

Introducing African American Sacred Music

African American Spirituals

- Francis Bebey observed that during the period of enslavement the transplanted Africans “managed by trial and error to transform the white man’s language into a singing language whose intonations resemble his (African) ancestral tongues.”
 - There was a shift in the accents on words and variation in the actual musical tones and rhythm.
 - As a result many African American spirituals reflected the typical declamatory preaching style of many African American ministers.
- When referencing the significance of worship for African slaves, African author, John S. Mbiti stated, “religion is life and life is religion.”
- The African American sacred music sung by church choirs and individuals as well as school and college choirs, especially spirituals, originally had a different meaning from the religious purposes that these songs served in the last one hundred years.
 - Originally many were used as work songs to help lighten the heavy burden of the inhumane conditions of slavery.
 - Some were used as signal songs and provided travels directions for escapes on the Underground Railroad.
 - The purpose of the spirituals was a code to those in bondage who were not allowed to learn to read and often had to travel at night.
 - River Jordan = Ohio River
 - Sweet Canaan, the Promised Land = Land on the other side of the Ohio River
 - Wade in the Water = Slaves’ escape at night by going through water to get rid of the scent picked up by dogs
 - Gospel Train = Underground Railroad
- Hall Johnson (1888-1970) was a choral director, composer, arranger of spirituals, and violinist.
 - Director of Festival Negro Chorus
 - Wanted to maintain the spiritual as it was performed during slavery
- 1892: Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949) transcribed and arranged several spirituals at the National Conservatory of Music in New York City.
 - Antonín Dvořak was the head of the music school. He along with Burleigh raised the level of the African American spiritual to an art song. These pieces were and continue to be sung by trained, professional African American recital soloists.
 - Examples of recital soloists include: Marian Anderson, Portia White, Kathleen Battle, and Jessye Norman
- William L. Dawson (1899-1990) was composer, choral director, and music professor
 - Arranged spirituals mainly for his choirs at Tuskegee Institute
 - Arranged spirituals for solo voice
- Moses Hogan (1957-2003) arranged African American spirituals for both solo singers and choral ensembles.
 - New Orleans native
 - Composer, arranger, conductor, and pianist
 - Director of Moses Hogan Chorale and Moses Hogan Singers

Music and Religion after Reconstruction

- 1867: Publication of *Slave Songs of the United States*
 - Published by William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison
 - Examples of songs include: “Old Ship of Zion,” “Lay This Body Down,” “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore,” and “We Will March Through the Valley”
 - Publication helped to make spirituals more popular
- Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the recorded spiritual arrangements of the Fisk Jubilee Singers gained recognition as the quintessential African American sacred music. They paid tribute to enslaved African Americans with a precision that matched the highest standards of Western art music.
- 1927: Singer Bessie Johnson recorded her sacred songs with an ensemble but her powerful voice and her passionate religious convictions that gained her notoriety.
- Although not as known as the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Johnson’s recordings would lead to the development of gospel music, a form of religious music that would soon become more popular than the spiritual among African Americans and the mainstream American culture.
- The recordings of the Fisk Jubilee Singers and Bessie Johnson represent the competing meanings that African Americans gave to religion in the years following emancipation as they faced the challenges of freedom, industrialization, and of racial prejudice in America.
- African Americans turned to religion to deal with the changing world around them. The spiritual arrangements were precise and disciplined and grew out of a worship tradition that was more restrained. The gospel style of Bessie Johnson and others represented more of an emotional affect and expression.
- As African Americans dealt with the many challenges of the twentieth century, these competing traditions helped to define the terms of their struggle.
- The gradual development of gospel music cannot be separated from the racial problems and politics that erupted during the nineteenth century. Politics seemed to both nurture the music and keep it at the margins of black religious life
 - With the end of the Civil War and post-Reconstruction, machine production became more prominent rather than the need for unskilled laborers.
 - In Social Darwinism, the Anglo-Saxon race was superior to African Americans.
 - The discrimination, lynchings, and riots during the 1890’s prevented African Americans from working in factories and seeking industrial employment.
- The pervasiveness of racist ideologies led African Americans to build and institutions to address their own social, economic, and political needs. They built churches, religious institutions, schools, and businesses. These institutions did not end racism but provided a sense of unity to combat prejudice for black people.
- In the late nineteenth century there was a growing black middle class who concentrated their efforts into building schools, social organizations, and churches to improve the lives for all African Americans.
- The educational institutions and culture that advanced the African American middle class led to advancements in the practice of religion, especially in the black Baptist church.

