the African-American church (as explored in Chapter 2), and namely the piano. It has been, and continues to be a highly regarded instrument of the worship experience. The following selection highlights the primacy of the piano:

Now let me tell you what happened at Greater Harvest. They bought a new, concert Steinway grand piano. Edward Robinson was the pianist there. Robert Wooten was the organist...They bought this Steinway grand piano, and so they called me to play the dedication – play at the dedication service. They didn’t want a concert, they just wanted me to play because it was a dedication service. I mean they shouted, ran all around the church, and everything, and then the climax was for me to play. And I played a tocatta – a real modern Russian piece of music. Child, they shouted (laughs)! When I finished they were shouting and speaking in tongues, and standing up. Then Edward got on the piano and somebody else got on the organ, and they just went off. They went forth for about 15, 20 minutes. And so then they said “now the piano is dedicated.” (laugh)⁵³⁰

⁵³⁰ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

The functional efficacy of the piano reflects the values regarding the importance of piano accompaniment with worship. Any gospel artist will communicate that having a good pianist (musician) is essential to their success.⁵³¹ As one gospel singer and director stated,

There's something that the piano gives me that no other instrument has been able to do...But no matter what, no matter how good the organ is or a bass guitar, drum or whatever instrument you have, if I can get with that piano, that piano just gives me some sort of lift that no other instrument has ever been able to. You know, they add to or accentuate or whatever. Basically a piano is like, for lack of a better word, a harness it just holds me up.⁵³²

The pianist, as seen from the foregoing musical analyses (Chapter 5), is fundamental and inextricably connected to the gospel idiom. Unlike other instruments, harmony, melody, and rhythm are commanded by the piano itself.⁵³³

The gospel piano style is not simply an ancillary ornament within the larger scheme of the gospel music performance, but is recognized as an equally dominant “voice” that communicates musically within the performance/worship experience. Often, the piano was the only instrument that accompanied gospel artists had when they sang before large audiences. Not only did the pianist accompany the artist, but they supplied and augmented the core part of the soloist's sound. Archie Dennis remembers that “There were groups that just had a pianist, and no drums and nothing else. And of course that person there was ‘pounding,’ and would put a micro-

⁵³¹ Dorothy Norwood states that “I learned early on that the musicians are the life of your session. You have to get the right musicians and the right songs.” See BlackNews, “The Legendary Caravans Gospel Singing Group Reunites For First Live Recording in 40 Years,” <http://www.blacknews.com/pr/thecaravans101.html>, Accessed 6 March 2008.

⁵³² Dwayne Watkins, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵³³ An organ and guitar also have the same musical and instrumental capabilities in gospel music, and provided accompaniment options when the piano was not employed.

phone inside to make it sound throughout the building.”⁵³⁴ Speaking of Mildred Falls, Mahalia Jackson’s long-time accompanist, Dwayne Watkins highlights how her piano accompaniment created a synchronous sound with the voice:

DW: Oh my God!...This lady, Mildred didn’t even look at her and she could accompany her unbelievably. She just knew where she was going to do. *And her playing matched her voice.*

IJ: What do you mean matched her voice?

DW: I mean it was just so soulful and spiritual just like Mahalia’s voice. I mean highly spirited. I you could call it anointed. It was just so anointed. She just, from the time they started, for lack of a better term, their performance would just be astounding. You just couldn’t take it. It was just so forceful, so forceful and Mildred would just, my God she would just play.⁵³⁵

Time and time again, countless gospel singers have reiterated the importance of having a proficient pianist. In the words of the former Clara Ward Special singer and Stars of Faith singer, Frances Steadman, “...you can’t fail when you got a good musician.”⁵³⁶ Steadman clearly understood the musical importance of having a good pianist – for gospel groups were incomplete without one. In an interview with the author, she recounts about how the Clara Ward Specials began with their pianist.

FS: I got this phone call from Miss Ward, and Miss Ward said, “If anybody asked you why you coming up here...Just tell them that Clara is out of town and she just wanted somebody up there with her.’ So that’s what I told them...So they dropped me off...And that was the end of that. Then she told me she was gon’ organize a group. I said ‘why you gonna organize a group for, you have the Ward Singers?’ She said ‘Well, we’ve got so many engagements coming in...we just can’t fill them all. And we need a group.’ She said ‘Can you get in touch with Thelma?’ I said ‘yeah’. She said, ‘well, call and tell her to come to Philadelphia.’ And I did call her...and she came to Philly. And she had asked me to be at her house...So Thelma came in, and then I went ‘round there...and there was another lady sitting in there that I didn’t know. And she said ‘this is going to be the group.’ I said ‘oh yeah! What’s it gon’ be named?’ She said ‘I’ll give you the name. I

⁵³⁴ Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵³⁵ Dwayne Watkins, Personal Interview with Author. (Italics mine)

⁵³⁶ Frances Steadman, Personal Interview with Author.

ain't got it together yet'...So we got together...And she got the girl—She had a girl from Camden...Aleta from Camden...and two from Philadelphia...and me and Thelma.

IJ: Do you remember their names?

FS: Huh?

IJ: The other members' names?

FS: Thelma Jackson, Lillie Davis, Frances Johnson, and Frances...And then we asked who was going to play for us. She said 'don't worry. I got a young man that plays just like Clara.' We said 'well, okay,' because we thought Clara was a great piano player. So then he came in later that afternoon—named Sylvester Dean. He was from Washington. Now he played fine."⁵³⁷

In reality, gospel singers could not operate or perform without their pianist. As another example of the necessity of a pianist, the Stars of Faith⁵³⁸ were asked to sing at a church a few days after they were organized. In order for them to accept the engagement, they immediately scrambled to find a pianist, Gladys Gordon, to accompany them.⁵³⁹ Pointing to the indispensableness of a pianist, Rev. Charles Walker, Mahalia Jackson's cousin, tells the story of one instance of her calling on her pianist James Lee.

Now I don't know if you heard this story. But when she recorded "Move on Up A Little Higher," James Lee was on the piano, and was on his honeymoon with his wife. They had just got married, and Mahalia called saying (female intonation) 'now James, we've got to go down here and make a record,' and he left his wife (laugh)...that's how that happened.⁵⁴⁰

6.1.2 Musical Leadership

Besides gospel pianists' ability to independently supply musical elements, gospel pianists operate as gatekeepers who inaugurate the ritual events and musical selections. In an act of leading the singer(s), the pianists play introductions and preludes that established the tempo, key, and spirit of

⁵³⁷ Frances Steadman, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵³⁸ Marion Williams, Frances Steadman, Kitty Parham, and Henrietta Waddy left the Ward Singers and formed the Stars of Faith.

⁵³⁹ Frances Steadman, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁴⁰ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

the song. Pianists help gospel singers keep their time, pitch, and infuse energy and life into songs. Furthermore, pianists operate as a “catalyst” that engineers unity and community among all of the ritual participants as they join their voices together. Gospel pianists are effective leaders when they are equipped with vast musical knowledge in a number of areas. Musical knowledge is acquired through rehearsal (private and corporate) and cultural experience. For gospel music participants, rehearsals are not construed as a perfunctory activity that simply manages the musical product, but as another opportunity for the re-creation of community; furthermore, musical and spiritual ties are further fortified in rehearsals between the pianist and singers, and between the pianist and other musicians.

First of all, an individual pianist’s musical adeptness is what places them in the role as leader, and is necessary for a quality gospel production. Frances Steadman’s following account illustrates the impact of a competent and incompetent pianist:

FS:...[Gertrude Ward] said ‘y’all leaving tonight.’ We said ‘tonight?!’ She said ‘yeah. You’re leaving tonight cause you got a concert tomorrow night in Columbus, Ohio.’ Then we said, ‘well, what’s the group’s name? We don’t know the name of the group.’ She said ‘it’s gon’ be called ‘Clara Ward Specials,’ and we stopped! We said, ‘we don’t want to be named that.’ She said ‘well, I done sent it out that you’re named to be the Clara Ward Specials.’ So we went on. The first date was in...Cleveland—we met the Ward Singers...and he made a mess of that playing that night. So, we were so hurt.

IJ: Sylvester?

FS: Sylvester [Dean]...when we’d get in a big crowd, he’d either get in front of us or behind us playing. And if we didn’t know how to sing, it really would have been a mess...you know... So we complained to Miss Ward about it. Well, they heard what he was doing so she knew we weren’t lying...you know...Before we left out of Cleveland that night, she had a meeting with us. She said, ‘I’m sending Dean home and I’m sending Florence [a singer] home. And I’m going to get you a piano player—matter-of-fact he’s in this house now.’ And she sent for him to come up...and his name was Raymond Raspberry. And he was an excellent musician. He didn’t miss no beats at all. And when they left Cleveland, we stayed the rest of the week in Cleveland singing around. So the next time we met them [Ward Singers] since the people was gone...It was Lillie Davis, Frances Johnson, Thelma Jackson, and myself. We went to uh St. Louis...And Lord did we sing!

IJ: Threw down huh?

FS: The Ward Singers didn't have a chance. By Chicago—The Clara Ward Specials done got it together...cause Raymond was an excellent musician and an arranger and he wrote songs... So we sang them all crazy that night. Mahalia,...there was a quartet there, and the Ward Singers, and us. And they put us on first, and that was the end of the program! Them Clara Ward Specials could sing! Not bragging, but they could sing and they did!...And the next concert was the St. Louis concert. We wore them out!

IJ: So the Specials out sang the Ward Singers?

FS: Yeah. The famous Ward Singers...But that night as people say 'the program was ours'

...We out sang them all...The Clara Ward Specials—as they say—took the show!...⁵⁴¹

One of the premiere skills of a competent gospel pianist is the ability to “play by ear.”

With the rise in the popularity of gospel music within the Black church came an increased demand for musicians whose only qualification had to be the ability to play by ear. No other training was required, and in some cases, desired. In fact, in many instances training was frowned upon in the same manner that trained Black ministers were stereotyped as somehow less 'spirit-filled' than their counterparts who possessed no academic training, only native skill.⁵⁴²

By the 1940s, gospel groups and soloists began to travel around the country and perform together in some of the same venues at concert and anniversaries. These programs provided an opportunity for gospel pianists to not only display their own pianistic prowess, but to also learn (signify) certain styles and motives (tropes) from their colleagues. An escalation in the number of recordings of gospel groups and soloists also accompanied this period of increased concert performances. Aspiring pianists began to copy (signify) different gospel motives and idiosyncratic elements from recordings. Eileen Southern confirms that

most often the gospel pianist played 'by ear,' developing his skills by attending concerts of the celebrated pianists he wanted to emulate and/or by listening to their recordings. Thus he received his training in the same way as jazz pianists did. Those who rose to the top, however, generally had closer contact with the notable pianists – either in an apprentice relationship or as a member of a leading performing group.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ Frances Steadman, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁴² J. Wendell Mapson, The Ministry of Music in the Black Church, 85.

⁵⁴³ Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 476.

Harold Anderson confirms Southern's notion:

HA: You would buy the records, and you would listen to the records, and you would go and pick it out and learn it...And it was just some like uh...just something that...it was just a part of me...I can never explain why or how, or, but it was just something I loved.

IJ: And when you would pick out...you would come home and work out, you would be like 'well, this is what I heard.'

HA: Yeah. You would play it as close to...and in those days it was easier to pick out and to play, because basically then, you had piano, organ, and later the drums were added. But...you, yeah, you would sing it to yourself, you know. And then you would go and try and play it. And you would sing, then you'd play it. Until you get what you think sounded right.⁵⁴⁴

Other aspects of a gospel pianist's adeptness, is measured by their versatility to incorporate other styles, and their ability to play in various keys. Of Roberta Martin and Kenneth Morris, "those were what you called accomplished gospel pianists because they took concert music sound and incorporated it with the blues, jazz, and gospel sound all into one beautiful sound."⁵⁴⁵ When Willie Webb would accompany Mahalia Jackson,

... he would play these wonderful chords. And you would be like, 'oh my god' where did they come from. You would think it was a totally different performance from the first half, cause they'd come out with this gospel swinging gospel, emotional gospel, getting everyone all fired up and getting them all involved. Then in the second half she would come back very sacred, very laid back, and he's playing the piano very lightly like a concert, almost like an operatic accompanist. They were so versatile and tremendous.⁵⁴⁶

During the time that Ruby Gould accompanied Mary Johnson Davis, Gould would transpose naturally in head whenever a song was written too low for her.⁵⁴⁷ Rev. John Fullard indicates that

⁵⁴⁴ Harold Anderson, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁴⁵ Dwayne Watkins, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ruby Gould, Personal Interview with Author.

one reason why he excelled in his musical aspirations, was because of his ability to play in non-traditional keys.

