

“A MIGHTY LONG WAY”: COMMUNITY, CONTINUITY, AND BLACK GOSPEL MUSIC
ON TELEVISION IN AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, 1954-2008

by

CARRIE ANNE ALLEN

(Under the Direction of JEAN N. KIDULA)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the musical, religious, and cultural evolution and significance of the *Parade of Quartets*, a Black gospel music television program broadcast weekly in Augusta, Georgia, from 1954 to the present. The research engages with two central themes: 1) the program as a site of overlapping musical and religious communities, and 2) the tension between musical, theological, and cultural change and continuity present on the program and in the history of many local gospel performers associated with the program. These two themes are examined through an overview of the program's historical development, three case studies of local Augusta gospel artists' association with the show, and a composite case study of theological and textual themes common in a cross-section of the show's performances. Data collection was conducted using archival and ethnographic methodology, and included sources such as Black and mainstream local newspapers, digital/internet resources, footage of the television program from the late 1980s to the present, albums issued by local gospel artists, interviews, miscellaneous ephemera such as concert posters and album liner notes, and attendance at local events and program tapings. Data collected and analyzed in the dissertation points to the following conclusions: 1) The *Parade of Quartets* exists as part of a complex regional gospel music infrastructure made up of overlapping communities of performers, radio disc jockeys, independent music stores, performance venues, churches, religious leaders, and gospel promoters; 2) Longevity, and the consequent sense of regional heritage, of performing ensembles and other institutions within this infrastructure is highly valued and celebrated; 3) This longevity is achieved through a balance of adherence to distinctively Black musical, theological, and textual roots, while also employing strategies of reinvention that evolve the musical product beyond these roots; 4) The *Parade of Quartets* simultaneously acts as a generic, almost ecumenical, religious and musical local media presence that is appreciated and valued by many viewers, while also affirming and propagating a distinctively Black Baptist set of liturgical and theological values.

INDEX WORDS: Augusta, Georgia; Gospel quartets; James Brown; Swanee Quintet; African Americans on television; *Parade of Quartets*

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family; to the Howard family of Augusta, Georgia,; to the many people who have contributed to the important cultural institution that is the *Parade of Quartets*; and to the memory of Henry Howard.

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CHAPTER 1

PROSPECTUS

Introduction

In the late 1940s, two white men at WJBF radio in Augusta, Georgia, began to air *Parade of Quartets (POQ)*. The program consisted of live performances by local and nationally-known Black gospel quartets along with advertisements and announcements of interest to Augusta's Black community. Steve Manderson, the white WJBF advertising executive who conceived *POQ*, hosted the program in its first few decades. When the radio station made the transition to television in 1954, *POQ* became one of WJBF-TV's newest programs. Over the next twenty-five years, the program continued to broadcast quartet performances and community announcements. In 1980, *POQ* transitioned to a Black managerial staff. Under the leadership of the late Georgia State Representative Henry Howard (121st District), *POQ* began to incorporate explicitly political content. This included interviews with Black activists and politicians of local, regional, and national stature. Howard also added weekly prayers and a segment of religious instruction taught by a local minister. Despite the program's new political and religious content, its core remained the performance of gospel music.

During the 1980s, *POQ*'s roster of performers expanded to include soloists, choirs, and instrumental groups in addition to the traditional quartets that had long been the program's mainstay. According to current producer Karlton Howard, non-quartets were welcomed to *POQ* in the 1980s in a deliberate effort to broaden the musical and religious scope of the program (2007c). Today, under the leadership of Karlton, Wayne, and Zach Howard, sons of the late

Henry Howard, *POQ* is still broadcast every Sunday morning on Augusta's WJBF-TV. It appears to be the longest-running gospel music television program in the United States.

Need For Study

A television program that has broadcast Black gospel music performances for more than fifty years presents a remarkable lens through which to engage issues of race, music, religion, and media in the South. To date, no scholarship has extensively researched a Black music television program in order to document aspects of African-American cultural, religious, and artistic history. *POQ*'s blend of political commentary, community activism, religious instruction, and gospel music provides a critical window into multiple aspects of the African-American experience in the south in the twentieth century.

The current study addresses the lack of scholarship in at least three areas: Augusta's rich gospel music tradition and infrastructure; the intersection of recording technology, musical improvisation, and religious expression; and the impact of a sustained Black media presence in Augusta.

Objectives

The purpose of the study is to:

- 1) Establish a chronological history of the program's musical and non-musical development prior to 1980;
- 2) Analyze the development of musical style in quartet performances on *POQ* from the early 1980s until the present;

- 3) Examine the musical and expressive behavior of gospel quartets in the “artificial” environment of the television studio in order to explore issues of authenticity and the commodification of religious expression;
- 4) Assess *POQ*’s role in the region’s gospel music infrastructure;
- 5) Explore how *POQ* content reflects Black Baptist musical and theological influences and how these interact with other denominational influences; and
- 6) Describe the program’s socio-cultural and political impact in Augusta.

Assumptions

The research is informed by four assumptions relating to the social significance of gospel music, the history of race relations in Augusta, and the nature of recorded versions of gospel music.

- 1) Gospel music constitutes a rich source of insights into the social, cultural and religious fabric of many African-American communities. Studies of gospel music must be approached on multiple levels beyond that of mere musical description and analysis.
- 2) Augusta’s complicated race relations and tensions have shaped and informed local Black cultural products such as *POQ*. Research into the African-American experience in Augusta must engage with the dynamics of local race relations.
- 3) “Authentic” gospel performances present versions of a piece which the audience perceives as unique, innovative, or personalized. This performance goal is achieved through a variety of musical, rhetorical, physical, and verbal modes of extemporaneous expression. This extemporaneous expression is deeply-rooted in distinctively Black musical and religious practices that have marked African-American sacred song for centuries.

