Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartet singing expresses the soul of Christian experience in America, but in ways that reference the distinct cultural and musical heritages of their respective communities.

This thesis uses the semiological method demonstrated by Kofi Agawu to identify musical features for analysis from the Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartet styles. The cultural-factor approach proposed by Joseph H. Kwabena Nketia is applied to key musical features to reveal the uniqueness of African-American and Euro-American communities in four key aspects: musical behavior, the contexts for music making, the perceptions of musicians in the two communities, and the cultural frame of reference that gives rise to the two musical styles.

The conclusion of this study is that Black Gospel quartet music is unique because "improvisation" is organized according to the principles of Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC) as defined by Meki Nzewi. ETC form in Black Gospel expresses interconnectedness in the community. Southern Gospel quartet music is unique because improvisation is organized according to the principles of tonal harmony as suggested by Douglas Harrison. Improvisation in tonal harmony present in Southern Gospel quartet music expresses self-determinism of the individual.
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PREFACE

This essay deals directly with the issue of representation in rhetorical discourse. It demonstrates how ethnomusicologists reorient their research to reflect a deepening understanding of musical conceptualization and behavior. In this science of opinion, we frequently revisit the same territory, but, as Meki Nzewi has so aptly stated, "we often re-trace the same path with different impressions." The impressions gained from expanding my horizons beyond my own musical culture have given me greater empathy for other people in the human family and in my faith community.

Foremost, I am thankful to my family and friends for giving me every possible advantage to bring this project to completion. Secondly, I am thankful that Dr. Kazadi has never relented in teaching African rhythm to a sometimes less than receptive audience. Through lecture explanations and subsequent ensemble rehearsals, little by little, I have begun to hear the drums singing to me.

Many thanks also go to Cindy Kristof of the Kent State University Libraries, and Sharon Parente of Middle Tennessee State University Library. You came to my rescue.

I hope my work serves to express how ethnomusicologists can perceive, explain and create a continuum for traditional musical wisdom in a variety of cultures. I trust it will honor my musical ancestors, my teachers, and God—Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer—who inspires the worshipful creativity of Gospel communities everywhere.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION


—Shirley Caesar

I was raised hearing Southern Gospel music. Because I lived in an ethnically segregated, suburban community, I never knew there was any type of Gospel music other than Southern Gospel. I recall attending a black Christian church in downtown Philadelphia on a college outing as a young adult. While I sat in the pew during the offertory listening to the choir, my mother’s words echoed in my mind, “What is with all that repeating the same thing over and over again? That drives me crazy!” As the entire congregation responded to the choir both visibly and audibly, I had to ask the same thing, “What is with all that repeating,” but I had a decidedly different question in mind. I perceived that repetition of the Gospel text in song was vitally important to the Black church experience, but I could not relate to why it might be important. As a Euro-American Christian, I felt wary of Black Gospel music because I thought it verged on the “vain repetition” discouraged in the Bible.² Yet all evidence indicated that

². Matthew 6:6-8
the congregation I observed exalted the Lord through their worship as authentically as any other I had witnessed.

My current research questions stem from more recent experiences in Gospel Choir and African Drum Ensemble at Kent State University. As the ensemble directors instructed their respective students throughout the rehearsals, I noticed similarities between the ensembles emerging. Notably, the cumulative effect of layering vocal parts in the Gospel Choir evokes the same feeling as layering rhythmic time-line patterns in the African Drum Ensemble. I became curious about whether my impressions of similarity between the two ensemble techniques were based upon mere speculation, or upon some point of fact.

My cultural context and vécu—my personal experiences—predicate my understanding of Gospel music, and influence my interpretation of Black and Southern Gospel styles. My basic familiarity with African-American and African music traditions enables me to hear common musical gestures in Black Gospel music and African drum performance, even if those gestures fail to refer to anything in my experience beyond the newly learned repertoire. However, for tradition-bearers, musical gestures unique to the Black Gospel style resonate with and are interpreted through awareness steeped in the cultural context of the community. This essay attempts to identify distinct musical features of Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartet styles, to analyze the sonic architecture of those musical gestures, and to theorize a conceptual frame for the musical behaviors relevant to the creative philosophies of their respective communities.

CHAPTER II

GOSPEL QUARTET STYLE

According to Alan Lomax, musical style is a pattern of musical behaviors or habits acquired from the whole experience of life.⁴ Although the histories of African-Americans and Euro-Americans in the United States are intertwined, there is no doubt that the experiences of these communities are, indeed, distinct. Consequently, the creative philosophy of each Gospel community yields both common and unique musical attributes in Black Gospel and Southern Gospel styles.

Chronological histories of Gospel music that include substantive information about the development of Gospel quartets have been written by George R. Ricks (1960),⁵ Mancel Warrick, Joan Hillsman and Anthony Manno (1977),⁶ Lois Blackwell (1978),⁷ Kerill Leslie Rubman (1980),⁸ David Smucker

⁴ Lomax specifically encouraged musical ethnographers to focus on vocal timbre, motor activity connected to music, and inner emotional intent in the pursuit of musical style; from Ronald Cohen, ed., "Folk Song Style: Notes on a Systematic Approach to the Study of Folk Song," in Alan Lomax: Selected Writings 1934-1997 (New York: Routledge, 2003), 134.


In the broadest sense, Gospel music is music made for and/or by Christians. Gospel music serves as entertainment and as religious experience, and it is almost always "transmitted through oral means to larger audiences by

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way of mass media." 18 Stanley Brobston suggests the succinct definition "folk hymn" to describe the Gospel song. 19 This expression is especially accurate because it denotes the strong reliance on oral tradition embraced by Gospel music performers and audiences.

Most examples from the Gospel genre are modified strophic songs in AB structure. 20 The A section is the strophe or verse, and the B section is the refrain or chorus. In the church setting, the typical AB song structure may be preceded or followed by other expressions of devotion related to the song text or the context of Christian worship. These extensions of the song may include prayer, quotation from sacred text, preaching or personal testimony in heightened speech form with or without accompanying instrumental or choral interjections.

This spontaneously developing form of Gospel song in Christian ritual can be called AB plus, since the “plus” may manifest a continuum of behaviors from speech to dance. In his book, *African Rhythms: A Northern Ewe Perspective* (1995), Kofi Agawu proposes a model called the Domain of Rhythmic Expression. 21 The model shows how thought, speech, musical behavior and response in dance are related. The model, also, graphically depicts behavior largely taken for granted among non-liturgical, American Protestant congregations as common to the worship experience—behaviors frequently

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considered "non-rhythmic" in nature, but that exhibit rhythmic qualities, nonetheless.

Field recordings such as *Children of the Heavenly King: Religious Expression in the Central Blue Ridge* (1981)\(^{22}\) and *Sounds of the South* (1993)\(^{23}\) illustrate elements of Kofi Agawu's Domain of Rhythmic Expression by demonstrating the fluid movement between reading, prayer, preaching in heightened-speech, call and response song, devotional chorus, instrumental accompaniment and holy dance associated with American folk religion. The rhythmic nature of these "non-musical" aspects of the church experience is important because their rhythmic qualities affect musical behavior. Gospel musicians in the church, and often in the concert hall and recording studio, view their music as ministry of the Gospel—the Good News of Jesus Christ. As such, the form of the Gospel song, how it unfolds over time, is directly related to the effort to communicate the message of the Gospel.

When the "plus" portion of Gospel song performance includes extension and repetition of the musical refrain, the resulting form is called "musical improvisation." This is the point at which Black Gospel and Southern Gospel music most diverge. The African-American community refers to the B-section as the drive,\(^{24}\) and the Euro-American community refers to the B-section as the vamp. These terms—one dynamic and the other static—imply deeper concepts.

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of organization in the "improvised" portion of the Gospel quartet song. Chapters V and VI, Black Gospel Quartet Style and Southern Gospel Quartet Style, will present these concepts fully.

ELEMENTS OF GOSPEL SONG

The Euro-American Experience

Choral Homophony

Part-singing and attention to the text are core elements of European Protestant Christian ritual music. Throughout the period of coalescing protest against Roman Catholic liturgy, sacraments and indulgences, the Reformation church leaders in Europe emphasized vernacular language-use to facilitate a rational understanding of Biblical doctrine. Hymn tunes emphasized syllabic text setting to make the meaning of hymn poetry plain and clear.

By the time the break from Roman Catholicism in Europe was complete, Bach had become the voice of the German Protestant church. Though Bach’s cantatas for worship services were performed by a rehearsed choir, the congregational response, written in Soprano-Alto-Tenor-Bass (SATB) choral homophony, stood in marked contrast to the monophonic, responsorial chant still practiced in Roman Catholic congregations. Four-part harmonic setting emphasizes the individuality of each participant in Protestant ritual. The uniqueness of men and women, the contrast between high and low—these elements mirror the Protestant principle of individual responsibility and authority in relationship to God and God’s revelation in scripture.
Lined-out Hymn Texture

Protestants in the British Isles had a different way of expressing the value of the text and the worth of the individual in corporate song. Singing was so important to Protestants at the turn of the seventeenth century that the sacred text of Scripture was often bound in the same volume with a Psalter. However, in the absence of an abundant supply of bound volumes, and in the presence of many illiterate worshipers, British Protestants sang from metrical Psalters in call and response, "lined-out," style. Through the moderator who called out the text of each song, phrase-by-phrase, to the congregants, worshipers had spontaneous access to a large number of songs. Text-rich hymn settings fed both the intellect and the piety of Protestant worshipers during this period.

German and Anglian lines of Protestant Christianity met in the New World. Anglicans, Lutherans, Baptists, Swiss Reformed and Presbyterian Christians, and, later, Methodists and Christians from other smaller denominational groups, created a decidedly Protestant context in the nascent American culture. Their four-part harmonies and lined-out hymn texture became the primary song forms in the Euro-American, colonial church.


Hymns Books and Shape-note Singing

As literacy and industry rose in America during the late 1700s, Christians turned increasingly to songbooks. Publication of shape-note hymn books, revival-song pamphlets and denominational hymnals satisfied the market demand for devotional material in the Euro-American church. Shape-note singing profoundly affected Gospel song in America by making four-part, fugal vocal harmony—normally reserved for a rehearsed choir—part of the congregational experience. By teaching music-reading in the shape-note singing school, hymn book publishers and their representatives raised the level of musical complexity and required a new level of musical attentiveness within the Protestant church in America.

27. Like their Euro-American counterparts, African-American church leaders supported musical developments born in the Great Awakening with songbooks intended for African-American audiences. Richard Allen (1760-1831) issued A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors in 1801, the first hymnal published exclusively for use in the African-American church. The selections included in Spiritual Songs were a combination of Negro folk spirituals and English revival hymns, primarily hymns by Charles and John Wesley, George Whitfield and Isaac Watts, in Boyer, How Sweet the Sound, 6.

Allen's collection of hymn poetry was exceptional among hymnals. Spiritual Songs was the first to include additional choruses and phrases with Methodist and Baptists hymns to represent and accommodate the style of singing common among African-Americans during revival meetings as described in John Storm Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, second ed. (Stamford: Cenage Learning, 1998), 187. The first African-American publishing house was established in 1887, in Mark A. Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing), 339. Other early hymnals include the African Methodist Pocket Hymn Book (1918), Gospel Pearls (1921), and the Colored Sacred Harp (1934).

A steady publication of new Gospel songs such as Charles Tindley's "We'll Understand it Better By and By" (1905) and "Take Your Burden to the Lord, Leave It There" (1918) also expressed the unique culture of the African-American community through music. Other prolific Black Gospel composers include Richard Allen, Thomas Dorsey, William Herbert Brewster, Kenneth Morris, Roberta Martin and Lucie Campbell, in Beatrice Reagon, ed., We'll Understand It Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1992), 3-18; Luvenia A. George, "Music in the African-American Religious Tradition," in African-American Religion: Research Problems and Resources for the 1990s, ed. Victor N. Smythe and Howard Dickson, 81 (New York: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 1982), 81.
The African-American Experience

Considering that religious freedom and economic freedom were the two motivating factors causing Europeans to relocate to the New World, it is particularly unseemly that economic development in the Americas rested on the backs of those who lost their freedom. In the early days of colonial America, indentured servitude helped to create a stable labor force for venture capitalists. The face of indenture changed, in the mid-1600s, when the holders of servant contracts began to revoke the promise of freedom and made consenting servants slaves for life.\(^\text{28}\) The practice of enslaving Africans became integral to the business model of Southern plantations owners within a generation.\(^\text{29}\)

In a society where each slave-owning family was responsible for 10 to 12 African lives, Africans in large number came into intimate contact with Protestant Christianity for the first time. Although slave owners tailored exposure to Bible stories to support their rights and privileges as slave masters, Africans in America resonated with Old Testament portions of the Bible that demonstrated God’s love for and intervention on behalf of slaves, especially God’s chosen clan, the Hebrew people. The African-American focus on the biblical narrative maintained the African ways of keeping oral history and practicing creative philosophy.

Regarding Black Gospel, Pearl Williams-Jones states:


There are two basic sources from which gospel singing has derived its aesthetic ideals: The free-style collective improvisations of the black church congregation and the rhetorical solo style of the black gospel preacher. In seeking to communicate the gospel message, there is little difference between the gospel singer and the gospel preacher in the approach to his subject. The same techniques are used by the preacher and the singer—the singer perhaps being considered the lyrical extension of the rhythmically rhetorical style of the preacher.  

Williams-Jones rightly relates speech and musical behavior within the Domain of Rhythmic Expression, and implies that significant and detectible patterns emerge from analysis of Gospel performance as event-music. Specifically, there are two main song structures in African-American music—cooperative songs that are generated by collective "improvisation" and storytelling songs that share the testimony of a single speaker. These patterns, while uniquely African-American, reflect characteristics of African music.  

Portia Maultsby addresses these notably African characteristics in "Africanisms in African-American Music." As African-Americans interacted with various forms of Protestant theology and hymnody, they developed a uniquely African-American way of celebrating Christian beliefs. As Maultsby has suggested, African-Americans experimented with the novel musical styles observed in the majority culture, and then “brought relevance to European-American customs by reshaping them to conform to African ideals” of style of delivery, sound quality and mechanics of delivery.  


music doesn't manifest "survivals" from African music as much as it demonstrates musical tendencies that are inherently African. ³³

Using the term "survivals" to describe characteristics of African-American music implies that all but a few aspects of African creative philosophy were, effectively, killed by Euro-American domination. What Portia Maultsby proposes is that the African creative philosophy remained intact, while absorbing and manipulating newly acquired "raw material." Acculturation assumes that when the balance of social, political or personal power is unequal between two communities, the culture of the weaker party is replaced by that of the stronger one. Reinterpretation, however, assumes that when two parties come into cultural contact, they experience a period of assimilative or mimicking behavior followed by a period of reinterpretive behavior—when the "raw materials" acquired in the assimilative phase are extracted from one musical product and their essence is inserted into a new musical context, but often with a decidedly different meaning or conceptual frame.

The ideas of acculturation and reinterpretation explain how musical tendencies develop in cross-cultural musical experiences such as contact between European and African descendents in the Americas. Ed Cray (1961) has outlined a large number of musical genres in an "Acculturative Continuum for Negro Folk Song in the United States."³⁴ Although Cray’s continuum assumes that cultural impact is typically a one-way street (namely that Euro-American

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musical practices inform African-American musical development or vice versa, rather than music of both communities contributing mutually and simultaneously to one another), the relationships indicated between musical genres in Cray's continuum effectively demonstrate how style changes in the Euro-American and African-American communities have affected one another. Portia Maultsby has more recently proposed a "development of African-American music." Maultsby's work manifests that cultural contact between Euro-Americans and African-Americans has not led to the death of African creative philosophy, but rather, the re-animation of African creative philosophy in the uniquely American context.

Cooperative Songs

Though slave masters may have taken some form of responsibility for the religious instruction of African-Americans in their households, the conversion of African-Americans to Christianity largely occurred in the "invisible church." Because of the segregation of Euro-American and African-American believers, as African-Americans were becoming familiar with European chorale-style hymn texture and lined-out hymn texts, they were simultaneously developing religious music in the English language that more closely resembled the traditional African ring shout. The resulting form was the folk spiritual.


The folk spiritual utilizes several formal features of the African work song style including call and response\(^{37}\) and layered rhythmic sections (See Figure 1). Folk spiritual lyrics are not taken by rote from a Psalter; they are personal reflections on the Biblical narrative consistent with African dependence on oral tradition. Euro-Americans regarded the uniqueness of the African-American folk spiritual as “primitive” and even “grotesque” compared to the Euro-American lined-out hymn style. Euro-American observers called folk spiritual performances “barbaric madrigals.”\(^{38}\) Their opinion conveys etic perspective on the unique and distinctive form of African-American song.

![Excerpt from a transcription of the work song “Run, Old Jeremiah,” recorded at State Prison Farm, Jennings, Louisiana, 1934, Library of Congress (LC) 102, Archive of American Folk Songs (AAFS) 12B.\(^{39}\)](image)

**Figure 1:** Excerpt from a transcription of the work song “Run, Old Jeremiah,” recorded at State Prison Farm, Jennings, Louisiana, 1934, Library of Congress (LC) 102, *Archive of American Folk Songs* (AAFS) 12B.\(^{39}\)

Folk spirituals like “Toiling to See King Jesus,” “Steal Away to Jesus,” and “Swin’ Low Sweet Chariot” are the touchstone for succeeding developments in

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37. Similarities can be drawn between overlapping call and response in Gospel, blues and work songs. Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds*, 196.


> It was Protestantism that fueled the religion and religious fervor of enslaved and free blacks in the United States. Protestantism, with its more direct access to the High God through song and praise, made possible the emergence of a new song for Africans, a new song in which they could express themselves as freely as they had in their homeland.40

**Storytelling Songs**

Testimony songs constitute the other main division of African-American Gospel song. Although male and female singers excel in the solo Gospel-testimony song, popular recordings of female singers have become the most renowned. A short list of Black Gospel songstresses includes Sallie Martin (1896-1988), Clara Hudman Gholston (1903-66), Mother Willie Mae Ford Smith (1904-94), Mahalia Jackson (1911-72), Sister Rosetta Tharpe (1915-73), Clara Ward (1924-73), Marion Williams (1927-94), Dorothy Love Coates (1928-2002) and Shirley Caesar (b. 1938).41

Often backed by a choir in church, concert hall and recording studio performances, the solo Gospel-testimony song is a vital part of the sanctified, Gospel experience. The singer, anointed by the Holy Spirit to tell his or her story, uses a full range of vocal effects to express emotional intensity. Vocal effects include extremes of range, variety of timbre, dramatic changes in dynamics and personalized ornamentation of the melody line. Many singers of the solo genre

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have been particularly valued for the ability of their voices to cut through the choir and instrumental ensemble as well as the clapping and stomping of the audience. The Black Gospel solo testimony song is an easy fit in the African musical arts continuum because of the strong connection between the spoken word and the word as musical performance.

DEVOTIONAL REVIVAL SONGS

New developments in Euro-American and African-American Gospel music emerged from the revival movement of the nineteenth century. The Great Awakening of the 1730s melded into the Wesleyan Methodist Evangelical movement that began in 1766. Wesleyan Methodism focused on intellectual and spiritual development, and was instrumental in the increasing literacy and intellectual development of the masses. Urban and rural Sunday schools taught reading using the Bible and songbooks. The focus on literacy in Wesleyan Methodism provided skills necessary for rational faith that also demonstrated emotional fervor. The mind and the emotion found voice in newly composed songs from the mid-eighteenth century. Songs like those of Isaac Watts, known for their highly singable refrains, rivaled older hymns typically appreciated for their language-rich verses.

In the late eighteenth century, the Methodist movement sparked a revival. Compared to the Great Awakening of Wesley and Watts, the Second Great Awakening—also called the Great Revival (1790 to 1840s)—was more heavily concentrated among Americans in the rural South. For rural Americans, the dog days of summer were the "picnic season" when “worldly” people ate, drank and danced and Christians ate, preached and sang in camp meetings, conventions and singing schools. African-Americans and Euro-Americans Christians in the South frequently attended Protestant revival meetings together during the laying-by time, the period in July and August between planting and harvesting. On the whole, the recipients of the Gospel during the Second Great Awakening were poor and uneducated, and eager to embrace the social and religious goals of American Methodism.

Emotions ran high in Wesleyan camp meeting revivals. In the South, Euro-Americans and African-Americans attended these outdoor rallies together, though they were often segregated in the meeting space. The devotional songs of Isaac Watts frequently accompanied revival meetings during this Great Awakening. The informal music making that occurred after the programmed


50. William Dargan hypothesizes that Watts' metrical hymnody was particularly adaptable to African-American ritual practice because of they were reinterpreted to conform to the "time line concept by which African drumming traditions accompany and interact with ritual and social dancing," in *Lining Out the Word: Dr. Watts Hymn*
events, as African-Americans and Euro-Americans celebrated their faith together, was vital to the development of Gospel music as a popular music style because it united key elements of the Euro-American and African-American musical experience.

In this environment, the music of Euro-American and African-American Christians became intertwined in a way heretofore unparalleled. During the camp meeting afterglows, participants sang the new devotional songs of European composers such as George Whitfield and Isaac Watts. African-Americans responded to those songs by tailoring the four-part texture to fit African-American musical values—adding repetition of the devotional choruses and particularly meaningful phrases in a rhythm that coordinated with dance.51 Euro-American revival participants were deeply affected by the Negro ring shouts they witnessed at camp meetings. As a result, hymn collections published for the Euro-American church from the 1840s onward began to include songs incorporating the rhythms and responsorial practices of the African-American community (See Figure 2).52

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51. Goff, Close Harmony, 18.

