Beyond "the Gospel Truth" - Unpacking Black Sacred Music Genres

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Why is this important?

- The line between what is Gospel Music and what is of the Spiritual Genre has become more and more blurred.
- Understanding the history of these genres is integral to understanding performance practice.
- Because the "I am a Choir Director" Facebook page will lead many into corruption!

GOSPEL v. SPIRITUALS... PRETEST!



Listen to each excerpt and identify the genre!

1. GOSPEL?
2. SPIRITUAL?
3. SOMETHING ELSE?

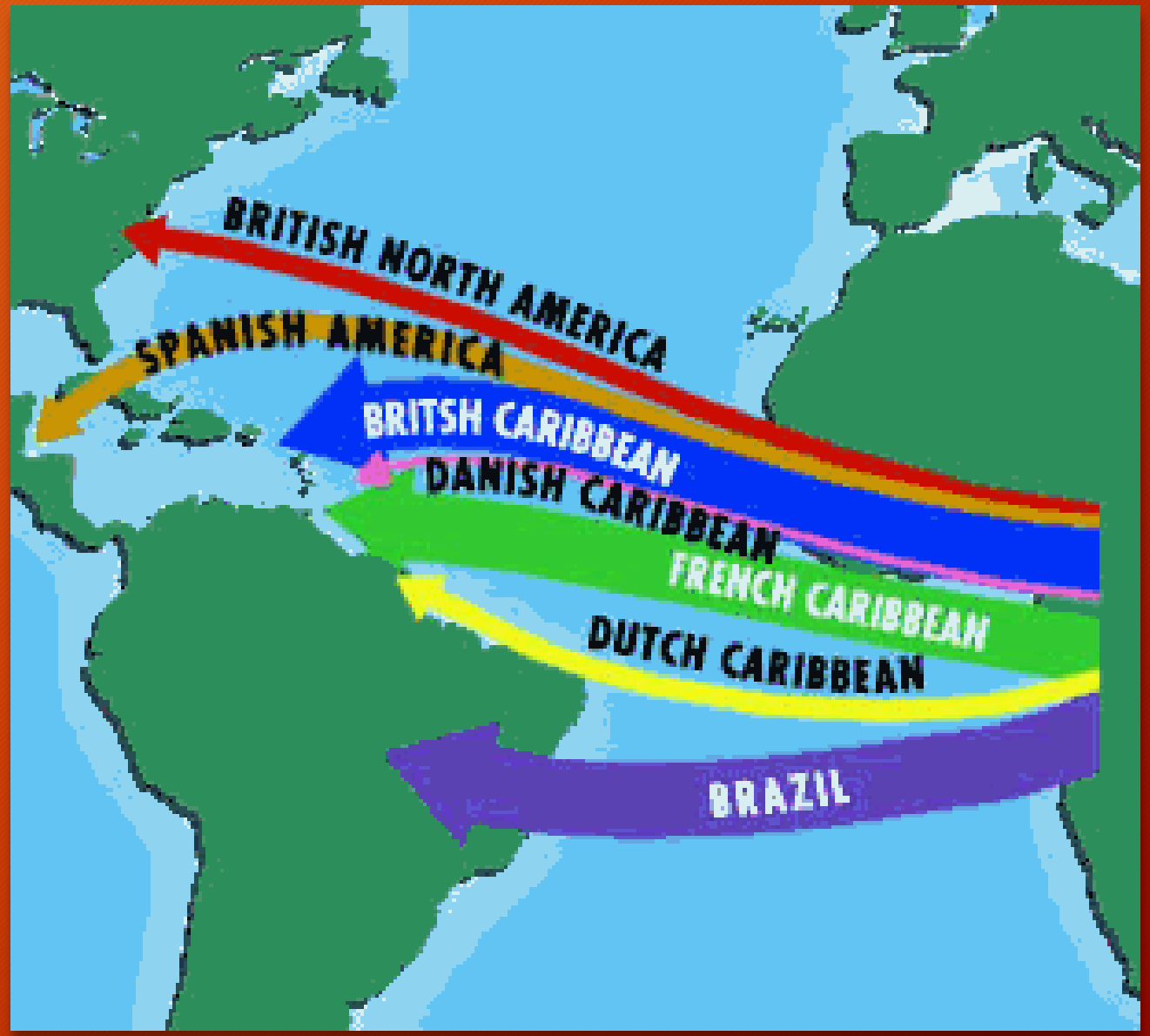
Today, we will explore four elements when dealing with the differences between Gospel music and spirituals

- Origins
- Performance Practice
- Implications for teaching
- Implications for Programming.