4) The authenticity or effectiveness of a gospel performance is measured by the extent to which a performer satisfies the audience's emotional expectations—a feat probably most easily achieved at a live concert. However, judging from the number of people who purchase recordings or consume radio and television versions of gospel music, recorded performances also seem to satisfy the expectations of gospel audiences.

Questions

The research addresses questions related to the evolution of the musical style of quartets on *POQ*; the relationship between recording/broadcasting technology and improvisatory behavior and religious expression; the managerial and technological development of the program; and the socio-cultural and political impact of a sustained Black media presence in Augusta that was accessible to anyone, white or Black, with a television (for more detailed research sub-questions, see Appendix A).

Literature Review

The project is informed by and hopes to supplement studies from a wide range of perspectives, including research on the centrality of music in African-American religion; the development of gospel as a musical genre; the evolution and analysis of Black sacred quartets; the nature and significance of improvisation in African-American musical idioms; the political, social, and musical history of Augusta; and representations of Black Americans in recordings, radio, and television. Multiple works from these areas of scholarship have informed the present study.

A. Music in African-American Christianity

Music has occupied a central position in the Black church since at least the late eighteenth century, when religious revivals began to introduce large numbers of African Americans to Protestant Christianity. The sacred music of the Black church is considered by many scholars to be a unique repository of theology, worldview, identity, emotional survival, and political agency. The work of these scholars, reviewed below, provides ample justification for the examination of gospel music as a cultural space in which individual and community identity is shaped and articulated, distinctive musical idioms are created and disseminated, and political agency is forged and expressed. The following texts establish a precedent for viewing *POQ* as a cultural product that functions on multiple social levels, much as the Black church and its musical rituals have done for centuries. The texts are reviewed in the following order: texts written by religion scholars, theologians, historians, and musicologists and ethnomusicologists.

Religion scholars C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya document the beliefs and practices of several large Black denominations in the late 1980s in *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (1990). Prior to their description of contemporary musical behavior, the authors summarize the historical background of various genres of Black sacred music. The summaries assess the antebellum spirituals and twentieth-century gospel songs as repositories of hope for both earthly and heavenly joy. Lincoln and Mamiya consider Black sacred song to have been a vital source of emotional sustenance, social bonding, and spiritual perseverance for a beleaguered people for many generations (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 348 – 68). The text provides a model of scholarship that blends ethnographic technique and historical background to discuss the beliefs and expressions of African-American Christianity as continually evolving yet simultaneously rooted in deep tradition.

In *Old Ship of Zion: The Afro-Baptist Ritual in the African Diaspora* (1993), Walter Pitts describes aspects of Black Baptist liturgy in rural American churches. His findings are based on ethnography in Black Baptist churches in Texas during the 1980s. Although Pitts is a religion scholar, much of his ethnographic data was gathered while he played the piano in Baptist church services. His detailed discussion of the language and songs used in the Baptist “devotion” ritual are foundational to the dissertation’s interpretation of *POQ* as a Black Baptist religious product.

Albert J. Raboteau’s *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (2001) is a concise survey of developments in Black religion from the early seventeenth century to the 1960s in which the author discusses the significance of music in Black religious ritual. Raboteau describes the power of antebellum sacred songs, whose focus was frequently on Old Testament stories of deliverance, to “[help] Christian slaves to fight off slavery’s terrible power to depersonalize its victims” (Raboteau 2001, 45). According to Raboteau, the ecstatic and cathartic performances of these spirituals represented a collision of Protestant hymnody and African musical characteristics that left the singers “renewed in spirit” (Ibid., 48). Raboteau relates the rise and spread of gospel music to social developments of the 1920s and 1930s, such as the migration of African Americans to cities, the emergence of mass media, and the growth of the Pentecostal/Holiness religious movement. His discussion implicitly links the new type of sacred music, gospel song, to consumerism from its inception (Ibid., 96, 99 – 100). *Canaan Land* provides context for understanding the theological, political, and social developments relative to multiple Black religious experiences in the twentieth century.

The reflections of theologians James Cone and Wyatt Tee Walker have often been drawn upon by others who write about Black sacred music. Cone’s text, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (1972), probes and even reconciles the dynamic tensions between the “sacred”

and “secular” elements in and among the various genres of African-American music. In the lyrical content, musical styles, and performance practice of the spirituals and the blues, Cone reads the entire history of the plight of Black Americans and the community’s myriad ways of coping with oppression. Wyatt is a seminal example of authors that perceive Black song to be so central to the Black experience that an entire worldview can be deduced from examining the lyrical content and musical style of various genres.

Wyatt Tee Walker’s *Somebody’s Calling My Name: Black Sacred Music and Social Change* (1979) builds a chronological history of African American sacred music upon the thesis that

the music of Black religious life served as an indispensable support system for the establishment, growth, and continuity of the Black Church, the institution of dominant influence in the life experience of Blackamericans [sic] in the United States...A survey of the musical content of the Black religious tradition can serve as an accurate commentary of what was happening to the Black community and its response to those conditions (Walker 1979, 15, 17).

Like Cone’s work, Walker’s survey relies on analysis of lyrics and description of musical styles to assess the social import of Black sacred music from the spirituals to gospel music. Although Walker’s discussion of the stylistic history of Black sacred music is often unsubstantiated with analytical, ethnographic, or documentary evidence, his observations about the social power of certain genres are informative.