- This movement emerged in the late nineteenth century and culminated in the National Baptist Convention, a group of black Baptist churches that were separate from white Baptist organizations.
- The black Baptist Convention adopted some of the spontaneous forms of worship that were prevalent during slavery.
 - The enslaved African Americans' worship consisted of participatory experiences such as shrieks, moans, groans, energetic hand clapping, and foot stomping.
 - During slavery a leader spoke or sang each line of a song, and congregation members, most of whom could not read, sang the line back often embellishing on the melody and augmenting the words. This is known as call-and-response.
- Baptist leaders suggested that in place of the emotion and spontaneity in worship, they stressed the use of hymnbooks and the formation of church choirs. These helped to stress the importance of education and structure and brought restraint to worship.
- There was much pride among African Americans for the spiritual arrangements performed by the choral ensembles that emerged at African American colleges in the late nineteenth century.
- In the 1870's, newly opened Fisk University gained notoriety with the Fisk Jubilee Singers.
 - Well trained singers
 - Toured the Northeast and Great Britain
 - Programs of temperance songs, operatic operas, parlor tunes, and slavery-era spirituals
- The Fisk Jubilee Singers sparked a jubilee movement among black colleges such as Hampton, Morehouse, Livingstone, and Tuskegee Institute to sponsor similar ensembles.
- The spiritual arrangements offered a convergence of African American heritage with the political uplift.
 - Performers and arrangers replaced full-throated singing and frequent melodic turns with smooth singing, precise tones, and even melodies that demonstrated African American mastery of Western classical forms.
 - The arrangements used a call-and-response structure.
 - The enthusiasm of the Fisk Jubilee Singers led composer Antonín Dvořák to praise the spiritual as distinctive American music.
 - He said, "These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are American. They are the folksongs of America, and your composers must turn to them. In the Negro melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music."
- The attention that the stage performances of spirituals gave African Americans hope for dispelling the inferiority that they experienced.
- During the 1910's and 1920's, black scholars such as John and Frederick Work, James Weldon Johnson, and Nathaniel Dett collected spirituals and arranged them into a Western classical format.
- The National Baptist Convention leaders were very proud of the classical renditions of the spirituals and choirs in the Baptist church and even sponsored musicales designated to the singing of spirituals.

- In 1921, The National Baptist Convention published its first hymnbook, *Gospel Pearls*.
 - Sacred songs including anthems, hymns, and spirituals
 - Spirituals were in a special section in the back of the hymnbook
- In 1927, the National Baptist Convention published *Spirituals Triumphant*, devoted exclusively to spirituals.
- The shift toward hymnbooks, trained choirs, and arranged spirituals caused some controversy.
 - Public school teacher Daniel Webster Davis who taught in public schools in Richmond, Virginia, expressed that singing among African Americans in worship focused on education instead of soulful expression.
 - Davis, as an educator, understood the importance of education but pointed to the notion that the use of hymnbooks changed social dynamics.
 - Davis encouraged educated worship and other African Americans were against the policy.
 - As a result of the dissent, the Church of God in Christ emerged as a new denomination that would help to nurture and create gospel music and a study of the Bible.
- Charles H. Mason and Charles P. Jones created a “bible religion” in the late nineteenth century.
 - Mason: Traveling minister from Arkansas
 - Jones: A minister of a small Baptist congregation in Mississippi
 - Together they published *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Churches*, a treatise on the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians.
 - In the 1890’s Jones organized a small study group to bring his church members together for serious religious reflection.
 - With their study of the Bible, Jones made a discovery that the ecstatic worship that had been a mainstay of religion among African Americans during slavery had also been a vital component of early Christianity.
 - They believed that 1 Corinthians represented a true religion, mainly the manifestation of divine presence. It described how the divine bestowed people with gifts that included wisdom and prophecy, the ability to heal and work miracles, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues.
 - In their search for authentic religion, they found a congenial spirit in the white-dominated Holiness movement, which dealt with the presence of the Holy Spirit within the Christian believer.
 - The Holiness movement developed in the Methodist Church during the mid-nineteenth century. John Wesley spread Methodism in the United States during the 1840’s.
 - The Holiness movement stressed holiness, the daily task of keeping the Word, and making the divine part of their lives.
 - Jones and Mason, in an attempt to develop a true religion, accepted many aspects of the Holiness movement.
 - Unlike the Baptists who believed that slave songs promoted a sense of racial pride and distinctiveness, African Americans of the Holiness movement rarely mentioned the significance of race.