SPIRITUALS (ORIGINS)

BIRTHED FROM THE AFRICAN DIASPORA...

- THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE (THE AFRICAN DIASPORA)
- SLAVES WERE BROGHT TO WHAT IS NOW NORTH AMERICA, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA, AND THE CARRIBBEAN.
- AMERICANS FORCED CHRISTIANITY UPON THE SLAVES.
- CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS AND AFRICAN MUSICAL IDENTITY COMBINED TO FORM THE EARLY MUSIC OF AFRICANS IN AMERICA.



MUSIC ON THE PLANTATIONS

- Steeped in African Traditions
- The camp meeting movements beginning in the mid 1700s allowed slaves to participate. These are the first known hearings of spirituals outside the plantation.
- Call and Response (predecessor of the chain gang songs)
- Used to pass the time and keep the rhythm of the work.
- Secret worship services characterized by "ring shouts", boistrous, celebratory singing, with drums (of course!)
- Some spirituals made their way into hymnals by the mid 1800s.
- Lullabies (maybe not like what you would think) - GO TO SLEEP LI'L BABY

CODED MESSAGES

- Ostensibly Praising God and singing the straightforward religious tunes.
- Used to warn of danger.
- Used to give "all clear" signals.
- Used to share feelings and longing for heaven...
- ….assuming heaven meant literal heaven and not freedom in the north!
- Swing Low, Great God A'mighty, Soon-a will be done.

ARRANGED SPIRITUALS

- Fisk Jubilee Singers (following the Abolition of slavery)
  - Began singing all kinds of music, but mostly western choral music, as a means of assimilation. Spirituals were more popular, so the Jubilee Singers took them and performed them as their main genre.
- Hampton Institute and others followed.
- Composers began to write in this style, incorporating bel canto singing with the new genre.
- Answer to minstrelsy and an appeal to white audiences.

SPIRITUALS: Key Names and Faces

FISK JUBILEE SINGERS

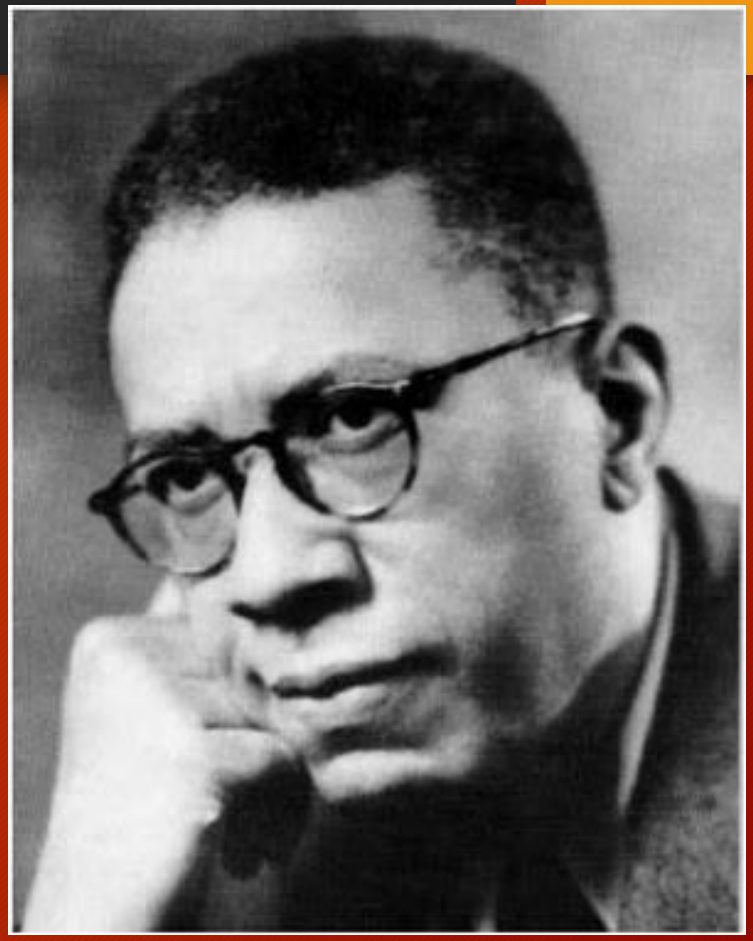
- Founded by George White.
- Traveled extensively throughout the US and Europe.
- John W. Work became conductor and his arrangements are still used today.