Jon Michael Spencer, a musicologist with theological training, also compiles a loose chronological survey of Black sacred music with the goal of demonstrating that its function extends beyond that of religious ritual. In *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religions* (1990), Spencer divides Black sacred music into two groups. First he lists genres that function as protest music, including spirituals, white antislavery hymnody, social gospel hymnody, freedom songs of the Civil Rights movement, and the blues. Second he lists genres that function as

religious ritual, including the ring shout, the music of Pentecostal-Holiness churches, and gospel music. Spencer's work describes vibrant theological and social aspects of some of the genres he discusses.

Several historians and musicologists have similarly perceived Black sacred song as central to African-American social, cultural, and political experiences. Lawrence Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (1977) discusses elements of Black expressive culture such as folk tales, beliefs, humor, and music as repositories of communal worldview. Levine's work is significant for being the first history text to centralize the beliefs and expressions of "average" African Americans in its inquiry (Levine 1977, preface). In his assessment of the lyrical content of spirituals, Levine contends that the songs enabled their singers to cope with present, worldly problems. Conversely, he asserts that gospel songs are primarily concerned with the joy and hope to be found in the afterlife (Levine 1977, Chapters 1 and 3). The evidence he invokes in these interpretations establishes a precedent for using the lyrical content and performance practices of Black sacred song to draw conclusions about the network of communal relationships and personal empowerment mediated by gospel music.

Sterling Stuckey's *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundation of Black America* (1987) continues the scholarly tradition of treating Black sacred music as a storehouse of worldview and identity. Stuckey constructs a philosophical framework for understanding African-American expressive culture around the trope of the ring shout, a religious ritual of music and movement dating from Black worship practices of the eighteenth century. In the ring shout, Stuckey perceives the keys to understanding subsequent events and ethos in Black culture. He gauges the authenticity and significance of Black musical expressions by the extent to which they manifest aspects of the ring shout. Stuckey's work illustrates how a single aspect of

African-American musical culture can be studied, evaluated, and used as a critical lens through which to view and understand other aspects of the culture.

In *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (1995), Samuel A. Floyd confirms the centrality of religious expression in forging Black communal identity. Floyd affirms Stuckey's assessment of the philosophical and cultural importance of early African-American religious rituals, which were rooted in traditions of West and Central Africa. When these rituals were transplanted to the New World, Stuckey theorizes, they became powerful articulators of individual and communal identity for the enslaved. Floyd integrates Henry Louis Gates' literary theory of "signifyin(g)" with Stuckey's reading of the ring shout. With the resulting perspective, he critiques various Black musical practices, idioms, and genres.¹ Floyd's theoretical framework describes a complex web of intercultural meanings and references derived from the social and communal power of Black sacred music from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. Floyd's work presents an interpretive chronology of various Black musical idioms. In the chronology, Floyd posits elements of philosophical, cultural, and communal continuity between the genres he discusses.

William Dargan's *Lining Out the Word: Dr. Watts Hymn Singing in the Music of Black Americans* (2006) is a comprehensive ethnographic, linguistic, musical, and historical study of the role of "Dr. Watts hymns" in the Black church. His data was taken largely from observations at southeastern Black Baptist church services. Dargan uses the "Dr. Watts hymn" tradition as a lens for interpreting the linguistic, religious, musical, and theological acculturation of Africans in

¹ Gates' theory of literary criticism, applied specifically to literature of African-American experiences, centers on what he perceives to be the distinctly Black rhetorical practice of "signifyin(g)." "Signifyin(g)" refers to a double-voiced discourse prevalent throughout the history of Black verbal traditions in which the speaker's words carry or evoke multiple levels of meaning. Gates roots his theory in the words and tales of the West/Central African "trickster" figures, and infers that the African American version of this rhetorical device has arisen in response to historic restrictions on the community's free, open, and direct articulation of thought and emotion. Among the categories of Black speech that Gates describes as saturated by the practice of "signifiyin(g)" are "marking, loud-talking, testifying, calling out (of one's name), sounding, rapping, and playing the dozens" (1988, 52).

America. Dargan's study of how a Black sacred song tradition functions on multiple cultural and historical levels provides a precedent for interpreting *POQ* as more than a musical media product. Additionally, his findings on the Dr. Watts hymn traditions in Black Baptist churches are significant for the dissertation's interpretation of *POQ* as a Black Baptist religious product.

B. Gospel Music, General Overviews

Gospel music has become a subject of serious scholarly inquiry only in the past four decades. In that time, musicologists, ethnomusicologists, folklorists, and journalists have provided overviews of the genre's history that are relevant to the current study. The following literature can be grouped thus: monographs from the early 1970s, a series of journal articles published over the following twenty-five years, and monographs and collections from the early 1990s to the present.

The following works inform the present project regarding aspects of gospel music history such as socio-cultural background, workings of the mass media and the music industry, changing musical styles, contributions of significant performers and composers, and important geographical centers for the genre. Additionally, many of the works reviewed engage with abstract issues pertinent to understanding the genre, including the commodification of religious expression, the relationship between sacred and secular concerns, the social and religious significance of gospel music to many Black Americans, and the unique musical/ritualistic interactions between gospel performers and their audiences.

Published in 1971, Tony Heilbut's *The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times* marks the first book dedicated solely to the discussion of Black gospel music. Heilbut, a gospel enthusiast and English professor, wrote in a decidedly journalistic style. Heilbut did not explicate

his methodology, document the dates of his interviews, or provide citations for historical data. However, the book has been absorbed into the scholarly literature on gospel music, since many of Heilbut's interviews contain valuable data and reminiscences from significant gospel composers and performers, such as his interviews with the lead singers of several quartets at the peak of the quartet tradition. Of particular importance to the current study is the fact that Heilbut's book begins with interviews of two people he considered to be the fountainhead of the gospel tradition, Sallie Martin and Thomas A. Dorsey, both of whom were Georgians. Heilbut does not explicitly discuss regional gospel styles, in Georgia or elsewhere. The book is useful to the current study for the windows it gives into the world of the mid-century quartet phenomenon. The study of *POQ* extends awareness of the state of Georgia as a significant locus of gospel music by documenting a previously-unstudied regional gospel tradition.

