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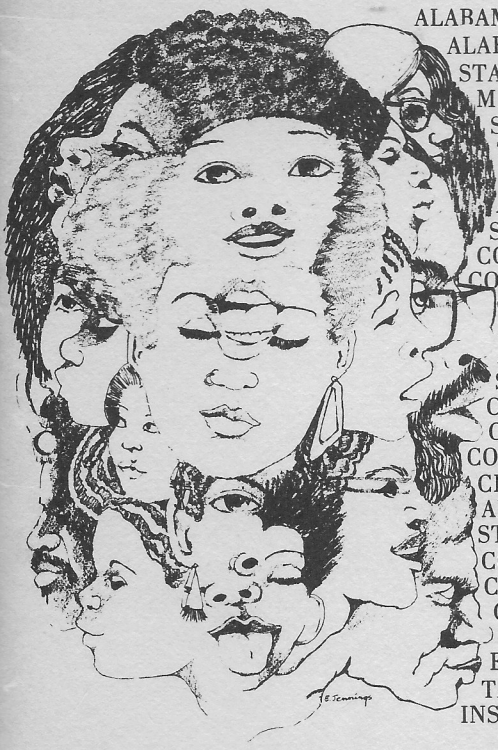
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BLACK RELIGIOUS MUSIC FROM SOUTHEAST GEORGIA

Black Religious Music From Southeast Georgia

Recorded, compiled, and written
by
Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje

Birmingham: Collection and Evaluation of Materials about Black Americans Program of the Alabama Center for Higher Education.

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1979

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BLACK RELIGIOUS MUSIC FROM SOUTHEAST GEORGIA

THE ISSUE

Religious music constitutes one of the more important music types in black American culture. Since slavery, people of African origin have not only used religion as a means to cope with the degradation they suffered as a result of their forced entrance to the New World, but through religious music performances they have been able to physically and spiritually escape adverse living conditions that still exist today. Several genres of religious music have been created by blacks, including *hymns, *spirituals, and *gospel songs. The impetus which gave rise to the creation of various styles of religious music has been a point of controversy in the music field. Many, especially white musicologists, suggest that all new creations were an exact imitation or replica of that used by whites; they normally dismiss the argument that blacks were partly, if not solely, responsible for the creation of some styles. It is common knowledge that blacks probably would not have composed such music without influences from Protestantism. On the other hand, we cannot ignore that these displaced people were also in touch with religious ideas and beliefs from their homeland. Therefore, it is probably safe to say that practically all musical styles created by blacks show an integration of elements from both African and European cultures.

Let us briefly examine the historical development of each of these styles. Hymns, songs of praise of God, were taught to slaves soon after their arrival from Africa to the New World. The first appearance of spirituals did not take place until much later. Several theories exist as to the creation of these songs: (1) spontaneous outburst and expression of the group, or (2) chiefly the work of talented individuals. James Weldon Johnson doubts that either theory is exclusively correct, but that "the far greater part of them is the work of talented individuals influenced by the pressure and reaction of the group" (1925:21).[1] Eileen Southern suggests that when blacks met in secret religious meetings during the early nineteenth century, "they turned away from Protestant *psalms and hymns, to songs of their own creation" (1971:145).

Blacks did not begin performing gospels until the early twentieth century with the migration of rural southern dwellers to northern cities in search of greater economic opportunities and freedom. Once in the north, many found the rural-born spiritual to be unsatisfactory in urban settings and unresponsive to their needs. "Consequently, the church singers created a more expressive

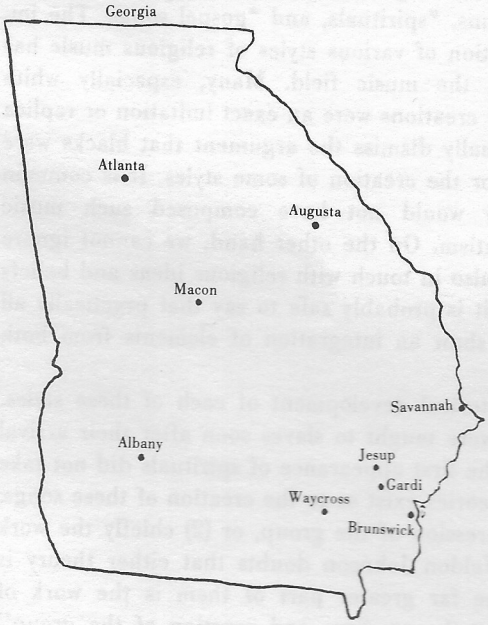
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**Items with asteriks are defined in the glossary, p. 26. The exact term sometimes differs slightly from the starred word, e.g., improvisatory is covered under improvisation, and polyphonic under polyphony.*

[1] *This style of documentation provides the name of the author, the date of publication, and the page number. Details about the source are found in the bibliography, p. 28.*

music to which they applied the term gospel music, but which displayed little resemblance to the traditional gospel songs of the whites. Negro gospel music became essentially the sacred counterpart of the city blues, sung in the same *improvisatory tradition with piano, guitar, or instrumental-ensemble accompaniment." (Southern 1971:402). It began its impressive development in the 1920's.

The purpose of this work is to introduce some of the religious musical styles that are performed by blacks in three small towns in southeast Georgia — Gardi, Jesup, and Waycross. Most of the performers who are included on this cassette have not had formal musical training. Only one (Ruth Mallard) has studied music at the college level, while others have either taken piano lessons as youths or acquired training through practical experience such as playing for church choirs. The primary reason that these particular persons have been chosen to perform is because they are admired and highly regarded in the community for their musical talents.



Not all musical examples were recorded in a religious setting. Three of the items (side two, items 4-6) were taped within the context of a church service (gospel recital program). Special sessions during choir rehearsals or at the home of the performer/compiler is the way that most songs were recorded.

The fact that these recordings have been obtained from a southern rural setting makes them somewhat unique from religious musical performances in metropolitan areas. Normally, rural southerners are a little more conservative and do not readily accept change as quickly as their counterparts in larger cities. For example, the only instrumental accompaniment that one hears on this tape is the piano or organ. It is extremely rare that other instrumental types—guitar, drums, horns, etc. — would be used in the rural south except in the few spiritualists and sanctified churches in the areas. Another difference is the size of the groups. In more urban settings where church memberships are quite large, more people are available to participate in choral groups — sometimes as many as 100 or more. Having 30 people in a rural church group is an accomplishment. Finally, the music in rural churches is not as improvisatory in performance style as that used by northerners. Although the ability to freely express music in one's

own style is a prerequisite for being known as an established performer, there are limits to what the audience will accept.

