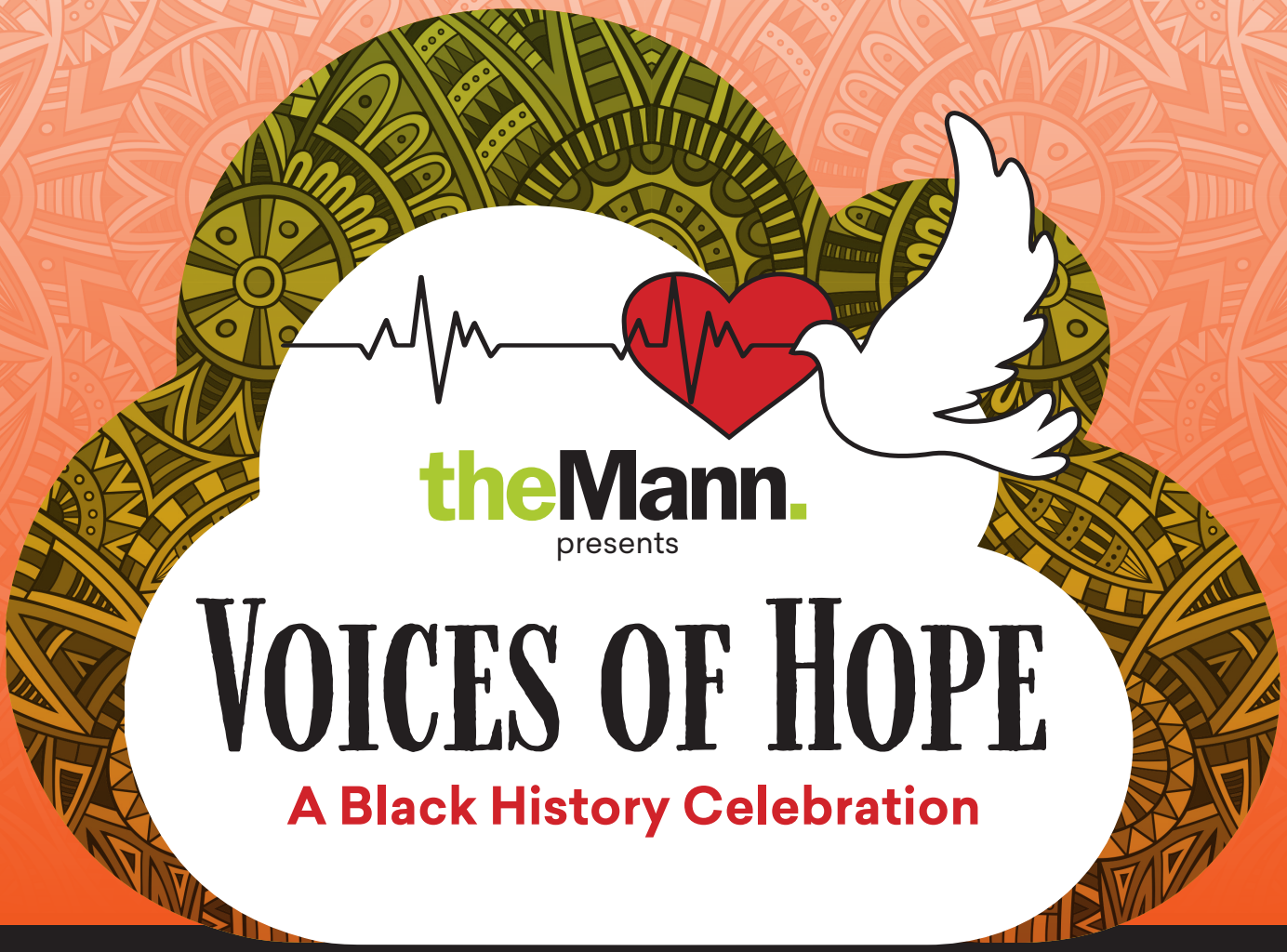

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VOICES OF HOPE

A Black History Celebration

Activity Guide
Gospel

MannCenter.org/VoicesofHope

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History



Gospel music is a form of African American religious music. At some Christian church services, people sing gospel music as a part of the preacher's sermon. The word gospel means "good news," and gospel songs often praise God or Jesus. Many gospel songs also describe struggles and hard times.

Small groups of singers, choirs, and soloists (single singers) perform gospel music. Singers are usually very expressive and display a lot of emotion while performing. The tradition that came to be recognized as Black American gospel music emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries alongside ragtime, blues, and jazz. The building blocks of the tradition exists in Black spirituals and white hymnody.

In the last decade of the 19th century, Black hymnody experienced a shift in style. Colorful and allusive texts, reminiscent in many respects to the older Black spirituals, were set to melodies composed by white hymnodists (someone who composes hymns.) The arrangements, however, were adjusted to reflect Black American musical sensibilities. Most significantly, the hymns were syncopated, or off-beat.