Contemporary with Heilbut's study was Eileen Southern's 1971 *The Music of Black Americans*, the first musicological work to provide an overview of sacred and secular Black musical genres. Southern does not discuss gospel in-depth; she places the genre in the section entitled "jazz age" and mainly covers the stylistic and lyrical innovations of the gospel composer Thomas Dorsey (Southern 1971, 402 – 4). The commercial impact and national popularity of gospel music is condensed to a few lines of text (Ibid., 403 – 4). Southern evaluates the genre's popularity in the 1950s in a similarly brief fashion (Ibid., 497 – 8).

Southern's second edition of *The Music of Black Americans* (1983) devotes more attention to the genre, describing in greater detail its rising popularity through the 1940s (Southern 1983, 444 – 56). Her discussion of gospel music post-1940 focuses on harmonic structure and instrumental accompaniment, vocal technique, expanding repertory, formats of gospel concerts, and key performers and composers, including quartets. In contrast to her first

edition, Southern uses transcriptions in the second edition to expand her discussion of gospel (Ibid., 461 – 71). Southern concludes by describing the explosion of gospel's popularity from the 1950s to the 1970s and the emerging scholarly interest in the genre (Ibid., 471 – 4).

Southern's third edition of *The Music of Black Americans* (1997) includes more information on the concurrent rise of gospel music and establishment of Black denominations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Ibid., 262 – 4). Southern discusses how the Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostal/Holiness churches began to include gospel hymnody in their hymnals and services in the early twentieth century. Her discussion of pre-World War II gospel music is expanded from the first and second editions of the book. It centers on the contributions of composers in addition to Dorsey, such as Sallie Campbell, as well as some seminal performers (Ibid., 461 – 4). Southern's coverage of mid-century gospel is also augmented compared to earlier editions. She discusses seminal male and female quartets, soloists, and choirs (Ibid., 464). She provides a detailed discussion of the musical elements and techniques in mid and late-twentieth-century gospel piano playing, vocal performance, approaches to improvisation, and harmonic structures (Ibid., 475 – 7). Southern's discussion of the mid-century commercial explosion of gospel music includes much more detail on the mass media's role in disseminating the genre compared to earlier editions (Ibid., 480 – 7). Southern also mentions the ascension of gospel from "roots" music to a genre considered socially acceptable and even an American art form. Her discussion of the genre in the late twentieth century includes its entry into Broadway in the form of gospel plays (Ibid., 561). She briefly discusses "contemporary" gospel music from the 1960s to 1990s, but condenses this part of the book to only a page or so (Ibid., 607 – 8).

That Southern's first edition (1971) virtually neglected a Black musical genre that had attained national popularity and influenced generations of secular musicians indicates the academy's old habit of privileging the slave spiritual as a more "authentic" Black folk utterance. By the time of Southern's second edition and third editions, scholars had begun to engage with gospel music as a unique and vibrant cultural product of the Black community. Gospel's newfound legitimacy as a subject of scholarly inquiry is reflected in Southern's expanded discussion of the genre in the 1983 and 1997 editions of *The Music of Black Americans*. Following the precedent set by the scholars of the 1970s, the present study examines gospel music on its own terms, as a popular, commercially-successful music that has also served as an outlet for religious expression.

Several journal articles and essays on gospel music emerged beginning in the mid-1970s. In 1975, Pearl Williams-Jones' seminal article "Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystallization of the Black Aesthetic" appeared in the *Journal of Ethnomusicology*. Williams-Jones asserts that Black gospel music represents the most pure, distilled form of a Black expressive and musical aesthetic. According to Williams-Jones, the genre is a conglomeration of West African expressive practices and "Euro-American" musical traits (Williams-Jones 1975, 376 – 80). The article includes the first detailed description of the vocal timbre and aesthetic preferred in gospel singing, along with the first effort to locate the sources of that aesthetic in the sounds of Black congregational worship and the rhetorical style of the Black preacher (Ibid., 380 – 82). The article also discusses the relationship of the Black speech idiom to gospel performance practice, the role of the gospel soloist in relationship to the blues singer and the preacher, and interactions between gospel performers and audiences (Ibid., 383 – 4).

Williams-Jones was the first author to establish a framework for critiquing and evaluating gospel music performances that rested on the aesthetic standards of distinctly African-American modes of expression. The current research adopts Williams-Jones' approach to the analysis and discussion of musical styles and characteristics, rooted in the knowledge that gospel singers and audiences evaluate the merits of a performance according to a unique and specific series of aesthetic values.

The inaugural issue of the *Black Music Research Journal* (1980) contains articles on gospel music by Bert Feintuch and Mellonee Burnim. Feintuch's "A Noncommercial Black Gospel Group in Context: 'We Live the Life We Sing About'" represents one of the earliest efforts to conduct fieldwork among active gospel musicians. Feintuch interviewed and observed the Cross Family of Kentucky, a mixed-gender gospel group who performed on the weekends as part of a local/regional gospel music community. Feintuch felt there was nothing distinctively regional in their sound or in the way their gospel community functioned, asserting that similar gospel music networks probably existed "wherever there are black communities" (1980, 48). Feintuch's subject and analysis is rooted in his perception that previous gospel scholarship overemphasized the commercialized aspects of the genre (Ibid., 39 – 41). The article discusses the Cross Family's performance venues, travel radius, publicity network, and motivations, along with Feintuch's own perceptions of the differences and similarities between "commercial" and "noncommercial" gospel performers. Feintuch's exploration of the boundaries between professional and non-professional groups provides a useful model for the current project.