- When African American were separating themselves from denominations controlled by whites, black members of the of the Holiness movement reached beyond racial boundaries. This was clearly found in the Azusa revival.
- Between 1904 and 1907, African American minister William J. Seymour led an extended revival at the Azusa street mission in Los Angeles.
 - The revival emphasized the speaking in tongues which was the beginning of Pentecostalism.
 - Seymour advocated that religion provided the only real tool for transforming social traditions. He believed that the outpouring of religious enthusiasm as a means for creating an inclusive church transcended the color issue.
 - In the mission he placed the pulpit in the center instead of an elevated position in the front. All of the pews surrounding the pulpit were on the same level as well.
 - This sparked great interest among blacks and whites, including Charles Mason. Blacks and whites worshipped together at Azusa.
- The Church of God in Christ, previously an all African American congregation, gained a number of white parishioners as a result of Azusa.
- The integrated church did not last as the whites left to start an all-white Assemblies of God church in 1914.
- As a result, the musical innovations nurtured by the Church of God in Christ took shape within a mainly African American context.
- Members of the Church of God in Christ regarded music as an extension of worship.
 - Horace Boyer, Church of God in Christ member, emphasized spiritual gifts, including music.
 - Boyer recalled someone telling him, “The Lord gives each person some kind of gift. He gives some the gift of smiling, some the gift of talking, soothingly to people, some the gift of praying, some the gift of preaching...some the gift of singing.”
- The close relationship between music and worship reflected how members of the Church of God in Christ regarded religion as an experience in which the physical and emotional reinforced each other.
- Parishioners spoke in tongues, considered the most sacred divine gift, made external an experience that was private and internal and in the process helped generate a community.
- As believers consecrated their bodies to God and celebrated God’s presence, they also moved away from a cappella singing that characterized vernacular music during slavery.
 - Music was a means for religious fellowship and for individual expression.
 - In 1907, Charles Mason described a religious experience that used both individual and collective singing that reinforced each other.
 - “More light came,” Mason wrote, “and my heart rejoiced!...Some said, ‘Let us sing [and] I arose and the first song that came to me was ‘He Brought Me Out of the Miry Clay; He Sat My Feet on Rock to Stay.’”
 - Moved by the Holy Spirit, Mason looked past the notion that the congregation started singing and he got up from his seat to sing the song that came to him.
- As time progressed, testimonies like the one Mason gave in 1907 became a part of the worship experience.