52. Small, Music of the Common Tongue, 90.
Figure 2: From the 1849 revival songbook *Revival Hymns*. Includes lyrics of 82, indexed songs. Excerpt of song No. 6, “The Good Land” – five of six printed verses.53

These developments in American music are much more than mere "survivals" of African tradition meeting "survivals" of European tradition. As John Storm Roberts points out, "survivals" are, fundamentally, adaptations and "adaptations are a prime sign of life."54 The adaptive reinterpretations that occurred during the nineteenth century don't indicate death of the old ways, they indicate growth of a new musical genre. Roberts summarizes earlier writing of LeRoi Jones by saying:


[During the Reconstruction era] Black musicians were then in the process of integrating what had been, on the one hand, definitely African survivals and, on the other, relatively undigested borrowings. The synthesis was being completed. A music that was truly Afro-American, in which African-derived musical techniques and concepts fundamentally made over elements from white America, was coming to maturity.55

Black Gospel music, therefore, became a fully-developed, living, distinctly African-American extension of the African mental-cultural arts continuum that effectively sustained the function of oral tradition and event-based performance in American culture.56

According to the testimony of former slaves, the Methodist movement in the Great Revival closely paralleled the philosophical mindset of African-Americans and their reliance on oral tradition.57 The cry of new converts was released in soul-stirring songs on the themes of nostalgia, freedom, work and protest.58 The process of conversion to Christianity threw these themes on their heads. Nostalgia became nostalgia for a future homecoming in Heaven. Freedom became freedom from sin and temptation. Work became working for God's Kingdom, and protest became protest against the draw of the material world.

In the camp meeting context, revival songs were particularly relevant to African-American Christians as an event-music genre. By serving as a sensory


backdrop for communal visual and mental activity, devotional revival songs retain the African quality of increasing psycho-physical intensity in event-music.59 As event-music, the devotional revival songs are danceable, and they invite participation in worship by incorporating elements from ring shouts, folk spirituals, and call and response choruses as well as the intensely personal and hopeful content of the storytelling “testimony” songs.

In the decades following the Great Revival, Black Gospel music emerged as a cooperative and personal song genre. The devotional revival songs reflected individual, spiritual experiences that were, at once, understood and shared by all participants. Musical features of the devotional revival songs persist as musical gestures in Black Gospel songs.60 The danceable, repeating pattern of the ring shout unifies the participants musically and spiritually in extended passages of “improvisation” in the Black Gospel song. The heterophonic structure of the folk spiritual opens opportunity for individual expression throughout the song form. Call and response passages serve to make individuals in the performance venue “one” 61 as they meditate on the text through song, and solo passages serve to release the anointing of the Gospel message—the power to tell the Good News as it has touched the life of the believer.


60. John Storm Roberts has examined a number of African-derived musics and suggests that, while style varies widely among musics in the Americas, each style retains functions of traditional, African musical arts. Roberts asserts that this functional aspect of music is the true, African-American "survival-adaptation" in the New World, in Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, 71.

THE RISE OF THE POPULAR QUARTET

The movement of Gospel music from sacred devotional experience to mass media commodity occurred gradually through the latter part of the nineteenth century. The use of Gospel musicians as music ministers, fundraisers, community ambassadors and entertainers brought Gospel music from church services and revival meetings to the university, the concert hall and the publishing house. In each context, Gospel quartets served as the nimble and adaptable counterparts to larger Gospel choirs. The ability to outfit and accommodate a group of four or five singers, rather than a choir of twenty or more, made the quartet format an attractive investment in both sacred and civic settings.

After 1880, the academic environment for African-Americans changed drastically. Reconstruction Era colleges like Fisk University and Howard University were founded in the South by northern, Euro-American Protestants. Among Euro-American Protestants of the Gilded Age, evangelistic fervor raged. After the perceived success of emancipation, Euro-American Christians in the North were bolstered by the belief that a humble and penitent church truly could change the world—and quickly! Evangelists and song-leaders took to the urban centers, the countryside and the world with street preaching, Sunday Schools, and global mission sponsorship.

Before emancipation, religious education of African-descended slaves was either at the prerogative of their masters or the function of the "invisible church." After emancipation, blacks established, to a greater degree than ever before,
their own religious and educational communities. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, free African-American communities struggled against the failures of Civil War Reconstruction to secure the fruit of justice—the express rights to life, liberty and ownership of property. In both academic and religious arenas, though African-American colleges and churches were established in large number, they frequently were dependent upon majority white institutions to authenticate the validity of their academic accreditation and religious ordination.

From the close of the Civil War to the turn of the twentieth century, African-American religious communities increasingly asserted their autonomy and authority over their own churches. Several thoroughly African-American movements emerged including: institution of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) in 1895 by Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne, founding of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (CMEC) in 1870, representation of the large network of independent Baptist churches by the National Baptist Convention founded in 1895, and formation of the Pentecostal Church of God in Christ (COGIC) in 1897 by Elder Charles Harrison Mason.

The rise of African-American Protestant denominations provided impetus and structure to establish colleges by and for the black community such as Lane College (CMEC), Livingstone College (African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church), and Morris College (AMEC). The academic and civic life of African-Americans

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was also fueled by organization of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1910 by Dr. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois.

Concurrent to religious and civic changes of the Reconstruction Era, economic changes were also occurring. In the musical realm, rising wealth of the emerging middle class in cities and small towns funded a growing and changing popular entertainment industry. Wandering “Medicine Shows” and saloon entertainment were superseded by local vaudeville and burlesque theaters at crossroads and coach stops across the country. Race and gender-based jokes and stereotypes were the stock material for itinerant minstrels.

After emancipation, the northward migration of newly freed slaves gave rise to “authentic minstrelsy” in which African-Americans themselves played the role of African-Americans on stage. Male quartets, which were actually groups of four to eight singers who sang in four-part harmony, became icons of the vaudeville stage (see Figure 3). The popularity of traveling groups spawned quartets in nearly every community. Barbershops, steel mills, mining companies, police departments—many were “fronted” by a representative quartet.

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On the national and international scene, critical acclaim for the Fisk Jubilee Singers, who sang concert arrangements of folk spirituals (see Figure 4), elevated the "respectability" of all Negro singing groups, including smaller quartets, in the estimation of Euro-American audiences and the view of African-American elites. The Negro colleges, inspired local, African-American church singing in the way that vaudeville inspired local, African-American community singing. To a degree, there was little division between community and church groups since churches played significantly in the social structure of both African-American and Euro-American communities near the turn of the twentieth century.

68. Abbott and Seroff, Out of Sight, 197-8.
Figure 4: “Jubilee” setting of the Negro spiritual “Steal Away” as transcribed for the 1890 account of the world travels of the Fisk Jubilee Singers.69

Music halls began to host concerts featuring Christian groups for “respectable folks” who would never pay a ticket for a vaudeville show. Soon,

African-American and Euro-American singing groups were not only serving as worship leaders in church, they were working in concert halls on the vaudeville circuit. On the stage, these groups incorporated the slap-stick comedy of the vaudeville show into their routines using material appropriate for women and children. The traditions of teasing, puns, physical comedy and the “straight-man” continue on the Gospel music stage to this day.

Though the term Gospel has been connected to Christian songs since 1644, Gospel was distinguished as a popular genre in the 1920s to separate the use of sacred tunes for entertainment from the use of sacred tunes for ministry. Thomas E. Dorsey (1899-1993) opposed the practice of entertainers such as Louis Armstrong, W.C. Handy and Jelly Roll Morton who “degraded” sacred tunes by interpreting them as “dance hall music.” Dorsey is credited with bringing folk spiritual and classical-style jubilee singing into the realm of popular music. Dorsey is responsible for the commoditization of Gospel music as a popular genre through sheet music publishing, concert promotion, vinyl recordings and radio broadcasts.

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72. According to James Goff and Horace Boyer, before rural electrification and in the absence of radios, African-Americans more often than not interacted with Black Gospel music through small, portable, hand-crank phonographs, in Goff, Close Harmony, 209 and Boyer, How Sweet the Sound, 150-2.

73. Although in a nod to the prevalence of oral tradition among African-American Christians Dorsey once stated, "Negroes don't buy much music. A white chorus of one hundred voices will buy one hundred copies of a song, A Negro chorus of the same size will buy two: one for the director and one for the pianist." Dorsey cited in Lawrence W.
From the earliest days of sound recording, sacred and secular quartet music became the foundation of the popular music industry.

In the 1890s black foursomes such as the Unique Quartette and the Standard Quartette and white groups such as the Manhansett Quartet were some of the first recording artists. Well into the 1920s, close harmony foursomes—led by the Haydn Quartet, the American Quartet, and the Peerless Quartet—were the dominant forces in popular music.

Post World War II, "the popularity of quartets skyrocketed, the cultural and musical climate grew ripe for full-time performing...by the late 1940s there were 'hundreds of quartets making lengthy tours, travelling around the country singing in churches, school auditoriums, and concert halls.'"

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74. Although Columbia recorded the Standard Quartette as early as 1895, and Victor followed with the Dinwiddie Colored Quartet in 1902, these cylinders and discs were poorly distributed. It was not until the early 1920s that record companies more thoroughly mined the wealth of black religious quartet music, in Lornell, "Happy in the Service of the Lord", 21.


CHAPTER III
MOVING FROM DESCRIPTION TO ANALYSIS

The histories of quartet music in the African-American and Euro-American communities are intertwined. The contexts for Black Gospel and Southern Gospel music making runs a parallel course from colonial churches to revival camp meetings to concert stages and, eventually, to popular recordings. Yet Black Gospel and Southern Gospel music styles are distinct. Style is defined as a pattern of learned behavior, common to the people of a culture that constitutes a "specialized act of communication, akin to speech, but far more formally organized and redundant."77 Style constitutes a summary of a recognizable range of musical models, a scale of awareness upon which people in a culture assess their musical behavior.78 Style also mirrors particular aspects of the source culture.79 Alan Lomax has reviewed vast numbers of field recordings, charting aspects of style and looking for corollaries that cross geographical and ethnic boundaries and link societal structure and experience with a specific set of musical features. Lomax coined the term “cantometrics” to describe his attempt


to objectively measure and compare musical qualities of various cultures. 80

Lomax theorizes:

Song style seems to summarize, in a compact way, the ranges of behaviors that are appropriate to one kind of cultural context…Song presents an immediate image of a culture pattern. A man’s favorite tune recalls to him not only some pleasant memory, but the web of relationships that makes his life possible. No wonder, then, that a song from home brings a rush of feeling to the heart and tears to the eyes of a traveler. It reminds him of how his branch of the human family has stayed alive, loved and perpetuated a culture on a particular terrain. Immediacy of recall is a normal symbolic function, but it is raised to a peak of rapidity and potency in song because of the condensation of, and the congruency among, all its levels. 81

The Gospel style, in general, is underrepresented as a topic of study among ethnomusicologists. A few biographical sketches of notable Black and Southern Gospel quartet performers exist alongside general histories of the genres (Boyer, Rubman, Cusic, Heilbut, Lornell, Montell, Seroff, Titon, Goff, Burt & Allen, Blackwell and Young). However, the study of Gospel music is beginning to evolve from the “grammar level” of ethnography to the “logical level” of analysis. 82 Mellonee Burnim’s research broke ground on Black Gospel music with analysis from emic perspective. 83 Burnim interrogates the essential nature

80. Alan Lomax, Cantometrics: An Approach to the Anthropology of Music, [sound recording and accompanying pamphlet] (Berkeley: University of California Extension Media Center, 1976). Similar principles are applied to dance in the discipline of choreometrics, phonemics in phonotactics, and to overall conceptual patterns of cultural products in concept analysis in Lomax, Folk Song Style and Culture, 10.

81. Lomax, Folk Song Style and Culture, 6-7.


of history, ritual and interaction of the African-American community as it relates to Black Gospel music, and addresses the Gospel mediums of choral, solo and quartet performance (1980, 1992 and 1999). Her research represents a comprehensive performance study approach that often analyzes "style of delivery." Burnim speaks as a tradition-bearer, and she documents the semantic discourse of Gospel observers both from within and without the Gospel tradition.

In the same vein, Ray Allen has contributed to musical analysis of African-American Gospel music, especially urban Gospel choral and quartet music (1988, 1991). Both Burnim and Allen focus extensively on the function of community identification through African-American music expressed in overt signs and symbols and basic values orientations. Burnim and Allen describe and evaluate song, dance, costume, audience interaction and participation, performer demeanor, instrumentation, audience and performer expectations, vocal timbre, pedagogy, social implications, professionalism, ideology, and pageantry associated with the Black Gospel tradition.


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85. Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," 14; and Mellonee Burnim, "The Black Gospel Music Tradition" (PhD Diss., Indiana University, 1980), 51.
Although Dent relies on Euro-American musicological methods of jazz theory, his study is distinct from the work of other musicologists because it focuses on Gospel as a sonic product rather than an historical or contemporary performance practice. Dent attempts to analyze specific, unique features of the Black Gospel music style apart from the performance context. Dent’s study isolates, describes and defines individual aspects of Black Gospel music that are entirely distinct from the Southern Gospel music style.

If studies of Black Gospel music are few, analytical works upon Southern Gospel music are nearly non-existent.\(^87\) Both Gospel communities take their relative obscurity in stride. Black Gospel icon Dorothy Love Coates has said, "Gospel artists are the most creative people in the world. They created—everybody else take it and turn it into whatever they want to."\(^88\) Yet lack of worldly acclaim hasn't stopped Gospel artists from serving as ministers. Clarence Fountain, lead singer of the Five Blind Boys of Alabama adds, "I sing Gospel music because I think that's the thing to do. Now, I don't have no problem with Rock 'n Roll folk singin'. I guess everybody gotta' work to make a livin', but I was satisfied in servin' the Lord. He was providin' us food and clothing, and He brought us all these years singin' Gospel."\(^89\)

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89. Clarence Fountain in Ibid.
Analysis of Gospel music has not been complete because ethnomusicologists have not fully applied what Joseph H. Kwabena Nketia calls, the “cultural factor approach.”

The cultural factor approach "combines aspects of thematic, causal and contextual [approaches] without the subordination of the musical to the social characteristic of the other approaches. It proceeds on the assumption that cultural analysis needs not take us away from music."\(^{90}\)

Scholars have generally accepted that Black and Southern Gospel musics support the social function of community identity without specifically identifying the unique musical gestures or features that distinguish Black and Southern Gospel musics.\(^{91}\) The goal of ethnomusicology is to analyze how and why music sounds as is does, but we are often troubled by the process of isolating and identifying the musical gesture that warrants analysis.\(^{92}\) Identifying the musical gesture that functions symbolically is the first step to revealing the behavior, context, perceptions and concepts with which a community identifies.

Nketia asserts that "the cultural factor approach in ethnomusicology similarly emphasises [sic] abstractions of cultural principles from the musical complex through observation of music making in different contexts."\(^{93}\) The


\(^{91}\) Robert Cogan and Pozzi Escot define musical “gestures” as intelligible, expressive and unified musical wholes created of musical space, language, time and the color of sound in their book *Sonic Design: The Nature of Sound and Music* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 402.


\(^{93}\) Nketia, *Ethnomusicology and African Music*, 84.
cultural factor approach explores musical behavior to reveal patterns of thought and broader concepts prevalent in the community. Nketia continues:

Since the cultural product that emerges out of music making is stored as repertoire that may be recalled, re-created, interpreted or used in particular ways, it assumes particular roles or function in relation to how it is used in society. Musical categories and repertoire consequently acquire certain values in society that inspire their continued use.94

Like Lomax, who has looked for style trends between communities, Nketia advocates isolating and analyzing musical gestures that cross platforms of various genres within a particular community. Through each incarnation, musical features, as cultural products, become part of the shared experience and memory of the community. Arguably, the set of musical memories unique to each community affects the way musical gestures are recalled, re-created, interpreted, or otherwise used. Musical gestures, therefore, stand for something else in the experience of the community—another place, another time, another experience that resonates similarly throughout the culture as a whole.

To some degree, this study answers the call of Alan Lomax in his 1962 article “Song and Social Structure:”

As a working hypothesis, I propose a common-sense notion that music somehow expresses emotion; therefore, when a distinctive and consistent musical style lives in a culture or runs through several cultures, one can posit the existence of a distinctive set of emotional needs or drives that are somehow satisfied or evoked by this music…Thus we might look forward to a scientific musicology that could speak with some precision about formative emotional attitudes pervading cultures and operating through history. In this first stage of investigation we need not be concerned about the way that musical symbolism works, but only with a method that would locate sets of musical phenomena cross-culturally.95

94. Nketia, Ethnomusicology and African Music, 84.
By identifying musical gestures that have endured across generations and continents and exist in Gospel music to this day, and by analyzing how those musical gestures have the ability to stand for something else in the culture, this study engages in the semiology of music. A basic semiology is vital to the cultural factor approach in ethnomusicology, for through semiological means, the ethnomusicologist can identify musical features, explore symbolizing behaviors, theorize how musical gestures are conceived and posit philosophical principles unique to the community from which the music comes.

In the case of Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartet music, the unique musical gestures for analysis come from the B section of the AB song form. Both African-American and Euro-American communities typically follow modified strophic form in overall binary song structure, but Black Gospel musicians refer to the B section as the “drive,” and Southern Gospel musicians refer to the B section as the “vamp.” These verbal images, one dynamic and the other static, express an inherent conceptual uniqueness that is based upon cultural norms.


SEMIOLOGY AS IT RELATES TO MUSICAL SIGN VEHICLES

This project is predicated upon the hypothesis that if community identity is expressed through specific and unique features of cultural products, and two communities share a cultural product named “Gospel quartet music” then one specific and unique musical feature or gesture must make one style of Gospel quartet music “Black” and the other style of Gospel quartet music “Southern.” Musical gestures can function as symbols if they are qualitatively unique. Without a clear indication of exclusivity and uniqueness, the argument that music functions as a symbol of identity for a specific culture cannot be sustained.97 The term symbol, as used in this essay, conforms to Georg Hegel’s (1770-1831) classic description. A symbol is “a significant fact which in its own external form already presents the content of the idea which it symbolizes.”98

In *Anthropology of Music* (1964), Alan Merriam defines music as a product of human behavior in cultural context—a product consisting of organized sound and silence.99 As an artistic expression of the mental-cultural context of a

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97. Fredrik Barth discusses the topic of cultural uniqueness in the introduction to his collection of essays, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (1969), and states that while ethnic groups may be defined by several factors, including that they share “fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms,” it is more significant to consider the genesis, structure and function of the ethnic group rather than simply defining the group by a particular “trait inventory” (12). Barth argues that “although ethnic categories take cultural differences into account, we can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences...one cannot predict from first principles which features will be emphasized and made organizationally relevant by the actors” (14). The complexity of identifying and confirming the boundaries of distinction between ethnic groups is acknowledged in my analysis.

Stating that one musical feature is equal to the “Black sound” and another musical feature is equal to the “White sound” renders musical borrowings that flow from personal creativity and the “rivalry and emulation” (Lomax in *Sounds of the South*, 3) that is common practice among Gospel musicians in the Euro-American and African-American communities illegitimate. I argue that the preponderance of a specific musical feature in a certain culture occurs because that musical feature satisfies a need within the community to symbolically express ideas relevant to a particular frame of reference.

community, music retains the essence of the creative philosophy which inspires it, and musical gestures retain the external form of the cultural ideas they symbolize. Music serves as a symbol of community identity in the sense that its external, formal features present unique, communally understood ideas. Furthermore, symbolic musical features are indexical to a certain culture because they point to one, unique culture as their source. In the case of African-derived musics in the Americas, specific musical features are identifiable across a great variety of musical genres. The presence of those distinct musical features points to Africa as the unique source of those gestures.

Each culture tends to organize music according to recognizable patterns. These patterns reveal communally understood concepts, concepts that yield symbolically significant musical products. The Austrian musical theorist Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935) calls the persistent tendency to organize music according to a particular pattern the "background" level of the composition and his conclusions are based "solely on what consciously or unconsciously the composers themselves have revealed in their own writings." Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert comment on Schenker's theories by asserting, "In the broadest terms, the closer we get to the background, the more similar any two pieces are likely to appear; obviously, the more detail we introduce, the more differences we are likely to find." This conceptual frame has guided comparative

101. Ibid., 311-2.
musicologists and ethnomusicologists to the discovery of African retentions in musics of the Americas. When applied to Black Gospel music, the background pattern in African-American music retains characteristics similar to African music, but overlaid with New World details.  

Throughout the twentieth century, music theorists, musicologists and some ethnomusicologists have spent considerable time describing, in notation and in prose, the external form, or “neutral level,” of the musical products in the cultures they study. Rather than decoding meaning in music, studies often merely describe the neutral level, or sonic architecture (intervallic and rhythmic parameters), of the musical product, and such studies merely create an alternate text for the musical product. Description of the neutral level trades the notation or aural experience of a musical product for a verbal description of the same. Such descriptions constitute a meta-system—an another layer of symbolizing activity superimposed upon the musical product.

Description of the neutral level, or sonic architecture, is vital to the process of analysis and subsequent rhetorical discourse. Detailed descriptions of a music's sonic architecture combined with careful ethnographic documentation of its cultural context form ethnomusicology's grammatical level of the classical

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103. Creative and artistic details that Schenker calls the “foreground,” Forte and Gilbert, Schenkerian Analysis, 315.


105. The term “sonic architecture” is derived from Eero Tarasti’s tripartite model for semiosis including: 1) temporal dynamics, 2) spatial dimension and 3) actorial motives in Eero Tarasti, Theory of Musical Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 242. Although Tarasti does not use the term sonic architecture, his general description of music as a sonic product (including expanse of range, depth of harmony, and linear measure/density of rhythm) conjures, in my mind, the image of a multidimensional floor plan model.
Semiology of music goes beyond building a lexicon or primer for a musical product to creating an interpretive reading of the musical product as a cultural text. Semiology is the rigorous academic study of the process of generating and decoding symbolizing behavior. Semiologists attempt to define the types of signs humans create, and how we use signs to manipulate ideas or convey meaning. Semiologists also create models that describe the process of thinking symbolically. By applying a semiological approach to analyze and interpret a cultural product, scholars identify what aspects of the cultural product function symbolically, bring clarity to how those aspects function as symbols, and reveal the concepts that lead to symbolizing behavior. “A semiotic interpretation uses the descriptive mechanism of semiotics to forge a reading of a particular work.”

Alan Merriam reshaped the discipline of ethnomusicology by insisting that scholars go beyond describing music and begin to read music as a mental-cultural text. According to Merriam, in his Anthropology of Music, ethnomusicology interrogates “why a music structure exists as it does…how and

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why the behavior which produces it is as it is, and how and why the concepts which underlie that behavior are ordered in such a way as to produce the particularly desired form of organized sound.” In Merriam’s model, revelation of the concepts and context of music flow from semiological analysis of the musical product. When applied to Gospel quartet music, Merriam’s model will disclose the elements of culture that inspire musical conceptualization and behavior. This model dovetails with Nketia’s cultural factor approach because it analyzes the musical product, the context of the community, thematic patterns of behavior and causal factors in the cultural paradigm.