In some cases, however, just the opposite would be apparent when comparing religious music traditions in small town and metropolitan areas. Possibly it might be the city dweller who is more conservative and reserved in his music-making in order to distinguish himself from the old ways of the rural south. Oftentimes, once the individual reaches the city, he feels that it is necessary to adopt religious music expressions that are more similar to white culture just to prove that he has finally "made it."

In order to expose the listener to as many styles as possible, this cassette includes musical selections from several categories: hymns, spirituals, and gospels. Solo music, both instrumentally unaccompanied and accompanied, constitutes the material on side one. The listener will be able to hear hymns and spirituals as they are performed today and see how these same songs have been arranged into a gospel style. Side two contains music by several ensembles of various sizes and age groups; both hymns and gospel songs are represented. An examination of such musical elements as *form, melody, rhythm, *volume, *vocal quality, and method of improvisation has been included in order to help the listener understand and appreciate some of the important features of these religious styles.

THE DOCUMENTS

Side One: Solo Music

Item

1. *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Chile*
   Ruth Mallard
2. *Balm in Gilead*
   Beverly Green
3. *Steal Away to Jesus*
   Kinsey West
4. *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*
   Kinsey West
5. *Something Within*
   Festus Moses
6. *My Father Watches Over Me*
   Harriett Seadrow
7. *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*
   Beverly Green
8. *Come and Go With Me to My Father's House*
   Margo Dan Boone

Side Two: Ensemble Music

Item

1. *Jesus, I'm Thankful*
   Kinsey West and the West Singers
2. *The Lord Is Blessing Me Right Now*
   Bennett Union Baptist Church Choir No. 2
3. *Looking for A Home*
   St. John Holiness Church Junior Choir
4. *Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow*
   Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Junior Choir
5. *Sweet Jesus*
   Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Junior Choir
6. *New Born Soul*
   Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Junior Choir

COMMENTARY ON THE DOCUMENTS

SIDE ONE, ITEM 1

Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Chile *(Time 2:33)*
Spiritual
Singer: Ruth Mallard
Recorded in Jesup, Georgia, September 21, 1971, before choir rehearsal at Bennett Union Baptist Church

During slavery the *spiritual served many purposes for the black individual. It was sometimes used to send secret messages and communication to fellow slaves, to celebrate joyous occasions such as the coming of freedom, or to hope for a better life. Other times the spiritual served as a means for the slave to make a personal statement about his feelings and condition. "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Chile" is a very good example of the latter. Since men, women, and children were often sold separately from one slaveholder to another, a person who sang this song may have been distressed and desolate about being separated from his family and loved-ones. Or the singer may have had memories of his home across the Atlantic ocean; then the term "mother," in the spiritual would symbolize the African continent.

Ruth Mallard has had extensive experience in the field of music. After receiving a bachelor of science degree in education with a minor in music, she taught for a number of years in the public school systems of Wayne (Jesup) and Long (Ludowici) counties. Besides serving as director of numerous public school choruses, she has taught piano formally in the Jesup community and has been director of church choirs throughout southeast Georgia. Although retired from public school teaching at the time of this recording, she still was very active in the church. She continues to hold the position she held then, as music coordinator and director for the State Baptist Church of Georgia.

In this vocal solo performance, Ruth Mallard demonstrates the calm and expressive quality that is used in the singing of some spirituals. No instrumental accompaniment has been included, which is probably the way it was performed during slavery. In a restrained vocal style, the use of *slurs, *slides, and *vibrato is kept to a minimum. The *form of the spiritual is *strophic with minor variations. In the second verse when Ms. Mallard sings "Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone" for the third time, she slightly changes the melody by singing the beginning of this phrase at a higher pitch level.

Several musical techniques are used throughout the performance for emphasis and variation. For example, the *volume normally increases at the beginning of each line of the text and decreases at the end of the phrase. In the third verse, however, Ms. Mallard sings very softly at the beginning of the phrase and a very light *vocal quality is used. The *tempo is slow and the rhythm is performed in a rather free style.

SIDE ONE, ITEM 2

Balm in Gilead *(Time 1:15)*

Spiritual

Singer: Beverly Green

Recorded in Jesup, Georgia, July 30, 1971, at the home of the compiler

Slaves often used scriptural passages from the Bible to create religious music. The late John W. Work, an eminent scholar on the subject of *spirituals, feels that "the reason why the Negro songs [spirituals] are so full of scripture, quoted and implied, is that for centuries the Bible was the only book he was allowed to 'study,' and it consumed all his time and attention" (1915:37.) Work also believes that a "scriptural reference may not always be used accurately, in fact, it may be and often is twisted and changed in strange manner, but it is never wrought into a form so shapeless as to be unrecognizable; moreover, it is generally shaped so as to carry a *point which sticks*" (1915:35).

The spiritual, "Balm in Gilead," is an example of a song that is based on a scriptural passage. Taken from Jeremiah 8:22, the passage reads:

Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?

Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Several reasons probably account for the slaves' use of this particular scripture. First, the people referred to in the passage are the Jews. Blacks at that time often compared themselves to the people of Israel because they, like the Jews, felt they had suffered and been oppressed unjustly at the hands of their masters. Moreover, Jews were saved from much of their suffering because God intervened and aided them in their time of need. If such could happen to the Jews, it is likely the slaves felt that God would do the same for them. Second, an analysis of the text shows that this passage was probably appealing because references are made as to how the slave could end his plight. The term "balm" refers to a medicinal ointment and "Gilead" is a mountainous region, rich in pastureland, east of Jordan where some Jews settled after Moses led them out of Egypt. To understand more clearly this particular point, let us look closely at the text of the spiritual:

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole.
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged.
And think my work's in vain.
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again.

There is a balm in Gilead
etc. etc. etc.

A plausible interpretation of the text is that balm refers to a tangible or intangible substance that would heal the slave from the hardships of slavery. Gilead was the place a slave could hope to go (it may have meant death, a place in

the north, or life in the United States once slavery had been abolished) to relieve himself from the oppression of slavery. Sometimes he became discouraged about the work and suffering, but by remembering that life would be better in Gilead, he was able to survive. If classified, then, the spiritual "Balm in Gilead," can be regarded as a song of hope and faith. To concentrate only on their present condition of slavery made the situation only more miserable and was not the answer to their problem. Only when they looked toward the future could they find real meaning to their existence.