- 1930's: Anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker witnessed a worship experience in the Mississippi Delta at a Church of God in Christ.
 - She recalled that members began worship with chanting, which they followed up with a scripture lesson. "Then comes the testifying," Powdermaker explained, and she recalled the interaction between spoken word and song:
Each witness stands up and starts a song, in which the others join. When they stop singing, the testimony is given...Some are very shy and speak so low that they can hardly be heard. Others shout at the top of their voices that they are living and sanctified. One looks particularly exalted as she sways back and forth, crying out that Jesus is in her and keeps her sanctified; otherwise, she could not escape the sins of the world.
- With arranged spirituals, testifying did not get rid of the call-and-response that occurred between leader and congregation.
 - It actually made the call-and-response more fluid and spontaneous.
 - Instead of a designated individual leading the congregation, any member who was moved to testify might initiate a song.
 - Testifying helped to show the giftedness that the person possessed. This helped to nurture the solo singing tradition that was fundamental to solo gospel music.
- The religious experiences such as speaking in tongues and testifying in the Church of God in Christ led to the fundamental elements of solo gospel music.
 - Intense emotional singing
 - Upbeat instrumental accompaniment – instruments created by industrial production
 - Instruments used included piano, washtubs, drums, trombones, trumpets, tambourines, and guitars
- The modern instrumentation used to accompany the gospel singing contained emphatic rhythms and had more in common with blues than with sacred music.
- Both gospel and blues musicians were rooted in rural communities and working-class urban settings as both celebrated the power of emotion over worldly circumstances.
- Many African American Christians wanted nothing to do with blues music.
 - The use of guitar in blues music did not go over well with several black Christian denominations.
 - In the 1880's, blues composer W.C. Handy purchased a guitar. His parents were not pleased at his decision. They said, "'A box,' 'A guitar! One of the devil's playthings. Take it away. Take it away, I tell you. Get it out of your hands. Whatever possessed you to bring a sinful thing like that into our Christina home? Take it back where it came from.'" Handy's father wanted him to trade in the guitar for a dictionary.
 - The Handy family belonged to the African Methodist Episcopal Church, an African American denomination, like the National Baptist Convention, believed in more restraint in worship.
 - Handy's parents did support the use of the organ in AME worship.

African American Hymnody

- The hymn is one of the early genres of music that African Americans used in their worship experiences.
- In 1707, Isaac Watts, published the first of many hymns that would eventually change the course of Protestant hymnody and start a lineage of African American liturgical music.
- Characteristics of Watts' hymns that appealed to African American slaves included:
 - Use of uncomplicated metrical systems
 - Simplicity of vocabulary and dominance of one syllable words
 - Frequent use of repetition

Published Hymnals by African Americans

The African Methodist Episcopal Church

- Richard Allen, self-educated, former slave, and ordained Methodist minister is the compiler and publisher of the first African American hymnal in 1801.
 - Pocket-sized
 - Text only
- The first African American liturgical document is *A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors* has fifty-four hymn texts without titles or tunes, and drawn mainly from Isaac Watts, the Wesleys, Richard Allen, and other hymnists.
 - 1801: Allen devised a second enlarged edition of the hymnbook and it was printed by T.L. Plowman with ten additional hymns and a change in the title to *A Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs from Various Authors*.
 - Richard Allen is given credit for adding a refrain to hymn texts. This improvisation added to the informal nature of the worship service.
 - African American spirituals were missing from both 1801 hymnals.
- The first official hymnal of the newly constituted African Methodist Episcopal Church is *The African Methodist Pocket Hymn Book*, published in 1818.
 - Richard Allen was committee chair
 - Daniel Coker and James Champion assisted Allen
 - Three hundred fourteen hymns and songs, fifteen from Allen's previous hymnal
 - Titles organized by theological themes

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

- The published hymnody in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was started in 1839.
- The publication of most recent hymnal is 1996.
- Prior to the 1996 publication, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Bicentennial Hymnal*, the AMEZ Church was instrumental in spreading folk music in the community, homes, and corporate worship.

- 1820: the AMEZ Church established a list of rules for worship.
 - Choose such hymns as are proper for the congregation; do not sing too much at once, seldom more than five or six verses
 - Let the tunes be suited to the words; and let the preacher stop occasionally and ask the people: Now! Do you know what you said last? Did you speak no more than you felt?
 - Do not suffer the people to sing too slowly: and in every large society let them learn to sing, and let them learn our tunes first.
 - Let the women constantly sing their parts alone; let the men be silent except those who understand the notes; and sing the bass as it is composed in the tune book.
 - If a preacher needs help in singing, let him ask for assistance.
 - Exhort every person in the congregation to sing; and when the singers would teach a tune to the congregation, they must only sing the tenor part.
- Keyboard instruments were probably not available to the early AMEZ worshippers.
- 1996 publication, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Bicentennial Hymnal*
 - Seven hundred thirty-four musical entries
 - Eighty pages of AMEZ ritual and lectionary Scriptures
 - Alphabetically arranged index consisting of twenty-four pages