SPIRITUALS: Key Names and Faces

HALL JOHNSON (1888 – 1970)

- Hall Johnson is primarily responsible for raising the arranged spiritual to "art form" status, along with Nathaniel Dett, H. T. Burleigh, and Eva Jessye.
- A violinist, singer, and actor, he wrote and arranged for many idioms including cartoons! Disney's Dumbo "When I see an Elephant Fly"
- His spiritual arrangements are among the most widely performed of the genre.
- Ain't A That Good News!



SPIRITUALS: Key Names and Faces

JOHN WESLEY WORK (1901 - 1967)

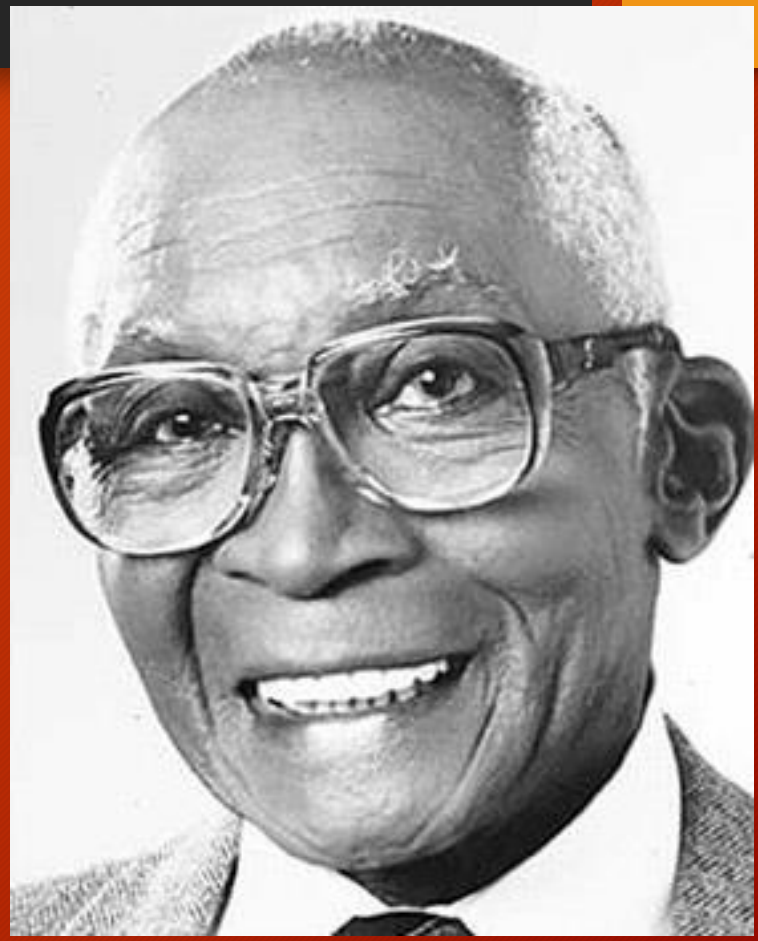
- John Work was the conductor of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, following in the footsteps of his father.
- Arranged spirituals for the group, many of which have been published and are still in circulation today.



SPIRITUALS: Key Names and Faces

JESTER HAIRSTON (1901 – 2000)