Although young in age (only 17 at the time of this recording), Beverly Green has had much experience in the performance of religious music. She often acted as church pianist for her mother, who is a Baptist preacher, when no other musicians were available. Most of her musical training was acquired as a result of this kind of practical experience.

The unaccompained solo performance of "Balm in Gilead" by Beverly Green typifies the mood and character of the song that was probably felt by its original creators. No *ornamentation or extensive use of *vibrato is heard. Contrasting loud and soft passages are not used. After establishing a moderate *tempo, the singer maintains a continuous *duple rhythm until she reaches the very last phrase of the song where she slightly slows the tempo. A unique feature of this spiritual is its *call and response form — a structure that is commonly used in many styles of both African and black American music. In this case, the chorus constitutes the response and the verse is the call. If sung by several people or a congregation, the call and response form would be more evident. The first passage, "There is a balm in Gilead," would probably be sung by the group, while one singer would sing the verse section ("Sometimes I feel discouraged.").

SIDE ONE, ITEM 3

Steal Away to Jesus *(Time 1:55)*

Spiritual

Singer: Kinsey West

Recorded in Gardi, Georgia, September 27, 1971, during choir rehearsal at Smith Grove Baptist Church

Scholars now admit that many religious songs performed by blacks during slavery were not always created or used entirely for sacred reasons. As early as 1862, collectors of slave songs[2] acknowledged that some of the music "contained the historical background of the Negro people . . . ." To date, a number of leading figures, among them W.E.B. DuBois (1903), have written about their interpretations of slave songs. Some have said that the music reflects the social

[2] *Lucy McKim, a white from Philadelphia, is known to be the first person to collect materials about black slave music. Her interests subsequently led to the publication of Slave Songs of the United States by William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison (all whites) in 1867, which is considered to be the first book of black American songs.*

consciousness of the slave, that "black spirituals were 'the slave's descriptions and criticism of his environment'" (Cone 1972:14). Through the performance of spirituals, slaves had a vehicle which aided them in their quest for a better life.



Smith Grove Baptist Church

Those that emphasize the historical significance of spirituals believe that this relates to the way music was used in African societies. Without a written history, Africans often relied on *praise songs created by musicians to record historical events. "Therefore, when Africans were brought to America," according to Cone, "they carried with them the art of storytelling through music. The black spirituals then are a reflection mainly of 'African background patterns' rather than white American Christianity" (Cone 1972:15).

Keeping this in mind, then, it is not surprising that a few scholars contend that they can actually give dates for the origin of spirituals. Such is the case with "Steal Away to Jesus." Similar theories by different authors have been proposed concerning the origin of this spiritual. Miles Fisher suggests that the song was composed by Nat Turner, a prominent slave-revolter of the early nineteenth century. Fisher states:

> The external evidence of Turner's revolt against slavery coincides with the internal evidence of this song. He knew that should he be caught meeting with other Negroes the oft-repeated burden of the song would be true: 'I hain't got long to stay here.' Yet, he was in a quandary how else to act when his personal Lord was calling him like a patrol officer with a trumpet by 'the thunder,' 'by the lightning,' 'by green trees' bending at will, and by signs of the judgment. He who sang so sweetly stood 'a-tremblin'' as he understood full well that he was a 'poor sinner,' to say the least. The saddened melody of the song bespoke that its author was melancholy about beginning his slave revolt at the house of his kind master. The circumstances all point to Nat Turner of Southampton County, Virginia, as the author of 'Steal Away,' about 1825, the time of his call to be a prophet (1953:66-67).

Similarly, John W. Work believes that "'Steal away to Jesus' meant to the slave a secret meeting which the master had prohibited; and to the overseer and the rest of the world, a longing for the quiet communion with God" (1915:123). Work also relates that approximate date and circumstance which gave rise to the creation of the spiritual:

> On a plantation down on the Red River, in the early part of the nineteenth century, a master of a large number of slaves was accustomed to allow them to go across the river, at stated times, that they might worship with the Indians, who had a mission there. Upon the days of these services, the slaves crossed the river in many an ingenious craft. They always enjoyed themselves, and talked much of the good times on the other side. But one day the master learned that the missionary to the Indians was a northern man; and, believing that he might put ideas of freedom in the heads of his slaves even if 'in a Bibleistic way,' . . . which might lead them to travel to the nightly path toward the North Star, he forthwith pursued the logical course and prohibited his slaves from worshipping any more across the river. Doubtless the master thought the matter was settled then and there, but not so; the slaves could not forget the good times across the river; and what they could not do in the open they determined to do in secret. They decided to 'steal away to Jesus,' as one slave expressed it. 'Steal away to Jesus,'' was expressed all day, in the fields of cotton and of corn, and in fragments of tuneful melody of the slaves were all informed of what would occur that night. At night when the master, overseer, and hounds had retired to sweet sleep, the slaves would steal from their cabins and quietly creep through the cotton, corn, and tall grasses, softly humming their greetings to one another. On toward the river they crept, and the night breezes wafted their melody to the ears of the missionary, who thereby knew that his black congregation was coming. Soon he espied here, there, and yonder, black forms, on rafts secretly made for the purpose, paddling themselves across the river. When they reached the banks, they lifted their voices in lofty inspiration, and from the depths of their hearts sang:
>
> 'My Lord, He calls me, He calls me by de thunder;
> De trumpet soun's it in-a my soul;
> I ain't got long to stay here.'
>
> The trees swaying in the night wind inspired them to proclaim, 'Green trees a-bendin' poor sinner stands a-tremblin', de trumpet soun's it in-a my soul, I ain't got long to stay here.' The judgment day, the most important day in his calendar, impressed itself upon him—
>
> 'Tombstones a-bustin'
> Poor sinner stands a-trimblin',
> De trumpet soun's it in-a my soul.'
>
> Of course, this song as we have it to-day was not produced in one night; it is a product of development, for the missionary who told the story to the Original Fisk Jubilee Singers, stated that he literally saw the song grow.

see p. 9a

"Steal away to Jesus," whispered at first, later chanted softly, was notice that that night there were to be services across the river. Their first-born thought, "Steal away to Jesus," was expressed all day, in the field of cotton and of corn, and in fragments of tuneful melody the slaves were all informed of what would occur that night.