Mattie Moss came to my town and said ‘I’m looking for somebody to play “Salvation Is Free”...To make a long story short, she got to town and everybody played for her...So somebody says ‘he can play it for her, he can play it.’ So I got on it [the organ] and started playing it and wore the church out because nobody didn’t play in C sharp. Back then the basic keys were C and G because of lack of training for a lot of people.⁵⁴⁸

Most times, the gospel pianist leads as the musical director and arranger for the group. For example, James Cleveland served as the arranger for many of the Caravans’ songs. Some composers of gospel music were not musically adept, so gospel pianists assisted them in getting their music written and published. For example, Ruby Gould, who served as a pianist for Mary Johnson Davis reports that

I could play anything...Ralph Davis...he introduced me to the organ. I took harmony. I could arrange music... E. Clifford Davis...And he wrote two or three pieces. When he would write the bass, the harmony was poor. But, he got pretty tunes, and the words were pretty. So, I said ‘I can fix the harmony on that.’ So there’s a couple of little songs he had wrote while I was with them – while they were together. And that I would rewrite, would do the harmony to it. Like his left-hand was very shabby with the tune, “My Soul Has Sunken At Noon” and “Holy Spirit”⁵⁴⁹ were the two that I think I did the harmony on. So I said ‘I’ll see Mr. Davis and see if I can take harmony from him and see if what I was doing was corect.’ And it was correct. And when he taught me, I already knew it, it was in my head. You know, I could do it. And the people down at the church, they would make up songs...and couldn’t nobody play ‘em...So they’d asked me could I play what they sang – songs that hey made up...So I’d say ‘I don’t want to play for them’ I say because they say ‘I can’t read music if I play for them.’ They didn’t understand how you could do that, hear music and play it.⁵⁵⁰

Not only did Willa Ward-Royster serve as the pianist at the various churches she played for, but she also taught the choir their vocal parts; afterwards, the director would simply come and “wave

⁵⁴⁸ Rev. John Fullard, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁴⁹ Johnny Lloyd confirms that “And another song she made very famous was uh ‘Holy Spirit Surely is My Comforter’ which was written by her then husband Professor E. Clifford Davis...Uh and as a boy I sang in the group...I was the little mascot of the group. The Mary J. Small Singers, as we were known.” Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁵⁰ Ruby Gould, Personal Interview with Author.

their hands.”⁵⁵¹ For gospel pianists, being a musical leader subsumes being a musical teacher. For Romance Watson, Roberta Martin was the quintessential teacher and leader.

IJ: And what was she? What do you think she did in terms of teaching you?

RW: Well, she was a mentor. She taught us how to breathe. How should I put this? She taught us how to present our songs. How to – she always said ‘be sure that you enunciate so that people will know what you’re singing about along with that gorgeous voice that you have. So you can get your song across. Please enunciate.’ She taught us all how to – She taught us stage presence. She just taught us everything. I mean, she was a second mother to me. I respected her very much. I loved her dearly.

IJ: What were the rehearsals like? What would be a typical rehearsal?

RW: A typical rehearsal was just like you were in church. Just like you were in church when you would rehearse a song. The spirit would even come into the rehearsals, and we would praise the Lord there too!

IJ: So she would go through and say okay this a new song that I’m going to teach you and go through the parts. Then she was meticulous about, like she said the enunciation. Was there other things she was really particular about?

RW: Very much so. Even when she taught us a song. She would play it through once, and then Lucy would come behind and give us our various parts. The voices that we had we knew what parts of the song that we were going to sing anyhow. But then after we got into the song, you know, we really liked the song. Oh boy! It was just like giving a service.⁵⁵²

The gospel pianist is as the musical leader in terms of the vast knowledge and body of material they contain. Pianists must know a wealth of songs. In an interview with Daniel Webster, Clara Ward stated that “I guess I know about a thousand hymns and songs – every one in the hymn book. My group has about 100 hymns in our repertoire ... There are new songs being written every minute and we learn them as we go.”⁵⁵³ Gospel pianists are expected to know an array of songs, chord changes, and be able to “follow” (the soloist) even if they do not know the song. At the National Baptist Convention, Frances Steadman was asked to sing but did not have her own personal accompanist:

⁵⁵¹ Willa Ward-Royster, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁵² Romance Watson, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁵³ “A Personal Interview with Clara Ward.” Gospel News Journal 8/4&5 (1973): 17. (Personal copy)

FS: And I told Miss [Willie Mae] Ford I—I say, ‘I don’t have anybody to play for me.’ She said, ‘Well, we have plenty of musicians. All you’ve got to do is to go up and tell them what it is you gonna sing and start singing’ So when they called me to sing, they said “Miss Frances Steadman from Baltimore...So I went marching up on the stage and I went over to the musician. I say uh ‘do you know ‘The Old Ship of Zion’? He said ‘Yes I do.’

IJ: Who was the musician?

FS: He was the greatest musician from Chicago. His name was—something...Kenneth Morris.

IJ: Kenneth Morris!

FS: Ooh what a man! I mean famous! And I asked him did he know how to play [Idella and Frances laugh] And when I had finished singing ‘The Old Ship of Zion’, everybody seemed to have liked the song...you know.⁵⁵⁴

When gospel pianists are in a setting where the music has not been rehearsed (e.g.: congregational or devotional singing), the pianist directs the congregation where to go in a song through harmonic choices. The audience is at the mercy of the pianist, and is forced to listen. The pianist provides cues about when to slow down, repeat a section, or end the piece through the manipulation of rhythm, harmony, dynamics and nuances. Whenever a pianist moves harmonically, the audience must follow in order for orderly harmony to exist. There is a musical and cultural understanding on the part of both parties.

Skilled gospel pianists know their singer’s style intimately, in terms of range, keys, and tempo. Archie Dennis states that

“My accompanists spoiled me in that they knew the keys of every song that I sang regularly. Or they knew my range so that if I said a song – if I hadn’t sung it before – they would come within a half-step...If it wasn’t A, it would be A-flat. They would know just the area of how and where I should sing it. And so, that spoiled me. If I’d just say a song, they would just find the key and start it, and of course, regulating the tempo...They would know just how to do it, and I would just settle down in it, and off we go.”⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁴ Frances Steadman, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁵⁵ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

The drums or percussive instruments are usually recognized as the instruments that drive the rhythm and beat. However, within gospel, the pianist is recognized, to a degree, as the leading rhythmic force. Time and time again, when interviewing gospel practitioners, most of them make some reference to the “*beat*” within the gospel piano style, and it being the dominant defining element of the gospel piano style.⁵⁵⁶ In a gospel pianist’s toolbox, divisive and varied rhythms must be present. Pianists are always filling up the space with divisive rhythms, and additive rhythms for variation. Of Roberta Martin, Romance Watson declared that “I believe that she was instrumental in establishing that *gospel beat*.”⁵⁵⁷ Frances Steadman understands the gospel piano style as missing no beats. After Gertrude Ward had organized the Clara Ward Specials, Frances Steadman recounts that Raymond Rasberry “...*didn’t miss no beats at all*.”⁵⁵⁸ When asked how Ruby Gould learned how to play gospel music, she relates that “I didn’t go anywhere to learn it” and “I learned *to get that beat*...”⁵⁵⁹ Willa Ward-Royster states that she played “Surely God is Able” for the famous Ward Singers when they would have public performances. She stated that her playing differed than Clara’s playing on the recording, because she would “...just play it plain with a lot of *good extra beats*.”⁵⁶⁰ Johnny Lloyd stated

⁵⁵⁶ For example:

IJ: ...if there was one main musical characteristic that you would have to say defines the piano style.. what would you say?

HA: Maybe rhythm, because the gospel rhythms and feels are so different from any other music.

Harold Anderson, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁵⁷ Romance Watson, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁵⁸ Frances Steadman, Personal Interview with Author. Italics mine.

⁵⁵⁹ Ruby Gould, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁶⁰ Willa Ward-Royster, Personal Interview with Author.

that Gladys Gordon “could take any old hymn and pump it up with that traditional beat.”⁵⁶¹

From the foregoing examples, the “*beat*” in the gospel piano style is understood to refer to the 1) rhythm 2) the pulse, and 3) ethos of the gospel experience.

Some gospel pianists have reversed the traditional role of “accompanying,” to the role of “leading.” Furthermore, shades of meaning and expectation exists among singers vis-à-vis pianists.

While a musical leader, pianists are viewed paradoxically as followers. Of Lucy Smith, Rev.

Archie Dennis related that:

AD: there were times when we first started working together that Sis. Lucy played such a full piano, and I was a soloist, until I’ve heard a couple of people say to her ‘he really accompanies you well.’ See there are times when uh, and you can tell, when a pianist is trying to ‘star,’ and full of showmanship, and when they’re really accompanying the person and moving and feeling with them. And I so appreciate those who feel and move with you and really accompany and not overpower.

IJ: So do you believe the piano is secondary?

AD: If a person is singing, yes. Because if it’s a piano solo, that’s something different. But the message of the song, whether it be a soloist, trio, or whatever, is lost if the accompaniment is overpowering – and you miss words, and you’re distracted. I feel that they should just sort of remain under where they are certainly supportive, but they’re not overpowering - and in reality you’re not accompanying them, that they’re accompanying you.⁵⁶²

On the other hand, some singers prefer for the pianist to be in a leading role. Dwayne

Watkins declared that

I like a musician to push me to sing. I pretty much will go were you take me. And usually those musicians are more highly motivated in driving the gospel music, the Pentecostal type of musician, than I have found in the Baptists churches. Not saying that they’re not good musicians in the Baptist churches. But what I look for is people that have good interpretations of what I’m trying to tell. They can more or less create as they go as well. It’s like it’s an art that we’re designing together, what we want the song to do. I’m open if this musician is giving me some things that I can go with and add to, and hear what they’re trying to do with me as well. You know, support me and help me create at the same time. I just always feel that a good musician for me is a person that has the ability to make me feel what I’m singing... You have some people that’ll play and they act like extremely laid back, not aggressive, not trying new

⁵⁶¹ Johnny Lloyd, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁶² Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

ideas...I get a lot from the person that's playing for me. Whatever you make that instrument do, I'm trying to be right there with you, and try to hear what you're doing and go there...⁵⁶³

6.1.3 Musical Creativity

The fact that most gospel pianists employ similar musical techniques and elements, does not imply that all gospel pianists play alike, or that they lack creativity and fresh ideas. The “creative individual” plays an important role in codifying the style. Timothy Rice’s “Toward the Remodeling” (1987) builds off of Merriam’s 1964 model and examines how people 1) historically construct, 2) socially maintain, and 3) *individually create and experience music*. Rice’s third component of individual creativity focuses on such issues as: musical composition, improvisation, and performance; individual cognition; organizing and associating musical experience; and spiritual, emotional, physical, and multi-sensory experiences mediated by the music. Creativity is an important tool in the gospel pianist’s toolbox, and is what listeners have come to expect within a performance. Creativity manifests through the use of varied rhythms, harmonies, riffs, and one’s literal “touch” – all which serve to heighten and dramatize the musical performance;⁵⁶⁴ and a pianist’s creative ability is increased by their ability to “play by ear.”

There is a tacit expectation that requires “something new” from the gospel pianist. The same expectation that one expects from the gospel singer, is also expected on the part of the pianist. Just as “what” and “how” are important factors for the gospel singer, so they are for the gospel pianist. As mentioned in chapter 2,⁵⁶⁵ the success of the gospel piano style lies not only in “what” is

⁵⁶³ Dwayne Watkins, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁶⁴ See discussion of Wilson’s “Soul Focal Point” in Chapter 2.

⁵⁶⁵ See the discussion of Gospel’s Music Characteristics, see Chapter 2.

played, but “how” it is played. Boyer confirms “improvisation is the rule rather than the exception.”⁵⁶⁶ The written, musical score provides a skeleton of what is actually played. The pianist becomes co-composer, as improvisation is not only encouraged, but expected. The gospel piano style is constantly being reshaped each time it is performed. The gospel pianist lives with music both practically and knowledgeably over time, and to play a familiar piece is to summon one’s prior acquaintances. Their performance is a constant negotiation of identity between themselves and the listener, the particular work and other related works, and the particular work and interpretation.

With improvisation as one of the predominant hallmarks of gospel music, gospel pianist’s improvisational ability is pivotal in ensuring the success of gospel music.⁵⁶⁷ Pianists will usually practice improvisational patterns in private, but the real test takes place within the confines of the worship service which becomes another “rehearsal room.” The test is passed when the pianist receives affirmation from the congregation or the spirit, in one way or another. The congregation can provide verbal responses, or the spirit can manifest by elevating the worship experience through more spiritually emotive displays and responses. When Willa Ward-Royster would include some “popular flavor” in her piano playing, and “jazzed it up,” she noted that the church members liked it and that “the choir would be singing. They were enjoying it. The people would be clapping and shouting.”⁵⁶⁸ This reinforces the impact a pianist has when employing creative, or extra-gospel elements within a religious service. When a pianist presents something creative and new, it evokes some type of response on the part of the listeners – it elicits a certain

⁵⁶⁶ Horace Boyer, “Gospel Music,” *Music Educators Journal* 64/9 (1978): 35.