The Roman Catholic Church

- The African American Catholic hymnal, *Lead Me, Guide Me*, published by GIA Publications in 1987, contains spirituals, gospel songs, hymns, service music, and music for the Roman Catholic Mass.
- J. Glen Murray states in the preface to the hymnal: “This hymnal, prepared by Black Catholics in the United States of America attempts to both meet the challenges of our faith and to incorporate the achievements of our centuries of vibrant life in the Spirit.”
- *Lead Me, Guide Me* second edition is now available.
 - In addition to African American music, it features music from Africa and the Caribbean.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

- September 1995, due to the contributions of the Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation, the hymnal, *This Far by Faith: An African American Resource for Worship* was completed.
- The spirituals in the hymnal were a black style of Euro-American hymns, meter hymns, and the blues roots of black gospel music.

The African American Heritage Hymnal

- The concept of an ecumenical hymnal developed over time in the mind of Dr. Delores Carpenter, a clergywoman ordained by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - This hymnal would transcend denominational politics and get to the reality of mutual concerns and journeys of African Americans.
- Carpenter, along with Rev. Nolan Williams, compiled the hymnal and GIA Publications offered them a contract to publish.
- The initial title, *African Heritage Hymnal*, was given to go with the *African Heritage Bible*.

- Consideration for a new title was made because most of the musical material had evolved from a variety of African American sources.
- The *African American Heritage Hymnal* is a liturgical document containing the following:
 - Introduction (Wyatt Tee Walker)
 - Essays:
 - “The Ecumenical Nature of African American Church Music” (J. Alfred Smith)
 - “African American Music and Freedom Movement” (Otis Moss)
 - Table of Contents
 - Biblical Responsive Readings
 - Litany Prayers for the Black Church Year
 - Hymns and Songs
 - Indexes
 - Musical Entries

The Current Status of Hymn Singing in African American Congregations

- The hymn among African Americans has seen a decline over the last few years because the congregational hymn singing in worship has been replaced by spectator-participants in worship.
- The large gospel choir movement has also contributed to the decline of the hymn.

The Evolution of Gospel Music

- Twentieth century African American gospel music has roots in liturgical music and the preaching of slaves.
- Black gospel music as liturgical has been misrepresented and misunderstood as it moved from the church to the concert stage.
- Gospel music originated in the black Pentecostal church.
- The lyrics and musical forms of African American gospel music were not bound by preconceived musical idioms or theological poetic devices.
- Gospel music emerged in urban areas as blacks continued to seek freedom from small and somewhat confining environments of rural communities.
- Black gospel music is both a genre and a style of performance, embodying the soulful expressions of the history of black people in and out of bondage and looking with joy to the future.
- As a genre, gospel music began as a sacred, freely expressed perception of the good news of the salvation power of Jesus Christ as experienced by the individual, but offered as a shared experience for a people of faith and for potential believers.
- As a style of performance, gospel music is an improvisatory expression of simple and slow harmonic rhythms to complex harmonic tensions.
- Thomas Dorsey, composer of “Take My Hand, Precious Lord,” is given credit for the term “gospel music” in the early 1920’s and 1930’s.
 - He wrote about one thousand songs and published more than half of them
 - Dorsey turned the use of blues into music for worship in his compositions
- The secular tendencies associated with gospel music consist of the vocal rhythms and textures and body rhythms that draw attention to the singer and put less attention on God.