> Each stanza, as well as the chorus, ends with the expression, 'I ain't got long to stay here,' which was not originally sacred, but a sharp reminder to the slaves that they must not stay too long on that side of the river, or they must pay the penalty of disobeying their master. Too well they knew what such a penalty would be. So that little expression had to them a tremendous meaning (1915:77-78).

Kinsey West must be regarded as a child prodigy. At a very early age in life and without formal musical training, she was able to play on the piano, in a very accomplished manner, practically any music that she heard. She is well respected throughout Wayne and neighboring counties for her musical talents in composing, arranging, singing, and playing piano.

The unaccompained solo performance of "Steal Away" by Ms. West is sung with great emotion and feeling. The singer, in a slow rather free rhythm, uses some *vibrato, *slurs, and *slides, but *ornamentation is kept to a minimum in comparison to her performance of "Precious Lord" (side one, item 4). The *form of "Steal Away," although based on a *call and response pattern, differs from the previous example, indicating that not one but several *responsorial patterns are used by blacks. The song can be divided into three parts — leads, a response, and a chorus.[3] Because the chorus is the most important part, it is performed first:

> Steal away, steal away,
> Steal away to Jesus.
> Steal away, steal away home,
> I ain't got long to stay here.

The lead part is then performed next:

> My Lord calls me.
> He calls me by the thunder.
> The trumpet sounds within-a my soul.

followed by the response:

> I ain't got long to stay here.

SIDE ONE, ITEM 4
Precious Lord, Take My Hand *(Time 3:00)*
Gospel. Composed by Thomas Dorsey
Singer: Kinsey West
Recorded in Gardi, Georgia, September 27, 1971, during choir rehearsal at Smith Grove Baptist Church

Thomas Dorsey, born 1899 in Georgia, earned the title, Father of Contemporary Gospel Music, as a result of his contributions to the early development of

[3] *The formal analysis which follows is based on that used by the Johnson brothers (Johnson and Johnson 1925:26-27).*

this religious style. As a young man, he was much more interested in secular musical forms — blues and jazz, performing with such people as Ma Rainey (mother of the blues) and Lionel Hampton (jazz musician). In 1932, however, he decided to commit himslf entirely to the writing of church songs. "By 1970, Dorsey had written more than 400 songs (of which *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* was the most famous), had founded the National Convention of Gospel Singers, and had inspired the organization of hundreds of touring gospel singers, gospel ensembles, and gospel choirs" (Southern 1971:404).

Although unaccompanied by instruments, Kinsey West's rendition of "Precious Lord" is highly *improvisatory, making use of numerous *slurs, *slides, and *vibrato. At the end of phrases, she usually holds notes beyond their prescribed note value and adds a hum (e.g., "Let me stand," "I am worn," or "Thru the storm"). In a very slow, free, and expressive style, Ms. West uses an *open throat vocal quality. The *volume of the music is varied. As the song is raised in pitch she simultaneously increases the volume and does just the opposite when a lower pitch level is used. The *form of "Precious Lord" is strophic; the same music with minor variation is performed to each of the two verses.

SIDE ONE, ITEM 5

Something Within *(Time 2:20)*

Gospel. Composed by Lucille E. Campbell

Singer: Festus Moses

Recorded in Jesup, Georgia, September 12, 1971, at the home of the compiler

One of the unique features of the *gospel style is that performers are allowed to freely express the music in whatever manner they would like. Oftentimes, the performance rendition of a song sounds nothing like the written score, an approach to performing that the audience prefers. Anyone who cannot create his own rendition or version of a song is not looked upon as a good musician in many black communities.

Festus Moses, at Bennett Union Baptist Church in Jesup, Georgia, is one of those people who can spontaneously create new music. He, therefore, is often called upon to lead new songs, appear as a guest on special programs, or organize choirs for important events in the church. His rendition of "Something Within" demonstrates his particular talent to bring the music to life.

Although unaccompained by instruments, a person listening to this song is acutely aware of the rhythmic emphasis. Mr. Moses believes that gospel songs should be sung "in the swing," while *spirituals should be performed in "a drag style." He achieves this "swing" rhythm by strongly attacking tones and using a continuous lively and moderate *tempo. The use of *slurs, *slides, and lots of *vibrato does not appeal to him; this is probably why these *improvisatory devices are not used a great deal in this song. The written score of "Something Within" is divided into two parts: verse and *refrain. Mr. Moses sings only one of the three verses and repeats the refrain three times. For variation, he normally

decreases the *volume of the music at the beginning of the refrain and gradually increases it until he reaches the end when he sings in a much louder voice.

Bennett Union Baptist Church



SIDE ONE, ITEM 6
My Father Watches Over Me *(Time 2:37)*
Gospel. Composed by Charles Gabriel
Singer: Harriett Seadrow
Recorded in Jesup, Georgia, June 18, 1971, at the home of the performer

Many times blacks perform *gospel songs written by both black and white composers. Because the music is freely changed to suit a person's personal taste and style, few performers do research to find out who wrote the song. Moreover, singers normally like and choose songs not because they know the composer, but because they have heard the composition performed by other artists, such as James Cleveland, Mahalia Jackson, the Edwin Hawkins Singers, and so forth. What they might say if asked about the composer is that "the song is sung by *(name of the performer)*; I like it; and I want to try my own rendition."

"My Father Watches Over Me" was written in 1910 by Charles Gabriel, a very successful white gospel composer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the time of the recording, however, Harriett Seadrow said that this particular arrangement is entirely her own. She acquired her musical training through practical experience, playing piano and directing church choirs throughout the Jesup area and neighboring communities for at least 40 years before her death in 1978.

Similar to the gospel song performed by Festus Moses (side one, item 5), "My Father Watches Over Me" is composed in two parts — verse and *refrain. Ms. Seadrow performs the *strophic form differently from that used by Mr. Moses. After singing one verse and the refrain, she then repeats the second verse and the

refrain. Also, she does not extend the length of the performance by singing the refrain several times as was the case with "Something Within."

In a raspy and deep voice, Ms. Seadrow prefers not to use a lot of *vibrato to *improvise. Rather, she sustains the value of notes at the end of phrases by adding a number of *slurs and *slides (e.g., ". . . on the rolling *sea;*" "He cares for *me*"). When the phrase, "Tho' billows role," is repeated the second time, a higher pitch level than that indicated in the written *score is sung. The use of breaks or pauses between the syllable of words and phrase units is another improvisatory devise that is heard. For example, the performance of the word, "o-ver," and the phrase, "My heavenly father — watches," demonstrates this particular technique. The rhythm of the gospel is sung moderately slow and free.