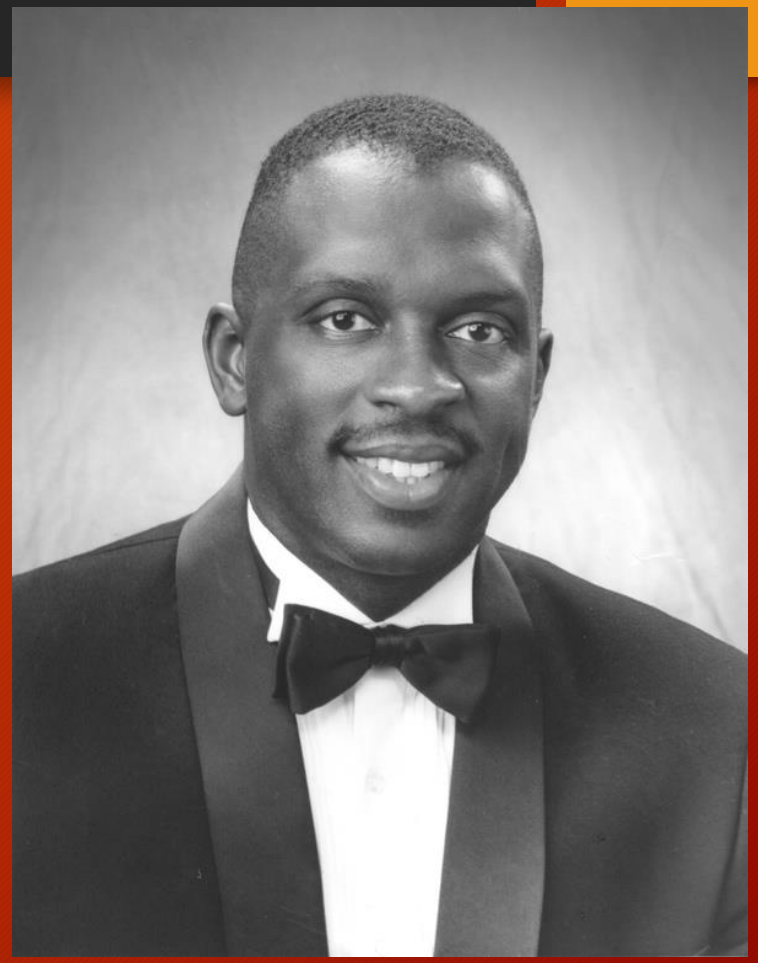
Was a leading expert in choral music and spirituals. He was an actor, composer, and singer/musician. Wrote the theme "Amen" and the Christmas song "Mary's Boy Child," along with my favorite arrangement of Hold On!



SPIRITUALS: Key Names and Faces

MOSES HOGAN (1957 - 2003)

was an American composer and arranger of choral music. He was best known for his settings of Negro Spirituals. Hogan was a pianist, conductor, and arranger of international renown. His works are celebrated and performed by high school, college, church, community, and professional choirs today. He died at the age of 45, in New Orleans.



SPIRITUALS: Key Names and Faces

STACEY V. GIBBS (b. 1961)

Stacey V. Gibbs has many arrangements of spirituals in print. Highly acclaimed for his expertise in bringing new vitality and excitement to these beloved pieces, they have reached a wide range of choirs both internationally and in the U.S. where they have been featured in numerous festivals, celebrations, and competitions as well as at ACDA regional and National Conferences. Stacey resides in Detroit, Michigan.

INSPIRE: WAY OVER IN BEULAH LAN' (Excerpt)



SPIRITUALS: Key Names and Faces

Jacqueline Hairston

Jacqueline Hairston, pianist, composer and arranger, received her musical training at the Juilliard School of Music and at Howard University School of Music. She earned a Master's degree in music and music education from Columbia University in New York City. In addition to her work as a pianist and vocal coach, she is a prolific composer and arranger.