⁵⁶⁷ See Portia K. Maultsby, *Afro-American Religious Music: A Study in Musical Diversity*, Papers of the Hymn Society, 35 (Springfield, OH: Hymn Society of America, 1981).

⁵⁶⁸ Ward-Royster, Personal Interview with Author.

response. On the other hand, the “older guard” tacitly established boundaries of the tradition that were non-negotiable, and tended to scrutinize those who transgressed. Rev. Charles Walker, a Chicago-born pianist whose playing career began in the late ‘40s, encountered many of old-line attitudes well into the ‘60s.

I was accused of being too jazzy when I was pushing my style and was really admonished about that by some older musicians...[Even though] I was admonished, but I was revered by a lot of the younger musicians. I mean, you know they thought that was cool. I wasn’t trying to be cool, I was just expressing myself.⁵⁶⁹

As Guthrie Ramsey has so aptly stated,

The tension existing between tradition and innovation...convention and expression...is one of the reasons the church has remained a hotbed of musical creativity through the years. While church leadership has generally guarded and cherished the notions of tradition and convention, forces from within the church (more often than not the younger generation) have defied the older heads...and claimed stylistic change as an artistic priority.⁵⁷⁰

African Americans have a unique way of perceiving and realizing what it is that they are playing. It is understood by performers, audience-participants, and those closely linked with the gospel tradition. In an interview with Rev. Charles Walker, the following view is reified:

IJ: But how was it that in the ‘40s, the people began to say that ‘oh, yeah, this is gospel’? What was it musically that identified it?

CW: It was blues actually. It was blues with a gospel message...There were certain harmonic patterns, certain rhythmic patterns that was passed down, that you actually couldn’t teach in a – there is that undefineable (what I call) essence in gospel music that you get by osmosis as well as by practice.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁹ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁷⁰ Guthrie Ramsey, *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 191-192.

⁵⁷¹ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

“*Talk*” and “*drive*” are two additional words that describe kinesic attributes of the gospel piano style. Just as singers are expected to communicate their song’s text with energy and emotion, gospel keyboardists are expected to communicate, and “talk” through the medium of music. The piano plays an anthropomorphic role within gospel music – thus, the personification of the piano as an important voice that “speaks” and “tells the story.” Viewed as an extension of the collective church body, the piano too, uses its voice to “praise God.” Neely expresses that “Musical instruments take on human qualities as they are manipulated in the service to cry, shout, sing, wail, dance, and speak religious sentiments.”⁵⁷²

Maceo Woods...let me tell you he can *tickle* the organ—I mean...He can *tickle* the organ...And to watch him—sometimes he look like he is just as pleasant sitting there...And he’ll do his little thing looking all around the room. When you can feel what you’re playing — whatever it is—that is the message...There is a song...that Blanche plays on the organ...She can *kick* that thing out. And she’ll get on the pipe organ and play it and then get down to the Hammond and rock it...You know...Rrrrr—all that...But he way she plays it, I can feel what she’s feeling...And it’s almost like telling the story—you know—without verbally speaking the words...⁵⁷³

As “*beat*” is an important construct, so is “*drive*.” Drive is a culturally understood term as that musical and extra-musical force that ushers and propels the musical experience to a culturally understood utopic space where communion is experienced by performers and audience.

Curtis Dublin was just unreal. He was, I could just say he was the “Liberace of gospel music.” He really was. He could make it “talk back to you.” The piano would just *talk* back to you. And then, with the group, playing for a group that could just send you into the clouds like the Davis Sisters, that combination of his playing... He could drive them anywhere they wanted to go, and then go there. It was just like lightening and thunder went on as music came out of the Davis Sisters and Curtis Dublin. He was just, oh my god, he was out of this world.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷² Neely, “Belief, Ritual, and Performance in a Black Pentecostal Church”, 348.

⁵⁷³ Johnny Lloyd, Personal Interview with Author. (Italics mine).

⁵⁷⁴ Dwayne Watkins, Personal Interview with Author. (Italics mine).

Personal style fits under the constellation of musical creativity. Gospel pianists, while sharing a set of stock musical material, also differ in individual execution of that material – which produces one’s style. Willie Webb’s style was so phenomenal that “you really didn’t even have to have a soloist to sing to enjoy his playing. He just added so much to a song.”⁵⁷⁵ Gospel pianists are simultaneously viewed as part of the larger collective group that sustains the genre, and as individual stylists within that collective. Further pushing the veracity of this concept of personal style, Johnny Lloyd exclaims that

JL: ...Each musician has their own style. Each musician has their own interpretation...And that’s important — And that’s what makes each musician unique...there are musicians such as Gladys and Mrs. Pearson and Thomasina and uh Roberta Martin...I can sit at this table and shut my eyes—you can put on a CD of just those different musicians playing and without even knowing—I can tell you who’s who—Because each of them have their own style...And there’s something about each person’s uh playing that is different and uh—

IJ: Like what are some of those things you can notice that are different...like you were to—

JL: Uh Mrs. Pearson’s chords...Her chords were secular in a way of speaking. They were — they sounded almost like love songs...And-and that is the way she played...When she played songs like that I could see her head back like this and her arms just flowing across the keyboard. It was almost like she had a love for—well she did—had a love for what she was doing... Uh...When Vera Eubanks—I-I-I’m showing the difference—sits at the piano ...I can tell from the first note from the first chord who’s playing because Vera...has a class- ical, jazz, gospel, Pentecostal background and it tells in her style...And she’s well learned ...You hear me?! But it tells...You can...It’s almost as if you can feel it.⁵⁷⁶

Along with musical creativity, gospel pianists acknowledge the presence of God’s Spirit that assists them in forging their personal musical style:

CW: ...[Odessa Wilson] would give me advice about which chordal progressions to use for certain songs. And I would do that, because I started out mimicking her. Then I started exploring in my own search, my own identity and personality as a pianist, and I was doing things that people just didn’t do. I mean it’s hard for me to explain now,

⁵⁷⁵ Dwayne Watkins, Personal Interview with Author. (Italics mine).

⁵⁷⁶ Johnny Lloyd, Personal Interview with Author.

because most of it was not contriving. Much of the experimental stuff that I did, was done in the act of playing in a worship experience.

IJ: So your most creative times were in church?

CW: Right!...Well, for me, it was the emotional drive. You get caught up in an emotion, and it's like you go out of yourself. You're playing things that you have not contrived, you have not thought it out, it just happens. I developed some progressions that I never thought about, but they came about in the act of praise and worship. That's about the only way I can explain. And afterwards, I'd go back and explore - 'now what did I do/how did I do that?' And then it would become then a permanent part of my playing repertoire expression.

IJ: The worship experience, the emotion of the worship experience...

CW: Cause my church was a shouting church – especially on Communion Sunday, that was a known shouting time, and we'd do all sort of things. It was like, they would be clapping and dancing, and we'd be playing, and all sorts of things would happen in the act of playing...⁵⁷⁷

6.1.4 Musical Authority

Time, individual performance and interpretation, and re-creation are important to music's existence – and, unlike other art forms, it unfolds in a highly rarefied, temporal duration that has an immediate significance. The gospel pianist's use of creativity spawns musical creativity among the singer(s) and other musicians. As a result of what a pianist plays, it in turn serves to excite and inspire others. This musical authority is evident in the way a pianist sparks creativity or the heightening of some emotion. The gospel pianist's musical choices also influence the worship experience in terms of heightening the emotional intensity.⁵⁷⁸ Musical features that a gospel pianists uses to heighten the emotion of a service is modulation (key changes), increased rhythmic motion, and playing musical tropes that induce a certain religious response. The gospel pianist can

⁵⁷⁷ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁷⁸ Ricks (1960) mentions about gospel performance practices and discusses the importance of the piano is used to heighten emotional intensity. See George Robinson Ricks, "Some Aspects of the Religious Music of the United States Negro" (1960).

musically influence the: a) singers, b) other pianists (and other instrumentalists), or c) tenor of a performance/ service; and conversely, these elements can musically influence the gospel piano.

Gospel pianists encourage musical excellence from singers through their playing. The basic rationale is that the better some one plays, the better someone sings. While with the Roberta Martin Singers, Archie Dennis confirms that

...Lucy played until – there were certain nights that I didn't even feel like singing. We would sing every night, you know. But when she would get through playing the intro to "Only a Look," by the time she got to the beginning – back around, she would play the whole song through – but she played it in such a way that when she got to your part and you were ready and everybody hit it together "on-ly-a-look" (sung), you know, we were ready. Her playing inspired me, even if I didn't feel like singing. By the time she got through playing, I was ready.⁵⁷⁹

Speaking of Leroy Snelling, a Philadelphia pianist who accompanied Mary Johnson Davis,

...He would give her a long introduction. It was almost like – you know – setting the audience up or preparing them for this grand lady...And his intros were great...And he-he played so that uh you – He made her sing...you know. There are some musicians where you really have to work hard because they're not giving you much...and then there others – musicians that where once they start playing...it-it generates something inside of you and it makes you do more...and he was one of them. He knew what to do with her in accompaniment...⁵⁸⁰

The gospel pianist's musical influence is important in shaping the direction and development of the style, which is seen when other pianists use/trope on their particular idiosyncratic style or innovation. For example, Roberta Martin's influence is noted when gospel pianists employ her characteristic inner-motivic plagal cadence. Rev. Charles Walker, who served as the organist for Rev. Clay Evans of the Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois from 1961 to 1965, further adds to the veracity of how gospel pianists (and singers) musically influenced other gospel pianists.

⁵⁷⁹ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁸⁰ Johnny Lloyd, Personal Interview with Author.

And shortly there after, is when I met Willie Webb and James Lee, and those kind of people – Roberta Martin, Robert Anderson, Sallie Martin, Thomas Dorsey – and being in fellowship with them and being exposed to them, it really crystallized my style. And because of my classical training, my style set a tone for most of the pianists, especially once I started playing for Rev. Clay Evans - playing the organ - because everybody listened to his broadcast. And when I was playing for him, Rev. Bodie at Greater Harvest wanted me to come and play with him. Clarence Cobb at First Church of Deliverance, he tried to get me over there, because they all admired my style of playing. And today when I go to Fellowship, the organists, when they do “It Is No Secret,” they do some riffs that I used to do and look at me and laugh, because it sounds so dated now. (laughs) But in the 1960s, I was avante-garde – I mean people would come (laughs)...There’s a fellow there now who used to play for Maceo Woods, uh Stevie Stewart. He started studying me when he was five – he was Rev. Evans’ nephew. He used to stand – on this little, small pew thing, his mother would send him – and he’d stand by the organ and just watch my fingers. And in a week, he could do what I was doing! And to hear him now...his mind and the chordal progressions...they’re so fantastic. I mean I look at him and I just marvel at what they do, you know.”⁵⁸¹

One aspect of gospel piano pedagogy has centered around watching pianists and their movements, listening to their chordal movements, and mimicry of those movements – all part and parcel of developing one’s style. For example, with “Little Lucy’s” style, her

...personality was reflected in their playing...and her pressing of the boundaries...harmonic and rhythmic boundaries – was more aggressive than Roberta’s...She was more aggressive, and more insistent in searching out new patterns, and new – I can’t remember the song that she wrote, this one song, and everybody was playing it because of this new, what we considered far-out harmonic progression. We thought it was just wild (laugh) – everybody was playing it (chuckle) – even in songs it didn’t apply to. That’s the kind of influence she had.⁵⁸²

Conferring this point, scholar and practitioner Peal Williams-Jones reflected on the didactic impact that the Roberta Martin Singers had when they would come to her father’s church in Washington, D. C.:

First of all, as with Santa Claus, you were going to get a lot of musical goodies. You knew you were going to get a lot of new music that you had never heard. You knew that you were going to get a lesson in how to perform that music. You were going to sit on that bench and watch Lucy Smith Collier play those

⁵⁸¹ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁸² Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

changes on the piano. You watched her hands and tried to find out what key she was playing in and wondered if you could go home and do what Lucy did.⁵⁸³

In another example, Willie Webb's musical influence was so pervasive that

Some of the things he did on the organ, we were doing it 20 years after he stopped playing. One progression that I used at Fellowship, that everybody started using and credited it to me, I really got it from Willie Webb. When I did it on Fellowship's broadcast, we start hearing it all over the city. And it was nothing more than parallel octaves and fifths, and coming to a resolution of a chord. I heard Willie Webb do that when I was about 12 or 13 years old, when I started playing over at Evangelistic Temple.⁵⁸⁴

Not only do pianists influence what happens within the musical setting, but others (i.e.: musicians, singers, congregation) can influence what pianist plays. Evelyn Gay, recognizing Jackson's style as being different, "...learned to play for her for the pure pleasure of it: 'Halie's got something they can clap and rock by.'"⁵⁸⁵ This comment reveals the importance of pianists playing for gifted soloists – those who would encourage their development and creativity. Additionally, a gospel pianist's musical ability and choices can also influence the overall tone of a service. One can shape or dismantle a service with a simple musical prelude.

IJ: ...Now when you played gospel music what would encourage you to be inspired or to create new things or to try new things.