SIDE ONE, ITEM 7
I Heard The Voice of Jesus Say *(Time 2:12)*
Hymn/Gospel. Composed by Horatius Bonar
Singer and pianist: Beverly Green
Recorded in Jesup, Georgia, July 30, 1971, at the home of the compiler

Material that is used for the arrangements of some *gospel songs is taken from a number of sources. Most often the gospel is new music created by the composer. Yet, a number of performers and arrangers borrow material that is already in existence — *hymns, *spirituals, or other gospels. "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say" was originally composed by Horatius Bonar (most likely a white but not certain) in 1846. Since that time a number of people have either set the text of this song to a different melody (Roberta Martin, c. 1941 and Kenneth Morris, c. 1942) or performed the hymn in a gospel style, such as the case with this performance.

Very reminiscent of a secular "pop" singer, Beverly Green creates her arrangement of Bonar's song. Her *vocal quality is clear and some *vibrato is used at the end of phrases on sustained notes—e.g., "I heard the *voice,* of Jesus *say,* come unto *me,* and *rest.*" The contextual meaning of the words is used as a guide for her performance style. Because the text makes reference to a calm setting:

Come . . . and rest.
Lay down . . . .
I was weary . . . and sad.
I found . . . a resting place.

she also performs the music in a soft and meditative manner. Even the piano accompaniment is simple, making use of repeated chords in the upper *range and a moving bass in the lower. A contrasting loud section is performed during the middle of the song ("Take my yoke upon you . . ."). It is almost as if this is the point at which God speaks forcefully to His flock. Following the loud statement, the singer returns to her previous calm singing style. The rhythm is *duple and performed moderately slow.

SIDE ONE, ITEM 8

Come and Go With Me to My Father's House *(Time 3:37)*

Spiritual/Gospel. As sung by Dorothy Love and the Harmonettes

Singer and organist: Margo Dan Boone

Recorded in Jesup, Georgia, July 2, 1971, at the home of the performer

"Come and Go With Me to My Father's House," originally created by blacks during slavery, can be classified both as a song of revolt or return to Africa song. Depending upon the interpretation, "father's house" could mean a home in Africa or a home in the north. The context in which the song was performed probably dictated the actual meaning of the phrase.

Margo Dan Boone began her formal musical training very early in life. By the age of fourteen (her age at the time of this recording), she was an accomplished vocalist, pianist, and organist. In addition to her duties as pianist for the junior choir in her church, she very capably held the position of church organist. One of her special talents is the ability to play spontaneously any music that she hears, such as the case with this performance.

This performance shows the way in which a *spiritual can be arranged into a *gospel rather than the use of a *hymn as was seen on side one, item 7 (see p. 13). Ms. Boone indicated that she heard this arrangement performed on a recording by Dorothy Love and the Harmonettes; she was not sure if Dorothy Love is also the original arranger.

A number of things have been done to change this spiritual into a gospel. Most obvious is the inclusion of organ accompaniment. Ms. Boone's organ playing is not highly *improvisatory, but she does slide from one chord to another rather than clearly attacking notes. Most of the music is played within one *range; movement all over the organ to higher pitch levels is not done. If accompaniment was used at all during slavery, it was probably only foot-tapping and handclapping.

Vocal techniques used by Ms. Boone give a feeling of freedom, one of the more important characteristics of gospel music. Her vocal range is extremely flexible; she easily handles both high (notice her singing of "me" at the end of each verse) and low notes. *Vibrato is prominent and *slurs and *slides are constantly used. Calling out *vocal interjections in addition to singing the written text is a common technique employed by gospel singers. Notice her performance of "oh" in the third verse and "yeah" in the fourth verse.

The *form of the song is *strophic; the first, second, and fourth verses are sung to the same text, while the third differs. Usually, the beginning of each verse is sung softly but increases to a louder *volume during the middle. Toward the end of each verse she normally returns to a softer voice. The rhythm is slow and based on a *triple meter.

SIDE TWO, ITEM 1

Jesus, I'm Thankful or I'm Thankful, Lord *(Time 4:50)*

Gospel. Composed by Kenneth Morris

Singers: Kinsey West and the West Singers (Sheila Frazier; Alfredda Jenkins—leader of first verse; Denise Lawson; and Kinsey West—leader of second verse and vocal interjections)

Pianist: Kinsey West

Recorded in Gardi, Georgia, September 27, 1971, during choir rehearsal at Smith Grove Baptist Church

The four women who call themselves the West Singers are sisters and cousins of the West family. The entire family is extremely gifted in music and widely known throughout Wayne County, Georgia, for their singing talents. Most of their training in music, like most musicians in small communities, has been acquired through practical experience. After hearing performances of songs through the media (recordings, radio, television, etc.), they learn and rehearse the music at choir practice or in the home until they have achieved just the right sound quality they desire. Once the selection has reached perfection, it is then performed in public—either during church service or at a choir anniversary program. The reception given to the song by the audience determines if the group has been successful in their efforts to create a new rendition. If the song is liked, lots of "Amen's," "Yes Lord's," or "That's alright's" would be heard during and after the performance. Complete silence would be the response if the audience does not care for a song. Although "Jesus, I'm thankful" was not recorded in the context of a church service, it is almost certain that the song would be very well-received.

The *form of the composition is *strophic. Similar music—especially piano accompaniment — is used both for the chorus and verse parts. The *call and response technique is also employed in that each chorus section is sung by the group in three-part *harmony, while all verses are performed alone by one of the leaders. An *open-throat vocal quality is performed by all of the singers and a moderately slow rhythm in *triple meter is used.

A number of *improvisatory devices — *slurs, *slides, and *vibrato — are used in this arrangement by Kinsey West. The most prominent feature, however, is the extensive development of vocal interjections (the spontaneous adding of words and phrases to the written text). As John W. Work puts it in his discussion of *spirituals, these interjections "are usually thrown in by the leader, but oftentimes by others, just as the spirit moves, but by whomever it is interjected there is no violence done to the rhythm, and the effect is electrical. Sometimes such an expression, though extemporaneous and spontaneous, is so fitting and effective that it becomes a part of the song" (1915:39).