Other aspects of Feintuch's work deserve more scrutiny, such as his assertion that there are no differences between regional gospel music networks. Later ethnographic work has demonstrated that certain gospel music networks are, in fact, characterized by musical and/or

socio-cultural elements peculiar to the region (Lornell 1988; R. Allen 1991a). The present project assumes that Augusta's gospel music infrastructure is unique due to its own confluence of personalities, record stores, performance venues, radio stations, and the presence of *POQ*.

Mellonee Burnim's "Gospel Music Research" (1980), published in the *Black Music Research Journal*, describes contemporary gospel scholarship by dividing gospel music into historical eras and discussing research accomplished in each period. Burnim discusses scholarly and non-scholarly books, articles, and biographies, as well as five dissertations. She identifies omissions in the scholarship; for instance, she mentions that no one had researched the gospel choral associations (1980, 68). Burnim also advances reasons for the paucity of material on gospel music in 1980, blaming an academic bias towards Western art music and the difficulty of documenting a dynamic tradition. This article demonstrates that as of 1980, there were significant gaps in gospel music scholarship, particularly in the examination of the institutions of gospel, which to date still remain relatively unaddressed. The dissertation remedies this omission by studying a long-standing gospel music institution.

Burnim's essay "The Black Gospel Music Tradition: A Complex of Ideology, Aesthetic, and Behavior" in *More Than Dancing: Essays on Afro-American Music and Musicians* (1985) criticizes efforts to evaluate gospel music according to Euro-centric musical standards. The article presents gospel music as a unique cultural product of the Black community, governed by a distinctive musical and expressive aesthetic. Burnim's essay is preceded in the collection by Horace Clarence Boyer's "Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Contemporary Gospel Music," which relies on analytical categories such as melody, rhythm and meter, harmony, and form—parameters fundamental to discussions of Western classical music—to differentiate between various sub-genres of gospel music (Boyer 1985, 129 – 44). Boyer's discussion was

based on combined analysis of audio recordings, notated scores, and the comments made by gospel performers during interviews conducted by other people. Burnim's conclusions and analytical categories, on the other hand, are rooted in live performances she observed while conducting fieldwork among Apostolic congregations. The *POQ* project will borrow from both Boyer's and Burnim's analytical models, since gospel music is a hybrid of Western Protestant hymnody and African American musical practices and idioms. Unlike Boyer's project, the current scholarship distinguishes between analyses of television broadcasts, audio recordings, and live performances.

Irene Jackson-Brown's "Developments in Black Gospel Performance and Scholarship" in the *Black Music Research Journal* (1990) highlights gospel music performances in recent, non-liturgical contexts, such as Broadway musicals, concerts at the White House, gospel music associations, workshops, and the college choral movement. She compiles a catalogue of reliable research sources on gospel music, listing rather than describing the items. Jackson Brown's roll of current gospel scholarship includes non-print resources such as audio recordings, college course offerings, and symposia on gospel music.

Joyce-Marie Jackson's article "The Changing Nature of Gospel Music: A Southern Case Study" in the journal *African American Review* (1995) combines a brief chronological survey of the macro-development of gospel music with a case study of the genre's evolution in New Orleans. Jackson's overview of the tradition focuses on retentions of West African musical and religious practices in gospel music. Jackson advocates moving from purely musical analyses of gospel music, framed by Euro-centric aesthetic values, to an examination of cultural elements which have shaped the genre's history. Jackson's chronological survey of gospel reflects a socio-cultural approach, rather than defining various eras in gospel music according to changes in

musical characteristics. She focuses on how gospel music of different time periods represented a uniquely Black response to changing social conditions. In her case study of New Orleans gospel, Jackson discusses quartet “song battles,” the tradition’s influence on rhythm-and-blues, the interplay between sacred and secular styles in quartet singing, and the increasing popularity of other subgenres of gospel after the decline of the national quartet phenomenon in the late 1950s.

Jackson’s work in New Orleans is significant for its recognition of the roles of non-performers such as radio stations, DJs, and printed fan publications in the gospel music network. The *POQ* project seeks to describe a similar web of socio-cultural context, locating the television program within a larger gospel music infrastructure. Jackson’s work demonstrates that regional gospel music traditions vary according to the elements of the gospel network operative in a particular location. The current project constitutes the first effort to describe and document Augusta’s gospel music infrastructure and heritage.

The proceedings of the Smithsonian Institute’s symposium on gospel music composers (1992) include two essays which inform the current project. In the introduction to *We’ll Understand It Better By and By*, Bernice Johnson Reagon provides a succinct description of gospel’s development (1992, 14). Given the focus of the Smithsonian project, the author fittingly spends much of the historical survey discussing the innovations and contributions of significant composers and arrangers. Her discussion of the quartet tradition acknowledges ensembles that achieved national commercial prominence, and those “thousands of local groups who performed the latest popular quartet tunes as well as creating their own” (Ibid., 14). Of further interest is Johnson Reagon’s innovative method of presenting data, which she calls “the conference model, a live publication.” It encompasses “a symposium-performance event, small exhibit components, and an outreach component which included a small publication... We used radio

programs...[and] conference booklets” (Ibid., 8 – 9). She also explores the intersection between gospel as an oral tradition and the mass media technology that replicates and disseminates it (Ibid., 6). The *POQ* research is informed by Johnson Reagon’s project in its effort to document the types of local groups that Johnson Reagon mentions—their histories, their contributions to Augusta’s gospel music network, and their appearances on *POQ*. Moreover, the *POQ* project draws on Johnson Reagon’s discussion of tensions between oral expression and technology’s ability to capture it.