Merriam’s model (Figure 5) is a prescription for semiosis because it presumes that music operates symbolically—that the external form of a musical gesture stands for the concepts and cultural context from which it originates. The model is esthesic in nature; it focuses on analyzing the music to discover and describe aspects of the music as a mental-cultural product. ¹⁰⁸  Merriam’s model studies the musical product as fact, traces the process of music making as behavior, explores musical behavior as it reveals concept and unpacks conceptualization to reveal cultural context. The term cultural context implies a sociological origin—the sum of what is taught and learned in a particular culture. On an individual level, the sum of culture and life experience is the personal vécu. Kazadi wa Mukuna has used the term vécu to describe the music-maker’s frame of reference for musical conception and the source of musical behavior. ¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Nattiez, Music and Discourse, 153.

When analysis proceeds from the known (the musical product) to the unknown (cultural context of the music-maker) the process is called inductive esthesis.\textsuperscript{110} Through application of semiology, the cultural factor approach and theories borrowed and adapted from other academic disciplines, ethnomusicology rises above the levels of pure grammar and analytical logic to stimulate rhetorical discourse. Observing musical behavior, describing the sonic architecture of music and disclosing the cultural context for music making enables ethnomusicologists to “science” the musical product by positing, refuting or supporting theories regarding human nature.\textsuperscript{111} Knowing humanity involves studying both the sociological and individual levels of behavior and conceptualization to understand the human conscience. At the root level,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} Merriam, \textit{Anthropology of Music}, 277 and Nattiez, \textit{Music and Discourse}, 140.
\item \textsuperscript{111} John E. Kaemmer, \textit{Music in Human Life: Anthropological Perspective on Music} (Austin: University of Texas, 1993).
\end{itemize}
ethnomusicological discourse is the study of human cognition\textsuperscript{112} and the
influences of biology, psychology and culture. Ethnomusicologists make a
distinct contribution to rhetorical discourse regarding humanity because of the
ability to sense and respond to music as a mental-cultural product and to develop
a deep acquaintance with the cultural contexts from which music springs—an
ethnomusicological approach called bi-musicality.\textsuperscript{113}

Mental-cultural products of art, such as music, serve as symbolic
expressions of the individual conscience and the society. The drive among
human beings to engage in music making appears to transcend observable
biosocial needs—above the level of animal instinct for self-preservation and
reproduction. We share symbolic patterns of meaningful social interaction with
other human beings in an experience anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski calls
“phatic communion.”\textsuperscript{114} Humans universally achieve the goal of self-expression
through music because music has an assumed ability to bear meaning.\textsuperscript{115} We
recognize that the mind is functioning symbolically “when some components of
its experience elicit consciousness, beliefs, emotions and usages, respecting
other components of its experience.”\textsuperscript{116} Simply stated, the mind is functioning


\textsuperscript{114} Bronislaw Malinowski, “The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages,” in The Meaning of Meanings,

\textsuperscript{115} Lomax, Folk Song Style, 3.

\textsuperscript{116} Alfred N. Whitehead cited in Raymond Monelle, Linguistics and Semiotics in Music (Chur: Harwood
symbolically through signs when something stands for something else,\textsuperscript{117} and the mind perceives patterns of symbolism in interactions with other human beings. However, recognizing the presence of a sign in music is more intuitive than understanding the process by which signs are created and perceived.

Because it is easier to agree that music functions symbolically than it is to identify the symbols contained in the music, Kofi Agawu has expanded a method for inductive esthesic semiological analysis of music in his book, \textit{Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music} (1991). This method moves from the known (the musical product) to the unknown (the \textit{vécu} of the music maker) while taking into consideration the point of view of the audience.

Kofi Agawu’s semiological method is based on the concept of musical topics (Figure 6).\textsuperscript{118} He contends that cultural context and personal experience (\textit{vécu}) constitute, in the imagination of every individual, a “Provisional Universe of Topic.”\textsuperscript{119} The Provisional Universe includes all the topics relevant to a particular frame of reference—all of the objects, experiences or emotions a person may imagine. Topics germane to a particular cultural context or \textit{vécu} bear meaning because they are referential; they symbolize or allude to experiences of an individual or to experiences that are common to a particular community. Indeed, “the primary condition for the perception of topic is listener


\textsuperscript{119} Kofi Agawu, \textit{Playing with Signs}, 30.
competence.\textsuperscript{120} The ability of a listener to identify the presence of a musical sign or to decode the meaning of a musical sign depends upon the scope of the listener’s “Provisional Universe.”

Charles Boilès attests to the power of musical signs to communicate in his article \textit{Sémiotique de l’ethnomusicologie} (1973). A viable and productive

\textsuperscript{120} Kofi Agawu, \textit{Playing with Signs}, 49.
semiological model can determine what message is communicated by identifying what aspect of music acts as a sign vehicle.\textsuperscript{121} In music, a sign vehicle is a musical gesture or feature that, when recognized by the listener, calls to mind an emotion, state of mind, experience or object.\textsuperscript{122} If a sign is not recognized, to that listener it is not a sign at all.\textsuperscript{123}

The music-maker conceives music based upon creative philosophy, creative initiative and the experiential, iconic and emotive topics held in the imaginary Universe of Topic. The concepts of the music-maker are manifest in musical behavior exhibited in the musical product. The musical product is, thus, encoded with sign vehicles referential to the Universe of Topic of the maker-maker.

As the musical product is created and perceived by the music-maker and the listener, it flows from the creator’s Provisional Universe of Topic to the listener’s Provisional Universe of Topic. The collective experiences of both the music-maker and listener create a unique context for creating and interpreting musical performance. The listener recognizes and interprets musical gestures present in the musical product according to how those gestures refer to his/her own Universe of Topic. As Peirce has suggested, the listener may identify and decode any number of interpretations (Figure 6, I\textsubscript{1}, I\textsubscript{2}, I\textsubscript{3}, I\textsubscript{4}… I\textsubscript{n}) referential to

\begin{itemize}
  \item 121. For more of Boilès thoughts on semiology, see Appendix E.
  \item 122. Boilès is one of many semiologists who have assigned a name to the thing represented by a sign vehicle. Boilès called the referential object the \textit{designatum} in Boilès, “Semiotique de l’Ethnomusicologie,” \textit{Musique en Jeu} 10 (1973): 34-40. For an encyclopedic table of terms describing the functions of sign vehicle, referential object and symbolic sense or interpretant, see Nöth \textit{Handbook of Semiotics}, 90. Recent terms created for \textit{designatum} also include isotopy (Terasti 1994) and trace (Nattiez 1990).
\end{itemize}
experiential, iconic and emotive topics in his or her imaginary Universe of Topic. If both the music-maker and the listener share a common cultural heritage and/or life experiences, musical gestures within the musical product may call to mind similar topics from their Provisional Universes. If the creator and the listener have diverse cultural heritages, they will each likely draw from decidedly different Provisional Universes, and the topics that serve as interpretants for the musical product will also be diverse.

Kofi Agawu’s description of Universe of Topic explains why music effectively communicates within a community of shared cultural experience. When people share closely related Provisional Universes of Topic, they recognize the same musical gestures and sign vehicles, and those sign vehicles refer to the same referential topics.124 Jean-Jacques Nattiez describes the evocative nature of sign vehicles in the musical product:

A symbolic form...is not some 'intermediary' in a process of 'communication' that transmits the meaning intended by the author to the audience; it is instead the result of a complex process of creation (the poietic process).125

Musical products exhibit at least three distinguishable types of sign vehicles, or forms of topic, that are contained within the Provisional Universe of Topic. As sign vehicles, these forms of topic retain the external form of the

124. The inverse is also true. When people do not share closely related Provisional Universes of Topic they either recognize different musical gestures resulting in reference to different forms of topic, or they recognize the same musical gesture and reference it to a completely difference form topic. Ultimately, this concept explains why, in an African-American worship service, I was uncomfortable with repetition in the musical product, and why the African-American congregants resonated with the musical product on a profoundly personal level.

125. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 17; the poietic process is the generative process. Poetics flow from the creator to the musical product. Esthesics flow from the listener to the musical product.
concepts held in the Provisional Universe of Topic. Kofi Agawu categorizes the symbolized concepts as experiential, iconic and emotive forms of topic.

Experiential forms of topic refer to actual events or settings (see Figure 7). Experiential topics are musical themes or features that, by their sonic architecture, denote a setting other than the immediate context for music making. From the European perspective, a sampling of experiential forms of topic frequently encoded into art music includes the fanfare, hunt style, gavotte and other dance styles, march, pastorale, and Turkish music. In Gospel quartet music, experiential forms of topic may include gestures such as a barbershop “swipe.”

Figure 7: A barbershop “swipe,” a common form of experiential topic found in Gospel quartet singing. The swipe is “a progression of two or more chords sung on a single word or syllable[;] a characteristic feature of the barbershop style of music.” In this case, the swipe occurs on the word “call” from the song “One Day When the Lord Will Call Me.”

126. Kofi Agawu, Playing with Signs, 10 and 30.
127. A swipe occurs when one or more parts move to a different tone while the other part(s) maintain a steady pitch in Henry, “Barbershop Quartet,” 25.
Iconic forms of topic refer to familiar objects because they closely resemble the originals. Instrumental and vocal sounds can mimic a variety of sound effects—human cries, animal calls, sounds in nature, and mechanical noises. An iconic relationship exists when musical gestures resemble, in pitch and form, the original sounds that function as aural referents (see Figure 8). In Dvorak’s *New World Symphony*, imitations of the “clickity-clack” of steel on steel and the hydraulic pumping of railroad engines streaking across America’s wide open spaces serve to exemplify iconic topic. In the case of the *New World Symphony*, the topic itself becomes a sort of sign. Dvorak infused his passion for exploring the great expanse of the American frontier by employing an iconic representation of transportation. In Gospel music, moaning gestures are included as iconic forms of topic. The pitched re-creation of moaning expresses the perceived importance of personal, emotional response to the Gospel lyric.

The third form of topic, the emotive form, is referential in a slightly different way than the experiential and iconic forms. Signs that express emotive content do not refer to a particular event or object. The emotive symbolic forms do not mimic a familiar pitch/rhythm pattern, nor do they directly communicate emotion. In music, an emotive topic is a recognizable pattern of tension and resolution that resembles what Susanne Langer calls a “form of sentience.” It is possible to interpret a composer’s use of the dynamic properties of tension and resolution as a reflection of emotion or “psychical action.” Thereby the


132. Kofi Agawu lists a great number of emotive topics including the essence of feeling proud, humble, bold, timid, violent, gentle spirited, happy, lively, sublime, magnificent, daring, courageous, serious, fiery, wild, furious, innocent, naive, pleading, tender, moving, sad, melancholy, strong and tender, Ibid.

composer uses a particular sonic architecture to evoke an emotive topic. Eduard Hanslick has further addressed the definition of emotive forms in *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen (The Musically Beautiful)*. He postulates:

What part of the feelings, then, can music represent, if not the subject involved in them? Only their dynamic properties. It may reproduce the motion accompanying psychical action, according to its momentum: speed, slowness, strength, weakness, increasing and decreasing intensity. But motion is only one of the concomitants of feeling, not the feeling itself.  

Cultural norms that shape the dynamic properties of emotive forms differ drastically from culture to culture. Kofi Agawu supports this high degree of cultural variability by saying, “notions of expression, feeling, and emotion are inherently ambiguous, requiring careful delimitation in context.” In the context of Gospel quartet singing, a cadential, musical gesture incorporated in the concluding line of many performances serves as an emotive form of topic. Following a period of repetition of the refrain, Gospel quartet songs frequently conclude with a sudden *ritardando*, and a *staccato* gesture followed by a long *fermata* (see Figure 9). This musical figure is referential to the emotion of resoluteness as if, by repetition of the text in the refrain, the singers have become convinced of the truth of their own declarations. This conclusion is a summarizing statement of confidence. The musical figure becomes a “final word,” expressing authority, power and joy.


135. Ibid., 37-8.

Figure 9: This common, concluding musical gestures in Southern Gospel quartet singing serves as an emotive form of topic. It denotes resoluteness and confidence through the successive use of eighth note-fermata combinations. Excerpted from the song “One Day When the Lord Will Call Me” as performed by the Southern Sons.137

We must assume that all signifying aspects of music are rife with a high degree of cultural variability because the generative and interpretive Provisional Universes of Topic are also highly variable. Peircian semiology posits that any given sign encoded in music may refer to an indeterminable number of topics and are subject to an infinite number of interpretants in the mind of the listener (Figure 6; I₁, I₂, I₃ to Iₙ).138 However, the foundational assumption is that experiential, iconic and emotive symbolic forms can be recognized and identified in the musical product.

Identification of symbolic forms by their type serves as a foundation for the ethnomusicological application of semiology. Wye Jamison Allanbrook states that investigation of music using the concept of topic “provides a tool for analysis which can mediate between the [works] and our individual responses to them.”139

When we consider how musical features are indexical to a certain culture, or why communities espouse certain music as symbols of their communal identity, we must use semiology to identify which particular musical features have the potential to serve as sign vehicles. For the purpose of community identification, the three categories of symbolic topic serve to limit the scope of relevant topics to those “held in common with [the composer’s] audience, and used…with the skill of a master craftsman.”

To determine which musical gesture in the musical product serves as a means of community identification, the ethnomusicologist must analyze the cultural context of both the music-maker and the listener to identify a common form of topic. The quality of analysis is, therefore, completely dependent upon the ethnomusicologist’s conversance with the culture(s) in question.

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CHAPTER IV
THEORIZING CONCEPTS THAT ORGANIZE GOSPEL "IMPROVISATION":
USING A CULTURAL FACTOR APPROACH

Gospel don't have no color to it...This is programmed from man. Man formats his radio station to play white gospel or man formats his station to play what they call black gospel...And I want to know, 'Did God die for everybody?' Jesus Christ came back and won on the cross and He died for the sins of the world. And when Jesus comes back, He’s coming back after the ones that accept Him regardless of what color they are. Now how am I going to put a tag on the gospel of God—God's Gospel? It don't have a color.141
—Charles Johnson of the Nightingales

The ultimate question of this essay is, "How and why do Gospel musics of two distinct Christian communities sound unique?" Answering how and why musical behavior occurs as it does connects the musical behavior with the pertinent community context and the relevant cultural paradigm. If Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartet musics are, indeed, distinct, the ethnomusicologist must identify the unique musical gestures, describe the relevant cultural contexts, note persistent themes in musical behavior, and theorize what concepts cause the unique musical behaviors in each community. Because the concepts held by a community shape the sound of its music, music is able to communicate the sociological and psychological paradigm of the source culture. In the case of Gospel quartet music, this symbolic function gives dimension and animation to

141. Charles Johnson cited in Goff, Close Harmony, 199.
otherwise intangible cultural concepts, and, by so doing, serves as a symbol of community identity.\footnote{142}{In this way, the function of music is similar to the function of language, as Friedrich Nietzsche has said, “By the grammatical structure of a group of languages everything runs smoothly for one kind of philosophical system, whereas the way is as it were barred for certain other possibilities;” in Ogden and Richards, \textit{The Meaning of Meaning}, front matter.}

This essay moves beyond describing the perceived uniqueness of Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartet performance practices to identifying and examining distinct musical gestures in the two styles. Within Black and Southern Gospel musics, connotative musical gestures exist. These gestures serve as referential forms of topic that are evident in a comparative study of the two styles.

As discussed in Chapter Two - Gospel Quartet Style, Black and Southern Gospel musics are unique, cultural products of two distinct communities, yet the intertwining of African-American and Euro-American cultures have resulted in shared style traits in both genres. First, Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartets feature Tenor-Tenor-Baritone-Bass (TTBB) structure with high tenor harmony, lead tenor melody, baritone inner-voicing harmony and a foundational bass line. These elements reflect the tradition of Protestant choral homophony and the American shape-note hymn tradition. Both Black and Southern Gospel styles frequently incorporate seventh-chords to allow each voice-part a distinct harmonic role in the four-voice structure.\footnote{143}{Henry, “Barbershop Quartets,” 26.} Secondly, Black and Southern Gospel musics exhibit call and response, a musical device commonly used throughout the history of the Christian church and in African-derived cultures and specifically used in lined-out hymn singing.
The distinction between Black Gospel and Southern Gospel music styles is detected in the B-sections of their overall AB structure. Black and Southern Gospel styles are unique because of the concepts that organize "improvisation." The word "improvisation" is used in a guarded way because it often implies the act of making something up on the fly. Musical improvisation, however, is governed by knowledge and creative philosophy that shapes the musical product in specific and recognizable patterns. African-American Gospel musicians conceive "improvisation" as ensemble melorhythm, and the formal structure is dependent upon the concepts of traditional African drum music. Euro-American Gospel musicians conceive improvisation as solo exploration, and the formal structure is dependent upon the concepts of European tonal harmony.

The following sections explore the musical, contextual, thematic and causal factors at play in the organization of the B section of the Black Gospel quartet song "Time to Testify" by the Pilgrim Jubilees and the Southern Gospel quartet song "Crossing Chilly Jordan" by the Blackwood Brothers. Analysis will show that aspects of African culture are expressed through Black Gospel quartet music in the musical gesture of Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC) as it reflects oral tradition, community identity, and event-based performance-composition practices. Additionally, aspects of European culture are expressed in Southern Gospel quartet music in the musical gesture of exploratory improvisation as it reflects literary tradition, individual identity and performance practices rooted in tonal harmony.
Concentrated attention is applied to how aspects of Ensemble Thematic Cycle, as defined by Meki Nzewi, appear in the 1956 video recording of “Time to Testify,” sung by the 2001 American Gospel Quartet Convention Hall of Fame inductees, The Pilgrim Jubilees.\textsuperscript{144} The Jubes, as they are called by fans, released the same song under the name “Testify for Jesus” in 1996 on their album \textit{Don’t Let Nobody Turn You Around}.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{144} YouTube, “"Vintage" Pilgrim Jubilees-An AGQC 2001 Hall of Fame Inductee,” accessed May 24, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZqXR-LuP9Q; transcription of the song appears in Figure 12.

CHAPTER V
BLACK GOSPEL QUARTET STYLE

In works discussed previously, Mellonee Burnim and Ray Allen have addressed Black Gospel music performance practices and the perceived authenticity of Africanisms present in various Black Gospel music performances. Their work documents the unique costume, audience interaction and participation, performer demeanor and vocal technique, and performer and audience expectations common to Black Gospel music performances. However, the relationship between Black Gospel as a symbol of community identity and specific musical gestures, or forms of topic, that create this symbolic relationship have not been clearly established in their work. John Blacking states that, “In music, code and message are inseparable: the code is the message, and when the message is analyzed apart from the code, music is abandoned for sociology, politics, economics, religion, and so forth.”

By focusing on extra-musical aspects, or the exo-semantic level of Black Gospel music performance, Burnim and Allen have not fully examined the ability of the musical product itself to create bonds of community identity. Charles Boilès expands upon the challenge of not neglecting the music in ethnomusicological analysis:

Many people, including musicologists, have difficulty in stating what aspects of the musical signal have connotation for them. They have learned to interpret a musical symbol through the process of enculturation; they are similar to members of a culture who speak a language but have no knowledge of the formal aspects of its lexicon and grammar, and thus they allude to a musical phenomenon and its symbolic interpretation in a general, descriptive manner rather than enumerate the specific musical characteristics that connote the symbol. Under such circumstances, we are compelled to accept that a cultural group may be cognizant of its use of musical symbols but that the complex nature underlying the symbols' existence remains subliminal, as an expressed process of signification pertaining to the ethos of the culture. Although musical symbols are extant in the cultural milieu, the details of their composition and operation are not consciously systematized.147

Since the time of slavery, African-Americans have synthesized their community values and creative philosophy with Protestant theology and ritual to develop an ideology and practice of “Blackness” 148 that has found expression in relevant biblical interpretation and musical expression. Within the "invisible church" and, eventually, the organized, denominational congregations, African-Americans associated the Gospel message with freedom and hope in the material realm—the tradition of Christian teaching commonly called "liberation theology." 149 Mellonee Burnim has highlighted this concept described by theologian James Cone who commented upon the incorporation of the word "African" in the names of newly independent churches:

If they [Blacks] thought it important to define the meaning of their spiritual community by focusing on their racial identity, this meant they believed that either the God of Jesus Christ must meet them at


the point of Blackness of their existence, or He is unrelated to reality as they know it to be.\textsuperscript{150}

Likewise, Black Gospel style brings relevance to the majority Protestant hymnody in the African-American frame of reference. The coalescing Black Gospel style that began to take shape in the eighteenth century revival meeting songs came to full flower in the twentieth century Pentecostal movement.\textsuperscript{151}

Though modern Pentecostalism flamed to life in California, the locus of attention came to rest in Memphis, Tennessee when, in the 1910s, Memphis became the headquarters for the African-American Pentecostal Church of God in Christ (COGIC).

COGIC hosted sacred concerts for audiences numbering in the thousands, and the spontaneous nature of the services “helped to set the stage for local and national gospel music performance practices.”\textsuperscript{152} The Pentecostal movement infused a new freedom in the Gospel style including “intensity of expression related to the “filling” of the Holy Spirit, resulting in performances characterized by high intensity, conspicuous physical responses, and a sense of improvisation.”\textsuperscript{153} The following section examines the nature of “improvisation” in the drive section of Black Gospel quartet song.


\textsuperscript{153} Wilhoit, “Performance Practices,” 293.
MUSICAL "IMPROVISATION" AND ENSEMBLE THEMATIC CYCLE

Those who attempt to reduce black religion to nothing more than a cryptonym for the prevailing white expression of the faith run the inevitable risk of exposing how little they know about religion, or black people, or both. Whatever other derivations it may have, religion derives in part from the experiences of the people who confess it, and the white experience is not in its critical essence the black experience in America.  

—Eric Lincoln

Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC) is an expression coined and defined by Meki Nzewi as a culturally appropriate way of representing traditional African musical practice. Meki Nzewi first defined this expression in an unpublished manuscript titled Musical Sense and Musical Meaning (1993), and subsequently published the core concepts of that text in the booklet African Music: Theoretical Content and Creative Continuum—A Culture's Exponent Perspective (1997). In aural analysis, Ensemble Thematic Cycle consists of repetition, syncopation and relationship tension with complementarity and linear circularity in its layered time-line patterns (TLP).  