- Williams-Jones, a multitalented gospel music specialist, often expressed the importance of the intuitive nature of the gospel music performing process. He said:
 - The performing process is so intuitive as to be almost unteachable. The greatest gospel artists are usually those who were born nearest the source of the tradition...
 - There are two basic sources from which gospel singing has derived its aesthetic ideals: the free style collective improvisations of the African American church congregation and the rhetorical solo style of the gospel preacher. Inherent in this also is the concept of African American folk rhetoric, folk expression, bodily movement, charismatic energy, cadence, tonal range, and timbre.

- Charles Tindley is the primary person in the development of composed and published African American gospel songs.
 - 1916: Published a collection, *New Songs of Paradise*
 - 1941: Published a seventh edition
- Chicago is often regarded as the center of black gospel music because by the 1920's several of its churches had produced many gospel writers and singers.
- By the end of the 1930's, there were two categories of gospel performing groups:
 - All-male gospel quartets that sang a cappella in a barbershop style
 - Slapped their thighs
 - Snapped their fingers
 - All-female gospel choruses
 - Dressed in choir robes or evening attire
 - Accompanied by the piano
- African American gospel music from the 1920's through the 1940's is described in the following manner:
 - The earliest texts are often subjective and filled with hope, thanksgiving, and lamentation, with acknowledgement of the blessings received or promised; some texts speak objectively of the triune God, with a strong focus on Jesus, the second person of the Trinity.
 - The improvised manner of the style of delivery is as important as what is sung. Melodies are freely improvised at the will of singers, often with spoken vocal inflections and chanted testimonies.
 - Melodies often utilize flatted thirds and sevenths, demonstrating a close affinity with the blues.
 - Marked syncopation is common, as well as highly improvised, instrumental accompaniment that serves as a driving force in its production and as an integral part of the performance.
 - Songs are basically strophic in form, tending to be sixteen and thirty-two measures in length.
 - Certain techniques, such as arpeggios, passing tones, runs, chromatics, and glissandi, are used to fill in measures of rests.

Historical Classifications of Black Gospel Music

- The most frequently used classifications of gospel music include: traditional, historic, or classical; the golden era; modern; and contemporary.

Traditional, Historic, or Classical Gospel 1920 to 1940

- Many African Americans refer to this time period as the best of gospel music.
- This period represents a time when African Americans had problems with accepting their African heritage and where the secular and sacred merged in their worship experiences.
- The Black Renaissance (Harlem Renaissance) took place during this time and focused on literature and the arts. Gospel music was accepted for worship during this Renaissance although it had secular undertones.
- 1930-1945 is referred to as “The Dorsey Era” because of Thomas Dorsey’s music contributions to gospel music.
 - Wyatt Tee Walker described Dorsey in the following manner: “Gospel music was born with Thomas A. Dorsey as its chief architect...is the music of the Great Depression that details clearly and poetically what the religious mood of Black America was all about.”
- 1930: Gospel music was accepted by the National Baptist Convention.
- 1931: Dorsey and gospel singer Sallie Martin organized the first gospel choir at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Chicago
- 1932: Dorsey opened the Dorsey House of Music which was the first music publishing house founded for the purpose of selling the music of black gospel composers.
- Rosetta Tharpe also rose to fame during this time with her gospel concerts at Carnegie Hall and Radio City Music Hall.

Golden Age Mid 1940’s-1969

- The music of this period reflects harmonies that were similar to those found in spirituals, hymns, and blues combined with personal testimonies.
- Some gospel music of this period contained complicated rhythms and improvisations.
- During this period gospel music continued to be used in the liturgical setting but also in places outside of church because of radio, recordings, and gospel concerts.
- 1950’s: The first all-gospel concert in history was the Negro Gospel and Religious Music Festival in Carnegie Hall with Mahalia Jackson as the headliner.
- Mahalia Jackson was a key gospel singer during the 1950’s with appearances on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and her own show in 1954.
- This period contained reversals from the previous era: the first all-male gospel choir and female quartets.
- Gospel radio also became popular in the mid 1940’s.
 - This is the period when gospel music became a form of entertainment.
- This golden age occurred during the Civil Rights Movement.
 - African American spiritual tradition revived for rights through freedom songs
 - Civil rights theme song was the hymn by Charles Tindley called “I’ll Overcome Some Day” which became “We Shall Overcome.”