WW: Well the people that were singing, you know, the more they sang, the more I played.

IJ: So,...what would they do that would make you do something?

WW: Well, they, when they get in the spirit, you could feel it. I could feel the spirit with gospel...the better they sang the better I played.⁵⁸⁶

What Ward relates, is that when people give vent to what the pianist is playing, that inspires the pianist to play a little harder.

⁵⁸³ Bernice Johnson Reagon, ed. We'll Understand It Better By and By, 288.

⁵⁸⁴ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁸⁵ Goureau, Just Mahalia, Baby, 57.

⁵⁸⁶ Willa Ward-Royster, Personal Interview with Author.

6.2 SOCIAL ROLE OF THE GOSPEL PIANIST

While a gospel pianist's *musical performance* validates their status as competent practitioners of the style, their *social/cultural performance* is of equal importance. For many African Americans, Christianity is inextricably bound with the social fabric of their lives. Gospel pianist's musical role mirrored that of their social (cultural) role within the greater African-American church community. As gospel music became an important force in the African-American church, attitudes toward musicians began to change. Hinson confirms that

No longer were newly converted musicians enjoined to lay down their instruments; instead, they were encouraged to carry them into the meetinghouse, using the gift of musical skill for heavenly praise rather than worldly pursuit. With this move into the church, musicians joined the ranks of specially blessed saints, taking a place alongside the praying deacons and singing sisters. Yet this place was never quite one of parity; for the musicians' gift somehow set them apart, according them a special position in the fellowship. To some degree, this can be attributed to the uniqueness of their skill, a skill whose reliance on an adjunct instrument immediately distinguished it from its liturgical complements (all of which employed only vocal and/or kinesic channels) and removed it from the realm of everyday ability; the very fact of using an instrument in a setting dominated by unaccompanied voice and unabettted bodily activity commanded a singular measure of auditory and visual attention.⁵⁸⁷

Like the pastor and other upper-level church leaders, gospel pianists were respected, admired, and revered within the African-American church community for their leadership and talent. Like the foregoing musical constructs, gospel pianists were viewed socially as: **a) central; b) leaders; c) creative/anointed; and d) authority figures.** Meaning is not a static element, but is a "...situational construct, a signification grounded in cultural knowledge, tempered by human

⁵⁸⁷ Hinson, *Fire in My Bones*, 106-107.

experience, and negotiated in social discourse. It is created rather than given, negotiated rather than declared. Within the gospel community, this process finds its base in the triangulated nexus of aesthetics, belief and experience.”⁵⁸⁸

6.2.1 Social Centrality

Music has always been an important dynamic within the African-American church; therefore, pianists are important and central to the maintenance and sustenance of a church’s worship experience. Pianists help in facilitating the entire worship, liturgy, or ritual, even in the absence of other instrumentation. Like the pastor, being a pianist carried its own prestige that catapulted one into another class. This status enjoyed by pianists was engineered by the role they held within the church. They were “unofficially” responsible (along with the pastor) for setting the tenor and tone of worship services. A church’s membership would grow exponentially if it had a good musician and music department, even in light of poor preachment on the minister’s part.⁵⁸⁹ Thus, the gospel pianist has a critical voice as it relates to the construction and sustenance of the worship service.

Having a good pianist was essential for gospel singers, who usually sought out their pianist of choice. Relating how she began playing for Mary Johnson Davis, Ruby Gould recalls that

I was playing different things around the church, and her mother asked my mother, she said ‘Mary likes Ruby’s playing, and I think she wants her to play for her – be her accompanists. I was taking music of course. So that’s how I got started playing for her. And then when she traveled, she took me with her. We

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁸⁹ This point is still evident and valid today in most churches.

went to California in 1937...And everywhere she went, she wanted me to play for her. So that's how I became her accompanist, because she was just called everywhere.⁵⁹⁰

When one surveys iconographical evidence from the gospel groups and artists from the 1930s to 1950s, it becomes conspicuously obvious how important gospel pianists were. For example, at the Ward's homecoming concert in 1957, Mahalia Jackson's pianist, Mildred Falls, is seated on the front row of the stage with Mahalia Jackson and Theodore Frye.⁵⁹¹ Many groups featured their pianist or a piano on their publicity pictures and albums.

The location of the pianist in the worship experience also serves to place them in category different than the congregants. Gospel pianists are located in a different place than the congregation during the worship experience.

Spatially confirming this sense of separation was the musicians' physical positioning at the foot of the chancel. Whereas deacons and songleaders would rise from the congregation, engage in their assigned performance, and then return to the pews, musicians kept their place at the front, facing churchgoers throughout the service (except perhaps during the sermon, when they might sit in one of the anterior pews). Their distance from fellow believers was palpably evident; though considered spiritual peers, they nonetheless occupied a position as spatially and performatively removed as that of the preacher. This degree of distancing by congregational co-equals was new to the church. Yet its gradual conventionalization ultimately paved the way for the performative separation of other gifted saints. Among these were singers; with them came the new sounds of gospel."⁵⁹²

Spatial location signifies the importance of the pianist and their role within the worship experience. Irene Jackson Brown contends that pianists are considered to be part of the "core"

⁵⁹⁰ Ruby Gould, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁹¹ Willa Ward-Royster, How I Got Over, 141.

⁵⁹² Hinson, Fire in My Bones, 107.

class of music makers, due to their proximity to the sacred space where the predominant sacred activities occur.⁵⁹³ Within the same vein, Rose C. Jackson contributes additional insight by asserting that

Organists, pianists and pastors usually provide first line core leadership. Directors, soloists (from the choir or chorus), deacons and song leaders from the congregation provide second-line core leadership. This configuration of music-makers accounts in part for the belief that black music in worship enables both folk music and sacred music.⁵⁹⁴

She further explains that

Members of the core group [pastors, pianists, and organists] have one major function: to 'encourage the spirit to manifest itself.' The organ and piano are used as percussion and the piano supports the organ which controls the entire ritual. The organist, as Jackson points out, is a masterful 'timer.' Certain tempos, rhythmic patterns and harmonic formulae are manipulated by the organist as the ritual heightens to the point where shouting begins. Being with the sacred space where the most sacred activities occur, the keyboard instruments are ritually bound and thereby the effect of the musicians in this sacred place is extremely powerful.⁵⁹⁵

6.2.2 Social Leadership

Gospel pianists have social status within the church, and are literally leaders “up front” in the church. Not only are singers celebrated, but pianists are often celebrated in gospel music publications when different published songs are dedicated to them. This further bolsters the important role pianists have in the gospel idiom. At the 1955 Shrine Concert, before the Pilgrim

⁵⁹³ Irene V. Jackson, “Gospel Music: Being in the Spirit,” New Conversation (Winter, 1979-80), 30. “There are three classes of music makers; core supporting and marginal. The three designations are determined by proximity to the sacred space, the space where the most sacred activities occur. Also, designations are determined by the music-makers’ visibility. Nearest the space and sometimes within the ‘sacred space’ and most visible are the core music-makers, and so on.”

⁵⁹⁴ Rose C. Jackson, “The Nature and Role of Black Gospel Music in the Black Pentecostal Worship Service” (D. Min. University of Chicago, 1986), 128.

⁵⁹⁵ Jackson, “The Nature and Role of Black Gospel Music,” 128-129. In her dissertation’s 3rd chapter on “The Role of Gospel Music in the Apostolic Pentecostal Church”, Rose C. Jackson includes some insightful nuggets on the function of the performers/musicians.

Travelers begin singing they take time to introduce their pianist James Roots (See Appendix A – List of Recordings). In Chicago on Sunday evenings when churches would broadcast over the radio,

...musicians would go to maybe more than one church and play. And they felt free – when they'd come in they'd just get on the organ. Some of them were like 'father figures.' When they'd come in, the younger fellas [musicians] knew to just slide off. That kind of thing...Yes, everybody respected them...You see, there were people in Chicago that were tremendous singers and musicians, but they were local. They never went beyond the confines of that city, but then they were aware of those that were traveling nationally, and they held them in high esteem...And when people like Willie Webb and Robert Anderson and those who had been traveled, the younger ones were just glad to 'give way' and let them have it without any problem. It was great.⁵⁹⁶

Gospel pianists are referred to as “professors,” a title usually ascribed to black musicians and individuals who have displayed a cultural competence in the performance of a particular musical style. Honorific titles were ascribed to, for example, Prof. Alex Bradford and Prof. Willie Webb, Prof. Dorsey, and Prof. James Roots. The acquisition of this title comes through a lifetime of experience within the tradition, and is bestowed by those from within the tradition who can attest to the individual’s competence and skills. As professors, gospel pianists were also recognized as teachers – privately and publicly. Roberta Martin taught many students at her Studio in Chicago. In Pittsburgh, gospel and classically trained pianist Prof. Ralph Davis taught lessons to many who went on to become gospel pianists. Gospel pianist Ruby Gould remembers:

He was my teacher, he was fresh out of college and he had a studio there on Center Avenue. He was my only teacher...Well, he was a minister of music and he would have recitals...oh, he could run all over the piano...⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

⁵⁹⁷ Ruby Gould, Personal Interview with Author

James Cleveland is credited with teaching Aretha Franklin how to sing and play the piano while he served as the choir director at Rev. C. L. Franklin's New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit, MI.⁵⁹⁸

Not only did gospel pianists serve as musical teachers, but they were also cultural teachers. Pianists were institutions all by themselves because they were the repository of the style. The gospel piano style did not exist in books, and there were no formal schools in which one could go to learn, so piano enthusiasts went to the gospel pianists themselves,⁵⁹⁹ or places where they could ascertain the style. Every time a gospel pianist performed, it was not simply relegated as a musical performance, but it was a valuable cultural service and preservation for themselves, their adherents, and the descendants of the gospel musical heritage. Within gospel music, one usually begins to develop understanding and sensibilities as a young child in a passive way. Over time, their musical enculturation is further developed by the attending church, choir rehearsals, concerts, programs, and listening to gospel music through various mediated forms.⁶⁰⁰

With gospel pianists situated in the black church, it overwhelmingly served as the viable cultural institution for the artistic development and communal education of gospel pianists.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁸ Sherry Sherrod Dupree and Herbert C. Dupree, African-American Good News (Gospel) Music (Washington D. C.: Middle Atlantic Press, 1992), 75.

⁵⁹⁹ Silvester Henderson remembers seeking out Helen Stephens to teach him the gospel piano style: "...I called her and told her, I said 'I want you to teach me piano lessons, to play the piano.' And the first time I called her, she hung up the phone in my face because she didn't know who in the world I was. Well she didn't know that I was the same young kid at the church she was playing at. So, about a couple of months later I got up enough nerve after a program they had had at my church to go up, and uh I just kept hanging around the piano, I just kept hanging around the piano. I just finally asked her, 'I'm the young man who called you, and I want you to teach me to play the piano.'" Silvester Henderson, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶⁰⁰ Melville Herskovits suggested the term "enculturation" to describe the process of cultural learning. See Melville Herskovits, Man and His Works: The Science of Cultural Anthropology, (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948), 39.

⁶⁰¹ Neely confirms that "The training of musicians takes place in the church setting where rehearsal is the performance and the performance is the rehearsal. Formal training is acquired through listening, imitation and consistent

Some pianists usually come under the tutelage and mentoring of an established gospel pianist, and some develop autonomously through practice and application. While playing for a female minister's church who liked extemporaneous songs, Gould relates that "...I could hear music...I could play by ear...All she wanted me to do was play whatever she would be singing, just pick it up."⁶⁰² These comments "drive home" how important being present in the church environment was to one learning the gospel piano style. Church was a culturally multi-mediated and multi-sensory experience, of which gospel pianists facilitated.

Since gospel pianists were musical leaders in bands and groups, they tended to receive higher wages than other instrumentalists. Their higher pay status placed more value on their instrument, and also on them. Often, gospel pianists were hired as the head choir director. Spaulding relates that "many well-trained musicians were hired by lower-class churches as choral directors, often at salaries much greater than those earned by music directors at the staid middle-class churches."⁶⁰³ Blanche Taylor made \$38.00 a month in 1941 when she played at Emmanuel Institutional Baptist Church in Philadelphia.⁶⁰⁴ When in 1947 (at the age of twelve), Rev. Charles Walker made \$10.00 a Sunday playing at Evangelistic Temple COGIC, and made \$10.00 in 1949 when he would play on Thomas Dorsey's gospel concerts.⁶⁰⁵ When Rev. Archie Dennis sang for Rev. W. H. Brewster, Jr.'s church broadcast in the early '50s, he recalled that

practice in the context of the church service." See Neely, "Belief, Ritual, and Performance in a Black Pentecostal Church", 286.

⁶⁰² Ruby Gould, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶⁰³ Spaulding, "History of Black Oriented Radio in Chicago", 173.