In his own words Meki Nzewi defines ETC:

As the significant musical form or module by which a piece of African music is recognised [sic]. It is the aggregate sound of the layers of role-themes [TLPs] in an ensemble. Its length and significant content is the lowest common multiple of the unequal lengths *cum* differentiated contents of all the compositional themes assigned the various instruments of an ensemble for the purposes of the performance-composition of a piece on any performance occasion or session.

In a novel and provocative manner, Meki Nzewi shows how ETC reflects a uniquely African way of sensitizing knowledge about the universe and expressing


155. Meki Nzewi calls time-line patterns “themes” in African Music, 44.

156. Ibid.
that knowledge with creative intention. Meki Nzewi's colleague, Kofi Agawu, characterizes Meki Nzewi's strong defense of Ensemble Thematic Cycle as "embattled, pugnacious" and "no-nonsense." I have seen some of this frustration in my own mentor, Kazadi wa Mukuna, who, after patiently teaching and listening to his graduate students reflect upon their understanding of his lectures on African rhythm has raised his eyes and hands toward heaven and exclaimed, "Ahhh, what can I say. I'm just an African!"

The key musical feature interrogated in this essay is the presence of Ensemble Thematic Cycle as it often appears in the B section of Black Gospel quartet songs. For African scholars, the discord in discourse over African musical art and "Africanisms" in African-American music stems from the deep divide between African and European perception—the humanistic paradigms from which we naturally interpret the musical behavior we hear. In times long past—before citizens organized themselves hierarchically in city-states, scholars thought of the universe mechanically in rigid patterns, and people imagined themselves dually as mind and body—Europeans might have had a more sympathetic relationship with Africans; however, in the modern era, when challenged by African scholars to consider the structure, context and meaning of African music, Western scholars must intentionally surrender the reigns of their minds to their African masters. Though the truth may be hard to come by, if this science of opinion is truly about human-to-fellow-human communion, then both sides must contend with each other until clarity of thought is achieved.

Modeling, or re-modeling ethnomusicology, has always been a "one-step forward and three steps back" proposition. From comparative musicology, to contextual ethnography, to ethnopsychology, a succession of analytical models designed to close the gap between Africa and the West have met with mixed results. At worst, African music in Western estimation has gone from being the subject of "objective" research,\textsuperscript{158} to the topic of "interobjective" analysis, to the victim of "subjective" supposition—the kind of supposition that claims, "Africans generally do things in multiples...they are polytheistic, they have many gods and goddesses, they speak many languages, have multiples wives."\textsuperscript{159} At best, African music has been preserved, and then analyzed, and finally imitated by patient and careful scholars in the field. However, Western academia has lacked a model that clarifies and reveals the root cause of the African sound in the culture and concept of African life.

Western objective empiricism has created the tendency to make specimens of Africans and African art. Throughout the modern era, Africans and Westerners have been in close contact on the African continent and away from it. The proximity of such highly diverse cultures has led to a sense of "otherness" in interactions between the two communities. The duality of "otherness" is a comfortable sociological frame for Europeans and Euro-Americans. The concept of "I – Thou" relationships, posited by Martin Buber in his essay \textit{Ich un Du} (1923),

\textsuperscript{158} Regarding the analytical approaches listed, if objectivity is "What I think you are" and interobjectivity is "What we think they are," then subjectivity is "What I think I am" and intersubjectivity is "What we think we are."

aptly describes the space between people in Western culture. The artifice of space and "othering" in cross-cultural interactions with Westerners confounds and frustrates their African peers.

Aristotle (384-322 BC) may have been the first scholar in Western civilization to describe a seam in the fabric of the universe—the divide between body and soul. René Descartes (1595-1650 AD) completely separated the experience of the mind from the experience of the body so that the body became merely an instrument for the mind's collection of knowledge via touch, taste, hearing, smell and sight. Objective empiricism was born of this dualistic view, and was the dominant paradigm throughout the European Industrial, Colonial and Modernist eras. Western society and academia naturally took on the "objective" dualist frame of reference. Casual observers, historians and comparative musicologists of the past have recorded their "I – Thou" impressions of African and African-American music, and described its temporal effect as "pounding repetition" of the melodic and rhythmic aspects. The "I-Thou" approach is mono-faceted, and values the opinion and perception of the scholar above all other considerations.

After centuries of observing, collecting, notating and preserving the world's traditional musics, Western academia was challenged by Alan Merriam, in 1964,

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163. For examples see Appendix D.
to incorporate interobjectivity in cross-cultural studies—to observe patterns of musical behavior and to deduce meaning in their cultural contexts. Merriam intended for scholars to seek descriptions of musical gestures that reflect cultural relevance in the source culture and to propose models for musical behavior that reveal the cultural concepts giving rise to those musical gestures. It follows, then, that any model lacking cultural relevance, also lacks sustainability in the quest to reveal conceptualization and for the purpose of human-to-human communion.

Euro-centric, mid-twentieth century descriptions of the temporal effect of African music underscored the need for Merriam’s new model and the hope that it might shed new light on the African conceptual paradigm. In 1948, Richard Waterman called the African sound, polyrhythm, consisting of "multiple-metered" lines and "off-beat phrasing."164 The implications that Africans play many rhythms (polyrhythm) and that those rhythms are off-beat reflects exclusively Euro-centric perceptions of the African ensemble effect. Joseph H. Kwabena Nketia, in 1961, described the essence of African music with the culturally-charged term "hocketing."165

In European Renaissance singing, melodies were often divided between voices in the ensemble so that the entire melody was revealed through the ensemble effect. In the absence of a word in English to describe the African perception of the African ensemble effect, Nketia used the word “hocketing.” It


seems that Nketia intended to use of the term “hocketing” among European audiences as a bridge to communicating and understanding African music cross-culturally. Yet European and Euro-American scholars latched on to the term hocketing as if it explained the African ensemble effect in toto. African ensemble play cannot be hocketing because to create a hocket one part must rest or hold while another plays. Such is not the case in African music where every member of the ensemble is actively moving forward to drive the pulse. This essay will show that such Euro-centric models, though they persist in Western discourse, are insufficient because they lack cultural relevance to African musical art and they fail to clarify and reveal what Portia Maultsby refers to as the “African frame of reference.”

Jean-Jacques Nattiez has described Simha Arom’s *African Polyphony and Polyrhythm*, first published in France in 1985, as a “monumental work.”

*African Polyphony and Polyrhythm* is dual-faceted because the analysis covers both the musical product in encyclopedic transcriptions and the cultural context for music making among the Aka people in central Africa. The study is both objective and interobjective; it documents the behavior of others and also observes the social context of the music as a cultural product. Though Arom


168. Commenting upon a variety of notational methods and African drum song, Kofi Agawu has said, “none of these modes of representation—verbal or graphic—can hope to convey the musical experience in all its manifold detail” in *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 186.

Even the transcriptional expertise of Alan Lomax has been stymied in efforts to document and compare the nuances of melorhythm in African drumming and rural, African-American dance band music. Lomax quipped, “These similarities [between musics] could not be represented in music notation—here my European musicologist friends threw up their hands—but [the similarities] were nonetheless there,” in *The Land Where the Blues Began*, 326.
expands his analysis to the cultural context, he persists in describing the peculiar form of polyphony that results from the relationship between definitely and indefinitely-pitched instruments in the African ensemble as “polyrhythm.”\textsuperscript{169}

The Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Music Media and Technology (CIRMRT) quotes Arom as saying:

Time organization in Central African Music is based on a strictly periodic structure. The period is internally organized on two levels: by the pulse and by the minimal operational values. Rhythm consists in the imposition of cyclic figures with or without variations on an underlying period. The dominant rhythmic feature in Central Africa is a contrametric relationship to the pulse, which creates an antagonism between the rhythmical events and their metrical framework. Polyrhythmic music results from the interaction of two or more superposed rhythmic figures, which may vary in dimensions but have periods standing in simple ratios, and its dominant feature is the interweaving of accents, tone colors and/or attacks of the simultaneously performed figures. This gives rise to a conflict between rhythm and rhythm, which is coupled with the antagonism between rhythm and meter characterizing each individual figure. Many of the phenomena described in this paper are current over a much wider area of sub-Saharan Africa.\textsuperscript{170}

Overall, Arom makes a unique contribution to the debate about the essence of African music because, through carefully notated transcriptions, he attempts to let the music speak for itself. Though Arom persistently uses the term polyrhythm, his use of the word is mediated by a broader understanding of African rhythmic concepts. He shares how emerging patterns of interaction between the various instruments of the ensemble form the deep structure of the ensemble performance. Without fanfare, Arom concedes, “Paradoxical as it may


seem, this music should, despite its polyphonic [and polyrhythmic] nature, be deemed the ‘accidental’ result of a basically melodic intention.”

Furthermore, Arom states that if African music is polyrhythmic, it is only “elementarily so.”

Arom follows by pairing the concepts of ‘polyrhythm’ and ‘homophony’ to attempt to clarify the African rhythmic concept. This line of argument refutes Arom’s own description of African musical conception as “strict polyrhythmics,” and denies the caveat prefacing his book: “The proof of the analysis is in the synthesis.”

After decades of attempting to follow Merriam’s contextual model, the canonized European description of traditional African music as hocketing polyrhythm began to ring hollow, even for Western scholars in the African field. By submission to African elders in the quest for bi-musicality, John Locke gained aesthetic intuition regarding African drum performance-composition, and not merely an objective or interobjective view of the subject. Locke’s “Drum Gahu” was published in 1987; in the same year, Tim Rice published his article “Towards a Re-modeling of Ethnomusicology.” Rice proposed analysis of the musical product through the historical construction (objective perspective), social maintenance (interobjective perspective) and individual creation of the musician.

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172. Ibid, 205.

173. Ibid., 229-451.

174. “In performance-composition one re-creates a piece spontaneously in order to fulfil [sic] the demands of an extra musical intention or a non musical context” vs. improvisation that one “creates with a theme spontaneously.” in Meki Nzewi, *African Music*, 67.

175. This is the concept of bi-musicality described by Mantle Hood in “The Challenge of Bi-musicality,” 55.

(subjective perspective). This model formally introduced subjectivity as a mode of ethnomusicological analysis.

Locke’s work incorporates the subjective mode. Though he is responsible for numerous European-style transcriptions of traditional African drum music, Locke readily admits that the musical score does not tell the story of the relationship between players in the drum ensemble.\(^\text{177}\) He instructs musicians to be consciously aware of the interplay between the Time, Call and Response roles of the ensemble instruments.\(^\text{178}\) Locke attempts to introduce the subjective view of the African drummer's thoughts by stating, "Improvisation springs from a player's feeling for the potency of his part, his sensitivity to the interplay within the ensemble and his intuitive understanding of the generative musical ideas characteristic of Gahu."\(^\text{179}\) Locke’s introduction of subjectivity to the study of the drum-song-dance event music of the West Africa brings a third facet to the objective and interobjective streams of ethnomusicological inquiry. Although Locke is attentive to the creative intention of the musician, he perpetuates the concept of polyrhythm. By doing so, Locke’s description of African musical values lacks truth with which Africans can fully identify.

Through use in the context of traditional African music, the term polyrhythm has become the default descriptor for certain aspects of African-American music, as well. Mellonee Burnim acknowledges the presence of polyrhythm throughout performance studies of Black Gospel music, while rarely


\(^{178}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 7.
venturing to define the term. In a cursory description of polyrhythm offered in “The Black Gospel Music Tradition: A Complex of Ideology, Aesthetic and Behavior” (1985), Burnim explains that in Black Gospel music, the density of musical textures can be increased “by gradually adding layers of handclaps, instrumental accompaniment, and/or solo voice.” By summarizing several performance studies in her article “Africanisms in African-American Music,” Portia Maultsby proposes that style of delivery (eternally visible performance practices such as costume and dance), sound quality (vocal and instrumental timbres) and mechanics of delivery (call and response and polyrhythm) indicate “retentions” of African musical values in African-American music. Maultsby states:

African retentions in African-American music can be defined as a core of conceptual approaches…Black people create, interpret, and experience music out of an African frame of reference—one that shapes musical sound, interpretation, and behavior and makes black music traditions throughout the world a unified whole.

While this statement is accurate, to a degree it avoids a definitive conclusion about the African frame of reference that shapes conceptualization, behavior and sound in the African-American context. Maultsby speaks of the African conceptual paradigm in vague terms stating, “The fundamental concept that governs music performance in African and African-derived cultures is that music making is a participatory group activity that serves to unite black people into a cohesive group for a common purpose.”

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183. Ibid., 187.
Maultsby’s study does not represent a theory expositing the African or African-American epistemological paradigm, but, rather, an interobjective analysis of African and African-American performance practices. The resulting disconnect between musical product and cultural conception leaves room for the use of the term polyrhythm in the work of both Burnim and Maultsby.

Through three major ethnomusicological trends in analysis of African and African-American music, conclusions about African musical concepts and the African frame of reference have been largely unsatisfactory. From the "othering" approach of objective empiricism employed by “comparative musicologists,” through the contextual studies approach of interobjectivity introduced by Alan Merriam, and into the subjective studies approach employing Tim Rice's "Re-modeled" ethnomusicology, the essence of African rhythmic structure and meaning has been elusive.

While attending to the literature review for this essay, I stumbled upon Joseph H. Kwabena Nketia's cultural factor approach in his book *Ethnomusicology and African Music, Vol. 1* (2005). Nketia expands upon musical, contextual, thematic and causal approaches in the pursuit of a multi-faceted cultural factor method for ethnomusicological analysis. 184 Since I had determined, to the best of my ability, to interrogate Black Gospel quartet music from an African point of reference, I incorporated Nketia’s cultural factor method into my research stance, hoping to thoroughly "Africanize" both the analysis and synthesis of my topic. It was through Nketia’s model that I saw a *lacuna* in the description of the African sound.

It seemed clear to me that the objective view of the music, the interobjective view of the context of social behavior, and the subjective themes of perception among musicians had not naturally led to intersubjectivity and the exploration of the causal relationship between conceptualization and the musical product that Alan Merriam intended. Therefore, analysis has not answered the question of how and why African and African-derived musics sound as they do. A notable exception to the lack of intersubjectivity in Black Gospel research is Mellonee Burnim’s dissertation “The Black Gospel Music Tradition: Symbol of Ethnicity.” In her research Burnim asked students of various ethnicities to view video recordings of a series of Gospel choir performances, and to comment upon those performances. The African-American students included two perspectives: 1.) What “they” (the choirs performing) achieved or failed to achieve in their performance, and 2.) What “we” value in music and how the choir did or did not achieve those aims in the performance. By so doing the African-American students who self-identified as members of the Black Gospel community engaged in analysis from the intersubjective point of view—what we are becoming together.

What began as a theoretical "hail Mary" in my research plan crystallized into a Euro-centric void in scholarship regarding African and African-derived musics and traditional African thought, a void filled by full utilization of the cultural factor approach. Nketia’s musical, contextual, thematic and causal modes of analysis correspond neatly to Ken Wilbur’s model for analysis of conscience, the

"Integrated Theory and Holarchy of Being" (Figure 10). Organizing the major trends in ethnomusicological analysis according to Ken Wilbur's Holarchy of Being indicates that intersubjectivity, the concept of what we are becoming together—the mode of consciousness most applicable to African and African-derived cultures—is explicitly lacking in every ethnomusicological model but the cultural factor approach.

Figure 10: Ken Wilbur's Integrated Theory and Holarchy of Being pictorially represented in Dion Forster's "Validation of Individual Consciousness." By comparing these models of analysis, it is evident that Wilbur's "Integral Hermeneutic" and Nketia's "Cultural Factor Approach" offer the most viable model for revealing how and why we find meaning in music.

This error seems to be longstanding and interdisciplinary. Wilbur's work has been vaunted as the most holistic approach to human consciousness in Western academia. Yet even Wilbur, whose model represents the leading edge

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186. Explored extensively in Dion Forster's "Validation of Individual Consciousness," 175-218.

of holistic thinking, has been criticized for neglecting explanation of the
intersubjective quadrant—the most holistic of all the ways of "Being"—in his
Holarchy of Being.

The Holarchy of Being model is holistic because it assumes every factor of
the human conscience is a whole that affects other "wholes" in an interactive way.
Intersubjectivity is the common mode of consciousness in African and African-
derived cultures, and is formed by the impressions we exert upon each other
about who we are becoming. Intersubjectivity is a philosophical definition for the
sense of belonging in traditional African culture.

Belonging is the essence of the philosophy of existence in African concept.
Nelson Mandela made the Zulu saying, "I am because you are, and you are
because I am," famous in the West. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, the concept is
classically expressed: "I belong, therefore I am." A person alone cannot be a
person; we are all connected. We cannot be unaffected by others, nor can our
existence fail to affect others. Our character and our identity are formed by the
explicit and implicit influence of the community. In African and African-American
cultures, my personhood does not begin where yours ends; our identity is
created and sustained by the active presence of our persons in our community.

In Western academia, the persistent use of the term polyrhythm in
reference to African and African-derived musics underscores how little African
and African-American community identity and consciousness is understood and
esteemed. In 1959, Jahn Janheinz made a direct correlation between
polyrhythm and its symbolic representation of polytheism in African culture.\textsuperscript{188} However, Africans don’t play in polyrhythm—many rhythms—to reflect polytheism. With the vast range of pitches and voicings present in the instrumental ensemble, Africans play together in what Meki Nzewi calls melorhythm, the one melody that emerges from the Ensemble Thematic Cycle to reflect the relationship—the belonging—between all things.\textsuperscript{189}

Assuming that interconnectedness, rather than polytheistic animism is the basis for musical behavior in African-derived cultures explains why the key elements of Ensemble Thematic Cycle have endured forced intercontinental migration and personal and communal depravation throughout succeeding generations, and why this musical gesture survives in Black Gospel quartet music to this day. Intersubjectivity is the proper "frame of reference" from which to examine the retention of Africanisms in Black Gospel quartet music. Joseph H. Kwabena Nketia’s cultural factor approach adds the perspective of intersubjective analysis to previously attempted theoretical models which address objective, subjective and interobjective modes of analysis.

The cultural factor approach, while investigating musical, contextual, thematic and causal aspects of music making, fills the void in the analytical “equation” by addressing the relationship of interconnectedness—belonging—and carries the scholar logically from musical product to theorizing cultural concepts (Figure 10). The cultural factor approach objectively identifies the

\textsuperscript{188} Jahn Janheinz cited in Gerhard Kubik, \textit{Africa and the Blues}, 58. While Kubik doesn’t explicitly state that polytheism and polyrhythm are unrelated, he strongly implies that reducing African rhythm to merely a symbol of polytheism is a gross oversimplification.

\textsuperscript{189} Meki Nzewi, \textit{African Music}, 34.
musical behavior that functions as a sign vehicle, interobjectively studies the
cultural context, subjectively investigates the perceptions and creativity of
musicians, and intersubjectively draws conclusions about the causal, conceptual
paradigm that produces musical art.

Intersubjectivity serves as an analytical approach for Black Gospel quartet style and as the causal element in Black Gospel quartet "improvisation."
Ensemble Thematic Cycle structure in Black Gospel quartet music serves as the external form of the idea it symbolizes—the concept of "becoming something together." Intersubjectivity also describes the underlying concept of identity in the African-American community—a concept retained from traditional African culture.

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190. For more on musical gestures as symbols, see Chapter III – Moving from Description to Analysis – Semiology as it Relates to Identifying Musical Sign Vehicles.
THE MUSICAL GESTURE

The unique sound of Black Gospel quartet "improvisation" can be described and explained by rightly relating it to Ensemble Thematic Cycle—an African, musical concept. The Ensemble Thematic Cycle is the relationship between rhythmic patterns played by various instruments in an ensemble. The ensemble participants play rhythmic time-line patterns in a layered arrangement. Each "voice" in the ensemble recycles its time-line pattern. The time-line patterns vary in length and the voices that play them vary in timbre, but the overall affect of layering the time-line patterns creates a tapestry of sound from which an overall melodic pattern emerges. The resultant melody is called the melorhythm.

Ensemble Thematic Cycle is the significant musical form, or module, by which "improvisation" in most African-derived musics is recognized. In Black Gospel quartet music, ETC is the relationship between voices—both instrumental and human. Each voice recycles a time-line pattern. The ensemble members play time-line patterns of various lengths to create a melorhythmic affect. The melody that emerges from the layered, time-line patterns gives form to the Drive section of the Black Gospel quartet song.

The presence of ETC in Black Gospel quartet music recommends that the African-American community shares a common, philosophical, creative

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191. Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC) is "the significant musical form or module by which a piece of African music is recognised [sic]. It is the aggregate sound of the layers of role-themes [TLPs] in an ensemble. Its length and significant content is the lowest common multiple of the unequal lengths cum differentiated contents of all the compositional themes assigned the various instruments of an ensemble for the purposes of the performance-composition of a piece on any performance occasion or session," in Mek Nzewi, African Music, 44.
rationalization about music with traditional, African culture. Meki Nzewi’s definition of Ensemble Thematic Cycle states that it is the “significant musical form...by which a piece of African music is recognised [sic].” Nzewi continues:

If then, at first aural perception, we can tentatively categorise [sic] the provenance of music as African, there must be certain underlying Africa-peculiar formulae about musical constructs which account at macro and micro levels for such distinctions. The consistency of such phonic features recommends that they must derive from some common philosophical creative rationalizations [sic] about music. It becomes clear, therefore, that African musical intellection is guided by principles and standards of form and structure, some of which are common across vast ethnic groupings in the continent.”

As discussed in Chapter III - Moving from Description to Analysis, the purpose of applying semiology is to bring clarity to which musical gesture holds meaning in the mind of the creator and the listener. Semiology also reveals how the musical gesture, once identified, is able to stand for another experience, object or emotion—how it serves as a sign vehicle capable of bearing meaning.