The manner in which these interjections are incorporated into the song is fascinating, and they are the means by which the vocalist is able to develop the music. When the song is first introduced by the group, no extemporaneous singing is performed. But as the song progresses, more and more vocal interjections

are added. For example, during the first chorus part, only a small number of vocal interjections are sung; notice the singing of "Everyday, everyday, of my life" early in the song by one of the leaders. Towards the end of the song, extemporaneous remarks become much longer and extended. Consider the following:

You healed my body and I'm so thankful Jesus.
Oh! I'm thankful Jesus.
You saved my soul and I'm so thankful Jesus.
Oh! I'm thankful Lord.
Everyday, everyday, everday of my life.

These vocal interjections are treated as "fill-in" material; that is, they are sung by the leader during a time when the group is silent. Therefore, a continuous calling and responding type of performance style is created in order to give more excitement to the composition. As vocal interjections become much longer and extended towards the end of the performance, however, they overlap with the group's responses.

SIDE TWO, ITEM 2

The Lord Is Blessing Me Right Now *(Time 2:55)*
Gospel. Composed by Beatrice Beals; arranged by Ralph Good Pasteur
Singers: Bennett Union Baptist Church Choir No. 2, Leola Wilson (leader)
Pianist: Ruth Mallard
Recorded in Jesup, Georgia, September 21, 1971, during choir rehearsal at Bennett Union Baptist Church

Most black churches, regardless of the size of its membership, maintain at least two, three, and sometimes even four choirs. Each choral organization, although not explicitly stated or written in a charter, has its specified musical function to the church. The senior choir normally is the group that has been in existence for the longest period of time; its members tend to be composed of the middle age and elderly church-goers. Music performed by the senior choir usually consists of *hymns, old *spirituals, and some *gospels.

The junior choir serves the musical outlet for the young in the church. At a church service, the youth would perform more gospels than any other music type. If its membership is composed of more small children (ages 5 to 12), however, religious children's songs would probably constitute a larger portion of the repertoire.

In addition to these two choirs, there is normally a choral organization that is composed of young adults. More than likely, this group has just been recently organized. The primary purpose for the new organization was to fulfill the musical needs of the newer generation. Until recently, gospel music in many small rural black communities such as Jesup, Georgia, was not regarded as "respectable." The senior choir rebelled against performing such songs and the adult who directed the junior choir would not allow the young to sing gospel

music. Therefore, those who wanted to make this new music "respectable" and "acceptable" decided to organize and devote their entire time to the singing of gospel songs.

Although Bennett Union Baptist Church was founded more than 125 years ago, Choir No. 2[4] has been in existence for only 21 years. Their gospel singing, under the leadership of Ms. Ruth Mallard (see p. 5), still is not as *improvisatory or free in performance style as one would find in some of the other churches in Jesup (for example, listen to music on side two, item 3). Nevertheless, members of the group believe that they have accomplished their objective. As a result of their singing gospel, other choral organizations at Bennett Union—senior and junior choirs — have begun to perform this type of religious music.

At this choir rehearsal, only ten of the 28 members of the group were present, but the performance gives a fairly good representation of the gospel style sung by the choir. Very few *ornaments are used by the women and men singers. Even the leader of the song sings in a rather nasal *vocal quality with little *vibrato, *slurs, and *slides. The rhythm is based on a *triple meter and the *tempo is moderately slow. A verse/chorus *form is used. After the piano introduction, the group sings the chorus section. During the verse which follows, *call and response between leader and group is heard. The performance ends with a repeat of the chorus by the entire choir. Change from a loud to soft volume occurs during the leader's performance and at the very end of the composition by the pianist. Only the piano is performed in an improvisatory style with melodic phrases being played in upper, middle, and lower *ranges.

SIDE TWO, ITEM 3

Looking For A Home *(Time 3:10)*

Gospel. Composed by Joe Washington; arranged by E. Kendrix of the James Cleveland and the Southern Community Choir

Singers: St. John Holiness Church Junior Choir, Margo Dan Boone (leader) and Earlene Fuquay (director)

Pianist: Margo Dan Boone

Recorded in Jesup, Georgia, July 14, 1971 during choir rehearsal at St. John Holiness Church

St. John Holiness Church maintains two choirs — one for adults and another for children. The music performed by both organizations consists of *gospel and some *spirituals. Their gospel performances are much more *improvisatory in comparison to the music performed by the group at Bennett Union Baptist Church (see side two, item 2). Several reasons probably account for the differences. First, the worship service at St. John contains much more emotionalism, spiritualism, and evangelistic preaching. Because the music in many

[4] *The group has been given the name "Choir No. 2" to distinguish it from the senior choir which is now sometimes referred to as "Choir No. 1."*

black churches is used to function as a stimulant to the service, people who render the gospels try to perform in a style that encourages strong emotional responses. The music, then, helps to initiate or accelerate outbursts of emotion and forms of possessions among individuals (DjeDje 1978:10). Second, gospel music has its roots in Holiness and Spiritualist churches. According to Ricks, a noted scholar on the subject of gospel music, "the gospel tradition was influenced by the older styles of Negro religious music, and here the split of Holiness groups from the orthodox Negro church was an important event, for it was among the Holiness groups that the free expression of religious and musical behavior common to the rural Southern Negro began to assert itself and undergo further development in an urban setting" (1960:131).

Only 15 young girls and boys, ranging from ages 8 to 16, were present for choir rehearsal on this day. Even though only about half of the group was in attendance, the enthusiasm displayed by those present made up for the absence of voices.

"Looking For A Home," like most songs performed by the group, was first heard on a recording. The director and pianist liked it and decided to teach it to the choir. The verse/chorus *form is very similar to other songs examined on this cassette (see side two, items 1 and 2). After the piano introduction, the chorus part is sung three times before the verse section is introduced. Following the verse, another segment of music, which will be referred to here as the *"bridge," is performed. Then the whole routine is repeated again — chorus, verse, and bridge. *Call and response between leader and group is a prominent feature in all these sections.



St. John Holiness Church

The piano playing style is very much in the gospel tradition. Fast *tempo, extensive use of *ornamentation, and free movement to all levels on the piano create a very complex sound.

It is very obvious that children are performing because of their *voice quality; in their enthusiasm to sing loudly and forcefully, some screaming is heard. Yet, they also incorporate *embellishments such as *slurs and *slides that are integral to the gospel performance. The leader uses *vibrato and sometimes sings in very high registers.