- Bessie Griffin is the first gospel singer to appear in a cabaret.
 - Lead singer in the first gospel musical, *Portraits in Bronze*.
- 1961: *Black Nativity* was the first gospel musical to tour in both America and Europe.
- 1963: Gospel music has its own television show, *T.V. Gospel Time*.
- 1963: The Willa Ward Singers became the first gospel group to sing at Radio City Music Hall.
- 1969: James Cleveland organized “The Gospel Music Workshop America” which was a music convention that brought together gospel composers and others interested in gospel music.
- Reading music was not a requirement for gospel music composers.
- Gospel choirs became popular on historically black college and university campuses during this period where reading music was and still is a requirement for music majors.
- This is the period when the Hammond organ became popular as an accompaniment instrument in gospel music.

Modern 1969-1980’s and Beyond

- This period of gospel activity in the African American church was marked by Edwin Hawkins’ recording of “O Happy Day.”
 - Hybrid arrangement of a hymn by the Euro-American composer Philip Doddridge
 - Over two million copies of this recording were sold as church choirs were aspiring for the big sound
- The popularity of gospel music increased faster in the last quarter of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.
- This period featured gospel music with the electric organ, amplifying stringed instruments, and adding percussion (conga and bongo drums).

Contemporary

- Contemporary period refers to gospel music of the late twentieth century to the present that has vocal styles that are closely related to pop, rhythm and blues, jazz, soul, reggae, and rap.
- Names that are associated with this era include: Bebe and CeCe Winan, Walter Hawkins, Tramaine Davis Hawkins (Walter’s wife), Danniebelle Hall, Ben Tankard, Richard Smallwood, and the Smallwood singers.

Instruments in African American Worship

- The total human body, known as idiophone, was the beginning of instruments in African American worship.
 - Earliest congregations and denominations had human sounds – vocal and physical
- Instruments that came from Africa to America include:
 - African drums
 - Mpinti drums of the Ashanti in Ghana
 - Apinti drums of Guyana
 - Gomba
 - Bonjour – type of guitar
 - Cotter – Played by beating sticks over strings

- Wind instruments
- Balafo – African xylophone with gourds underneath the wooden keys
- The predominant instruments used in African American worship today are percussion and keyboard.

The Emergence of the Hammond Organ

- The Hammond organ, the most popular instrument in African American worship, was developed by Laurens Hammond, owner of the Hammond Clock Company in Chicago.
 - First presented on April 15, 1935
 - Not well received by producers of pipe organs
 - Court case with the Council of the American Guild of Organists that questioned Hammond’s use of the word *organ*.
 - Hammond Company misrepresented the instrument’s tone quality and value of the company
 - The Federal Trade Commission ordered that Hammond Company end its claim that their product could reproduce the sound of a pipe organ.
- The Hammond B-3 model gained much popularity for entertainment in the 1950’s and 1960’s as a jazz improvisatory instrument and also as an instrumental accompaniment for black gospel music in churches and concerts.

Organs in African American Worship

- 1828: African American Episcopalians installed a pipe organ in St. Thomas Church in Philadelphia. This was the first organ to be installed in an African American church.
 - Organ used to accompany congregational singing of hymns and accompanied choral anthems and oratorios
- 1830’s: The organ became a standard in other African American churches
- Black professional musicians played organs at other churches such as St. Philips Episcopal in New York City, First African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and Belknap Baptist Church in Boston.

Conclusion

- Sacred music has played an important role throughout the course of African American history and culture, aesthetically, artistically, sociologically, and politically.
- The music of black religious life has served as a bridge for the establishment, growth, and continuity of the black church that continues into the twenty-first century as the most dominant influence in the lives of African Americans.
- African American sacred music has suffered from efforts to negate its history and purpose but it survived and remains a means for God to mold people.
- The ancestors of present day African Americans must have been the bravest and most determined people to not only make it through the cruelest form of treatment ever enforced on human beings in the history of humankind, but to also produce some of the greatest sacred music in the United States.

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