The presence of ETC structure in Black Gospel quartet music indicates that Ensemble Thematic Cycle, found first in traditional African drum music, is currently an active part of the African-American "frame of reference" or Provisional Universe of Topic. Ensemble Thematic Cycle is a significant musical gesture that serves as an experiential form of topic in African-American music. The use of Ensemble Thematic Cycle in Black Gospel quartet music and the function of ETC as an experiential form of topic reveal how the musical gesture communicates identity in the African-American community. The persistent use of Ensemble Thematic Cycle form in Black Gospel propels ETC principles and


As musical gesture and an experiential form of Topic, Ensemble Thematic Cycle references African musical art. As discussed in Chapter II - Gospel Quartet Style, the cooperative style of the ring shout, first incorporated in the folk spiritual and then in the devotional revival song, is further reinterpreted in the B section of Black Gospel quartet songs like "Time to Testify." Key ETC elements such as layered time-line patterns, timbre and recycling offer new perspectives for analyzing and performing Black Gospel "improvisation."

**Layered Time-line Patterns**

The multi-linear form in Black Gospel mentioned by Portia Maultsby and Mellonee Burnim finds its equivalent in layering of time-line patterns in the Ensemble Thematic Cycle structure. Meki Nzewi describes this element of ETC as “the aggregate sound of the layers of role-themes” (time-line patterns or TLPs) in an ensemble. In the African drum ensemble, the master drummer sings or plays each participant’s time-line pattern so the ensemble members may learn their parts in rote manner. Each participant’s time-line pattern plays a vital role in the ensemble. These roles are: pulse (P), phrase referent (PR), action

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194. Nzewi attempts to indicate the dimension of interconnectedness between the time-line patterns by calling them “role-themes.” While the term “role” describes the ability of one time-line pattern to act upon the other time-line patterns, it also implies a sense of hierarchy that doesn’t exactly fit the Ensemble Thematic Cycle model. So while Nzewi defines one role as the “master instrument,” he does not mean that all the other time lines are subject to the “master.” Rather, the existence and ability of the master instrument is created and sustained by the existence of the other “roles,” in *African Music*, 44.

motivator (AM), obbligato (OB) and master instrument (M). Figure 11 represents the relationship between the time-line pattern roles.

Figure 11: Psychic Perception of Ensemble Thematic Cycle

The mind perceives the cycling layers in simultaneous layers of affect: the Primary Affect of the composite sound with defined length and depth (i.e., the Ensemble Theme), and the Secondary Affect of the five individualistically composed layers of sound with varied lengths and characters (i.e. role themes). It is important to note that each role theme, or time-line pattern, may be a different length, but all the time-line patterns repeat until, at a single point in time, all the time-line patterns converge and conclude simultaneously. This point in time is both the end of one cycle of ETC and the beginning of another.

The length and content of one Ensemble Thematic Cycle is the lowest common multiple (LCM) of the time-line patterns, or role theme layers. In this hypothetical example, the LCM is 18 cycles of P, the pulse theme (time-line pattern) as portrayed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Theme</th>
<th>Duration of one cycle</th>
<th>Ratio to Master Role Theme</th>
<th>Ratio to ETC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pulse (P)</td>
<td>$y^2 - y^2$</td>
<td>9 cycles in the time of M</td>
<td>18 cycles in an ETC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase Referent (PR)</td>
<td>$2(y^2 - y^2)$</td>
<td>4 ½ cycles in the time of M</td>
<td>9 cycles in an ETC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Motivator (AM)</td>
<td>$3(y^2 - y^2)$</td>
<td>3 cycles in the time of M</td>
<td>6 cycles in an ETC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obbligato (OB)</td>
<td>$4(y^2 - y^2)$</td>
<td>2 cycles in the time of M</td>
<td>4 cycles in an ETC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Instrument (M)</td>
<td>$9(y^2 - y^2)$</td>
<td>1 cycle</td>
<td>2 cycles in an ETC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the song “Time to Testify,” stomps and handclaps create the pulse role. The phrase referent time-line pattern is occupied by the trio of back-up singers. The action motivator time-line pattern goes to the electric guitar, and the lead singer takes the master instrument role. Due to the size of the ensemble and the nature of the obbligato role, it is absent from this musical example. The number of possible time-line patterns is necessarily limited by the number of musicians in the ensemble. Since the obbligato role interacts and accentuates the master instrument role, eliminating it is least detrimental to the musical goal of interconnectedness between the time-line patterns.197

In the African sense of belonging, individuals in the community, like time-line patterns in an ensemble, naturally assume different responsibilities. Their importance to the community, however, is not more or less vital than individuals with other sorts of roles. “Seen from the vantage point of traditional philosophy of existence,” writes Kazadi wa Mukuna, “an ensemble’s existence is a musical cosmos, a total that has meaning in function of its integral time-line patterns and from which each pattern derives its musical value.”198 Performance of ETC reflects an egalitarian view of humanity; each time-line pattern is responsible for a different aspect of the melorhythmic line, but each time-line pattern is vital to the melorhythmic effect. Kazadi wa Mukuna describes the stratification of time-line patterns in an interlocking relationship thus:

Although each pattern may appear simple individually, the difficulty in understanding the final rhythmic tapestry of a piece stems from

197. In live performances, the audience can enjoy interplay with the lead singer and respond to the ensemble in a form of spontaneous obbligato.

the relationship created by the combination of patterns. Each pattern contains holes that provide “receptacles” for other patterns, and so on. Although it may be perceived as a temporal part of the composition, the relationship between the patterns is by application also perceived as a melodic formula.\textsuperscript{199}

Alan Young, after an interview with Pilgrim Jubilee lead singer Clay Graham, describes the interconnected rhythmic feel of the Gospel song in terms that direct correspondence with the interlocking, ETC structure:

Much of the character of the Pilgrim Jubilee’s sound comes from the way the bass guitar propels the rhythm while the drums simultaneously hold it back—a push-pull effect that creates dynamic tension within the song. The lead singers then have the option of singing on the beat with the bass or fractionally behind with the drums. But it all comes undone if a drummer starts pushing. [Clay Graham’s quotation] “He has what we call a pocket that he has to get in. The song seem to be going faster than they are, but we always tell him to get in the pocket, to kinda back off—lay back.” Failure to “lay back” gives a double push to the song instead of the desired push-pull, the tempo starts to accelerate, and the singers find themselves trying to fit into an accompaniment that is no longer providing the foundation they need.\textsuperscript{200}

Figure 11 depicts the proper orientation of the time-line patterns to one another in a flexible and periodic arrangement. This model accurately represents the fact that the layered time-line patterns in ETC structure often have various lengths. Each time-line pattern plays a specific part in the melorhythmic whole, and enjoys a varying degree of freedom to move within space and time, yet all the time-line patterns reach a point of congruence and convergence that acts as a launch pad for the next recycle.

\textsuperscript{199} Kazadi wa Mukuna, “Creative Practices,” 242.

\textsuperscript{200} Young, \textit{The Pilgrim Jubilees}, 89
Melorhythm

The transcription of "Time to Testify" in Figure 12 represents the first of three cycles of the Ensemble Thematic Cycle. The first cycle of ETC occurs at 1'07" in the video recording. Subsequent recycles begin at 1'49" and 2'31". The first staff notates the melorhythm that emerges from layering the ensemble time-line patterns. The time-line pattern roles are notated by ensemble player in the staves below the melorhythm, and the pitches each time-line pattern contributes to the melorhythmic effect are highlighted by boxes in the first eight measures of the transcription. Staff two represents the lead singer (master instrument – M). Staff three is the unoccupied Obbligato role. Staves four and five represent the trio of backup singers (phrase referent – PR). Staves six and seven notate the electric guitar riff and bass guitar line (action motivator – AM). Staves eight and nine portray the stomps and handclaps of the ensemble and the audience (pulse – P).

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201. YouTube. "'Vintage' Pilgrim Jubilees."

202. Note that the melorhythmic pitch notated in m. 6 (and following) as F₃ highlighted in the bass guitar time-line pattern more accurately represents the convergence of definitely and indefinitely pitched instruments (bass guitar and stomp) at each point it occurs.
Figure 12: Transcription of the B, or Drive, section of the Black Gospel quartet song "Time to Testify" as recorded by The Pilgrim Jubilees in 1956 and arranged by Ensemble Thematic Cycle role.
The overall perception of the Ensemble Thematic Cycle is twofold: 1.) the melorhythm—the composite of cycling, simultaneous layers of affect, and 2.) The individual length and character of distinct time-line patterns. The phrase referent time-line pattern is the key to understanding the melorhythmic whole in the song "Time to Testify." The entire phrase referent time-line pattern performed by the backup singers is audible in the melorhythmic line. Other time-line patterns contribute to the syncopated ensemble melody in a broad range of complementary pitches. Two features of the "Time to Testify" melorhythm are especially characteristic of African drum ensemble: the medium range "call" (m. 2 to 3a) and high range "response" (3b to 4a) between the phrase referent role and the master instrument role, and the periodic, bass/stomp effect that follows the high, master instrument role theme and occurs in four-measure intervals (mm. 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, 26, 30).

Though the individual time-line patterns in this songs are of various lengths, the conclusion of all the time-line patterns regularly coincide in a culminating moment—the fulfillment of the Ensemble Thematic Cycle and one full statement of the melorhythm. The transcribed score is divided in 4/4 bars, but the division between two-bar sets is diminished by using a hash mark rather than a full barline. Since the cycle of one stomp and one handclap represents a pulse, the score, though written in 4/4 meter, represents four pulses to every eight, notated quarter notes. The four-pulse unit (2 measures = Pulse) played by the

203 Meki Nzewi also calls the melorhythm the "ensemble theme" as a point of comparison and contrast with the instrument role-themes (time-line patterns). Simha Arom called the layered, ensemble affect "isoperiodicity" in "The Constituting Features of Central African Rhythmic System: A Tentative Typology," *The World of Music* 24 (1984): 51-64.
stomp/handclap constitutes the smallest recycling time-line pattern in the ensemble (P). The electric and bass guitar action motivator time-line pattern is twice as long as the pulse time-line pattern (AM = 2P). The phrase referent time-line pattern is four times as long as the pulse time-line pattern (PR = 4P). The master instrument role is unique because it is asymmetrically subdivided into a phrase of five pulse units and three pulse units (M = 5P + 3P).

**Recycling**

By definition, the time-line patterns of the Ensemble Thematic Cycle are presented in cyclical fashion. However, time-line patterns are not repeated, in the Euro-American sense, but recycled. Musicians use the material in the time-line patterns to create new music. The pulse (P) and phrase referent (PR) roles spin out into time and space like a stream upon which the other themes play. Musical pulse is similar to the concept of breath that has periodicity, regularity and continuity, and yet no two breaths are identical.204 Through recycling, the time-line patterns and the resultant melorhythm are actually refreshed and reanimated. The pulse and phrase referent role time-line patterns re-circle or retrace their themes in virtually identical fashion throughout the duration of the performance-composition.

The lead singer, in the master instrument (M) role, displays the “most freedom to develop theme and interprete [sic] actions phonically in event-music types.”205 The lead role is not only supported by others in the ensemble, his role

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205. Ibid., 50.
is made possible by the others. Just as the tension and pressure exerted on the hull of a ship by the water allows the ship to move along the sea, the relationship between the lead singer, “back-up” singers and instruments provides an opening for the lead singer to feedback a variety of melodic and temporal innovations into the ensemble experience. The action motivator and phrase referent roles enjoy less flexibility, but they are the core of the “groove” set up by the ensemble.

The concept of recycling may be the most difficult for the Western mind to grasp because as soon as we begin to imagine it, we revert to a purely mechanical, ratio-driven pattern (See Figure 13). Kazadi wa Mukuna designates ETC in this manner:

An ensemble thematic cycle is a section of the composition in which all time-line patterns are recycled, regardless of the number of times an individual pattern recurs, before reaching a new starting point. The evolution of an ensemble thematic cycle is vital to the performance-composition process. This evolutionary process is based not on the repetition but on a recycling concept of each integral time-line pattern. Thus, a time-line pattern is *recycled* but not *repeated* with each recurrence, thereby providing a *same-but-different* pattern to the total creative process of the performance-composition.206

Consider a practical analogy proposed by Dion Forster to describe the interrelationships in African conscience and reflected in ETC. In a love story, any number of variables may occur from the moment a courtship begins to its closure in the marriage nuptials. Each aspect of the courtship is integrally connected to every other aspect of the courtship, but each aspect is, at the same time, flexible and prone to personal interpretation.

[Suppose the] whole outcome may be a desire for peace between two nations, a possible part of this outcome, amongst many other

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interventions (such as political alliances, trade negotiations, etc.) might be that the two prominent political families, one from each nation, are joined together in a common interest. One possible [interdependent element] that could facilitate this (among many others) is the marriage of two persons. Their happiness is facilitated by the fulfilment [sic] of certain emotional expectations (e.g. attraction and love). A poem might be one small contributor to the success of this venture. Well structured sentences, composed with carefully chosen words, made up of recognisable [sic] letters would be a further necessary element in fulfilling this aspect of the outcome.\footnote{207}

In Forster’s example, every aspect of the courtship is a recognizable “whole,” right down to the individual letters on the page of poetry. Yet infinite variety is possible in the execution of the courtship while proceeding toward the goal of fulfillment in the marriage ceremony. An Ensemble Thematic Cycle is periodic in the same sort of way. If a large series of poems were rapidly exchanged by courier between the prospective couple alongside a few extended letters shipped by sea between their mothers and fathers, and two long, slow, coastal camel-caravan shipments of gifts transferred between the bride and groom—we essentially see the whole ETC cycle concept—several complex, interrelated activities culminating in one remarkable moment for the two lovers, their parents and two nations.

Recycling in the B section of the Black Gospel quartet music is fulfilling in the same manner. If the goal is worship of the Creator, Savior and Sustainer, the experience of worship as a community is the event. The mode of delivery is the united song of the ensemble—the melorhythmic effect of Ensemble Thematic Cycle. The recycling of time-line patterns—pulse, action motivator, phrase referent and master instrument—is event-based just as the recycling of activities

\footnote{207. Foster, “Validation of Individual Consciousness,” 179-80.}
in our hypothetical love story is event-based. In African and African-American music, the activity in the performance space guides the intensity and duration of the recycling of the ETC form. In performance, ETC is perceived in sonic, visual and psychedelic dimensions. As Albert M. Opoku, director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble has described, dance and music are so closely connected that one "can see the music and hear the dance." The perception of ETC is poetic motion, an evocative and composite sensibility that has temporal span, tonal depth, emotional quality and mathematical quantity. Even in the concert hall, Black Gospel quartet members invite the audience to participate by "having church." The perception of ETC requires audience involvement and inspires fulfillment of the perceived requirements for spiritual service through the event performance-composition.

**Harmoniousness vs. Harmonization**

The interplay between the Black Gospel quartet voices is like the interplay between African drum ensemble instruments in that African drums are not perceived as percussive, they are perceived as melorhythmic. Therefore, as one, they create a harmonious, melodious affect.

Kazadi wa Mukuna pronounces conclusively:

Although an ensemble thematic cycle is rhythmically conceptualized, the evolutionary process of its fulfillment also engenders the melodic and harmonic dimensions of the

208. Psychedelic in the sense that participating in music making can influence perception.


performance-composition. The attainment of this level of perception is an affirmation of its musical fulfillment; that is, in a properly fulfilled ensemble thematic cycle, the relationship of time-line patterns, as rendered by differently pitched percussive instruments, produces well-defined melodic lines and a tapestry of harmonic sound.\(^{211}\)

The harmonious ensemble sound should not be confused with tonal harmony. The drive achieved by ETC structure is not drive toward harmonic resolution; it is a drive toward relationship between the time-line patterns. The Black Gospel drive is a striving that orients and validates the existence of each voice in the ensemble. The misconception that African musical principles have been supplanted by European harmonic progressions is why some authors perceive that Black Gospel quartet music “stalls” on a chord or combination of chords.\(^{212}\) When the drive, or B section, of the song commences, ETC principles engage, and the harmonic progressions common in the verse format are discarded for other musical aims.

Figure 13 is a graphic illustration of the ETC structure. This drawback of this model is that it implies a purely ratio-driven relationship between the ensemble time-line patterns. Figure 13 also appears to signal the termination of one cycle followed by a “re-start” of the time-line pattern layered effect. I often call this misconception of ETC the “Lather-Rinse-Repeat” model because repetition, thus portrayed, can seem quite arbitrary and even pointless. Nevertheless, Figure 13 serves as a helpful intermediary diagram. Figure 13 shows how the time-lines pattern roles in the Black Gospel quartet song “Time to


\(^{212}\) Allen, Singing in the Spirit, 119.
“Testify” depicted in Figure 11 are organized in the notational transcript (Figure 12) and in graphic lyrical form in Figure 14.

**Figure 13:** Graphic Representation of an Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC)

- **PR=** Phrasing Referent role – no variations allowed
- **AM1 & AM2=** Action Motivation role share a unilineal Ensemble Theme, but constitute two layers of ensemble sound – could develop sections of theme independently
- **OB=** Obbligato role is the aesthetic compliment for an ensemble – much freedom to develop theme
- **M=** Master Instrument role – most freedom to develop theme and interpret actions phonically in event-music types; also language simulation to communicate text in performance contexts
- **P=** Pulse role – normally no variations

*In this example, the ETC span is six Phrasing Referents (PR).*213

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Figure 14: The A section lyrics and graphic representation of the ETC structure in the B section of the Black Gospel quartet song, “Time to Testify” by the Pilgrim Jubilees. The lyrics in this drive section illustration are arranged by their ETC roles: Pulse (handclap and stomp), Action Motivator (electric guitar), Phrase Referent (backup trio) and Master Instrument (lead singer).

Key: F Maj

A Section:

[:00 – time elapsed]
I believe I'm justified by Jesus while I have this chance.
Whoa, justified by Jesus while I have this chance.
I believe I'm justified by Jesus while I have this chance.
I may not have this chance anymore.

[:27]
I believe I'll sing for Jesus while I have this chance.
I believe I'll sing for Jesus while I have this chance.
I believe I'll sing for Jesus while I have this chance.
You know, I may not have this chance anymore.

[:50 - spoken]
Listen! I believe every time ya' go, they'll know you've been born again.
You ought not to mind lettin' the world know that you know Jesus,
And not ashamed knowin' Him no where.
Listen!
**Time-line Pattern**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B Section</th>
<th>Pulse Theme</th>
<th>Phrase Referent (Backup Singers)</th>
<th>Master Instrument (Leader Singer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Master Instrument-Lead Singer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pulse (Handclap &amp; Stomp)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Action Motivator (Electric Guitar)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Master Instrument (Leader Singer)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXC. 1 [1:19]</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Say, &quot;I was on a Tuesday, He saved my soul.&quot;&quot;]</td>
<td><em>cate Erroneous content</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXC. 2 [1:49]</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wind. Somebody say, &quot;One Friday evening, late on a Sunday,&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EXC. 3 [1:31]</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evening, late on a Sunday evening, late on a Sunday</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Obbligato**

- Not present in this musical example

**Action Motivator-Rhythm Guitar**

- See transcription of this role in Figure 12

**Phrase Referent-Backup Singers**

- You ought to stand up and testify!
- You ought to stand up and testify!
- You ought to stand up and testify!
- You ought to stand up and testify!
- You ought to stand up and testify!
- You ought to stand up and testify!
- You ought to stand up and testify!
- You ought to stand up and testify!

**Pulse-Handclap & Stomp**

- Quarter note pattern (rest x rest x rest) continues throughout the cycle

**Pulse-Handclap**

- Quarter note pattern (rest x rest x rest) continues throughout the cycle

**Pulse-Stomp**

- Quarter note pattern (rest x rest x rest) continues throughout the cycle

**Master Instrument-Lead Singer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Length (equivalent to number of 4/4 measures)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pulse (Handclap &amp; Stomp)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Phrase Referent (Backup Singers)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Master Instrument (Leader Singer)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
<td><strong>PR</strong></td>
<td><strong>AM</strong></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (P)</td>
<td>4 (P)</td>
<td>8 (P)</td>
<td>5 + 3 (P)</td>
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CONTEXTUAL, THEMATIC AND CAUSAL ASPECTS OF BLACK GOSPEL QUARTET STYLE

When Black Gospel quartet "improvisation" is rightly related to Ensemble Thematic Cycle, the cultural context, creative themes and causal aspects of music in the African-American community also come into focus. The use of ETC structure in Black Gospel reveals the context of oral tradition and community identity where ETC thrives. Creative intention and artistic philosophy meet in event regulated, performance-compositions that exist as extensions of the African mental-cultural arts continuum.

Oral Tradition

ETC in the B section of Black Gospel song expresses and enhances community among African-Americans by referring to a shared, experiential form of topic passed along by oral tradition. Christopher Small states:

Afro-American musicking does not depend on literacy, that essential tool of [European and Euro-American] school—and state—socialization, nor does it require the formal instruction of compliant groups of pupils; its performance involves not stillness, isolation and abstract contemplation but movement, communality and involvement.214

When we say that African and African-American cultures exist and are transmitted in the context of oral tradition, we are saying more than, "I tell two people, and you tell two people; then all of the world will know." We are saying that the act of speaking is a generative process. It is the "materialization or externalization of the vibration of forces."215 To speak something makes it so, so

214. Small, Music of the Common Tongue, 186.
that every word of the speaker must reflect the truth of all that has come before him when he allows his breath to proceed out of his mouth. In Africa, when an elder speaks, he is connecting the listener with the power and truth inherently held in the existence of the universe. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya call the unity between the tangible and intangible realms, the “black sacred cosmos.”

In Black Gospel quartet singing, the context of aurality enables the singers to express a message of great power and authority. All performance studies of Black Gospel singing and biographies of Black Gospel singers mention the essential quality of power and authority, and the need for singers to “find their own voice” and “tell their story.” In his book, *Music of the Common Tongue*, Christopher Small describes the authority of the Gospel singer:

[The Gospel song] began as a spontaneous outpouring of religious emotion from the individuals within that community which was the congregation, interacting with it, the spontaneity mediated always through the idiom which came most naturally to the singers—that of the folksongs, hymns and hollers which were at around the same time giving rise to that other great Afro-American form, the blues. Their purpose was to testify, in song, to the power of their religious experience, to their very close and personal knowledge of their Jesus and to his ability to carry them through the worst that the society and the conditions of the time could do to them. Thus from the start, the key to the singer's power in the church was not the possession of a beautiful voice, though many have in fact been endowed with remarkable vocal qualities, but authority, the authority of one who has lived what he or she sings about, and the ability to communicate the sense of the experience. If you haven't lived it, they say, you can't sing it—though it is acknowledged also that 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings…' and the voices of children are often prized as much as those of their elders.
Gospel music is a way of getting the word of God out and is predicated on the belief that the Gospel message has vital force as stated by the prophet Isaiah:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
And do not return there without watering the earth  
And making it bear and sprout,  
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;  
So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;  
It will not return to Me empty,  
Without accomplishing what I desire,  
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.  
For you will go out with joy  
And be led forth with peace;  
The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you,  
And all the trees of the field will clap their hands.  