Portia Maulsby’s essay in the collection, “The Impact of Gospel Music on the Secular Music Industry” (1992), traces the commercialization of gospel from the 1920s. Maulsby describes what she perceives to be gospel music’s “explosion” over the past two decades:

Its audiences have become multiracial in composition. It is broadcast on full-time gospel-formatted stations and on religious television programs. Its performers are featured in music festivals, with symphony orchestras, and on recordings of popular music; major concerts are jointly sponsored by record companies and national advisers (2002, 20 – 21).

The essay particularly focuses on expanded notions of acceptable venues for gospel performances and the role of the radio and recording industries in the commercialization of the genre. Maulsby does not discuss the role of televised gospel performances beyond the aforementioned brief acknowledgment of the presence of gospel music in the television industry. The *POQ* project represents the first effort in gospel music scholarship to discuss in depth the genre’s presence in the television industry at either the local or national level.

Horace Clarence Boyer’s *The Golden Age of Gospel* (1995, reprinted 2000) is the first monograph to present a chronological overview of gospel music from its wellsprings in

eighteenth-century hymnody through its subgenres in the late twentieth century.² Boyer primarily focuses on the genre's "golden age" from 1945 to 1965, identifying centers of gospel music in Alabama, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, St. Louis, parts of Tennessee, and New York. Boyer also discusses the role of the radio and recording industry in disseminating gospel music in the 1940s (2000, 51 – 54). In addition to listing significant technological developments, record labels, and radio stations that effected the mid-century popularization of gospel music, Boyer also touches on white ownership of Black cultural products and the emergence of the Black community as a discrete demographic targeted by advertisers. The current project draws on Boyer's descriptions of musical styles, socio-cultural context, and significant arrangements and recordings.

Boyer does not discuss Georgia as a center of gospel music development, despite the fact that notable innovators such as Thomas A. Dorsey, Sallie Martin, and the Swanee Quintet hailed from the state. The research on *POQ* documents the vibrancy and persistence of Augusta's local gospel tradition, previously overlooked in the scholarly literature. Boyer's text focuses on nationally-known, commercially-successful gospel groups. Like other ethnographic projects focusing on the contributions of non-professional gospel groups, the proposed research will further highlight the role of grassroots performers in perpetuating the gospel tradition. Additionally, Boyer's book does not address the role of television in disseminating gospel music performances, even after 1965. The current project will address this central avenue in gospel music history, documenting and analyzing the sustained presence and impact of televised images of Black gospel musicians in one community.

² The 2000 reprint was entitled *The Golden Age of Gospel*. The same text had previously been published in 1995 as *How Sweet the Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel* by Elliott and Clark, Washington, D.C. It is listed in the dissertation's bibliography as *The Golden Age of Gospel* (2000).

Bernice Johnson Reagon's *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me: The African American Sacred Song Tradition* (2001) contains four ethnographic profiles of performers that demonstrate the social, communal, and spiritual power of Black sacred music. The author's role in the Albany, Georgia, branch of the Civil Rights Movement was inextricably bound up with her experiences of Black sacred music, including gospel. Throughout the book, Johnson Reagon's autobiographical commentary coheres with the narratives of other musicians to articulate ways in which African-American sacred music can powerfully shape individual and communal identity. The book provides a model for discussing Black sacred music as an articulator of social and personal identity through privileging the voices and views of those involved in the tradition. Her approach provides one model for negotiating the "insider/outsider" dichotomy inherent in ethnomusicological native/non-native researcher positions.

Jerma A. Jackson's *Singing in My Soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age* (2004) studies gospel music's sacred power and commerciality. Jackson describes gospel music as

black religious music that enjoyed great commercial acclaim, [coming] to inhabit multiple worlds, serving as a meeting point for sacred and secular concerns and for local black communities and mainstream popular culture. As a result gospel became a critical arena in which African Americans contended with questions about the nature of faith, as well as the shape and meaning of racial identity (2004, 3 – 4).

Jackson uses Sister Rosetta Tharpe's career as a case study of gospel singers' negotiations of the boundaries between sacred and secular styles, lyrics, venues, repertoires, and public images. Jackson's approach is a model for the multifaceted documentation, analysis, and interpretation of the lives and careers of gospel musicians. Jackson's willingness to accept gospel music recordings as a simultaneous expression of religious devotion and a product with commercial intentions (Ibid., 47 – 48, 88 – 91) legitimizes this project's examination of *POQ* as a multivalent cultural and religious product.

Robert Darden's *People Get Ready! A New History of Black Gospel Music* (2004) is the only monograph since Boyer's 1995/2000 text to present a chronological history of the genre's development. Using an earlier date of origin than Boyer, Darden roots the genre in African musical practices. After tracing the genre's origin through the spirituals, Reconstruction popular songs, and Pentecostalism, Darden structures his discussion around seminal composers, groups, and geographical locations. Darden's and Boyer's organizational approaches are therefore very similar. Because Darden is a journalist and not a musicologist, the data tends to center more on anecdotal evidence and social history rather than on musicological description of styles and elements. Darden acknowledges this in the book's preface (2004, xii). Darden was the gospel music editor of *Billboard* magazine, and thus was able to interview many important figures in the gospel industry. Although Darden is not a music scholar, he acknowledges and draws on the work of many seminal Black music scholars (Ibid., xi). The book is extensively footnoted, which further distances it from a journalistic approach.