SPIRITUALS: Key Names and Faces

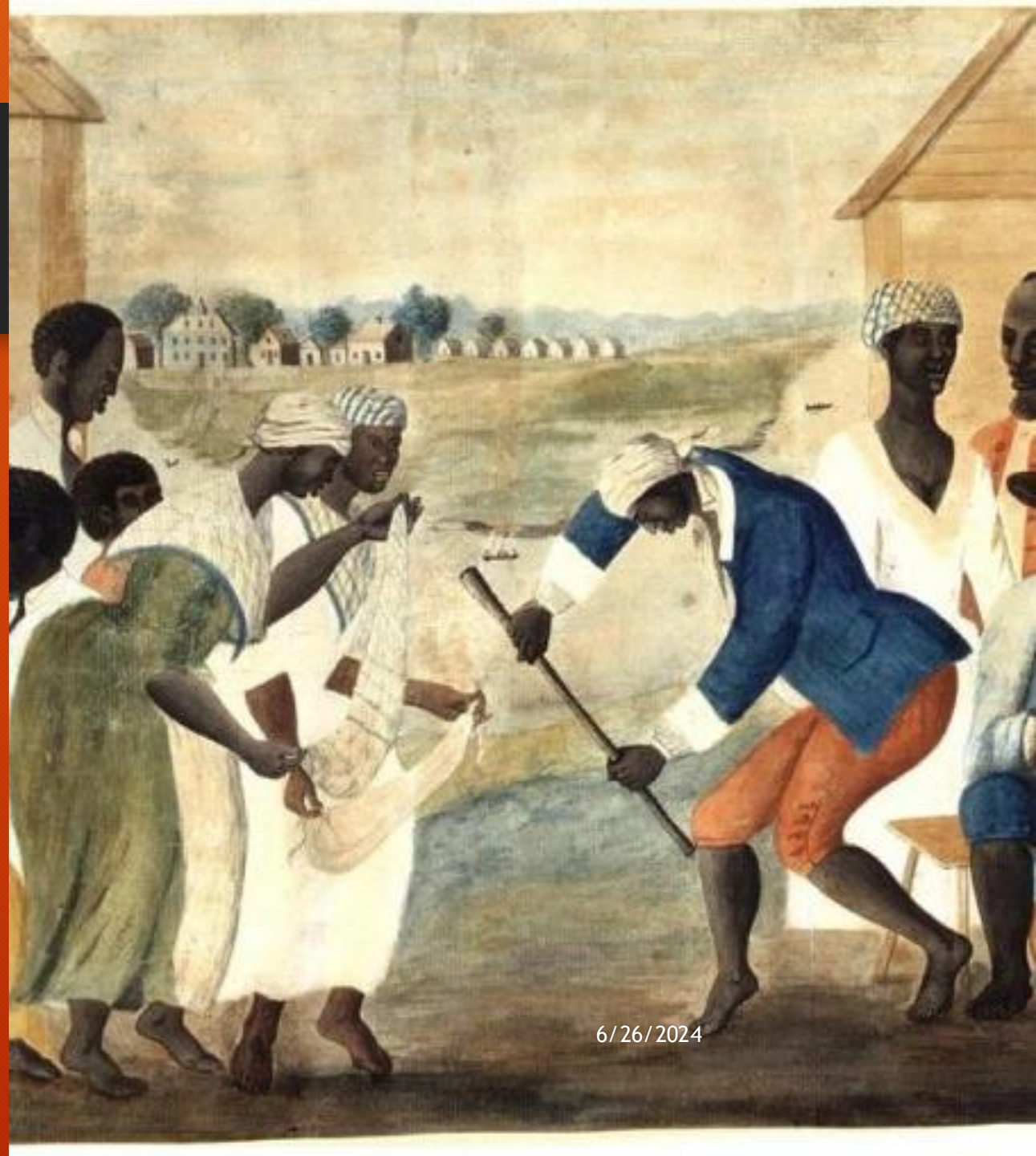
ROLLO DILWORTH

- Rollo Dilworth (b. 1970) is Associate Professor of Choral Music Education at Temple University's Boyer College of Music in Philadelphia, PA. In addition to teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in choral music education, he conducts the University Chorale. He is an oft-published composer of choral music, with emphasis in the areas of spirituals and gospel-inspired works.



PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

- DEPENDS ON WHAT KIND OF SPIRITUAL (Work Song? Call And Response)
- UNACCOMPANIED
  - This is a point of debate, but were there pianos and drums in the plantations?
- MOVEMENTS AND EXPRESSION SHOULD MATCH THE TEXT!
  - Are snaps and sways appropriate? If so, when?
- TONE
  - The FISK effect.....
- DIALECT!
  - Not cultural appropriation if it's being done out of respect.
  - "Regina Angelorum"
  - De, Lawd/Lowd,
- WHEN IN DOUBT, PHONE A FRIEND!!!



IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

- PREPARATION AND SCORE STUDY
  - Does it require the same amount?
- TYING THE MUSIC IN TO HISTORY AND CULTURE (National Core Arts Standards)
  - Connecting;
    - Anchor Standard 10: Connecting to Personal Experiences
    - Anchor Standard 11: Connecting to History and Culture
- HELPS YOUR STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY YOUR BLACK STUDENTS, FEEL SEEN!
  - This is very important – when students feel seen, they are more likely to stick with your program.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

- WHERE SHOULD SPIRITUALS GO ON YOUR PROGRAM?
  - According to I am a Choir Director Facebook page – LAST
  - Because they are FUN!
  - Or ARE THEY!?
- IF YOU ARE DOING A THEMED PROGRAM, PUT IT WHERE IT FITS IN THE THEME.
- CHRISTMAS SPIRITUALS
  - Glory Hallelujah to the Newborn King – Mark Butler
  - Behold the Star - William Dawson
- IF YOU ARE DOING A CHRONOLOGICAL CONCERT
  - Hall Johnson would go before Whitacre, right?
  - Make good choices.