The power and authority of oral tradition meet the effects of recycling in event-based performance in this Psalm. By referring to the earth's hydrological cycle, the Psalmist sets up the recycling of the Gospel message—the message goes out, it accomplishes the goal for which it was sent, and it returns to the Creator in the form of praise. The word, thus gone out, has vital force to affect physical and psychical activity—the mountains, hills, trees and fields clap their hands with joy. This is the cumulative and generative affect of the Gospel text in the Black Gospel drive—it moves the ensemble and the audience to spiritual and active fulfillment of spiritual service.

The perception of power and authority evoked by recycling in the drive section of the Black Gospel quartet song can be overwhelming. As the ensemble


melorhythm recycles, it gains psychical energy that affects the audience physically, spiritually and emotionally. When Black Gospel musicians, through musical behavior, open an opportunity for participant-observers to engage actively with the Gospel message and the presence of God, the result is called “church wrecking”\(^\text{219}\) or causing members of the congregation to “fall out.” According to performance practices in the sanctified community, the presence of the Holy Spirit of God overwhelms the participant-observers in the Gospel experience. Congregants may be driven to ecstatic expression of happiness or they may be temporarily, physically incapacitated.

**Community Identity**

The context of community identity also factors very strongly into the presence of inter-rhythmic play and melorhythm in the Ensemble Thematic structure of the Black Gospel quartet song. Long called “cross-rhythm”\(^\text{220}\) or hemiola\(^\text{221}\) by European and American theorists, inter-rhythm occurs when two time-line patterns come into close proximity in time and space. Rather than operating at crossed or opposing purposes, the relationship between inter-rhythmic time-line patterns properly orients one to another within the ensemble. Inter-rhythmic play in Black Gospel quartet "improvisation" symbolizes ideals about the interconnectedness of relationships. The relationships that form between time-line patterns in the ensemble stem from the “African philosophy of


\(^{220}\) John Collins in Bischoff, *Listen to the Silence*.

inter-dependence in human relationships. Personal/group identity and strength develop through structures of physical and emotional tension and catharsis."^{222}

So although role themes “lean” upon or bounce off one another, they serve to build each other up.

Inter-rhythms in ETC represent, or take the external form of the concept of community identity. Through music, individuals in the community express deeper issues of social control and social roles. They say, “If I lean on you and you falter or move unpredictably, I may fall apart. We must all be faithful in our roles to serve the needs of our community.” Kofi Agawu states:

"Clash and conflict" are antithetical to African traditional philosophy, which is more likely to be communal and cooperative. African musicians play with competing accents in order to enhance pleasure, delight the ear, and stimulate spiritual renewal. Such flights are possible only as temporary, imagined, or simulated departures from solid ground.\(^{223}\)

In the African drumming ensemble, it is a musical fact that when inter-rhythm is not faithfully interpreted by any one individual, the entire structure of the ensemble theme crumbles.\(^{224}\) Alain Barker, student of Ruth Stone, described the concept of inter-rhythm thus:

[Compare] the use of some Western rhythmic patterns based on an organized down beat or conductor's beat to a house built on a concrete foundation. All parts relate to and depend upon that anchoring point in the ground...African performance, which uses different organizing beats is like a tent. The stakes in the ground hold ropes that depend upon tension between them to hold up the

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structure. African performance frequently depends upon multiple points of organization rather than [sic] a singular focus.\textsuperscript{225}

The perceived effect of ETC is generative and intensifying. Since the goal of ETC is to sense, experience and interact with the other time-line patterns of the Ensemble Thematic Cycle, the circularity of the musical gesture is neither futile nor fruitless. As ensemble members recycle their themes, they are, in a musical sense, presented with fresh opportunities to "dance" with a variety of partners—this time stepping with the pulse, that time swinging off the action motivator, now cajoling the master instrument in an embrace against which he flirts and strains, but from which he never hurtles out of control.\textsuperscript{226} When the carnal knowledge of each element of the thematic ensemble is consummated, only then can the cycle satisfactorily close.

The concept of inter-rhythm depends upon temporal and spatial dimensions as well as the musical qualities of tone and timbre. In order for the melorhythm to sound properly, the layered time-line patterns must be played by instruments and voices of various pitches and timbres. Recycling, inter-rhythmic play among the layered time-line patterns produces the overall affect of unilinearity—of many rhythmic time-line patterns emerges one melody—the melorhythm. The melorhythmic effect of unilinearity is conceived rhythmically, but perceived melodically.\textsuperscript{227} Melorhythm is evident in African and African-

\textsuperscript{225} Alain Barker cited in Stone, \textit{Music in West Africa}, 84.

\textsuperscript{226} In the transcription of "Time to Testify," compare the downbeat of m. 6 to the downbeat of m. 30. In successive statements of the master instrument (lead voice) time-line pattern, the master instrument’s increasing inter-play with the downbeat ultimately leads to an unvocalized accent of the downbeat just before the conclusion of the ETC cycle (Figure 12).

\textsuperscript{227} Kazadi wa Mukuna, "Creative Practice," 240.
derived cultures that organize ensemble music according to ETC principles. Such music demonstrates the speech-song-dance relationship\textsuperscript{228}, where verbal language is encoded in song and all instruments, including the drums, sing.\textsuperscript{229} Language and instrumentation are united in the music of the African mental-arts continuum, and melorhythmic themes that begin as drum ensemble music can also be directly transferred to the voice.\textsuperscript{230}

Melorhythm reflects the social context of community in African and African-American musical art. In \textit{Radical Knowing: Understanding Consciousness through Relationship} (2005), Christian de Quincey writes:

\ldots we are definitely not alone\ldots we don’t form relationships, \textit{they form us}. We are constituted by webs of interconnection. Relationship comes first, and we emerge as more or less distinct centers within the vast and complex networks that surround us. In this new view, we are noted in the complex web of life. Each of us is a meeting point, a center of convergence, for countless threads of relationship. We are moments in time and locations in space where the universe shows up—literally, as a phenomenon (from the Greek \textit{phainomenon}, “to appear” or “to show”). In other words, in this “new story” we emerge as subjects from intricate networks of interrelatedness, from webs of intersubjectivity.\textsuperscript{231}

\textsuperscript{228} See Appendix A.


\textsuperscript{230} Meki Nzewi, \textit{African Music}, 34. In the case of the Puerto Rican \textit{jíbaro} genre, the melorhythmic concept is transferred from drum ensemble to other instrumental ensembles. Angel G. Quintero-Rivera writes about the incorporation of African drumming tradition and ETC structure in the Puerto Rican \textit{jíbaro} genre: “With a sound so radically different from the drums, a brilliant metallic sound which evoked the string instruments of Spanish music, the \textit{cuatro} camouflaged in our contradictory counter-plantation world the African presence of its real, but denied constitution. No one could imagine (except those living these rhythms) that \textit{jíbaro} music was full of camouflaged drums, in Angel G. Quintero-Rivera, “The Camouflaged Drum: Melodization of Rhythms and Maroonage Ethnicity in Caribbean Peasant Music,” in \textit{Music and Black Ethnicity}, ed. Gerhard Béhague, 47-63 (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 55-7.

\textsuperscript{231} Christian de Quincey cited in Forster, “Validation of Individual Consciousness,” 267.
In Black Gospel quartet music, much is made of the selection of vocal timbres for precisely this reason. To create melorhythm in the ETC format, the melorhythmic roles of each theme must be audibly distinguishable. In fact, Black Gospel “quartets” frequently include more than four members to accommodate the desired variety and intensity of vocal timbres. Willie Johnson of the Golden Gate Quartet states:

I think with this quartet what we tried to create was what I used to call “vocal percussion”. It was just like a drum but it had notes to it, it had lyrics to it you see. And you had different beats, you had different accents. Like a bunch of guys beating a tom-tom somewhere, and that’s what it had to sound like. It all had to be done sharply and together, along with the harmony, and we sang simple chords. We were trying to sing chords that sounded good to the ear.\(^{232}\)

In summary, the context of oral tradition and community identity are reflected in Black Gospel quartet in the Ensemble Thematic Cycle structure through recycling that produces an effect of power and authority in the ensemble sound, through rhythmic inter-play that emphasizes the relationship between ensemble members and participant observers, and through melorhythm that is emerges from layered time-line patterns and the great variety of timbres created by the Gospel quartet.

**Event Performance-Composition**

The thematic aspect of Black Gospel Quartet performance has to do with the creative intention and perceptions of the musicians themselves. Black Gospel singers perceive their performance in terms of event-based performance-

composition in the same way that African musicians perceive music as part of a continuum of behaviors that correlate to external circumstances. The musical gesture of ETC is regulated by the attendant event in the performance venue.


> It is in some sort of ceremonial (ritual) form—even if that form be hardly more than a recitation of a myth, the consultation of an oracle, or the decoration of a grave—that the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men and the general conception of the order of existence which they formulate for men meet and reinforce one another. In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world.

Performance-composition in Ensemble Thematic Cycle structure fuses African roots to African-American musical behavior and the Gospel experience to human existence. African performance-composition is event-based. In place of a concept of “music,” Africans participate in songs that correlate to or comment upon life experiences. The Ensemble Thematic Cycle is predicated upon the presumption that mankind is spiritual, and that communication with the immaterial realm is part of the energy activated in performance. Recycling themes in Ensemble thematic cycle balance the temporal and the eternal. In an interview with Ray Allen, New York City Black Gospel quartet singer David Stewart reflects:

> Gospel music is spiritual entertainment, and it’s something that was given to black people by God. And the Bible tells you, make a joyful noise. So you see it really is entertainment for spiritual people. You feel good, you have a good time in the name of the

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Lord, no matter where you are—in church, a school, a theater, no matter where!234

Recycling in the drive section of the Black Gospel quartet song creates a sense of emotional tension and resolution. The recycling of pulse and phrase referent time-line patterns prepares the mind and the emotions by creating a point of departure and a state of suspension.235 From that point of departure, action motivator, obbligato, and master instrument roles are at liberty to play, and, thereby, to create a state of increasing energy and intensity. In church and on the concert stage, Gospel music performance is part of a continuum of activity that runs from speech (testimony and prayer) to dance. The fulfillment of the Ensemble Thematic Cycle corresponds to occurrence of other verbal or physical aspects of worship. Under normal circumstances, the culmination of the Gospel song would be directed by cues in the performance venue.236

The music maker and the listener perceive the conclusion237 of the Ensemble Thematic Cycle when the purpose of the corresponding event is fulfilled.238 The ensemble participants, especially the one who takes the role of “master instrument,” observes cues in the performance venue related to audience participation, emotional experience, dance behavior, spiritual or physical event parameters, and other culturally defined objectives of the specific event to determine when the ensemble’s musical goals have been achieved.

236. Ibid., 67; Meki Nzewi, Musical Practice and Creativity (Bayreuth: Iwalewa-Haus, 1991), 140.
To outsiders, the nuances of performance-composition can be completely “lost in translation.” The conclusion of the ETC form can appear abrupt or unfulfilling to those who lack understanding of the underlying event-function of the music. Such was the experience of a London Guardian music critic who reported during the European tour of Nigerian pop legends Ebenezer Obey and King Sunny Ade:

Sunny Ade…functions less as a star performer than as a conductor orchestrating a series of musical dialogues. [His] show offered a marked contrast with western song structure and our notions of musical climax. Although the set was divided into songs of varying mood and tempo one had the impression it was all part of the same fabric. Each number ended abruptly—in mid sentence [sic] as it were—yet without any feeling of discontinuity. They could have all started at any point and played for ever [sic]. Their skills and joyful dedication had the effect of making the panorama of English rock music look jaded and trite. 239

Stripped of its event context, video-taped performances like “Time to Testify” seem particularly incoherent. 240 The studio-recorded version of this Pilgrim Jubilee song falls short of the ideal for event-based performance-composition because the performers, the audience and their responses are all staged. There is little liberty, due to the constraints of time and space, to pursue a sense of interconnectedness with the audience, and, therefore, the entire performance lacks a viable context of raison d’être. Just as if someone pulled the cork on the ocean, the ensemble plays through exactly three cycles of


layered time-line patterns and then closes their performance with a cued round of applause.\textsuperscript{241}

The sound stage setting and the limitations of mid-twentieth century video recording technology effectively eliminates the development of performance-composition in this version of “Time to Testify.” Other than occasional vocal interjections from the backup trio, the interplay between the obbligato and the master instrument is largely absent from this piece. In the studio, the audience politely claps on prescribed beats that mimic the staged performance. In a more unaffected setting, like the church or concert stage, the audience would play with the ensemble with hand clapping and tambourine playing to create the obbligato time-line pattern. The video production team, charged with producing a clearly audible recording that highlights the Gospel singing group has curtailed the development of performance-composition by creating an artificial setting and an arbitrary time limit for developing the ETC form.

\textbf{Philosophical Concepts from African Cultures}

As a sign vehicle, Ensemble Thematic Cycle is the external form of internal beliefs and ways of knowing. Meki Nzewi has said, “traditional musics are rationalised [sic] mediation and transformation of nature, life and the people’s world view.”\textsuperscript{242} The world view of a culture encompasses beliefs about the nature of the universe, the self and the roles of human beings in society. African-Americans and Euro-Americans espouse decidedly different points of view.

\textsuperscript{241} YouTube. "'Vintage' Pilgrim Jubilees."

\textsuperscript{242} Meki Nzewi, \textit{African Music}, 41.
regarding the universe, and the role of human beings within society. Correspondingly, the mental-cultural products of both communities are detectibly affected by their beliefs and perceptions.

At issue are two similar terms: ratiocination and rationalization. If ratiocination is the express product of perception, then rationalization is the process by which observable and quantifiable laws that govern the universe translate into the pattern for human behavior. Ratiocination involves how perceptions of the universe relate to human behavior, and rationalization addresses why perceptions of the universe validate human behavior. So when we want to know how something should be done, our communal understanding of the universe informs our behavior. When we want to evaluate to appropriateness of behavior, our understanding of the universe either refutes or supports our thinking.

Recycling and the connection between speech and song present in Ensemble Thematic Cycle reflect ratiocination and rationalization of philosophical concepts from African cultures. Apart from religious doctrine or dogma, there are certain beliefs about cosmology and humanity that are widely spread among African cultures—chief among them is the perceived connection between the immaterial and the material realm in everyday experience. The traditional, African way of “knowing” extends to the African-American community and affects the African-American mental-cultural arts. Through the practice of Ensemble Thematic Cycle in Black Gospel quartet singing, African-Americans exhibit methods of sensitizing knowledge that correspond to the African humanistic

243. See Appendix G.
paradigm.\textsuperscript{244} Ruth Stone summarizes the affect of the African cultural arts and concludes, "The music of Africa performed represents a vitality, a mosaic in motion, a balance of the arts and everyday life. Through music people can reorder their feelings and live life with renewed vigor."\textsuperscript{245}

African cultural arts are grounded in African cosmology, and the resultant philosophy of life. According to African teaching about the origin of the universe and the creation of man, God spoke. As the Komo teach among the Bambara people, "The Word, Kuma, is a fundamental force emanating from the Supreme Being himself—Maa Ngala, creator of all things. It is the instrument of creation: 'That which Maa Ngala says, is!'\textsuperscript{246} In the creation of man, Maa Ngala imparted the potentialities of ability, willing and knowing—a reflection of Maa Ngala's own mind. Then the creator stirred the mind of man with the breath of his own speech. All the senses are used to perceive Maa Ngala's speech, and 'listening' involves hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and seeing. Therefore, "everything in the universe speaks: everything is speech that has taken on body and shape."\textsuperscript{247}

The generative power of speech and behavior based on speech, such as music and dance, is released through recycling as expressed in the concept of circular futurity. As Kazadi wa Mukuna has said, "Musical composition or dance exists in perpetuity and does not necessarily become 'a past referential framework for a new creative experience every subsequent performance


\textsuperscript{245} Stone, \textit{African Music Performed}, 271.

\textsuperscript{246} Amadou Hampâté Bâ, "The Living Tradition," 166; Genesis 1:3 and John 1:1.

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., 170.
occasion,” as Meki Nzewi suggests. Recycling within the ETC form and recreation of an event performance-composition is not repeating, but bringing the past into being in the present.

Recycling, according to the concept of circular futurity, is a means of training the mind to deep understanding through experience. According to traditional African philosophy, time, in music and in nature, is cyclic and never ends; it can be “bent, interrupted and resumed at any logical point in the sequence.” Because a growing acquaintance with a person, place or thing deepens our understanding, appreciation and mastery of it, “repetition” is never stale, uninteresting or pointless. It is, rather, always intellectually invigorating, instructive and purposeful. In essence, when ideas are recycled, they are brought from the past and restored in the present.

Recycling in Black Gospel quartet music takes the external form of the concept of circular futurity. My personal experience as a backpacker is relevant to this point. As I hike any new trail, outbound trail always seems longer and more confusing than retracing the inbound trail. The familiarity of the return path creates psychical relief, while simultaneous affording an increased opportunity to observe the scenery and enjoy the companionship along the way. Community play in Ensemble Thematic Cycle is enjoyable for just the same reason. Returning to the familiar stimulates confidence, adeptness and

resourcefulness. This is the concept of circular futurity—that the future is a replaying of the past. In "replay" mode, the individual, as a member of the community, is prepared and capable of negotiating the pitfalls and benefits of any particular situation. Circular futurity is a key theme in African oral tradition. An African proverb says, "He whom a snake has bitten fears a slow-worm [a kind of lizard]." Presently, that same concept has been adapted to Jamaican terms: "If snake bite you and you see lizard, you run." Familiarity enhances and liberates creativity because the mind is able to perceive, anticipate, perform and appreciate subtle variation within the pattern of recycling.

Among African-American Christians, the biblical basis for worshipping God and the African philosophy of existence find congruence. Since the Almighty spoke the universe into existence, the Black Gospel declares, “Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—the LORD, who remains ever faithful.”

Since reality is perceived with all the senses, the community can sing, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” Recycling the lyrics in ETC format is not "mindless repetition" because the Bible says, “Praise Him for his

251. It is for this reason that Africans, traditionally, excel in interpersonal relations. Africans are not “inclined to meditiveness like Eastern peoples, nor are they “inquisitive searchers” like Europeans, but primarily “penetrating observers, relying more on intuition than on the process of reasoning.” Dunduza Chisiza cited in Roberts, Black Music of Two Worlds, 62.


254. Psalm 146:5-6.

255. Psalm 34:8.
mighty deeds; praise him according to His excellent greatness," and “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”

Furthermore, the essence of God’s nature is not in conflict with the African philosophy of existence—even in identification with the person of Jesus Christ.

Christian minister Mthokozisi Maseko states:

…as the Bible is to Christianity, so is ubuntu [the concept of belonging] to an African person. Ubuntu is therefore the “Isintu Bible”. This “Isintu Bible” is an oral Bible, since our forefathers lived in a prescientific age. To have ubuntu is to have what is expected of a human person, which is to embrace family values, the community values and today we can add that it embraces the values of Christ. Jesus could rightly be said that he had the value of ubuntu in its totality. In as much as he embraced our human form, so he also embraced this value.

The inter-connectedness of all things generated by the speech of Almighty God is not unique to Africans in diaspora in North America. It is ancient knowledge that has found its fulfillment in the biblical narrative. Ensemble Thematic Cycle is a powerful way of connecting knowledge of the divine to the human spirit in community. Because ETC structure prevalent in Black Gospel music resonates with community concepts about the universe, the nature of human beings, the function of society and the ideals of truth, African-Americans, both Christian and non-Christian, identify with the Black Gospel sound.

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256. Psalm 150:2.


Ensemble Thematic Cycle, as expressed in Black Gospel "improvisation," is neither polytheistic nor monotheistic, it is humanistic. ETC in the Black Gospel drive reveals a humanity that emanates from the word of the Almighty God, experiences unity with the material and immaterial realms and enjoys relationship with other human beings in community. The success of Black Gospel choirs in secular communities attests to the strong relational function of the Gospel genre. Linda B. Walker, professor and director of the Kent State University Gospel Choir, has noted the diversity of participants under her direction. Singers of many ethnicities, ages, religious affiliations and gender identities make up the Kent State University Gospel Choir. In my experience with the Kent State University Gospel Choir in 2006, singers who self-identified as Christian and non-Christian, gay, straight, lesbian and trans-gendered persons participated with a similar sense of belonging and mutual respect. Diverse communities that share a vested interest in egalitarian values and cooperative communities are drawn to Gospel performance because of the ideals inherently symbolized by Ensemble Thematic Cycle structure.

CHAPTER VI

SOUTHERN GOSPEL QUARTET STYLE:
CONTEXTUAL, THEMATIC, CAUSAL AND MUSICAL ASPECTS

Just as Black Gospel quartet music remains "phonologically and syntactically African,"
260 in its musical, contextual, thematic and causal aspects, Southern Gospel quartet music remains phonologically and syntactically European. Folklorist Charles Wolfe has called Southern Gospel the "fourth great genre of grass roots music," 261 and classifies it beside jazz, blues and country music as a uniquely American phenomenon. It would be a counterproductive error to assume Black Gospel and Southern Gospel are unrelated, or that one is a "pale imitation" of the other. 262 The dynamics between the African-American and Euro-American communities are complex, and so are the musical borrowings and imitations that occur between them. James Goff, Jr. contends that during the formative eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

White and black southerners lived, worked, and worshiped together even though custom and economic status often sanctioned the firm foundation of white supremacy...Ironically, the area of life most divided in 1900 was religious life...a by-product was an increased separation and preference for gospel music. The timing was pivotal, for the late decades of the nineteenth century would be the crucial


262. Goff, Close Harmony, 4.
decades in the development of the shape-note songbook publishing business and also in the formation of early quartet styling. Black and white singers would still listen to and learn, and consciously borrow from each other, but segregation in general would mean that their audiences and the confines of their market would be separate for at least the first six decades of the twentieth century.²⁶³

Because the experiences of African-Americans and Euro-Americans are intertwined, they share many experiential topics in their respective Universes of Topic. Among these are choral homophony, call and response choruses, lined-hymn texts, shape-note hymns and devotional revival songs. Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartet musics share many musical gestures and manifest similarities in style.²⁶⁴ However, the sonic architecture of Black Gospel and Southern Gospel "improvisation" reveals the foundationally disparate philosophical concepts of their respective communities.