The development of the rhythm is probably the most striking feature of this performance; it is played very fast and in a *duple meter. Handclapping by the group adds to the rhythmic emphasis. During the piano introduction, handclapping is performed on the second and fourth beats of the measure:

Rhythm:	1		2		3		4	
Handclaps:			X				X	

When the "bridge" is introduced, however, the tempo becomes faster and the handclapping pattern is changed to the following:

Rhythm:	1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
Handclaps:		X		X		X		X

Changing from two to four beats in a measure makes the music much more stimulating and creates a very complex *polyphonic rhythmic pattern. Techniques of these kinds are often used in gospel to give a driving force to the musical sound.

SIDE TWO, ITEM 4

Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow *(Time 3:16)*

Hymn and Prayer. Music by Isaac Watts; words by Louis Bourgeois

Singers: Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Junior Choir

Pianist: Bernard Benson

Recorded in Waycross, Georgia, July 18, 1971, during a gospel recital program at Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church

In 1971, Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Junior Choir was composed of approximately 40 young women. The group was a star attraction in Waycross that year because not only did they have the honor of singing at the Georgia State Methodist Sunday School Convention in Atlanta, but as a result of the Atlanta performance, they won a trip to London, England, under the auspices of the Methodist church. Opportunities of these kinds do not easily come to small town church choirs, so the entire community was proud and thrilled for their young women.

To add to their accomplishments, the group decided to present a recital of gospel music that summer. Under the capable directorship of Bernard Benson, also pianist and organist, they organized the recital to include both *hymns and *gospel music. The performance was held one Sunday afternoon in July at five o'clock. The church was packed with about 200 people in attendance.

The program was divided into two parts. While the first consisted of the procession (a gospel) and hymns, the second was composed of only gospel music. A master of ceremonies, a young minister whose name is unknown, was responsible for introducing songs, administering prayer, and promoting the spirit of joy and goodwill during the program.



Mt. Zion A. M. E. Church

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow," written by the very famous white composer Isaac Watts in 1707, was the first hymn on the program. Since it was intended to be a congregational hymn for the entire audience, prayer by the minister (master of ceremonies) was included. A "lining-out" technique in which the minister first states each line of the hymn before it is sung by the congregation is used for the performance. For example, the minister states the text, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow," even before the pianist begins the accompaniment. After the first line is sung, the pianist continues playing in an *improvisatory style while the minister states the second line of the hymn, "Praise Him, all creatures here below." This alternation between minister and congregation — another type of *call and response form — continues throughout the first verse. During the second verse, no lining-out is done; rather, the minister administers prayers while the choir hums the melody of the hymn. Even though the prayer ends towards the end of the second line, the choir continues humming until the end of the verse.

The lining-out technique is not unique to Methodist churches; it is prominently used in many black Protestant denominations. The method of singing was first used during slavery by both black and white congregations. Because many who attended church services were not able to read, someone usually read the text of the hymn so that all would be able to join in the singing.

In this performance very little *ornamentation by singers occurs; everyone sings her respective part in *harmony without *vocal interjections, *slurs, *slides, and so forth. The piano music, however, is somewhat improvisatory. At the end of each line of the text, Mr. Benson's playing becomes much freer in that he moves to upper *ranges of the piano and plays some melodic passages in *octaves. The point at which he plays more freely can be regarded as "fill-in" material because it is used to fill the gap between the group's singing and to provide accompaniment while the minister lines out each line of the song. The *volume of the music changes to a softer level during the second verse not only for variation but to allow the prayer to be heard. A slow *tempo and *duple meter are used.

SIDE TWO, ITEM 5

Sweet Jesus *(Time 5:20)*

Gospel. Arranged by James Cleveland

Singers: Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Junior Choir, Bernard Benson (leader and director)

Pianist: Bernard Benson

Recorded in Waycross, Georgia, July 18, 1971 during a gospel recital program at Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church

"Sweet Jesus" is one of several songs led by Bernard Benson, the director and instrumental accompanist for Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Junior Choir. Mr. Benson began playing piano *"by ear" at the age of nine. By the time he was fourteen years old, he was already playing for church choirs. Although by profession he is a postman in Waycross, he also finds time to direct the junior choir and serve as church organist at Mt. Zion. Since 1971, it has been learned that Mr. Benson has become a part-time minister for one of the Baptist churches in the Waycross area, but he still works for the postal service.

The verse/chorus *form of this performance has been arranged differently from other examples that have been presented on this cassette. After the piano introduction, the song begins with the leader singing two verses of the song. Later the chorus part is introduced when both the leader and chorus sing in a *call and response fashion. What is interesting about the chorus is that the group repeats the same phrase throughout, while the leader freely *improvises by adding new and different textual material. Another feature is the manner in which the chorus is extended. The chorus section is repeated three times but varied in length each time it is sung. During the first time, the group repeats the phrase, "Jesus, sweet Jesus" only twice before singing the final statement — "He's the only one who really cares for you." But the same phrase ("Jesus, sweet Jesus") is stated nine times during the second and seven times during the third chorus repeats.

Mr. Benson, in an *open throat voice, makes extensive use of *slurs, *slides, and *vibrato. Also, changes in *volume from loud to soft during the beginning of

the verse and chorus sections add to the expressive quality that he uses in singing. A *staccato-like piano technique gives emphasis to the *triple meter that is used for this performance. This is probably why foot-tapping by the group and audience is so audible.

Active participation by the audience at black musical performances, regardless if they are religious or secular, is to be expected. Because this song was performed early in the program, the audience had not become fully stimulated and aroused; their light tapping of the feet is all that they do to show approval of the music. By the end of the program, as will be evident in the next example (side two, item 6), audience participation takes on a different character.

SIDE TWO, ITEM 6

New Born Soul *(Time 6:05)*

Gospel. Arranged by James Cleveland

Singers: Jackie Armstrong, Sharon Hill, Joyce Mobley (leader), and Shelinda Muchison

Pianist: Bernard Benson

Recorded in Waycross, Georgia, July 18, 1971, during a gospel recital program at Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church

"New Born Soul" was the final song performed on the gospel program at Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church. It is not common to have such a small group perform the finale, but an exception was made because of the dynamic quality of this song.

The *form of the composition is *strophic and a *lining-out technique is used. At the beginning of each verse, the leader states the line of the text before other members of the group sing it. Momentum is created in the singing of the text, because each verse is sung in sequence to the days of the week. For example, after the first verse, "I got a new born soul," is sung, subsequent verses are stated in the following manner:

Somebody caught it on a Monday.
Somebody caught it on a Tuesday.
Somebody caught it on a Wednesday.
Somebody caught it on a Thursday.
Somebody caught it on a Friday.
Somebody caught it on a Saturday.
We caught it on a Sunday.