GOSPEL MUSIC

What is Gospel Music?

Gospel music is a genre of Christian music that developed in the African American community in the United States. It typically features lyrics that express the singer's personal faith, often with a focus on religious salvation and redemption, and incorporates elements of various musical styles such as blues, jazz, and rhythm and blues. Gospel music is often sung in churches and religious gatherings and has influenced many other genres of music including soul, rock and roll, and hip-hop.



Origins of Gospel Music

- Georgia Tom moved to Chicago, played in the juke joints, and began to incorporate blues and other secular styles into his hymn stylings when playing in church. It was known early-on as the DEVIL'S MUSIC!
- In the late 1800s, Black churches based in the southern parts of the United States began introducing various musical genres such as African-American spirituals, hymns, and sacred songs into their worship services.
- The stylings of Thomas Dorsey eventually became popular "less devilish!" And different forms of accompaniment were explored.
- Gospel music has its origins as the diverse musical traditions practiced in the African-American churches merged. It's evolution also mirrors the evolution of secular music in America.



Gospel Music and the Black Church

- The Black Church was not only the place of worship, but the meeting place for social movements.
- The Church was a safehaven in addition to being a place of worship.
- The black church provided a social and cultural center for African Americans, where they could come together, support each other, and celebrate their shared culture and history.
- The Black church provided leadership opportunities and educational opportunities for people couldn't get them elsewhere.
- The Black church was where gospel music most significantly evolved.



Gospel Music and Civil Rights

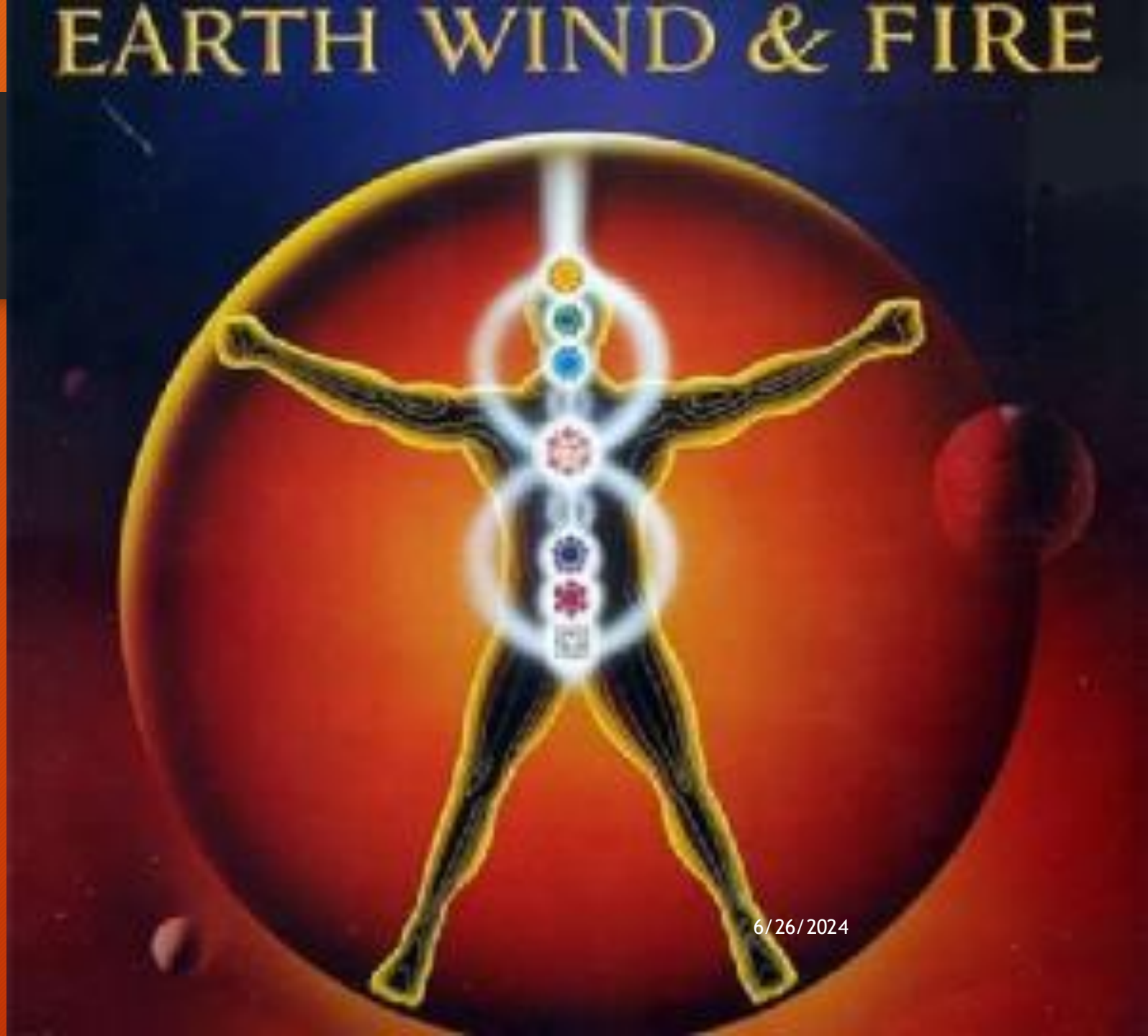
- Freedom songs
- “Not So Coded” messages
- Examples
  - Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around
  - We Shall Overcome
  - Ella’s Song