⁶⁰⁴ Blanche Taylor, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶⁰⁵ By the 1960s, he was the highest paid organist in the city of Chicago. Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

“...it was the first time that I was paid consistently to sing. I got \$20 a Sunday...and Raymond Rasberry got a considerable amount more than me...”⁶⁰⁶

The gospel pianist occupied a socio-political position of power within the black church – which could be highly volatile. Rev. Charles Walker remembers his experience in 1947 (at the age of 12), when he began playing for the Gospel Chorus at his home church, Providence Baptist Church of Chicago, Illinois:

I: Oh, so Evangelistic was your first church...?

C: Yeah...

I: Then pastor Lumpford said ‘come on home’?

C: ‘Come on home.’ Now the Gospel Chorus was not in favor of me playing for them.

I: At Providence?

C: (Yeah). No they were not because I really was not that good. I was just beginning. And they were a great choir...And they were so great. I mean, people used to come from all over the city to hear Providence Choir. Thomas Dorsey and Theodore Frye regularly came by our church, and all of the gospel singers. ‘This little skinny boy that you know, he was just beginning to play,’ and they didn’t want me to play – and they protested. And Rev. Lumford told them ‘well that’s who’s going to play.’ And I’ll never forget it. We weren’t permitted to go to the church business meetings – my parents wouldn’t let us go when we were young. But my mother, years later, told me, say, Rev. Lumford stood up and said ‘look, he’s gon’ be the pianist, all who want to sing, sing, all who don’t, just get out of the choir. (laugh) Now those same people who protested, loved me to death – they wept when I left – when I had to leave to go to the army. And they had competent replacement – Kenneth Morris replaced me while I was in the army.

I: You didn’t replace him, he replaced you. (laughs)

C: That’s right.⁶⁰⁷

This example illustrates how having a musically incompetent pianist can potentially wreak havoc within the social fabric of the church.

⁶⁰⁶ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶⁰⁷ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

6.2.3 Social Creativity/Anointed

There are some gospel pianists who have received a “God-inspired” pedagogy. Pianists, like other talented gospel performers, were treated and revered as creative and “anointed” instruments in God’s hands – which placed them in a “higher” echelon than the normal layperson. The defining element that set gospel pianists apart from other secular pianists, is being imbued with the Spirit of God. For example, many gospel and blues or jazz pianists were playing the same thing musically, but within the gospel context, it takes on a different meaning when one is “anointed” and “filled with God’s Spirit.” Willa Ward mentioned that during the golden age of gospel, “Most of these gospel organists and pianists, they could all play. They’re very talented – very good. And most of them didn’t take lessons...The rest comes from the Lord – His anointing. That’s what they call ‘gifted’ – you can play without lessons...They just picked it up.”⁶⁰⁸ Another aspect of a pianist being “anointed” is that they have a confluence of spiritual and/or musical discernment. Not only must a pianist be able to lead, but leading is subsumed under following. Experiential knowledge is key in understanding what to play, when to play it, and how to play it, as a result of following the “cues” that occur within the worship/musical setting. For most gospel artists, the gospel piano style is more than playing – for its real significance lies far beyond *what* is played, but *how* it is played, and the “spirit” or “anointing” that accompanies the playing. “Full understanding comes not from what one hears, but from what one feels while hearing.”⁶⁰⁹ According to gospel organist, Silvester Burkes:

First of all, on a spiritual level, when God gets into the music, he can take one type of music and give it a whole different element to it. On the spiritual side, of what we call anointing. You don’t hear that in your modern-day textbook, or

⁶⁰⁸ Willa Ward-Royster, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶⁰⁹ Hinson, Fire In My Bones, 2.

anything like that. But those of you that come from church, when you anoint something, you appoint it, you actually commission something. So by God anointing the music, He adds a certain touch to it that breaks the heart, it penetrates the heart of people. That's why even now when I play music, I prayed on Sunday that 'Lord, you would give me an anointing on music.' I've been playing a long time, so I know I play well, but I ask Him for that extra touch that will actually penetrate people's hearts and their minds and their spirit. So I think that's the main thing, number one. And people have noticed something different about the music, but they couldn't explain it from a theological standpoint. But that word is very important. The anointing that's in the music, which takes ordinary corny music – so to speak – and puts it to a different level. Cause I actually hear, and I believe it's very true, certain churches in the old days, they would have...this old beat up piano and nobody would play it. And I've actually heard stories of people – the old mothers' would place their hands on the keys and say 'Lord you anoint my fingers now!' And then, sure enough, pretty soon they would actually start playing and they would play well. That's why a lot of piano players are self-taught. So, I believe that the Lord has placed an anointing on me to play, because I've never learned – so to speak. But I remember one time as a child, I heard this guy play and I mean the music was so emotional and moved people. So I got on my bony little knees, I said "Lord I want you to anoint me to play like that one day so I could move people." And sure enough, He's actually done that. I've played and I've seen people's emotions. And it's something that sacred to a musician – and I think...no musician...should never take this for granted that you have so much power within what God has given you. I can play something and I can see people with tears streaming down their face. I can play something else...it's like what they call an Arkansas pump. You first start trying to get water out of it (chuckle), and you pump it 2 or 3 times and you're not getting nothing. But after you pump about the 7th, 8th, or 9th time, all of a sudden you can hear 'guke', that water coming up. So in church, you actually have that power to pump the service up, as where, you can actually make or break a service from what you're doing. The Spirit could be trying to come in, and you're hitting something that just takes away from the service. So, it's something that God gives a musician that he should never take for granted. There is actual power of playing, the power of music that you have.⁶¹⁰

Gospel pianists were not instruments for their own self-aggrandizement, but they view themselves as instruments used by God to minister to others. While gospel pianists were known for their outstanding performances, showmanship was not motivating the performance, but a spirit of service to God was the underlying motivation:

But the motivating factor, that all of the performers in the '30s and '40s, was to get the message of Jesus Christ out to the world. And they were not necessarily interested in money, or ratings, or whatever. They became stars out of service.⁶¹¹

⁶¹⁰ Silvester Burkes, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶¹¹ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

Being gifted and anointed provided the spiritual and cultural explication of how gospel pianists, who could not “read” music, could create such beautiful and rich harmonies. J. Wendell

Mapson purports that

Since some musicians possessed a ‘special’ gift that the rest of the community did not possess, they assumed positions of importance within the community, and particularly within the black church. Even the musician’s ability to ‘play by ear’ (to play the organ or piano without the ability to read music) was seen by (p. 85) many as a ‘special’ gift of the Spirit, in the same manner that black preachers, who did not use a prepared script but who relied upon the ‘power of the Holy spirit,’ were seen as somehow more authentic agents of the Word.⁶¹²

Blanche Taylor, who sang and played with the Ward Singers during the late 1940s comments of herself that:

Well, there’s nobody that plays an organ like I do. Out of all the musicians in his town, nobody has my touch, because mine is God-given, and they can’t touch it. The reason why I say that – I have never had an organ lesson...It’s a God-gifted touch. I know the instrument just like I studied it. I know what it can and what it can’t do.⁶¹³

6.2.4 Social Authority

In general, musicians have been beholden as celebrities, or a symbol of class. For the most part, gospel pianists were well-respected within the African-American church community. Furthermore, the gospel pianist is viewed as an agent and catalyst of change within its social milieu – among individual devotees and within the church worship experience. This was recognized as a seat of influence, a seat of political power within the institution of the African American church. Many were seen as encouragers, pillars, mentors, nurturers, and as Archie Dennis says, “father-figures.” Harold Anderson wanted to learn how to play piano because of Clara Ward’s influence. He states

⁶¹² Jesse Wendell Mapson, “Some Guidelines for the Use of Music in the Black Church” (D.Min. Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983) 84-85.

⁶¹³ Blanche Taylor, Personal Interview with Author.

that "...I started playing around when I was fifteen years old...I had this great love for Clara Ward. And I just wanted to follow in her footsteps." Rev. Charles Walker's piano teacher was a positive male influence in his life:

Mr. Parker was not only a teacher, he was a mentor...[he] insisted that I bring him twenty-five cents every week to my piano lesson. And he kept that money until it got to be \$7.00 and he took me to the Drexel National Bank to open my first savings account...but Mr. Parker, he was so wonderful. He imparted in discipline and pride, and he gave me sort of beginnings of playing gospel music. I just wanted to be a concert pianist, and he insisted that I play gospel music, and jazz.⁶¹⁴

Furthermore, the approbation and encouragement that he received as a young child from gospel pianists greatly influenced his work within gospel music:

When I was 12 years old, Mr. Parker took me to Roberta Martin's Studio because I had studied some gospel music with him. And he was proud of the fact that I could play "Christ Is All" in three different keys. I played it in C, I played it in F, I played it in G. And see, I was small for my age because I had that rheumatic fever. So here's this little skinny boy who goes in the studio, and Roberta Martin was there, and I think McKissick was there, and somebody else – I don't know whether it was Delois Barrett or not. I had heard the name Roberta Martin, but it really didn't sink in with me...So I sat down at the piano and played and she grabbed me, just hugged me, and picked me from the piano, and kissed me, and said "this boy is going to be great! Thank you Mr. Parker for bringing this child here to let me hear – this is just so wonderful."

[Odessa Wilson]...was a strong influence in my life. Not only was she minister of music, but she was head of the scholarship committee, which provided me with scholarships for my piano study. And she encouraged me in every conceivable way. And she literally raised me up.⁶¹⁵

Besides other pianists, gospel pianists also encouraged singers in their musical pursuits. Frances Steadman's dream of becoming a blues/jazz singer never materialized, but was supplanted after

⁶¹⁴ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶¹⁵ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

seeing and hearing the Roberta Martin Singers at her church in Baltimore, Maryland.⁶¹⁶ Years later when Frances Steadman was singing and traveling with the Waldo Singers in Chicago, Illinois, she tells:

And then we went to Chicago, and we stayed at Little Lucy's grandmother's house. She had a big house and she had a big church too. And one day the man [manager, Rev. Ford] said to me...He say, "Frances, get dressed." I said, "Get dressed for what?" He said "I'm gon' take you some place." I didn't know a thing 'bout Chicago because I had never been in Chicago...So I say "well, okay." He say, "You're going to be surprised." And I couldn't think of nothing I was gon' be surprised about in Chicago. So me and him left...And we went to this house. And the lady comes to the door. It was Roberta Martin!...I liked to fainted. I couldn't believe it! [laughs] Roberta Martin! And I had got to meet her...you know...to tell her how I had enjoyed the singing but that was it...But I had worried everybody so 'bout Roberta Martin [laughs]...so everybody knew I was crazy about that lady's singing and playing...And then got to Chicago and went to her house...Oh you couldn't tell me nothing then!...They say we don't sing anything alike, but she really inspired me to be able to sing in front of an audience big or little.⁶¹⁷

Along with preachers and the like, gospel pianists were recognized in their community as spiritual leaders. The way gospel pianists comported and emoted are essential social and religious markers that demonstrated their connection with spiritual values and beliefs of the music.⁶¹⁸ Arizona Dranes was known to jump up off of the piano when the Holy Spirit led her to do so, and Dorsey would stand while playing the piano.⁶¹⁹ Rev. Charles Walker remembers that when Roberta Martin would sing and play,

...you could see she loved the Lord, and she had the joy of Christ in her – her whole manner, her playing, her singing. I've seen her play, and the Roberta Martin Singer DeLois – you know, she could "raise a house." And I've seen

⁶¹⁶ Frances Steadman, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶¹⁷ Frances Steadman, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶¹⁸ Jackson discusses that "Kinesics (physical movements) function as a nonverbal means of communication for the performer. Kinesics can be viewed as another form of cultural language used to articulate and dramatize the ideas, feelings, and ideologies of the performer." See Joyce Marie Jackson, "The Performing Black Sacred Quartet", 189.

⁶¹⁹ Michael W. Harris, The Rise of Gospel Blues, 211.

Roberta get up from the piano and say ‘Go DeLois’ (female vocal intonation, laugh), and then get back to the piano and just go on. That was not an unusual thing for her. She’d shout and have a good time.⁶²⁰

Martin’s spiritual standards mirrored her social standards. According to Rev. Archie Dennis,

The Martin Singers taught you a way of life – how to be a Martin Singer. You were carrying her name. There were certain things you just don’t do. And if you do it, you could not do it openly. I mean, they didn’t run your life per se, but uh you had to be discreet. You had to use discretion. Uh, you never smoked in public, if you smoked – if that was your habit. You didn’t do it publicly. If you drank or tasted, you had to be sure of the person that you did it around. Uh, they taught you in a sense that you had to do it around a person who had at least as much to lose as you. So you couldn’t be common. You could be regular, but you couldn’t get common with people.⁶²¹

Urban, mid-century African American churchgoers were creatures of their social milieu and all of the symbols of social trappings, and admired those gospel pianists with such accoutrements. Referred to as the “Helen Hayes of Gospel Music,”⁶²² Roberta Martin had a warm infectious personality, a keen and fashion sense, and impeccably coiffed style – and people emulated her. Rev. Archie Dennis, whose father was a radio quartet singer in Pittsburgh, remembers the Angelic Gospel Singers and the Dixie Hummingbirds coming to his house when he was a kid:

...here we were still in the projects, and all the people in the projects thought we were ‘big time,’ because, you know, these people were coming to our house for dinner. It was great...During those days, gospel singers traveled in cars for the most part. They had Cadillacs. And that was a thrill, you know, to see the gospel singers pull up in their Cadillacs at our projects!⁶²³

⁶²⁰ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶²¹ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶²² Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

⁶²³ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal Interview with Author.