By the time the verse, "*We* caught it on a Sunday," is performed, everyone in the group and audience feels that they have reached the climax or peak of the song. Therefore, it is sung very emphatically. This method of *improvising a text is commonly used not only in *gospel but also in *spirituals. Rather than use the days of the week, sometimes members of the family are called out in sequence — e.g., father, mother, sister, brother, and so forth.

In addition to textual variation, a number of other improvisatory techniques are used in this performance. *Vibrato, *slurs, *slides, and *vocal interjections are commonplace. The piano playing is quite complex and helps to stimulate rhythmic momentum. For example, when the group reaches the climactic phrase, "We caught it on a Sunday," Mr. Benson pauses (abruptly stops playing) after the "we" to give emphasis to this part. A moderately fast *tempo in *duple meter is used. Handclapping on beats two and four is introduced at the very beginning of the song. The *volume of the music normally decreases at the beginning of each verse with the solo statement by the leader but gradually increases and becomes very loud at the end of each verse.

Audience participation — handclapping on beats two and four; sometimes applauding during the middle of each verse (especially at the point when the group sings "in my heart"); foot-tapping; and responding verbally — constitutes an important part of this performance, for its reaction also creates momentum and motivates the quartet to become even more stimulated. It is obvious that the recital was successful and greatly appreciated by the audience, because lots of applauding and the saying of "Amen" are heard at the end of the program.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Side One

Item 1

1. In addition to what the author has indicated, what kind of historical facts can be obtained from this spiritual?
2. Do you think there is ever an occasion for a black person to sing this song today?
3. Why did Ms. Mallard decrease the volume and use a very light vocal quality at the beginning of the third verse?
4. Why do you think the singer used a very slow and rather free rhythmic style for the performance of this spiritual?

Item 2

1. Can you think of any other spirituals that can be classified as songs of hope?
2. Do you think the slaves, in this case, used the Bible reference from Jeremiah 8:22 accurately or did they make any changes? If you think the meaning of the Bible passage has been altered, indicate and discuss the changes that were made.

Item 3

1. Compare the call and response patterns used in "Balm in Gilead" and "Steal Away to Jesus." In what way are the structures similar or different?
2. Can you think of other spirituals that Nat Turner may have used to inform slaves of his secret meetings?
3. What kind of historical information can you obtain from the following spirituals? What was the approximate date of origin?

   Deep River
   I Am Bound for the Promised Land
   Look What a Wonder Jesus Done

Item 4

1. Compare the performance styles of "Precious Lord" and "Steal Away." Discuss the melody, rhythm, and vocal quality.
2. Why do you think the singer used more ornaments (slurs, slides, etc.) in her performance of a gospel than that used in the spiritual?
3. How do you think her performance would have differed if instrumental (piano or organ) accompaniment had been included?

General

1. After examining both the spiritual and gospel song texts, what can you say about the two?
2. Are there any symbolic references (dual meaning for words) used in the gospel text?
3. To what extent does the gospel composer use quoted or implied scriptural references from the Bible in song texts?
4. What appears to be some of the basic musical characteristics of a gospel and spiritual song (unaccompanied and accompanied solo)?

Side Two

Item 1

1. Specify and discuss some of the other vocal interjections that are added to the text.
2. How would the mood of this song have been different if vocal interjections had not been added?
3. Do you think it is good or bad to add vocal interjections to a song?
4. Do you find the vocal interjection technique being used in secular styles of black music?

Item 2

1. Do you think it is necessary or logical for a church to have as many as three different choirs today since all of them sing the same type of music? Discuss advantages and disadvantages.

Item 5

1. What kind of additional textual phrases are added to the chorus?
2. When does the leader add the new text — before, during, or after the repeated phrase ("Jesus, sweet Jesus")?
3. Why do you think the chorus section was extended so long during the second and third repeats?

Item 6

1. Can you think of other ways to improvise a repetitive text besides using the days of the week or members of family?
2. Who takes the responsibility for singing vocal interjections in this song? What kind of vocal interjections are used?
3. What is the significance of the words *we* and *Sunday* in the climactic phrase of the text?

General

1. Discuss some of the characteristics of gospel piano playing.
2. In what way is gospel singing in a group different or similar to solo gospel singing?
3. If these songs had been performed in a church setting in a northern city, how do you think they would have differed?
4. Specify and discuss all of the different types of call and response patterns used by performers on this cassette.

GLOSSARY

bridge—music which is used to join or connect different parts of a composition
by-ear — the ability to play music spontaneously without the aid of a written score

call and response — form of music in which one person or group leads or calls a phrase or section of the musical composition while another person or group responds or answers the musical phrase

duple — marked by a two or a multiple of two beats per measure of music
embellishment — notes that are used to adorn or ornament a musical phrase
form — the organization, plan, or design of a musical composition
gospel — religious song that became popular with blacks during the early twentieth century

harmony — two or more different pitches that are sounded simultaneously
hymn — a song of praise to God
improvisation — the art of performing music spontaneously
lining out — technique in which each line of a song is first stated by one person and then repeated by the group or congregation

octave — musical interval embracing eight diatonic degrees
open throat — a manner of singing in which the sound is projected from the throat rather than the nose
ornament — notes not belonging to the essential melody or harmony of a composition (also see embellishment)

polyphony — musical texture in which two or more different and independent melodies or rhythms are performed simultaneously
praise songs — songs that are sung in honor of a person; they often contain historical and genealogical material
psalm — a sacred song or poem used in worship

range — the extent of pitch covered by a melody or lying within the capacity of a voice or instrument
refrain — a recurring section of music at the end of each stanza or verse
responsorial — music that is organized in a leader/chorus fashion

score — the copy of a musical composition in written or printed notation
slide — a continuous gliding movement from one tone to another through all of the intermediate pitches
slur — successive tones of different pitch that are performed in a smooth or connected manner
spiritual — religious song that was created by American blacks during slavery in the United States
staccato — marked by short, clear-cut playing of tones
strophic — repetition of the same music to several verses

tempo — the rate of speed of a music piece or passage
triple — marked by three or a multiple of three beats per measure
vibrato — a slightly tremulous effect imparted to vocal or instrumental tones by slight and rapid variations in pitch
vocal interjections — spontaneous adding of words and phrases to the written text of a composition
vocal quality — the quality of tone distinctive of a particular singing voice or musical instrument
volume — loudness or softness of a composition

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