Eileen Southern's *The Music of Black Americans*, for many years the only general text available on Black musical history, was recently joined by *African American Music: An Introduction* (2006), a collection of essays edited by Portia Maultsby and Mellonee Burnim. In contrast to Southern's chronological organization, the book is sectioned into topics such as Genres, Issues of Mass Mediation, Issues of Gender, and Musical Agency. Burnim's chapter on "Religious Music" (66 – 72) includes a three-part chronological overview of gospel music that engages with socio-cultural context, characteristics of musical style, and seminal composers and performers. Her second essay in the book, "The Gospel Music Industry," uses case studies of two gospel recordings that achieved crossover fame in order to discuss tensions between religious

expression and economic commodification, white industry power and Black cultural idioms, and oral and written transmission.

Given the literature review, this project addresses two significant lacunae in the general scholarship on gospel music. Gospel music scholarship has yet to discuss, document, or investigate gospel music performances on television. In neglecting to analyze existing television footage and interview persons involved in the televisual mediation of gospel performances, the scholarship overlooks a rich source of data relating to tensions between musical improvisation and broadcast technology, religious expression and commercial expectations, and the influence of Black gospel musicians on white audiences for whom televised performances might constitute the only significant source of musical or cultural contact with non-white communities. This project expands gospel scholarship by providing the first detailed documentation and analysis of a gospel television program, its musical and socio-cultural development, and its impact on a particular geographical region. Second, the current project addresses the general literature's neglect of Augusta's vibrant gospel music tradition, particularly its long history of community quartets.

C. Gospel Quartets

Gospel music scholarship over the past thirty years has included intensive studies on the gospel quartet tradition. Three categories of quartet literature are reviewed below: research on the genre's nineteenth-century antecedents; ethnographic studies of late twentieth-century regional quartet traditions; and the application of Western tonal theory in the analysis of quartet recordings.

1. Antecedents of Twentieth-Century Gospel Quartets

Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff's *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889 – 1895* (2002) compiles articles, advertisements, columns, and letters related to African-American popular music in mostly Black newspapers for the years in question. The documents frequently reference the quartet tradition, indicating its status as a form of social leisure in Black communities prior to the twentieth century. The documents related to quartets consistently mention the presence of keyboard accompanists; inter-group competition; variants in terminology to describe the lead singer; the wide variety of performance venues and contexts; the embedding of quartets in musical and dramatic shows; clear aesthetic standards; detailed organizational structure in the ensemble (quartets were often referred to as “clubs” and would join with other groups to create community music associations); repertoire such as plantation songs, quartets, sentimental numbers, and art music; and groups whose travel radius and notoriety far exceeded their hometowns. Abbott and Seroff's documentation of the multifunctional nature of the roots of the quartet tradition provides a strong justification for examining *POQ* as a mediated quartet product that simultaneously functions at social and religious levels.

Abbott's essay “‘Play That Barber Shop Chord’: A Case for the African American Origin of Barbershop Harmony” (1992) demonstrated that barbershop quartet singing, often perceived as a quintessentially “white” genre, sprang from the Black community quartets of the late nineteenth century. The article uses newspaper clippings and handbills to establish the ubiquity of amateur, semi-professional, and professional Black male harmony singing in the late 1800s. The article documents that African-American quartets of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries functioned on a multivalent level, performing eclectic sacred and secular repertoire in a

variety of venues. These early community quartets, along with the formally-trained Black college jubilee quartets, later developed into the gospel quartet. Abbott's article supports the notion that gospel quartets historically have occupied a unique place in the constellation of gospel genres, negotiating boundaries between sacred and secular musical styles, entertainment and religious function, and folk expression and commercial product. Abbott's article prompts an examination of *POQ* as a space for religious expression, as a commercial product that must bring in advertising dollars, as a marketing tool for local gospel groups, and as an important social player in Augusta's gospel music network.

Tim Brooks' "'Might Take One Disc of This Trash as a Novelty', Early Recordings by the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Popularization of 'Negro Folk Music'" (2000) discusses vocal techniques, arrangements, technology, and marketing of the Fisk Jubilee Quartet in the early twentieth century. The insightful questions Brooks raises are relevant to the study of the quartet movement as it progressed throughout the twentieth century. The current project examines some of the same questions as Brooks. For example, like Brooks, this project investigates how changing technology on *POQ* has impacted the vocal techniques, improvisational practices, arrangements, and visual mediation of gospel quartets. It also assesses the perceived authenticity of the televisual quartet product, and attempts to establish to whom the gospel performances on the program have been marketed.

The first part of Kip Lornell's "One Hundred Years of Black Gospel Quartet Singing" (2001) documents the twentieth-century gospel quartet's derivation from three discrete but overlapping streams of American music of the late nineteenth century: the university jubilee tradition; the male quartets featured in minstrel and vaudeville shows; and the community or folk quartet tradition so prevalent among Black communities of the time (Lornell 2001, 141 – 51).

The only piece in the quartet literature to discuss all three antecedents of the gospel quartet simultaneously, Lornell's article gives a comprehensive overview of the tradition's roots that informs studies of twentieth-century quartets.

2. Ethnographic Books and Articles

Available ethnographic work on regional gospel quartet traditions provides documentation of the ensemble's social power, the close ties between quartets and the mass media, the role of the audience at quartet events, musical analysis of audio recordings and live performances, and the tension between commercial concerns and religious expression in the tradition. The literature reviewed does not examine the expressive and musical behavior of quartets in studio settings, the presence of gospel musicians/quartets on television, the quartet tradition in Augusta, and certain aspects of local gospel music infrastructures, such as the use of internet/computer technology to disseminate recordings, communicate with fans, promulgate data, and advertise upcoming appearances. The proposed study supplements existing quartet ethnographies by addressing these issues.