The Euro-American community context is dependent upon literary tradition and individual identity. African-American culture is dependent upon oral tradition and community identity. Southern Gospel musicians create music with the intention of improvising according to principles of tonal harmony—principles that yield an exploratory style of improvisation in the B section of the Southern Gospel song. African-Americans often engage in passages of Ensemble Thematic Cycle in the B section of the Black Gospel song, creating performance-compositions that correspond to the psychical intensity of activity in the performance venue. In Southern Gospel music, exploratory improvisation functions as a symbolic

²⁶³ Goff, Close Harmony, 5.

²⁶⁴ Small, Music of the Common Tongue, 137.
LITERARY TRADITION

From the emergence of the European culture out of the prehistorical ages, Western music has been notated. If fact, the earliest form of distinctly Western “art” music emerged from an attempt to re-create music from Greek literary sources. Renaissance scholars in the collegium musicum, with newly retranslated works recovered from Arab-speaking lands, strove to reproduce the interpretation of Greek epic poetry and theatre that represented the roots of Western culture.

The result was monody. In monodic structure, the voice and instruments combine their affects to support the “one song”—the gestalt effect should be an emotionally evocative interpretation of the lyric sustained by both voice and instruments. Since the written word was foundational to the advent of Western music, the morphological and syntactical structure of Western language impacted the development of song style. European languages are not tonal. Therefore, meaning is not affected by pitch inflection of the various syllables in the lyric. Without the need to attend to pitch inflection, Western musicians have been free to pursue meaning in music through emotionally symbolic aspects of melodic contour rather than semantic aspects of melodic contour as in tonal African languages. Without constraints upon pitch as it relates to meaning, European composers gradually began to accept the movement from emotional tension,
caused by dissonance, to emotional resolution, caused by consonance, as the basis for melodic contour and the supporting instrumental accompaniment.\textsuperscript{265}

INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

This development begs the question, “Why choose to experience discomfort for the sake of regaining comfort?” The question points toward basic tenants of dualistic philosophy of existence in the European experience. First, the essence of existence, in European philosophy, is individuality, stemming from Descartes’ claim that, “I think, therefore I am.” This European argument for validity and existence has yielded a solitary idea of being. The effect of being both master and creator of one’s own destiny is, at the same time, emboldening and threatening because the results and the consequences of human behavior are the sole responsibility of the individual. This causal aspect of European culture shapes the context for music making and the themes that develop in Western musical performance practices.

Without any corroborating factors from the environment or the community, individuals in the Western world believe in their own existence as well as their right and obligation to be masters of their own destinies. This self-determinism shapes the context of European society by centering upon the nuclear family and state citizenship. As societal structures, the family and the state are voluntarily self-directed alliances created for the mutual benefit of those who chose to partake in them. Rather than growing out of or being an extension of relationship

\textsuperscript{265} Albert L. Blackwell, \textit{The Sacred in Music} (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 133.
with others, Europeans view themselves as participants in and beneficiaries of relationship with others.

In African cultures, individuals depend upon and relate to their traditional roles within the broader community, but in European culture, individuals depend upon and relate to their unique roles within the nuclear family. The needs and intentions of the individual are paramount in the European paradigm. Europeans, and, by inheritance, Euro-Americans, generally view life as a progression of events that can be manipulated, dominated, controlled and utilized to create something novel, unique, improved and/or beautiful. Rather than viewing life in circular futurity, Europeans view life in linear uncertainty. Sociologists also call the European paradigm Cartesianism, for the common habit of Europeans to wander into the unknown, and then to explore, conquer and map unexplored mental, relational or physical territory.266

PERFORMANCE PRACTICES BASED UPON TONAL HARMONY

To my knowledge, Douglas Harrison, in his article “Why Southern Gospel Music Matters,” has been the first scholar to dissect the anthropological implications of how and why Southern Gospel music sounds as it does.267 Harrison asserts that Southern Gospel, along with other forms of Euro-American mental-cultural arts, mediate the gap between the Euro-American frame of reference and Protestant doctrine. Harrison states, “These stories and sermons allowed readers and audiences to feel there was some room for self-


determination (or at least self-expression) in a world theologically understood to be pre-ordained from the foundations of time.” Harrison quotes the lyrics of the song “Oh That Wonderful Promise” recorded by The Perrys, a family quartet, and comments upon the meaning of the text:

He [Christ] will defend the poor and needy,
And that is me, oh that is me.
When I am weak, he giveth power,
And just any moment he'll be here with the help I need.

Southern Gospel lyrics imagine a variety of situations from Christian life and dramatize a range of topics germane to Protestant faith. In general, Southern Gospel songs operate much like this Perrys lyric. Southern Gospel songs describe or allude to some form of separation—be it alienation and disaffiliation from God, longings to go “home” to heaven, or, in this case, destitution (being “poor and needy,” whether physically, materially, or spiritually). Ultimately, the separation is theologically resolved by divine assistance and musically resolved by harmonic symmetry—a melodic and harmonic arch from consonance to dissonance and back to consonance. This sense of harmonic symmetry serves as the aesthetic foundation for Southern Gospel quartet music.

The deliberate and structured movement through harmonic progressions from tension to resolution serves as an emotive icon in Southern Gospel music. The aural quality of various chords in tonal harmony serve like the map coordinates, or way points, in musical time and space. Euro-Americans sense

269. Ibid.
movement and progress through musical space in relation to the perceived
dissonance and consonance of the chord structure. Again Harrison writes:

For southern gospel insiders, this ultimate return of harmonic
symmetry is a familiar and deeply satisfying triumph of musical
consonance and beauty over dissonance and incongruence. As
Robert McManus writes, the emphasis in southern gospel on this
dissonance-to-consonance harmonic movement “forms the musical
metaphorical parallel with the extreme ‘rightness’ and ‘wrongness’”
of evangelical theology. The lyrics and music call into being a
contradictory or dissonant situation in one breath (I am poor and
needy but he will defend me…I am weak but he giveth power) in
order to resolve and undo it in another: “any moment he’ll be here
with the help I need.” The song’s ending is always consonant,
God’s sovereignty and faithfulness to his children always
(re)affirmed.270

In the same way that African rhythmic time-line patterns validate and locate each
other because of their relationship in time and space within the ensemble,
European harmonic dissonances and consonances create and amplify one
another one another because of their relationship in time and space within the
ensemble.

EXPLORATORY IMPROVISATION

The exploration of consonance and dissonance within the bounds of tonal
harmony provides the basis for improvisation in the B section of the Southern
Gospel quartet song. When combined with the penchant for self-directed
exploration and the tendency to “chart one’s own course,” the quest for
expression of consonance and dissonance can have spectacular results.

In Southern Gospel, the order and quality of chords in harmonic
progression—their harmonic symmetry—serves as an emotive form of topic. The

movement from a chord of one quality to a chord of another quality produces a certain feeling or “psychical action”\textsuperscript{271} that references a specific emotion in the European Provisional Universe of Topic. Repetition of the movement from consonance to dissonance and back again is a form of musematic repetition—repetition that creates structure and has meaning because of the order and quality of its parts. \textsuperscript{272}

By comparison, the Black Gospel quartet drive manifests discursive repetition. Discursive repetition creates structure and has meaning more significant than the sum of its parts. Ensemble Thematic Cycle is discursive because the perception of ETC is not “many layered time-line patterns;” ETC is perceived as the communal creation of the melorhythmic line. As mentioned previously, harmonic progressions in the B section of a Black Gospel song may appear to “stall,”\textsuperscript{273} but harmonic progressions in the B section of a Southern Gospel song may appear to “take off.” African-American repetition is a function of aurality and reflects the rhythmic inflection in the tradition of African drum music;\textsuperscript{274} its essence is circular, diachronic and interdependent. Euro-American repetition is a function of literacy harmonic progressions in the tradition of tonal harmony; its essence is linear, synchronic and self-sufficient.

Southern Gospel music is not event regulated as is Black Gospel Music. The B section of a Southern Gospel song ends when the creative efforts of the

\textsuperscript{271} Hanslick, \textit{The Beautiful in Music}, 37.


\textsuperscript{273} Allen, \textit{Singing in the Spirit}, 119.

\textsuperscript{274} Kazadi wa Mukuna, “Creative Practices,” 242; and Dargan, \textit{Lining out the Word}, 11-2.
performer(s) are exhausted in the exploration of improvisatory harmonic progressions. Rather than "stalling" on a chord or the juxtaposition of a two-chord combination, the B section in the Southern Gospel style manifests extended musical phrases with complete harmonic progressions and cadences consistent with the rules of European tonal harmony. Euro-American improvisation in the B section appears to satisfy curiosity and quench the desire for pleasure through novelty. Dr. H. M. Poteat, a twentieth century critic of Southern Gospel describe the "gymnastic contortions for the basso, death-defying gyrations for the tenor, peripatetic circumambulations for the alto," and all this "while the soprano bravely pegs away at the tune."275

The musical gestures of harmonic symmetry and exploratory improvisation have practical implications for the members of the Southern Gospel quartet ensemble. While the function of ETC in Black Gospel supports a cooperative environment among the members of the ensemble, the exaggerated importance of the bass line in tonal harmony, tends to exaggerate the role of the bass singer in Southern Gospel quartets beyond that of the other singers.276 In fact, though the bass singer may not lead the Southern Gospel quartet as MC or "front man," he is frequently the de facto head of the organization as far as management, mentorship and musicianship are concerned. Bass singers often determine the membership of the quartet, the venues in which they will sing and the concert repertoire. On a national level, it was veteran bass singer J. D. Sumner277 who

275. H. M. Poteat cited in Goff, Close Harmony, 41.

276. Ibid., 210.
cast the vision for the National Quartet Convention.\(^{278}\) The "star status" that accompanies the bass singing role in Southern Gospel quartets either breeds unwavering stability or constant turmoil to the group dependent upon whether the bass stays and leads or is lured away to join forces with a succession of groups appearing to offer greener pastures.\(^{279}\)

The importance of the bass singer in Southern Gospel quartets stands in sharp contrast to the role of bass singing in Black Gospel, and strengthens the argument against tonal harmony as a basis for African-American performance-composition. In the absence of harmonic progressions in African-American Gospel, the importance of the bass line is minimized, and, thus, the bass singing role within the ensemble is also reduced. Mellonee Burnim affirms the reduced role of bass singing in Black gospel compared to Southern Gospel. She says, "Left to fend for themselves, or overpowered by the upper voices and the Fender bass, the potential harmonic interest the bass/baritone could provide goes untapped and unnoticed."\(^{280}\) Horace Clarence Boyer seconds the point by reporting that in professional Black choral singing of the 1980s, the "bass" voice had all but disappeared.\(^{281}\)


\(^{279}\) Montell, Singing the Glory Down, 82.


\(^{281}\) Boyer, How Sweet the Sound, 140; and Walker, "Developing a Gospel Choir," 24. Dr. Walker states that Gospel choir songs are performed in Soprano-Alto-Tenor arrangements and bass voices should double another voice part, usually the soprano part.
The quest for novelty creates an atmosphere supporting individual flamboyance and ingenuity in piano improvisation as well. Subsequently, volatility and changeability in the piano role is common in the Southern Gospel quartet community. It is somewhat ironic that even among groups that don’t accept instrumental excesses, such as drum or electric guitar solos, mastery of piano improvisation is held in high esteem. In her dissertation, *Development of the African American Gospel Piano Style (1926-1960): A Socio-Musical Analysis of Arizona Dranes and Thomas A. Dorsey* (2009), Idella Johnson has studied the identifiable musical gestures incorporated in twentieth century Gospel piano style.\(^{282}\) The impact of secular African-American pianists on the Southern Gospel piano style cannot be understated, and the roots of this influence are tied up in the use of piano in popular entertainment and in Euro-American churches.\(^{283}\)

The Southern Gospel song "Crossing Chilly Jordan," sung by the Blackwood Brothers Quartet, displays the virtuosic piano playing and other extreme qualities of exploratory improvisation discussed in this section.\(^{284}\) The song follows a route through the AB form employing conventional harmonic progressions. The most clearly audible result of the I-I\(^6\)-IV-V\(^7\)/V-I progression in

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283. Ironically, although African-American popular music drove innovation in Southern Gospel piano-playing, the role of piano players in the African-American community, especially in the Black Gospel quartet style, is much less significant than among their Southern Gospel counterparts. Black Gospel quartets were, more often than not, a *capella* groups. Among African-Americans, pianos were scarce, even in church, and when instrumental accompaniment of Black Gospel quartets became more prevalent, the preference for less expensive, more portable instruments, such as guitars and drums, clearly won the day.

the second half of each verse and each chorus is the persistent ascending bass figure (F, A, B-flat, B, C) resolving to the tonic (F). Within the B section, the singers entertain brief excursions through the ensemble cast through each repetition of the chorus, and conclude in a rollicking and exuberant final cadence accompanied by a descending, improvisational piano cadenza.
“Crossing Chilly Jordan” by The Blackwood Brothers (F Maj.)

A Section (F Maj.)

Verse one
(Second tenor voice leading)
On the Jordan (on the Jordan) banks I stand (banks I stand)
An the river (and the river) is deep and wide
I will have no fear for the Lord is near
I’m gonna reach (I’m gonna reach) the other side

Chorus
(First tenor voice leading)
I’m gonna cross (I’m gonna cross) Bass: the chilly Jordan
The Lord himself (the Lord himself’s) Bass: gonna be my guide
(Second tenor leading)
I will have no fear for the Lord is near
I I6 IV V7/V
I’m gonna reach (Bass: I’m gonna reach) the other side
V I

Verse Two
(Bass voice leading)
Oh Jordan (oh Jordan) deep and rugged (Hallelujah)
By the wadin’ (on the morning) I will rise (I’m gonna be rising)
(Second Tenor voice leading)
If the water is rough He will say get up
I’m gonna reach (Bass: I’m gonna reach) the other side

Chorus

B Section

[1:09] Chorus 3 with handclapping and first tenor improvisation
[1:26] Chorus 4 with soprano improvisation
[1:42] Chorus 5 with second tenor/baritone improvisation
[1:58] Chorus 6 with bass feature, extensive piano improvisation and final cadenza

All the common contextual, thematic and musical features of Southern Gospel are present in “Crossing Chilly Jordan.” First, The Blackwood Brothers recording of “Crossing Chilly Jordan” reflects the context of notated, harmonic
progression—the movement through dissonance to consonance. It also highlights individual identity of the ensemble members by highlighting their individual interpretations of the melodic line in choruses three through six.

Thirdly, The Blackwood Brothers treat improvisation as a journey, or expedition. Not only do the improvisatory sections wend their way through the ensemble, they explore the extremes of vocal register and virtuosic ability (as in the case of the piano). These attributes yield a distinct, musical style that separates Southern Gospel music from the Black Gospel style and indicates its origin in the Euro-American community.

PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS FROM EUROPEAN CULTURES

As Southern Gospel musicians press on or push past the boundaries of the notated melody, the normal registration of the voices, and tolerance for dissonance to discover and claim uncharted territory, they reap the benefit of heightened excitement and the self-awareness that comes with anticipation. The detractor is the final result—a feeling that is exhaustive or dissipating, a post-climatic resolution—as the terminal destination is achieved (Figure 15). The feeling of release and rest that accompanies the return to consonance in tonal harmony stands in stark contrast to the feeling of potency and action that accompanies the fulfillment of the Ensemble Thematic cycle. At the conclusion of ETC in the Black Gospel quartet song, performers seem to set the stage for what is to come, but Southern Gospel performers seem to close the books on what has been accomplished.
Figure 15: Comparative Psychical Perception of Energy and Resolution for Black Gospel Performance-Composition vs. Southern Gospel Improvisation.

Even the term vamp, often applied to the improvisatory section of a number of popular music genres, reflects the effect of the Cartesian worldview on music making. To vamp is to piece new parts onto something old in order to make it functional, as in to re-vamp a shoe (i.e. to replace the old leather on) or to vamp up, or refresh, an old speech.285 To vamp implies breathing life into something that has lost vitality from overuse. Using the term suggests that the vamp itself will go the way of the original, into decay and uselessness. On the

contrary, the term drive, associated with Black Gospel quartet music, implies the potential of vital force, the latent energy necessary for generating something that is “becoming.”

Cornel W. du Toit has written extensively on issues of personal identity and worldview. He states that in Western philosophy,

It [Cartesianism] symbolises [sic] a process of division, dualism and fragmentation that runs up to the present and which challenges present-day personhood...In the West the conception of the person is seen as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement [sic] and action organised [sic] into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background.286

This Cartesian concept of individual identity shapes improvisation in Southern Gospel quartet songs.

Consider how the improvisatory B section of the song "Crossing Chilly Jordan" develops: 1.) improvisation is led by one member of the group at a time (tenor, soprano, second tenor, baritone, bass and, finally, piano), 2.) since tonal harmony serves as the foundation for the length and direction of the improvisatory line, all the other musicians could, in theory, drop out and allow the improvising voice/instrument to work out his or her part alone, using the chord progression as the guide to the musical destination, and 3.) in the B section, all members of the ensemble serve as the supportive background for the featured improvisation.

Though it does not occur in this piece, members of the Southern Gospel quartet ensemble are often guided by their leader to "take it," and they can. Euro-American improvisation, though it is collaborative, is not cooperative. Southern Gospel quartet musicians may work very hard to create something together, but within the boundaries of their own resources and abilities they have all they need to create the vamp.

Black Gospel quartet ensembles cannot create the drive without one another; the cooperative relationship between ensemble members yields the melorhythmic line synonymous with the ubiquitous and elusive "groove." Chas Baker, jazz musician and professor of jazz studies at Kent State University, has seconded my opinion that the melorhythmic line emerging from Ensemble Thematic Cycle and "groove" may be one and the same. Further study should be applied to groove-based aspects of popular music genres—Black Gospel, funk, R & B, hip hop, jazz, reggae, groove metal—to confirm or refute whether layered time-line patterns within the ensemble create a cooperative melodic line. Considering the essence of groove as one melody, rather than "polyrhythm" or any other "non-descript definition," expands the potential for musical development and music appreciation for performers and audiences alike.

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287. The exception to ETC's ensemble format is any instrument that can create more than one time-line pattern in and of itself, such as drum kit or piano.

288. In conversation November 17, 2010, Chas Baker, a member of my review committee, described how he successfully applied melorhythmic ETC concepts in rehearsal with the KSU Jazz Ensemble. Baker identified a melorhythmic section in a jazz arrangement, conveyed the basic concepts of Ensemble Thematic Cycle and melorhythm to the ensemble, and observed an improvement in the performance of the piece that he attributes to the students' understanding of the melorhythmic effect.
CHAPTER VII

PAST PRACTICES AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR INVESTIGATION

The argument laid out in this thesis is predicated on the belief that ethnomusicologists make their greatest contribution to the academy when they reflect on their unique capacity as musical artists. Though folklorists, anthropologists, sociologists and linguists offer valuable insights into music as a cultural product, only the artist practicing ethnomusicology can sense and respond to the essence of musical culture.

Through cross-cultural contacts, the ethnomusicologist senses, in music, an order that has meaning. Just as the physicist notices predictable patterns in nature that deserve critical examination, the ethnomusicologist perceives musical features that bear further observation and a theoretical approach. “Sciencing” of music occurs when the ethnomusicologist posits a hypothetical frame for music making in a particular culture, and then tests the hypothesis for relevance to the behavior and experience of the cultural source.289

Too often, the breakdown in scientific method occurs at the point of testing the posited theory. It is the studied opinion of this author that not everything which can be said about a musical culture should be said. In particular, if the theoretical frame has no relevance to the source culture, and does not lead logically and naturally to accurately representing the conceptual foundations and

musical product of the culture, the theoretical frame must be revised, refined and re-iterated.²⁹⁰

This thesis is, in a sense, a work of revisionist ethnomusicology. No scholar can be faulted for stating a theory that is ultimately targeted for revision. In a science of opinion, we can hardly know what we do not know until we pose the question and then listen humbly and patiently for the response. In terms of African and African-derived musics, that response has come over decades of interaction between scholars from the Euro-American academy and elders and scholars from the African continent. The opportunity is upon us to revisit academic opinion, and to posit a new theoretical frame for African and African-derived musics, particularly the temporal aspect.

Perceiving, explaining and creating a continuum for traditional music gives individuals and communities deserved exposure to their own mental-cultural civilization. As Amadou Hampâté Bâ has cautioned, "For oral tradition and all that bears on it, therefore, we stand today in the presence of the last generation of great repositories."²⁹¹ African-Americans, and other tradition-bearers, deserve exposure to their own mental-cultural civilization because while human needs are universal, the expression and fulfillment of our needs are discrete and highly variable. When, as ethnomusicologists, we fail to reorient theory and discourse in ways that are relevant to the cultures we study, we risk destroying the “sense and sensitivity of being human…the human essence, a soul that feels."²⁹² By

²⁹⁰ Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 76.

understanding a culture's musical intention, ethnomusicologists can build a bridge to understanding perception, conceptualization and actualization of the soul's experience—what Susanne Langer calls the "symbolic transformation of experience."  

Identifying the foundation of African-American and Euro-American "improvisation" provides music educators with a pedagogical tool for interpreting pieces of various genres. Whether students desire to analyze formal features, study the historical context, or prepare for performance of a particular piece, understanding the essence of Ensemble Thematic Cycle and tonal harmony as they apply to "improvisation" should create a more meaningful and relevant result. These concepts of “improvisation” may be applied to Gospel, blues, jazz, rock, pop, soul, folk, rhythm & blues and hip hop genres. Linda B. Walker has studied the influence of musical characteristics on style preferences among African-American students in urban areas, and this study could be extended by analyzing whether teaching concepts of rhythm according to ETC principles could change student perception or improve musical performance of songs that reflect ETC structure.  