Early Gospel and The Father of Gospel Music



A key figure in the development of Gospel was Thomas A. Dorsey (1899 -1993). Referred to today as the **Father of Gospel Music,** Dorsey pioneered the form in Chicago. Before devoting his career to the development of Gospel, Dorsey, the son of a Georgia Baptist preacher, was a prolific blues and jazz composer and pianist. The energetic rhythms and primal growls of secular music heavily influenced Dorsey's sacred composing style.



Gospel music continued to evolve throughout the late 1930s. There are four distinct styles of gospel music, including but not limited to, quartet style, traditional gospel, contemporary gospel, and praise and worship.

The gospel **quartet style** is one in which a small number of male vocalists sing music together with tight harmonies. The major difference between traditional and contemporary gospel styles is that while **traditional gospel** usually features a more basic sound suited for singing by a choir, contemporary gospel places more emphasis on solo artists. Most contemporary artists rarely sing with a choir. **Praise and worship** is a combination of both contemporary and traditional gospel styles, in that a praise leader has a small group of singers to help lead the congregation into singing gospel music.

Aretha Franklin & Mainstream Gospel



By the mid-1900s, many artists and musicians had caught on to the sound and style of black gospel music. Some of the most famous artists of the 1940s and 50s took inspiration from their religion and church connections. Still, it wasn't until the 60s, when artists like the late Aretha Franklin became famous, gospel music took off and gained mainstream popularity. Aretha Franklin incorporated gospel themes into her music and it soon became a hit with a broader audience. Even to this day, Franklin's 1968 hit "Think" remains one of the most popular and well-recognized songs of the era. Ever since, gospel music has played a major role in mainstream music, as evidenced by Edwin Hawkins' Grammy win for "O Happy Day" just a year after "Think" popularized gospel music. Aretha Franklin is recognized in history as one of the most talented and influential gospel singers of all time.

Instruments

Gospel music is a soulful, spiritual musical genre that has its roots in black churches and blues music. There are a few key instruments that you will most likely hear when listening to this inspirational music.

Tambourine



According to W.K. McNeil, the author of Encyclopedia of American Gospel Music, the tambourine is a very popular hand-held instrument that is often played by various members of a gospel choir. It is lightweight, held in one hand, and helps to keep the beat.



Organ

According to the North by South project, a study of African American history and migrations at Kenyon College, the organ, a piano-like keyboard that pushes compressed air through pipes to create sound, is a staple of gospel music.

Piano



In addition to the organ, regular pianos are played to make gospel music. These instruments are often used to accompany the words of slow gospel songs, especially when it is a solo backed up by the choir.



Drums

Drums provide the beat for churchgoers to clap to when listening to gospel music. Like other black music forms, gospel music has its roots in Africa, where drum beats are popular.

Bass Guitar



Many gospel bands will have a bass guitar player. This instrument is often used because gospel music is closely linked to the blues and has very soulful tunes, which lend themselves to the guitar. The bass guitar provides the rhythmic backbone to gospel music.

At-Home Activities

Call and Response Games

Playing a simple game of call and response takes nothing more than your body and a little creativity. Start by producing a simple rhythm such as two hand claps followed by two foot stomps; once you have completed your rhythm, your friends can mimic your action. Change the pattern each time, experimenting with rhythm as you go.

Next Level - Create a memory challenge by starting with one action and adding an additional action to the pattern -- one note at a time -- until your friends can no longer remember the entire pattern. Give a chance to be the caller and encourage experimentation with different types of body percussion.

Word Scramble

SOGLEP _ _ _ _ _ _

NSGI _ _ _ _

RHUHCC _ _ _ _ _ _

OSDYRE _ _ _ _ _ _

DOGO WENS _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

“This Little Light of Mine”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1Tn29r16Pc (Kidzoa.com)

This little light of mine
I’m going to let it shine
This little light of mine
I’m going to let it shine
This little light of mine
I’m going to let it shine
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.
Everywhere I go, I’m gonna let it shine [x3]
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

All around the world, I’m gonna let it shine [x3]
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

This little light of mine
I’m going to let it shine
This little light of mine
I’m going to let it shine
This little light of mine
I’m going to let it shine
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine! Shine! Shine! Shine!

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“Gospel music.” *Britannica Kids*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 5 Jan. 2021. kids.britannica.com/students/article/gospel-music/394576.

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https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-gospel-music-definition-history-artists.html#lesson

Word Scramble Answers

(GOSPEL)

(SING)

(CHURCH)

(DORSEY)

(GOOD NEWS)



Seeing himself as a portal of access for those excluded from mainstream artistic opportunities, at major arts and educational institutions throughout the nation, **Dr. J. Donald Dumpson's** intergenerational work occurs within an educational, spiritual, psychocultural, and sociocultural framework. While he works with a broad range of art forms, his principal focus is the human voice. He believes that the human voice has been central in communicating messages from despair to jubilation, deprivation to abundance and from the impossible to the possible. His goal is to reduce artistic stereotypes that limit inclusion of art borne of the African diaspora. Currently, Dr. Dumpson is president of Diverse Arts Solutions, minister of the arts at Arch Street Presbyterian Church and founding artistic director of the Philadelphia Heritage Chorale.

Performance link