While African American church parishioners had respect for those who had a soulfully-imbued gospel piano style, they also respected those pianists who could play classical music as well. For example, pianists admired and respected Roberta Martin because she was a former concert pianist:

When you look at Thomas Dorsey, you see this image of a honky-tonk clubster, etc., even though the Lord had done a work in his life, you see that. And many of the church members remembered their days, and they didn't want to go back either. Whereas, you didn't have any of that with Roberta – it's just the church, and classical music, and sophistication, and class. That's what she was – and her playing reflected that. She was always exploring pianistic shades of beauty to enhance the music. Her driving was not brass, it was muffled, but it was yet powerful. It did the job – it drove the singers to ecstasy, but it wasn't a hard-driving, coarse...Her playing was always refined, always contoured, always driving to a point even when that point might be different than what you think the point is going to be. She was always moving in a direction. Her mind was a creative mind - so that you could hear play one song a hundred different ways. She was always creative. She had that command of the instrument – she could do that. And it was marvelous to watch her, I loved to watch her.⁶²⁴

The formality that Roberta Martin exuded was also embodied by other gospel pianists. According to gospel educator and pianist, Silvester Henderson, his gospel piano teacher, Helen Stephens embodied that same standard:

...I remember her telling me that music was a great tradition (now realize this, the thing that impressed me about her was that, I grew up in a Pentecostal church, and nothing negative, but there were a lot of poor people, the language skills were not very good, it was I guess you would say, your ebonic language, which is maybe a negative term, but it was your typical black dialect). And so, she was the first person that I had ever met who had a sense of formality about her. And think that that sense of formality is the thing that sort of locked in my mind, even for me. And it was like, I had never ever seen a person have an outward appearance of formality, but an inward drive of just like, an animal instinct.⁶²⁵

⁶²⁴ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author

⁶²⁵ Silvester Henderson, Personal Interview with Author.

As Roberta Martin's star rose, so did her influence on the whole gospel enterprise – from young to old, from male to female,⁶²⁶ from the sophisticated to the simple, from pulpit to pew, and from publishing to performance.

When she played, when she sat down to play it was like an encounter – a rendezvous. She used the piano as an extension of herself. She had such a command of the instrument, that she could use the instrument, and she could raise you to such a height, just playing. I remember times when the Roberta Singers, that piano would propel them like – and I mean, they would just knock you out. And that power, she had a power in her playing...⁶²⁷

⁶²⁶ Note: Unlike jazz and R&B that was dominated by male musicians, gospel music had a number of female pianists. This phenomenon reinforces the demographics of the black church, where more women attended than men.

⁶²⁷ Rev. Charles Walker, Personal Interview with Author.

7.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

African American gospel is a dynamic religious music that has been anchored by its piano accompaniment for nearly a century. This work has attempted to answer what the gospel piano style is and how it developed. Its centrality to the success of gospel music necessitated its investigation. The lack of attention paid to specifically musical issues resulted in speculative or generalized conclusions. As seen in the literature review, the general topic is certainly “in the air” in the academic circles; however, there was a vital need to bring the tools of skilled musical transcription and analysis into the exploration of eliciting the developing of the gospel piano style.

The gospel piano is a genre, but more importantly, it is a style of music that is subject to change – hence, there is a fundamental conception of continuity and change. The African-American church was, and continues to be, the incubator for this pianistic style. Along with the impact of recordings and radio, the gospel piano style proliferated throughout the “Golden Age of Gospel.” The gospel piano style is viewed as part of an ongoing continuum because it is a living tradition, and not as a relic, or a frozen entity of the past. It did not emerge *ex nihilo*, but was rooted in many secular and religious musical traditions. Descriptive analysis of secular piano style illustrates how the how the gospel piano style relates to and fits within the larger continuum/domain of African American music.

The gospel piano style is a synthesis of African and European musical approaches. Some European elements were accepted, while others (like rhythm and harmony) were gradually

molded into a distinctively black cultural expression. The fact that the accompaniment of hymns differs from what is written illustrates this fact. Western elements are not indiscriminately accepted, but are scrutinized or accepted with modification according to the dictates of African-American cultural and aesthetic practices and values. With Arizona Dranes and Thomas A. Dorsey both standing at the crossroad of the gospel piano style, the musical analysis revealed the following characteristics about their pianistic styles:

Table 7.1 OVERVIEW OF DRANES' PIANISTIC STYLE

1. Abundant use of 7th and diminished chords
2. Use of I7, Io7 for harmonic variation of I chord
3. Harmonic anticipation
4. Adherence to vocal melodic contour
5. Use of short repetitive motives to unify piece
 - a. Inner Chromatic Motives (key feature of 1928 recordings)
 - b. 1-6-5-3 Treble Riff
 - c. Descending “5-to-3” motive
6. Penchant for motivic-like bass lines
 - a. 1-5-6-7-1 & 1-5-6-1 leading to tonic
 - b. 1-6-5 leading to dominant
7. Dynamic rhythmic contrast
 - a. Divisive rhythms, syncopation
 - b. Variation of rhythmic combinations in right-hand
8. Strong duple rhythmic presence (sometimes triplet-feel is present)
9. Emphasis on third below & above tonic – the 6th & 3rd degree
 - a. dual use of major and minor 3rd
10. Use of upper treble register – as contrast to lower accompaniment
11. Organization and orchestration of piano accompaniment

12. Oscillating ½ steps – chromaticism
13. Use of trembling and broken chordal oscillations
14. Percussive and forte approach to playing the piano
15. Call and response created during vocal rests
16. Strong “oom-pah” left-hand construction
 - a. occasional walking bass lines leading to the I & IV (“He is My Story”)
17. Occasional Blues Lines (“Sweet Heaven is My Home”)

Table 7.2 OVERVIEW OF DORSEY'S GOSPEL PIANISTIC STYLE

1. Pervasive use of dominant chords, blue notes, and chromaticism
 - a. Gospel Dominant Chord - V7^b13
2. I-IV-iv-I Plagal Cadence with inner line movement
3. Predilection for pentatonic lines, flourishes, and runs (single-note & octave)
4. Walking bass lines to key tonal areas
5. Use of riffs and breaks
6. Rhythmic divisiveness
7. Greater use of bass octaves in left-hand
8. Strong swing/blues triplet-feel
9. Use of “5-to-3” motive, and “Ascending 5-6-1” and “5-6-7” motive

Dranes’ and Dorsey’s musical style formed the foundation on which the gospel piano style developed and coalesced from 1926 to 1960. Based on the study, I would propose the following periodization for historicizing the gospel piano style from 1926 to 1960:

Table 7.3 HISTORICAL PERIODIZATION OF THE GOSPEL PIANO STYLE

- 1) **1926-1936/NASCENT PERIOD (Quasi-Rural)** – reflects the stylings of Blacks that remained in the South or rural areas
- 2) **1937-1948/FOUNDATIONAL (Urban)** – reflects change in values, social stratification, education, and opportunity; prominent role of National Baptist Convention in promulgation gospel music; rise of gospel publishing companies and studios; increase in gospel recordings and gospel on the radio; blacks becoming more susceptible to social-cultural values and patterns of the dominant culture
- 3) **1949-1960/MATURITY (National)** – reflects more long-distanced travel and tours; more public exposure and performance in secular venues; post-war boom; rise of Black middle class; popularity of jazz and emergence of R&B; increased showmanship in gospel.

The forgoing discussion of Dranes and Dorsey illustrates the musical characteristics that emerged in the gospel piano style during the nascent period (1926-1923). New performance practices emerge as the style coalesces in the foundational period (1937-1948):

Table 7.4 MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL PIANO STYLE (1937-1948)

- a) Establishment of Gospel Stride sub-style and rhythms – namely, “long-short triplet” motive
- b) repetitive octaves (♩♩♩) used to control tempo and pace of song
- c) continued usage of descending “5-to-3” motive, ascending 3-to-5;
- d) “ascending melodic line” motive extends from “ascending 5-6-1 motive”
- e) increased alternation between upper and lower treble register
- f) fuller chords
- g) move away from oom-pah bass construction in favor of linear and octave bass lines

- h) motivic counterpoint and thirds
- i) more linear and blues-nuanced lines
- j) rife usage of “Gospel Dominant Chord”
- k) “5-6→7”
- l) broken chordal motive (some trope on descending “5-to-3” motive
- m) more sophisticated Call and Response patterns

Towards the culmination of the Golden Age of Gospel, circa 1960, the gospel piano style exhibited the following practices:

Table 7.5 MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL PIANO STYLE (1949-1960)

- a) blatant use of ascending 5-6-1 octaves and gospel plagal cadence
- b) increased usage of secondary dominants and expanded harmony
- c) “oom-pah” construction abandoned in favor of more advanced bass lines
- d) continued use of repetitive octaves
- e) repetitive “three-note motives
- f) increased use of flourishes, melodic embellishments, and arpeggios
- g) longer octave runs,
- h) smoother, homogenous sound
- i) greater improvisation
- j) move away from mirroring melody – accompaniment becomes more rhythmic than melodic

One aspect that forges the gospel piano style is the exploitation of idiosyncratic motives.

In this study, motives that reappear in a troped manner are:

Table 7.6 IDIOSYNCRATIC MOTIVES OF THE GOSPEL PIANO STYLE

- a) Descending “5-to-3” motive
- b) Ascending 5-6-1 motive
- c) Ascending “5-6-7” Motive
- d) Oscillating/Chromatic Motive
- e) repetitive three-note motives
- f) Inner Voice motive
- g) Gospel Dominant Chord
- h) Bass 1-5-6-7-1 Motive
- i) Martin Plagal Cadence
- j) Broken chordal motive
- k) Gospel stride rhythm.

Similar to the black preaching style in that the use of stock phrases that are drawn on during an impromptu delivery,⁶²⁸ so it is with the gospel piano style. Musical tropes provide lines of consistency that are linked to a musical and cultural understanding. Gospel pianists recycled these cultural tropes by using the musical characteristics in their gospel performances, by

⁶²⁸ See Margaret W. McCarthy, “The Afro-American Sermon and the Blues: Some Parallels,” Black Perspective In Music 4/3 (1976): 269-77.

restating that material in new ways, varying the rhythm and juxtaposing it in a new musical context. Gospel music's ability to employ ("signify") its own style – reflexivity – is indicative of its autonomous quality.

Arizona Dranes and Thomas Dorsey's piano styles provide the foundation on which other gospel pianists modeled and crafted their own styles. Even though more needs to be ascertained from the historical record regarding the interpersonal relationships of gospel pianists to determine if "X" definitively influenced "Y," the musical record yields pertinent information regarding the strains of musical influences. What is clear is that pianists intertwined their style, influence and connections.

The musical analysis of Dranes' style reveals that she forged a sanctified, rhythmically infused piano style, and Dorsey's produced a blues-based piano style. Dorsey had a number of musical protégés' who were directly influenced by him, or by his prized colleague/student Roberta Martin – thus representing a tradition of gospel piano performance that was passed down in an unbroken, discipular succession. While Dorsey inevitably helped to shape and impact Martin's pianistic style because of their close musical relationship, it was a confluence of his style, Arizona Dranes' style, and Martin's own classical training that produced the quintessential gospel piano style. (Many gospel pianists studied classical music or had formal training, and were strongly influenced by Western musical concepts, and stood in the nexus of several African-American pianistic traditions.) The gospel piano style is one that encourages interpretation and reinterpretation according to cultural knowledge, tradition, musical skill, spiritual experiences, personal creativity, and personal and collective tastes.

Although the gospel piano style is interpreted differently by various performers, the musical vocabulary, technical devices, and performance practices that represent a Black music aesthetic,

dictate the fundamental style that characterizes gospel piano accompaniment. Performance Practice represents the conventions and the knowledge that a performer uses to help them create a musical performance: use of the printed page as well as what is not on the printed page; style of composer, singers, and era. Continuity and change of the musical elements were not examined in isolation, but with an understanding that culture influenced these changes. Lawrence Levine sets forth that “Culture is not a fixed condition but a process: the product of interaction between the past and present. Its toughness and resiliency are determined not by a culture’s ability to withstand change, which indeed may be a sign of stagnation not life, but by its ability to react creatively and responsively to the realities of a new situation.”⁶²⁹ Therefore the gospel piano style represents continuity, change, creativity, and consciousness – a deliberation about what is played.