These songs still relevant today!



Rise of Funk Bands

- James Brown
- Sly and the Family Stone
- Parlaiment-Funkadelic
- Earth, Wind, and Fire
- Instrumentation included electric bass, Hammond organ, drums, horn section.
- Psychadelic Colors and Flashy costumes.



Why is this important?

- The funk movement had profound influences on Gospel music.
- Gospel artists emulated the style and look of funk bands (not completely, but included many musical elements of funk in their performance.
- This created another avenue for crossover appeal.
- For example……

“Oh Happy Day” – Edwin Hawkins (1969)



DIRECTING STYLE

- With traditional Gospel Music came a new, charismatic directing style.
- Gospel choir directors conduct the words and contour of each phrase.
- Among the choir directors that popularized the Gospel Directing style are: O'Landa Draper and Ricky Dillard

GOSPEL MUSIC: Key Names and Faces

Thomas Dorsey (1899-1993)

- Thomas Dorsey defined the gospel piano style.
- His career started while playing piano for secular artists.
  - Was Known as “Georgia Tom” and “Texas Tommy” in secular circles.
- He is known as the “Father of Gospel Music”
- He created a new sound by combining the rhythms and harmonies of jazz and blues with Christian themes.
- Wrote many well-known tunes, such as “Peace in the Valley” and, perhaps his most famous …..







Precious Lord, take my hand Lead me on, let me stand I am tired, I am weak, I am worn. Through the storm, through the night Lead me on to the light. Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home

-Thomas A. Dorsey

GOSPEL MUSIC: Key Names and Faces

Lucie B. Campbell (1885-1963)

- Lucie Campbell started the National Baptist Convention USA Chorus, which became a major outlet for Gospel music and catapulted many Gospel Artists to Fame
- Went to what is now Booker T. Washington High School
- Gave many of the early traditional Gospel Artists their start (Tindley, Dorsey, et.al.)
- Was a champion for the black feminist movement.



GOSPEL MUSIC: Key Names and Faces

Dr. Mattie Moss- Clark (1925 – 1994)

- Dr. Clark developed the common 3-part harmony (S-A-T) common to gospel music.
- She is the matriarch of one of the best-known traditional female gospel groups, The Clark Sisters.
- Served as International president of the music department of the Church of God in Christ.
- She popularized the style of directing that has become a staple to gospel choir performance.



GOSPEL MUSIC: Key Names and Faces

Walter Hawkins (1949-2010)

- He was the founder of the Love Center Church in Oakland, California, where he served as pastor until his death.
- Hawkins was best known for his gospel music compositions, including "Be Grateful" "Thank You" and "Marvelous"
- Hawkins won four Grammy Awards during his career, including Best Gospel Performance, Contemporary or Inspirational, for his album "Love Alive III" in 1991.
- He was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2000 for his contributions to the genre.