Studying rhythm from the perspective of melorhythmic Ensemble Thematic Cycle is applicable to choirs and instrumental bands that perform pieces from the Gospel, blues, jazz, rock, pop, soul, funk, rhythm & blues or hip hop repertory, and especially helpful for select jazz band ensembles, and


marching band drum lines that employ ETC-style rhythmic cadences.\textsuperscript{295} Specific measures could be devised to determine if improved aural skills and musicianship result from understanding Ensemble Thematic Cycle, and to assess how such knowledge diversely affects musically literate and musically illiterate students.

If the essence of African musical sensibility is aurality, and the essence of European musical sensibility is literacy, then logic might imply a convergence of musical gestures in preliterate European and African cultures.\textsuperscript{296} As we reach into the past, we may find aspects of ETC structure that flow from aurality in other cultural traditions. Rose Brandel suggests that, "Renaissance man, accustomed as he was to incessant subtle alternation of pulse grouping, might feel more secure than we do with the rhythmic subtleties of Central African music."\textsuperscript{297} The subject of ETC in Medieval European dance music warrants further consideration, especially investigations in the \textit{ars subtilior} genre.\textsuperscript{298} Specifically, if African rhythm is not "hocketing" because ETC time-line patterns don't pause or hold, is hocketing a more individualistic and tentative—a uniquely European reinterpretation—of Ensemble Thematic Cycle?

Further study could be applied to ETC-style rhythms co-opted by the Euro-American popular music genre. Euro-American popular music is riddled with "polyrhythmic" underpinnings. Because the philosophical framework for playing

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{295} Such a cadence was witnessed by the author on October 22, 2010 performed by the Theodore Roosevelt Marching Band drum line under the direction of Le Ron Carleton.
\item \textsuperscript{296} Brothers, "Ideology and Aurality in the Vernacular Traditions," 189.
\item \textsuperscript{297} Riedel, \textit{Soul Music Black & White}, 23-5.
\item \textsuperscript{298} Lomax, \textit{Folk Song Style and Culture}, 53; and Kofi Agawu, \textit{Representing African Music}, 81.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
in Ensemble Thematic Cycle is absent from most popular music (in fact, in most cases the rhythmic element is created through digital manipulation), the rhythmic foundation of most popular music is not culturally relevant except for its ability to function as a referential symbol in the Euro-American Universe of Topic—an iconic topic indexical to African-American culture. The absence of community participation in music making in the rhythmic aspect of popular music yields a shallow imitation of the original. However, the ETC form, as a musical gesture, is still indexically symbolic of African-American and African musical cultures. The sound is "African" even if its function and use does not conform to the concept of relational interconnectedness. Sociological and psychological parameters of these borrowing are, heretofore, underexplored.

Ethnomusicologists might also investigate how the perceived importance of timbral variety within African drum ensembles specifically effects Black Gospel music and other African-American musical genres. Barb Jungr points out that, "Gospel singing, whilst employing the same varieties of individual vocal timbres [as in the blues], looks "up," outwards, reaching as if towards salvation a better life, and heaven." Blues singer Li'l Son Jackson echoes, "You see, its two things. If a man feel [sic] hurt within side and he sing a church song, then he's askin' God for help. It's a horse of a different color, but I think if a man sing the blues, it's more or less out of himself...He's not askin' no one for help." Since


301. Riedel, Soul Music Black & White, 58.
the presence of distinct vocal timbres have been widely acknowledged by scholars of Black Gospel music, a cultural factor approach might also be applied to this aspect of musical art to extract what cultural principles may lie beneath it.

Studying the effect of ETC concepts on other popular genres may also yield further insight into the organizing principles of those genres. John Storm Roberts points out that there is a strikingly “possible link between West Africa and Mississippi blues men such as John Lee Hooker…Some of Hooker’s songs are set to an ostinato that never changes chordally, or at most moves between two chords in an endless cycle typical of the “open-ended” approach of much African music.”302 The concepts of ETC may also extend to modal jazz theory and performance. Close analysis may reveal what qualitative similarities exist between these American music genres and their African forebears. As Olly Wilson describes, analysts should look for the Africanisms in African-American music not as:

a static body of something which can be depleted, but rather a conceptual approach, the manifestations of which are infinite. The common core of this Africanness consists of the way of doing something, not simply something that is done.303

In addition, ethnomusicologists might explore how ownership and management of Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartets express concepts of power and agency by exploring how quartets serve the church, the community and commercial interests such as barber shops, radio producers, publication


houses, entrepreneurs and themselves. Issues of power and agency vary in the African, European and Gospel paradigms, and the business models in those communities should also be significantly unique. The phenomenon of singing conventions and publishing houses has not been studied as a way of understanding the three frames of reference. Cooperation and song-sharing between Gospel communities, has not been considered as a measure of the increasing power of a few publishing companies and the interest of quartets in avoiding copyright licensing. Finally, regarding social and community influence, the training and grooming of African-American Gospel quartets within the churches might be analyzed for similarity of function with African initiation societies.

Gospel quartet music also deserves treatment as a subject of ethnodoxologists, ethnomusicologists who specialize in sacred ritual as it relates to aesthetics and philosophy. In the words of Dave Hall who invented the term, ethnodoxology, it is “the theological and practical study of how and why people of diverse cultures praise and glorify the true and living God as revealed in the Bible.” The cultural factor approach should be a highly transferable model for ethnodoxology in a variety of cultures.


This study sustains the argument that African-American Christians draw upon African musical arts and philosophical concepts of African cultures. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Euro-American Christians largely opposed traditional forms of African ritual in African-American worship out of fear of heresy or syncretism developing within the African-American community. Euro-American Christians shunned African performance arts that were associated with pagan ritual, failing to comprehend that the rationalization of traditional African creative philosophy is primarily humanistic rather than merely polytheistic.

By eliminating drums during the colonial period, Euro-Americans were curbing the practice of animistic ritual among African slaves while at the same time stymieing the rationalization, reinterpretation, and ratiocination of the Gospel paradigm.308 As the number and independence of African-American Christians grew, Black Gospel musicians performed music that extended the African musical arts continuum. Accounts bear witness that Euro-American church leaders who tried to put an end to the performance of traditional ring shouts met strong protest from African-American pastors who declared, “No one will be saved if there isn’t a ring shout.”

Ethnodoxologists study concerns such as these from the vantage-point of theology, philosophy, sociology and psychology while keeping the music at the forefront of their investigations.

308. See Appendix G.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The art of creating Black Gospel “drive” is not “mindless repetition” as claimed by “casual scholars” and even some music professionals unfamiliar with the tradition. There are culturally valid, epistemological causes for the why and how Gospel quartet music sounds as it does. Ensemble Thematic Cycle functions as an expression of community identity through a living, oral tradition. Ensemble members who understand the function of melorhythm produced by the ETC form respond to events in the performance venue in a dynamic and expressive performance-composition. By relating to others in the Gospel quartet experience, musicians find fulfillment of human ideals—a sense of belonging and cooperation that affirms the existence and value of each member.

The beauty of the work of ethnomusicology is the potential to build a platform for common ground and empathy among human beings. For any person, Christian or not, understanding the essence of Gospel music is beneficial to well-being. If trepidation caused by “aloneness” is the hallmark of Euro-American individuality, then the security caused by “belonging” in the African-American


American community should certainly be a welcome antidote. There can hardly be a teacher of music who does not want to engender musical sensitivity, ensemble cohesion, creative deference and healthy esteem in the student, even among teachers who reject the Black Gospel genre outright.

As members of one faith tradition, Christians can benefit from understanding diverse perspectives within the communities in the body of believers. Each community contributes to the whole in a unique way. The African-American and Euro-American communities play upon different themes in the worldwide tapestry of the Christian faith. Their musical expressions are the external form of internal perceptions about the universe. As a result, their musics are as unique as the communities from which they come. From the Christian frame of reference, this diversity in cultural products serves to highlight unique perspectives on the overarching story of human history: the old, old story of Jesus and his love.
APPENDIX A


Figure 16: The Domain of Rhythmic Expression
APPENDIX D

DESCRIBING ENSEMBLE THEMATIC CYCLE

Many professional and amateur music scholars have created a descriptive or theoretical frame for African Ensemble Thematic Cycle. Several representative attempts are shown below:


A complaint published in 1819 by one John F. Watson, entitled *Methodist Error, or Friendly Christian Advice to Those Methodists Who Indulge in Extravagant Religious Emotions and Bodily Exercises*, tells us something of the musicking of black people…

'Here ought to be considered, too, a most exceptional error which has the tolerance, at least, or the rulers of our camp meetings, in the *blacks'* quarter, the colored people get together, and sing for hours together, short songs of disjointed affirmations, pledges or prayers, lengthened out with long repetition *choruses*. These are all sung in the merry chorus-manner of the southern harvest field…From this cause I have known in some camp meetings, from 50 to 60 people crowd into one tent, after the public devotions had closed, and there continue the whole night, singing tune after tune (though with occasional episodes of prayer) scarce one of which were in our hymn books. Some of this from their nature (having very long repetition choruses and short scraps of matter) are actually composed as sung, and are indeed almost endless.


The earliest reference to this tradition in folk culture is also the first reference to black religious singing by a "quartette." While traveling through Virginia in June 1851, Frederika Bremer reported: "I heard the slaves, about a hundred in number, singing at their work in large rooms; they sang in quartettes...in such perfect harmony, and with such exquisite feeling, that it was difficult to believe them self-taught." Another early account of what might be heterophony among slave singers, or at the very least a fore-shadowing of four-part harmony, states:

There is no singing in parts, as we understand it, and yet no two seem to be singing the same thing; the leading singer
starts the words of each verse, often improvising, and others, who "base" him as it is called, strike in with the refrain or even join in the solo when the words are familiar. And the "basers" themselves seem to follow their own whims, beginning where they please, striking an octave above or below, or hitting some other note that chords, so as to produce the effect of a marvelous complications and variety and yet with the most perfect time and rarely with and discord.

Lornell, "Happy in the Service of the Lord", 24-5.

Jubilee songs are closer to sermons that are presented in a more thematic or narrative form. The latter also include the "pumping" bass, interjected falsetto tenor singing, dramatic cante fable lead vocal and the simple polyrhythms and well-placed syncopations that characterize modern jubilee quartet singing.


The song often requires a single leader, and a swelling chorus of voices takes up the refrain. It is but natural that these songs should be suited to protracted services as good "shoutin' songs" or "runnin' speerichils." The same rhythm makes them pleasing to the toilers who are disposed to sing religious songs while they work, and promotes a spirit of good fellowship as well as being conducive to general "good feelin'."…Throughout these characteristic songs of the Negro the narrative style, the inconsequential, disjointed statements, the simple thought and the fastidious rhymes are all expressive of the Negro's mental operations.

Johannes Riedel, Soul Music Black & White (Minneapolis: Augsberg, 1975), 45.

The African's music begins with a metronomic motion, laying down a foundation of percussive polyrhythm, syncopating the monotony, and weaving in and out of this beating structure threads of simple, improvisational melody. It is an economic sound unit rooted in the simple dialectics of the body and the earth, life and death. No wonder it survived the cruel onslaught of feudalism, colonialism, and capitalism!

Riedel, Soul Music Black & White, 62.

Congregational "soul ecstasy through total participation…recorded at the State Prison Farm at Jennings Louisiana in 1934 (62).

A distinct melodic outline became more and more prominent, shaping itself around the central theme of the words, "Git right, sodjer!" Scraps of other words and tunes were flung into the medley of sound by individual singing from time to time, but the general trend was carried by a deep undercurrent, which appeared to be stronger than the mind of any individual present, for it bore the mass of improvised harmony and rhythms into the most effective climax of incremental repetition that I have ever heard. I felt as if some conscious plan or purpose were carrying us along, call it mob-mind, communal composition, or what you will.


Another adjustment to the vamp involves additions to the harmonic parameters, rather than new text or melody. Usually, a vamp is harmonized in three or four voices first. Once it has impressed itself upon the listener, a contrasting section is inserted and the vamp returns; however, on its return, only one voice enters at a time so that by the time all of the voices are singing, there appears to be a new vamp.

An outstanding example of this practice, called additive vamp, is found in James Cleveland's rendition of "I Don't Feel No Ways Tired." After Cleveland exposes the changing material of the song, the vamp or contrast section is introduced by the altos, with the words: "I don't believe He brought me this far." After a while, the tenors join in on the same text, but with a different harmonic line. They are later joined by the sopranos singing the same text, with yet another harmonic line. Cleveland then provides variations on top of this additive vamp. The effect is overwhelming.


Gospel music is indeed an important form of expressive behavior...In order to understand how these components are conceptualized and manifested, however, it is crucial to view the gospel tradition within a Black perspective—that is, as a medium created by Blacks, for Blacks, and subject only to meaningful criticism and analysis from the vantage point of Black aesthetic.

Gospel music is a product of Black culture. Just as the music of any culture is bound by its own qualitative standards, such is the case with the music of Black people in the United States. Gospel music symbolizes Blackness and has neither the intent nor the interest to reflect Euro-American norms and values.


At its level of greatest expression, whether in choir or in congregational singing, gospel music incorporates a multiplicity of complementary, yet contrasting clapping patterns. When combined with foot-stomping and tambourine playing, these often produce an effect reminiscent of the West African drum ensemble.


Time is further manipulated through the juxtaposition and layering of rhythms and through the effective use of tempo. Using the polyrhythmic concept, gospel music incorporates both vertical and horizontal time contrasts. Not only do various instruments play different rhythms, but soloists may continually shift rhythmic phrases, either by lagging slightly behind the accompanying instrument or by anticipating the beat.


A moment at the end of the recording, when the performance is apparently supposed to come to an end, but cannot because choir and soloist alike are too fired with the music, reminds us that a performance of this kind is not confined by any limits which a composer might intend but depends on the social interplay of the occasion.

The actual song consists of repetitions of a quite small number of verbal and musical phrases; as it is not 'going anywhere' and has no preset limits, the repetitions can be continued as long as everyone present agrees (there are social signals to indicate this) that they should. It is impossible to say on hearing the record whether the 'Africanism' of the call-and-response form is traditional or a conscious recreation by people who are aware of their own history; neither of these questions is of much significance, since the fact that the performers wish to record this performance in this way shows what it is that they consider important.

Song improvisation is not limited to embellishing the melody and lyrics of the verse/chorus structure, for many pieces include extended segments of vocal improvisation known as "drive," "gospel," or "working" sections. A drive section begins when the instrumentalists stall on one chord while the background singers repeat a single vocal line over and over. At this point the lead singer begins to ad-lib, switching from his or her regular singing voice into a tense, high pitched, rhythmically repetitive chant [Ch] or singing chant [Sch]. Occasionally the background singers will drop out, leaving the lead singer to continue his or her vocal improvisation with only the instruments for accompaniment. Or, as described in the first section of this chapter, a second lead singer may join the first and throw improvised phrases back and forth in a tight, call-and-response format. Short drive sections are sandwiched in the middle of the verse/chorus structure of many songs. But extended drive sections usually occur during a group's final selection, where the singer's chanted vocalizations are frequently accompanied by a slight increase in tempo and volume, as the musicians and background singers help build the song. During these final drive sections leads are often switched, doubled-leads are employed, and unrestrained movement is exhibited as singers walk or run into the congregation, wave their hands, shout, or grimace.


In face, however, blacks had Africanized the psalms to such an extent that many observers described black lining hymns as a mysterious African music. In the first place, they so prolonged and quavered the texts of the hymns that only a recording angel could make out what was being sung. Instead of performing in an individualized sort of unison or heterophony, however, they blended their voices in great unified streams of tone. There emerged a remarkable kind of harmony, in which every singer was performing variations on the melody at his or her pitch, yet all these ornaments contributed to a harmony of many ever-changing strands—the voices surging together like seaweed swinging with the waves or a leafy tree responding to a strong wind. Experts have tried and failed to transcribe this riverlike style of collective improvisation. It rises from a group in which all singers can improvise together, each one contributing something personal to an ongoing group effect, yet all sensitive to all the parts—a style common in Africa and African-American tradition. The outcome is music as powerful and original
as jazz, but profoundly melancholy, for it was sung into being by hard-pressed people.


More than any other factor, African American music is driven by its rhythm... This sort of syncopation pervades all forms of African American worship music. It should never be rushed, always a temptation when you are anticipating the accent. Keep a firm sense of the tactus so that the syncopation can play off of it. As singers become more experienced in this style of music, they will often add layers of symmetrical and asymmetrical beat divisions over the basic pulse, contributing to the characteristic rhythmic complexity. Those less accustomed to the style, however, will be better off maintaining the basic rhythm. Above all, avoid smoothing out the rhythms; to do so will rob the music of its vitality and energy (259-60)


The performing ensemble is made up of eight distinct layers... These may be grouped according to musical function into three sub-groups. The first is the fixed-pattern sub-group, which consist of instruments that play an unchanging pattern throughout: rattle, castanet, and bell... The second is the vocal sub-groups, which consists of lead singer and chorus, and the third is the variable-pattern sub-group, which includes small and big drums and the hourglass drum which, although it belongs timbrally to the more active variable-pattern sub-group, plays an unchanging pattern. There is one difference, however: the small drum plays against the metronomic sense established by the fixed-pattern sub-group. In other words, unlike castanet and bell, whose patterns articulate basic, referential patterns, the small drum’s pattern challenges, and ultimately reinforces, those patterns.


Many of the elements described here are present in black church services, if one substitutes for the judgmental word "monotony" the more accurate concept of repetition. The ring-shouts, as we have seen, could continue for up to five hours; the singing in churches today—the congregational singing, not the music of the small, trained gospel groups—swells on and on in great waves whose
result, conscious or not, is exactly that to the repetitive drumming of the cults of Africa, Brazil, or Trinidad.
1.1. *Eight Basic Assumptions.*

The reader will note that the eight assumptions listed here are presented in a progressive order and that they are based on the author's own logical bias and not necessarily that of others.

1. A given culture recognizes the existence of musical symbols.
2. The systematic interpretation of musical symbols is related to the culture's ethos.
3. Cultural ethos is expressed in regular patterns of physical and cognitive behaviour.
4. Regular features of cultural behaviour may be established by means of paradigmatic analysis of descriptive ethnography.
5. Regular features of musical systems that employ symbols may be discovered by means of paradigmatic analysis of pertinent musical phenomena.
6. The collective results of paradigmatic analysis of both descriptive ethnography and related musical phenomena are susceptible to comparative analysis.
7. When comparative analysis reveals a unique relationship that exists between a unique pattern of behaviour and a unique musical phenomenon, it is possible to identify the determinate characteristics of a musical symbol.
8. The constituents of a musical symbol are those determinate characteristics that elicit a response of signification pertaining to the ethos of the culture.

1.2. *Four Requisite Approaches.*

From the foregoing remarks it can be determined that any research that concerns musical symbol is a complex affair requiring at least four types of approach:

1. One must make or obtain a descriptive ethnography ideally containing precise information about all forms of social behaviour and evaluative judgments related to musical symbols, *i.e.*, an adequate documentation of the cultural ethos with regard to this phenomenon.
2. One must assemble an adequate corpus of musical material which can be transcribed with any type of notation that permits meaningful paradigmatic analysis.
3. One must develop a set of paradigmatic analytical techniques which generate data demonstrating unique relationships existing between discrete features of the ethnography and the corpus of music.
4. One must formulate a pragmatic philosophy of signification that permits development of a model describing diverse processes of semiosis, that is to say, a schema of the cognitive systematics involved with interpretation of signs.
APPENDIX F

BLACKING'S PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION AND
SELECTION OF UNITS OF ANALYSIS


There are special problems in the semiotics of music, first, in defining what is or is not to be treated as music. Second, there is the selection of the unit of analysis: can a movement of a symphony be treated independently any more than a sentence drawn from a paragraph? Third, the flexibility of meaning in music is generally greater than in language, and depends almost entirely on the context of performance and the status of performers and listeners. Fourth, the nonmusical or extramusical, components of musical structure must be distinguished from those that are irreducibly musical.

One solution to all four problems is to employ a method of analysis that is essentially anthropological. Definitions of music and nonmusic, views of what is or is not a musical whole, and meanings, all vary according to the perceptions of composer, performer, listener, and analyst (whether “native” or not). Thus, the surest way to understand music and discover what is unique about it is (ideally) to incorporate all “ethnic” perceptions of all available musics and to find out on what points they agree. What we are looking for is a musical process, which generates the creation and perception of products that are classified as musics by some but not by others, and may consist of organized nonsound (such as Cage’s silence) as much as sound.

If the same performance or the same score can be understood differently, all perceptions must be treated as valid data in finding out more about the musical process.
## APPENDIX G

PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS FROM AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN CULTURES COMPARED TO THE GOSPEL PARADIGM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African Concepts</th>
<th>Gospel Paradigm</th>
<th>European Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I belong, therefore I am</td>
<td>God is</td>
<td>I think, therefore I am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humankind is immortal spirit</td>
<td>Humankind is immortal spirit experiencing time</td>
<td>Humankind is temporal matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life is cyclic—experiences of the past inform the future</td>
<td>Life on earth is brief and eternity surrounds it</td>
<td>Life is linear—progress is possible, but life will end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human genius is best expressed through an ever-deepening understanding of the universe</td>
<td>There is no limit to the depth or breadth of God’s intellect, and he shares wisdom with his children</td>
<td>Human genius is best expressed through ever-expanding dominance over the universe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual is invocational</td>
<td>God's presence is both welcomed and adored in the life of the believer</td>
<td>Ritual is adorational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The truth of something is measured by its relevance</td>
<td>Truth is always relevant</td>
<td>Something can be true, even if it is not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature is unpredictable and can be traumatic</td>
<td>God is the master of nature</td>
<td>Humankind can harness the power of nature and mediate its effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources are finite but they can be conserved and manipulated</td>
<td>The universe is finite, but God’s resources are infinite</td>
<td>Resources are limited only by human ingenuity and industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity follows patterns with infinite variety</td>
<td>Variety in creation reveals the glory of God</td>
<td>Creativity is the quest for novelty and transcendent beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every person and thing is part of a whole</td>
<td>Every individual is part of God’s whole creation</td>
<td>Every person and thing is an individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


APPENDIX H

Additional Reference Works

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