Primary information gleaned from personal interviews was used to elicit cultural, musical, and aesthetic beliefs regarding the gospel pianist’s musical and social role.⁶³⁰ An objective and subjective stance was adopted while framing the information in the ontological terms of insiders. Excavating the hermeneutical tools and phrase of insiders allowed entry into the perspicacious and clandestine dimensions of meaning regarding the gospel piano style. The gospel piano style has developed within a musical, cultural, and social milieu, with its primary exponent (the gospel pianist) involved in a multi-dimensional process of creation, appropriation, revitalization, and identity. Creativity is not the “lone ranger” with the gospel style, but it is constantly and symbiotically negotiated with tradition; therefore, individual variation and collective responsibility coexist in each performance of the gospel piano style. When gospel pianists perform, they are

⁶²⁹ Levine, *Black Culture, black Consciousness*, 77.

⁶³⁰ “Folk thought cannot be derived from a single source, for there are many different perceptions of a performance event. All people in a cultural group do not perceive events in the same way not with the same degree of intensity. Neither does the same individual always perceive the same event in an identical manner.” See Joyce Marie Jackson, “The Performing Black Sacred Quartet”, 5.

elucidating the style's history and stating who they are historically and socially, thus reaffirming their own sense of being, culture, and community. Above all, the gospel pianist seeks to find the "spirit" of the music. The rule for performance creativity is that musical performance should edify rather than merely entertain. All of these components create the animus of the gospel piano style.

The gospel piano style acquired its motivic and rhythmic impetus from Dranes, its blues quality and coloring from Dranes, and coalesced in subsequent pianists' styles that restated, refined, modified, and augmented them. It was fueled by containers of rhythmic and motivic material that was ensconced in spiritual, emotional, and cultural knowledge. This study does not imply that the development was uniform or monolithic, because the individual pianists' development, talent, and creativity are considered and accounted for within the development.

This dissertation does not purport to be the magnum opus on the gospel piano style, but simply attempts to provide another lens through which to view the gospel piano style, and to add to the growing literature on the role of the gospel piano. As Christopher Waterman has so aptly asserted, this dissertation "...is important as a way of 'putting the jigsaw puzzle together', but no single one accounts exhaustively for what is known about continuity and change...continuity and change must deal...with relationships among patterns of musical sound and performance behavior, cultural symbolism and value, social transaction and ideology, and the material forces that encourage or constrain particular forms of expression."⁶³¹ Many of this dissertation's findings can be further developed and substantiated by the exploration of the following areas:

⁶³¹ Christopher Waterman, "Juju History", 50.

1. More information to fill in biographical gaps of gospel pianists
2. Studies on regional and local gospel piano styles
3. More work on gospel piano transmission and pedagogy
4. Individualized studies on gospel pianists and their entire oeuvre
5. Relationship between the voice and the piano
6. Relationship between the text and the piano
7. The gospel piano style's role in shaping consciousness (historical, religiously, economically, etc.)
8. Using the gospel piano style to understand larger social and cultural movements

This dissertation honors the legacy and continuing tradition of gospel pianists. Its aim is to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of gospel music history, its practitioners, its viable musical characteristics, and its continuing performance as practiced in everyday lives of African-Americans. As anthropologist Anthony Seeger has so eloquently and eruditely declared, "History is not a simple sequence of events but the creation of patterns of events that make sense not only of the past but also of the present and that implicitly make a statement about the future."⁶³²

⁶³² See Anthony Seeger, "When Music Makes History," In Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History, ed. Stephen Blum, et al., 23-34 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 28.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF RECORDINGS

1. “In That Day” (1926 – Music Examples 5.1 – 5.3)
Arizona Dranes, vocal/piano
Arizona Dranes: Complete Recorded Works In Chronological Order, 1926-1929. 1993. Document Records DOCD 5186.
2. “It’s All Right Now” (1926 – Music Examples 5.4 – 5.5)
Same as previous
3. “John Said He Saw A Number” (1926)
Same as previous
4. “My Soul Is A Witness For The Lord” (1926)
Same as previous
5. “Sweet Heaven Is My Home” (1926 – Music Example 5.6)
Arizona Dranes, piano
Arizona Dranes: Complete Recorded Works In Chronological Order, 1926-1929. 1993. Document Records DOCD 5186.
6. “Bye And Bye We’re Going To See The King” (1926 – Music Example 5.4)
Same as previous
7. “I’m Going Home On Morning Train” (1926)
Same as previous

8. "Lamb's Blood Has Washed Me Clean" (1926 – Music Example 5.8)
Same as previous

9. "I'm Glad My Lord Saved Me" (1926 – Music Examples 5.9 – 5.10)
Same as previous

10. "God's Got A Crown" (1928 – Music Example 5.11)
Arizona Dranes, vocal/piano
Arizona Dranes: Complete Recorded Works In Chronological Order, 1926-1929. 1993. Document Records DOCD 5186.

11. "He Is My Story" (1928 – Music Example 5.12)
Same as previous

12. "Just Look" (1928)
Same as previous

13. "Don't You Want To Go?" (1928)
Same as previous

14. "I'll Go Where You Want Me To Go" (1928)
Same as previous

15. "How About You" (1932 – Music Example 5.14)
Thomas A. Dorsey, vocal/piano
Georgia Tom: Complete Recorded Works, 1930-1934 Vol 2. 1996. Document Records DOCD 6021

16. "If You See My Savior" (1932 – Music Example 5.15)
Same as previous

17. "M & O Blues – Part 1" (1932 – Music Example 5.17)
Same as previous

18. "Singing In My Soul" (1934 – Music Example 5.19)
Same as previous

19. "If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again" (1934 – Music Example 5.21)
Same as previous
20. "He Is The Savior For Me" (1927 – Music Examples 5.23 – 5.26)
Rev. F. W. McGee, vocal
Unknown, piano
In the Spirit, Vol. 1. 197?. Origin OJL-12
21. "Untitled" (1927 – Music Examples 5.27 – 5.28)
Jessie May Hill, vocal
Unknown, piano
Preachin' the Gospel: Holy Blues. 1991. Columbia Legacy 46779.
22. "Sunshine In The Shadows" (1927 – Music Examples 5.29 – 5.30)
Jessie May Hill, vocal
Unknown, piano
Preachin' the Gospel: Holy Blues. 1991. Columbia Legacy 46779.
23. "Lordy Won't You Come By Here"/"Now Is The Needy Time" (1930 – Music Example 5.31)
Clara Hudman Gholston, vocal
Unknown, piano
Gospel Warriors: 50 Years of Female Gospel Classics. 1990. Spirit Feel SF1003.
24. "God's Gonna Separate The Wheat From The Tares" (1937 – Music Examples 5.32 – 5.33)
Mahalia Jackson, vocal
Estelle Allen, piano
Great Gospel Performers, 1937-1950 In Chronological Order. 1996. Document Records DOCD-5463.
25. "Oh, My Lord" (1937 – Music Example 5.34)
Mahalia Jackson, vocal
Estelle Allen, piano
Same as previous

26. "My Record Will Be There" (1943 – Music Examples 5.35 – 5.36)
 Ernestine B. Washington, vocal
 Unknown, piano
Sister Ernestine Washington with the Dixie Hummingbirds, Bunk Johnson's Jazz Band, Rev. F. Washington, and others, 1943-1948. 1996. Document Records DOCD-5462.
27. "I'm Going To Tell God" (1946 – Music Examples 5.37 – 5.39)
 Mahalia Jackson, vocal
 Mildred Falls, piano
Mahalia Jackson: Amazing Grace. 1995. Geffen Records.
28. "Didn't It Rain" (1958 – Music Example 5.40)
 Mahalia Jackson, vocal
 Mildred Falls, piano
Mahalia Jackson: Gospels, Spirituals, & Hymns. 1991. Columbia/Legacy C2K 47083.
29. "Yield Not To Temptation" (1947 – Music Examples 5.41 – 5.43)
 Roberta Martin Singers, vocal
 Roberta Martin, piano
Brighten the Corner Where You Are: Black and White Urban Hymnody. New World Records
 Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc. NW224. 1978
30. "The Old Ship of Zion" (1949 – Music Examples 5.44 & 5.49)
 Norsalus McKissick & The Roberta Martin Singers
 Roberta Martin, piano
The Great Gospel Men. 1993. Shanachie. Spirit Feel LC5762
31. "I've Got A Home For You" (1954/55 – Music Example 5.50)
 Norsalus McKissick & The Roberta Martin Singers
 Roberta Martin, piano
The Great Gospel Men. 1993. Shanachie. Spirit Feel LC5762
32. "Didn't It Rain" (1947 - Music Example 5.45)
 Roberta Martin Singers, vocal
 Roberta Martin, piano
Stars of the Gospel Highway. 1989. Spirit Feel 1008

33. "Satisfied" (1950 – Music Example 5.46)
Eugene Smith & The Roberta Martin Singers
Roberta Martin, piano
The Great Gospel Men. 1993. Shanachie. Spirit Feel LC5762
34. "Precious Memories" (1947 – Music Examples 5.47 – 5.48)
Norsalus McKissick & The Roberta Martin Singers, vocal
Roberta Martin, piano
The Great Gospel Men. 1993. Shanachie. Spirit Feel LC5762
35. "I'm Saved" (1955 – Music Example 5.51)
Eugene Smith & The Roberta Martin Singers
Roberta Martin, piano
The Great Gospel Men. 1993. Shanachie. Spirit Feel LC5762
36. "God Be With You" (1947 – Music Examples 5.52 – 5.54)
Prof. J. Earle Hines & St. Paul's Baptist Church Choir
Gwendolyn Lightner, piano
The Great Gospel Men. 1993. Shanachie. Spirit Feel LC5762
37. "Touch Me Lord Jesus" (1947/49 - Music Examples 5.55 – 5.57)
Angelic Gospel Singers, vocal
Margaret Allison, piano
Gospel's Greatest Women. WGG C 3
38. "I'll Wait On The Lord" (1949 - Music Examples 5.58 – 5.59)
Mary Johnson Davis, vocal
Jeff Banks, piano
Gospel Warriors: 50 Years of Female Gospel Classics. 1990. Spirit Feel SF1003.
39. "Give Me Wings" (1950 - Music Examples 5.60 – 5.61)
Willie Mae Ford Smith, vocal
Bertha Smith??. piano
Brighten the Corner Where You Are: Black and White Urban Hymnody. New World Records
Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc. NW224. 1978

40. "Too Close" (1950 - Music Example 5.62)
Bessie Griffin, vocal
Unknown, piano
The Gospel Sound, Vol. II, Columbia KG 31595
41. "I'm Sealed" (1951 – Music Examples 5.63 – 5.64)
Clara Ward Specials, vocal
Raymond Rasberry, piano
Gotham
42. "More Like Jesus" (1955 – Music Example 5.65)
Bessie Griffin, vocal
Raymond Rasberry, piano
Women of Gospel's Golden Age, Vol. 1
43. "Peace Be Still" (1951 - Music Example 5.66)
Mildred Miller Howard & Original Gospel Harmonettes, vocal
Evelyn Starks, piano
Dorothy Love Coates and the Original Gospel Harmonettes: Get On Board. 1992, Specialty Records SPCD 7017-2
44. "Get On Board" (1953 - Music Example 5.67)
Dorothy Love Coates & Original Gospel Harmonettes, vocal
Evelyn Starks, piano
Dorothy Love Coates and the Original Gospel Harmonettes: Get On Board. 1992, Specialty Records SPCD 7017-2
45. "At The Cross" (1952 - Music Example 5.68)
Clara Ward, vocal/piano
Gospel Warriors: 50 Years of Female Gospel Classics. 1990. Spirit Feel SF1003.
46. "When I Rise" (1952 - Music Examples 5.69 – 5.70)
Davis Sisters, vocal
Curtis Dublin, piano
Gospel's Greatest Women. WGG C 3

47. “He’ll Understand And Say Well Done” (1955 - Music Example 5.71)
 Davis Sisters, vocal
 Curtis Dublin, piano
The Best of the Davis Sisters. 1978. Savoy 7017
48. “Bye and Bye” (1952)
 Davis Sisters, vocal
 Curtis Dublin, piano
The Davis Sisters: Bye and Bye. 2004. Liquid 8.
49. “Stand By Me” (1952 - Music Example 5.72)
 Davis Sisters, vocal
 Curtis Dublin, piano
Stars of the Gospel Highway. 1989. Spirit Feel 1008
50. “Jesus Steps Right In” (1953 - Music Examples 5.73 – 5.76)
 Davis Sisters, vocal
 Curtis Dublin, piano
Stars of the Gospel Highway. 1989. Spirit Feel 1008
51. “Oh Sinner (1955 - Music Example 5.77)
 Davis Sisters, vocal
 Curtis Dublin, piano
Savoy 4079
52. “Marching To Zion” (1952 – Music Examples 5.78 – 5.79)
 James Cleveland & the Meditation Singers, vocal
 James Cleveland, piano
The Great Gospel Men. 1993. Shanachie. Spirit Feel LC5762
53. “Since I Met Jesus” (1955 - Music Examples 5.80 – 5.82)
 Albertina Walker & Caravans, vocal
 James Cleveland, piano
The Great 1955 Shrine Concert. 1993. Specialty SPCK-7045-2.