GOSPEL MUSIC: Key Names and Faces

Edwin Hawkins (1943-2018)

- American gospel musician, composer, arranger, and choir master.
- - He was the founder of the Edwin Hawkins Singers, a gospel music group that originated in California in the late 1960s.
- - The group's most famous song was "Oh Happy Day," which was arranged and performed by Hawkins and became a worldwide hit in 1969. The song is considered a classic of the gospel genre and has been covered by numerous artists.



GOSPEL MUSIC: Key Names and Faces

Twinkie Clark (b. 1954)

- American gospel singer, songwriter, pianist, organist and choir director
- She is best known as a member of the Clark Sisters, a gospel music group that started in the 1960s and rose to fame in the 1980s and 1990s.
- Clark wrote many of the Clark Sisters' hit songs, including "Is My Living In Vain," "Jesus Is A Love Song," and "You Brought The Sunshine."
- She has released several solo albums and has won multiple Grammy Awards and Stellar Awards throughout her career.



GOSPEL MUSIC: Key Names and Faces

- Richard Smallwood (b. 1948)
  - Expanded and modernized the traditional gospel sound
  - Added a “classical feel” to the gospel sound.
  - Music has a crossover appeal (sung by black artists/white artists, sacred artists/secular artists.
  - “Center of my Joy” written by Richard Smallwood and Bill and Gloria Gather.
  - Perhaps his most famous anthem: Total Praise (INSPIRE)



GOSPEL MUSIC: Key Names and Faces (Choral?)

- Rosephanye Powell
- Brandon Waddles
- Robert T. Gibson
- Brandon A. Boyd
- Jason Max Ferdinand
- Donald Lawrence



HYBRID COMPOSERS/EXAMPLES

- Rollo Dilworth (probably the BEST example!)
  - Jordan's Angels, I sing because I'm happy
- Mary Lynn Lightfoot
- Andre Thomas

I don't have a name for this genre, but I think we need to find it!

We mistake hymns a lot for spirituals, and for Gospel music, and the like... Still lots of work to do!

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

- ROCKS AND CLAPS!
  - 2 and 4, Gospel 6/8
- UNACCOMPANIED OR WITH A BAND. MAKE IT AS AUTHENTIC AS POSSIBLE
  - I've been improvising since I was 6, but there are score realizations out there that will help you.
- MOVEMENTS AND EXPRESSION SHOULD MATCH THE TEXT!
  - When are claps appropriate? Swells?
- TONE
  - Belting tone? Softer Tones? Breathy Tones? ALL THE TONES!
- DICTION?
  - Don't be lazy!
  - It’s the GOSPEL
- WHEN IN DOUBT, PHONE A FRIEND!!!

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

- PREPARATION AND SCORE STUDY
  - How do I prepare to teach a gospel song?
- TYING THE MUSIC IN TO (National Core Arts Standards)
  - Covers literally ALL the national Core Arts Standards
- HELPS PROMOTE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY IN YOUR CLASSROOM
  - Murdock – East High School
- GOSPEL MUSIC RUINS THE VOICE
  - Well, that's just stupid.
- HELPS DEVELOP OTHER SKILLS:
  - The Belt, Ear Training, Theory (figured bass!), Music Literacy, Improvisation
  - Might require you as a TEACHER to hone your skills in other areas!
- WHAT IF GOD

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

- WHERE SHOULD GOSPEL MUSIC GO ON YOUR PROGRAM?
  - According to I am a Choir Director Facebook page – LAST
  - Because they are FUN – YES, Some Gospel Music is FUN... but
  - Does it require the same amount of work to produce a quality product?

- AGAIN, IF YOU ARE DOING A THEMED PROGRAM, PUT IT WHERE IT FITS IN THE THEME.

- ARKANSAS INSPIRATIONAL CHORALE SWACDA PRESENTATION
  - WHERE WAS THE GOSPEL SONG?
  - WHY?

TAKEAWAYS

- There are differences between Gospel Music and Spirituals, and now you know them!
- Don't put these pieces last just because you think they are fun!
- There's lots of good music out there.
- You, as a culturally responsive teacher in the 21st Century MUST hone your skills such that you can teach this music effectively, and, it most definitely has a place in the canon.

GOSPEL v. SPIRITUALS... POST TEST (with videos!)

- EXAMPLE 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJuAVXowRUo
- EXAMPLE 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFQcqoQH-7w
- EXAMPLE 3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5xDGzmBGaU
- EXAMPLE 4: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDq5D4CG8Yg
- EXAMPLE 5: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJNN5bc66Gc



THANK YOU!

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