54. "I'll Be With Thee" (Music Example 5.83)
Original Gospel Harmonettes, vocal
Herbert Picard, piano
Dorothy Love Coates and the Original Gospel Harmonettes: Get On Board. 1992. Specialty Records SPCD 7017-2
55. "Mary Don't You Weep" (1958 - Music Example 5.84)
Inez Andrews & Caravans, vocal
Eddie Williams, piano
The Best of the Caravans. 1977. Savoy Records SCD 7012.
56. "I'm Not Tired Yet" (1958 - Music Examples 5.85 – 5.86)
Inez Andrews & Caravans, vocal
Eddie Williams, piano
The Best of the Caravans. 1977. Savoy Records SCD 7012.
57. "God Is Still On The Throne" (1959 - Music Examples 5.87 – 5.88)
Gloria Griffin & The Roberta Martin Singers, vocal
Lucy Smith, piano
The Best of the Roberta Martin Singers. 1990. Savoy Records SCD 7018.
58. "The Love of God" (1959/60 - Music Example 5.89)
Voice of The Tabernacle, featuring James Cleveland
Unknown, piano
Testify! The Gospel Box. 1999. Rhino
59. Introduction of James Roots at 1955 Shrine Concert
The Great 1955 Shrine Concert. 1993. Specialty SPCK-7045-2.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEWS

Abner, Mat tie Washington. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oakland, Ca., 28 April 1999.

(b. 1939) Native of Pritchard, AL who grew up organizing, singing, and playing piano for gospel choirs and groups in that area

Anderson, Harold. Interview by author. Tape recording. Philadelphia, Pa., 22 February 2000.

(b. 1939) Became director of Metropolitan Baptist Church's Male Chorus of Philadelphia and minister of music.

Burkes, Silvester. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oakland, Ca., 28 April 1999.

(b. 1958) Celebrated gospel pianist and organist from Oakland, CA; Grew up at Ephesians COGIC during the time of Edwin Hawkins' "Oh Happy Day" phenomenon; Has played for Patti LaBelle, Tramaine Hawkins, Yolanda Adams, James Moore, Albertina Walker, Timothy Wright, Shirley Caesar, the Gospel Keynotes, LaSahun Pace Rhodes, Daryl Coley, and the first Edwin Hawkins' Music & Arts Seminar album.

Dennis, Jr., Rev. Archie. Interview by author. Tape recording. Monroeville, Pa., 27 & 29 March 2000.

(1935-2001) Native of Pittsburgh, PA who sang with The Milleraires (Alfred Miller), the Maceo Woods Singers, and the Roberta Martin Singers; Hosted TV Gospel Time in the mid-'60s; Beginning in the 1970s, he became featured soloist with the Billy Graham Crusade, Morris Cerullo, and the Full Gospel Businessmen's Association; Pastored the Lord's Church in Monroeville, PA

Fullard, Rev. John. Interview by author. Tape recording. Oakland, Ca., 30 April 1999.

(b. 1945) Pianist/Organist from Baltimore, MD; Instrumental in organizing the D. C. Chapter of the Gospel Music Workshop of America, and was the organist for Myrna Summer's grammy nominated "God Gave Me A Song" (1970); GMWA organ instructor with the late Rev. Charles Nicks; Served as minister of music for numerous churches on the East Coast and in Northern California; Noted for his online Christian music school, and his multi-mediated "how to play gospel" literature.

Gould, Ruby. Interview by author. Tape recording. Pittsburgh, Pa., 2 February 2000.

(1914-2009) Organist/Pianist from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Played for Mary Johnson Davis in the 1930s – also at the 1937 National Baptist Convention in California; Formed female gospel choir called the Gould Singers; Organist/Minister of Music for local Pittsburgh churches: Jerusalem Baptist Church, Macedonia Baptist Church, Central Baptist Church, and Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church.

Hall, Rev. Willie. Interview by author. Tape recording. Berkeley, Ca., 27 April 1999.

Minister/Pianist/Organist from Oakland, California.

Henderson, Silvester. Interview by author. Tape recording. Pittsburgh, Ca., 1 December 1998 & 29 April 1999.

(b. 1960) Pianist/Educator/Director from Oakland, California; Studied piano with GMWA's Helen Stephens; B.M & M.A from San Francisco State University; Director of the famed U.C. Berkeley's Young Inspirational Gospel Choir.

Johnson, Bernice. Interview by author. Tape recording. Philadelphia, Pa., 22 February 2000.

Sister of Mary Johnson Davis; Sang with the Mary Johnson Davis Singers.

Lloyd, Johnnie. Interview by author. Tape recording. Philadelphia, Pa., 22 February 2000.

(19?-2004) Singer, Gospel Historian, Choir Director & Organizer, Impresario; Founder of the Reunion Choir of Philadelphia (1988) which specialized in singing traditional gospel music.

Steadman, Frances. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Philadelphia, PA., 22 February 2000.

(b. 1915) Began gospel singing career with the Steadman Sisters of Baltimore, MD; Went on to sing with the Waldo Singers of Washington, D. C., the Mary Johnson Davis Singers, the Ward Singers, and the Stars of Faith.

Taylor, Blanche. Interview by author. Tape recording. Philadelphia, Pa., 22 February 2000.

Pianist/Organist from Philadelphia; Sang and played with the Ward Singers briefly in the late 1940s, and a host of other Philadelphia churches; Played for the Reunion Choir of Philadelphia, under the direction of Johnny Lloyd.

Walker, Re v. Charles. Interview by author. Tape recording. Philadelphia, Pa., 22 & 23 February 2000.

(b. 1935) Pastor/Concert & Gospel Pianist; B.MUS (1957), M.MUS (1959), M.DIV (1970), studied at Sorbonne; Began playing for churches at the age of 11 at Rev. A. A. Childs' Evangelistic Temple COGIC in Chicago; Began playing for his home church, Providence Baptist Church from age 12 to 25; cousin of Mahalia Jackson; Served as accompanist for Myrtle Scott (formerly of the Roberta Martin Singers) for some 12 years, the McKinney Singers (aunt and uncle of James Cleveland), and recorded with Margaret Aikens; Served as organist for Clay Evan's Fellowship Baptist Church from 1961-1965 with whom he also re-corded; Pastor of Nineteenth St. M. B. C. in Philadelphia, PA since 1970.

Ward-Royster, Willa. Interview by author. Tape recording. Philadelphia, Pa., 22 February 2000.

Gospel singer and pianist with the Ward Singers.

Watkins, Dwayne. Interview by author. Tape recording. Pittsburgh, Pa., 16 February 2000.

(b. 1956) Gospel Director and Singer from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Watson, Romance. Interview by author. Tape recording. Philadelphia, Pa., 22 February 2000.

(b. 1930) Singer/Pianist who sang with the Roberta Martin Singers from 1949 to 1958; Began singing at the age of three on Elder Smith's All Nation's Pentecostal Church's radio broadcast; Sang with his family's group, the Watson Singers, around Chicago and its surrounding areas.

APPENDIX C

LIST OF GOSPEL PIANISTS

DORIS AKERS (1922-?), p – Sang with Sallie Martin Singers in California; Formed the Simmon-Akers Trio with Dorothy Simmons in 1948; Heralded for gospel compositions such as “You Can’t Beat God’s Giving” and “Sweet, Sweet Spirit.”

ROBERT ANDERSON (1919-1996), p – Singer, organizer and pianist from Chicago; Studied piano with Roberta Martin and briefly sang with the Roberta Martin Singers; Organized the Gospel Caravans and the Robert Anderson Singers; Known for his crooning, husky baritone voice that specialized in performing gospel ballads.

ALFRED BOLDEN (1937-1970), o – Detroit organist who was classically trained and recorded several gospel organ albums; Played for Rev. Lofton’s Church of Our Prayer and Rev. Charles Craig’s Voices of the Tabernacle Choir; Although very small in stature and very unassuming, he became ten-feet tall when he sat down to play the organ.

ROSIE WALLACE BROWN (1932), p – Sang lead, composed, arranged, and played piano with the Imperial Gospel Singers of Philadelphia – a fiery female group along the lines of the Davis Sisters; Became pastor of First Church of Love, Faith and Deliverance.

TERESA CHILDS, p – Accompanied Brother Joe May from St. Louis, who was known as the “Thunderbolt of the Midwest.”⁶³³

⁶³³ See Dupree, African American Good News, 8. This moniker was assigned by Mother Willie Mae Ford Smith

CHARLES CLENCY, p – Accompanied Mahalia Jackson.

BARRY CURRINGTON, p – Philadelphia pianist who played at the Metropolitan, Haven United Methodist Church, and occasionally for the Ward Singers.

HERBERT J. “BLIND” FRANCIS, o – New York-based organist who played for the Ward Singers and Mahalia Jackson.

EVELYN GAY, p (1924-1984) – Developed and utilized pianistic skills while at Elder Lucy Smith’s House of Prayer for All Nations Pentecostal Church; Formed gospel group, Gay Sisters; Piano style grounded in traditional, sanctified shout and Baptist hymnody; Known for arrangements of hymns, lilting gospels, and Pentecostal shout songs; “God Will Take Care of You” (1951) became the Gay Sisters’ signature piece throughout the Golden Age; Accompanied Mahalia Jackson.

GERALDINE GAY, p (1931-) – Known as the “Errol Garner of Gospel”⁶³⁴; Employed more jazz harmonies, stride techniques, and blues lines/linear riffs in her pianistic style.

ALBERT GOODSON, p – Native Californian who grew up in a Pentecostal church but joined St. Paul B. C. at age 12 and sang under Prof. J. Earl Hines and Gwendolyn Lightener; Served as assistant pianist for Echoes of Eden, and Hines’ Goodwill Singers; Became minister of music as Fellowship Baptist in Chicago from 1955-61; Most famous gospel composition is “We’ve Come This Far By Faith.”

GLADYS GORDON (1921-1980), p – The “Queen of Philadelphia Piano,” known for her big, sanctified sound; Played for the Ward Singers, the Starts of Faith, and Marion Williams (one of her best friends).

RUBY GOULD, p/o – Pittsburgh legend who served as Mary Johnson Davis’ accompanist throughout the 1930s.

JOE HENDERSON, p - Played at Greater Harvest Baptist Church in Chicago prior to Edward Robinson and Robert Wooten.

⁶³⁴ Rev. Archie Dennis, Personal interview with Author.

JAMES HERNDON, p – Childhood friend of Shirley Caesar whose piano skills were on the same par as Curtis Dublin; Became pianist for the Caravans after James Cleveland left; Composer of “I Won’t Be Back No More” which translated the fire in his pianistic style to his compositional style; Served as a minister of music in Durham, North Carolina.

JAMES LEE, p – Chicago pianist known for his powerful driving and plaintive, crying blues style; Played for Evangelistic Temple Church of God in Christ, and for Mahalia Jackson on “Move on Up A Little Higher” recording.

MAURICE MCGEE, p – Chicago native who played at Rev. Cobb’s First Church of Deliverance; Moved to Los Angeles and played for Rev. A. A. Peter’s Victory Baptist Church (Voices of Victory), and taught in the L.A. School system.

ALFRED MILLER (1920- ?), o – Organist and choir director of Washington Temple Church of God in Christ in Brooklyn, and accompanist for Madame Ernestine B. Washington (a featured soloist of the Church of God in Christ); Organized the Milleraires in the 1950s who appeared on various gospel concerts on the local level; Musical Director for the “TV Gospel Time” television program that was recorded in various cities and showcased local, as well as national gospel groups or choir.

EDGAR O’NEAL (1938-2008), p – Formed the O’Neal Twins with his lead singing brother, Edward; Native of St. Louis who was strongly influence by Willie Mae Ford Smith.

DOROTHY PEARSON (1914-1976), p/o – Philadelphia pianist, organist, arranger and choral director; Began studying as a concert pianist; Taught music at Pickett Middle School in Germantown; Served as Minister of Music at Waylan Temple Baptist Church in Philadelphia for 25 years, and 59th Street Baptist Church; Arranger for the Ward’s House of Music.

JAMES ROOTS, p - Celebrated as Rosetta Tharpe’s pianist; Eventually went on to accompany the Pilgrim Travelers.

MARGUERITE SHAW, p - Gertrude Ward’s great-niece who accompanied the Ward Singers.

BERTHA SMITH, p - Adoptive daughter and accompanist of the “Mother of Gospel Singing”, Willie Mae Ford Smith.

JOE WASHINGTON, p – Disciple of Roberta who played for the Original Gospel Harmonettes in the late '50s; In the 1960s, he was the accompanist for “Black Nativity”, and directed choirs in Newark, NJ.

EDDIE WILLIAMS, p – Pianist for the Caravans and composer of the popular “Lord, Keep Me Day By Day.”

BERTHA WISE, p - Played piano for her group from Augusta, GA, and was frequently at National Baptist Convention.

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