Lornell's article (2001), mentioned in the previous section, provides a concise overview of the twentieth-century gospel quartet tradition. After discussing the tradition's nineteenth-century antecedents, Lornell describes two geographical regions (Bessemer, Alabama, and the Tidewater area of Virginia) that developed significant quartet traditions. The bulk of the essay focuses on the "golden age" of commercial quartet singing from the 1940s through the late 1950s and concludes that since the 1960s, "black gospel quartet singing has moved full circle from the folk tradition to popular culture and then to its folk roots again" (Lornell 2001, 171). The essay provides context on the quartet movement as a national commercial phenomenon. The current

research assesses ways in which the Augusta quartet tradition developed concurrently with or divergently from this phenomenon. The *POQ* project demonstrates that Augusta's longstanding quartet tradition deserves the same scholarly attention that Bessemer, Alabama, and the Tidewater area of Virginia have received.

Seroff's "On the Battlefield: Gospel Quartets in Jefferson County, Alabama" (1985) describes how the university jubilee quartets in particular shaped the ethos, performance behavior, arrangements, and musical styles of the early Alabama quartets. Seroff tracks the Alabama quartets' local activities as well as their regional and national influence through commercial recordings and the interchange of performance personnel across the South in the 1920s and 1930s. Seroff's interviews with local quartet singers and his use of paper ephemera such as record jackets and photographs provides a methodological model for researching a regional oral tradition. The current project combines Seroff's methods with observations of live events and television tapings, since the project will describe not just a historical tradition but an ongoing and vibrant gospel music scene.

Also drawn from his fieldwork among the Alabama singers is Seroff's description of the quartet contests (also known in the literature as "song battles") common in the early and mid-century. Seroff's essay "Old-Time Black Gospel Quartet Contests" (1990) discusses the aesthetic standards for evaluating groups. Seroff's documentation of this practice, supported in the work of other scholars, informs the current study's awareness of the overlapping domains between popular entertainment and religious expression in the quartet tradition.

Joyce-Marie Jackson's 1998 dissertation, "The Performing Black Sacred Quartet: An Expression of Cultural Values and Aesthetics," is an ethnography on the quartet tradition in New Orleans. Jackson researched ancillary persons and institutions who, together with musicians,

constituted a larger gospel music infrastructure. Although Jackson's study took place in a large metropolis, she does not mention whether local or regional television programs featured performances by New Orleans quartets. The *POQ* project borrows from Jackson's approach in the range of personnel and the type of institutions it considers to be part of Augusta's gospel music network.

Kip Lornell's 1998 study of the Memphis quartet tradition, "*Happy in the Service of the Lord*": *Afro-American Gospel Quartets in Memphis*, emphasizes components of the gospel music tradition that appear to be unique to Memphis, such as the musical legacies of particular families, the role of radio station WDIA in disseminating the Memphis quartet sound, the centrality of the Spirit of Memphis quartet in the tradition's aesthetic, and the role of quartet trainers. Lornell's chapter on the general history of the quartet tradition provides valuable information about the interaction of the quartets with the mass media, as well as reflections on the boundaries between religious expression and secular entertainment in the quartet tradition. Lornell does not mention the role of television in mediating the quartet appearance, product, and sound.

Lornell's study provides potential angles for investigating and analyzing a regional quartet tradition; for example, his discussion of WDIA radio and of the Spirit of Memphis quartet corresponds roughly to the role of *POQ* and the Swanee Quintet as central components of the Augusta quartet tradition. Like Lornell's study, this project documents aspects of the Augusta quartet tradition that are unique to that region. Unlike Lornell research, this project describes a vibrant gospel scene, rather than focusing on Augusta's local tradition prior to the 1960s. Like Lornell, the current research also uses recordings to establish the development of a regional quartet style.

Ray Allen's *Singing in the Spirit: African American Sacred Quartets in New York City* (1991a) analyzes the religious expression and ritual behavior common to quartet concerts in New York City in the 1980s, describing performer and audience behavior surrounding the phenomenon of "falling out" or "getting happy." Allen does not discuss television as a means of disseminating gospel music performances, either in general or in New York. This study draws from Allen's discussion of how quartet singers interact with one another and with their audience members in order to effect a climactic religious, psychological, and emotional experience.

Allen's article "Shouting the Church: Narrative and Vocal Improvisation in African-American Gospel Quartet Performance" (1991b) draws upon interviews and attendance at performances to confront the notion that Black Christianity is an "other-worldly" panacea that anesthetizes participants' emotional and economic pain. The article analyzes lyrical content and performance practice to contend that gospel music embodies a theology that enables its participants to overcome, rather than ignore, life's difficulties. Allen's insightful reading of the lyrics and musical styles of quartets informs lyrical/musical analysis undertaken in the present study. In particular, the chapter that examines the "Dr. Watts hymns" engages with similar theological issues raised by Allen in his interpretation of gospel lyrics.

Of the scholars who have researched the Black gospel quartet tradition, amateur scholar Ray Funk is the only one to have explicitly identified a need for the investigation of quartets on television. His "Research Approaches to Black Gospel Quartets" (2001) contains a section entitled "Film and Television Appearances" in which Funk states that

the whole area of gospel television appearances is fairly under-researched. Many quartets have appeared on television, and several even had their own shows. But these early shows do not appear to have survived. One [national show with surviving footage]...was *TV Gospeltime*. Shot in the period from 1962 to 1964, it resulted in 66 half-hour shows...The show presented almost every major gospel

group of the time at least once. For many artists who since have died, the series holds the only known filmed appearance (2001, 101).

Funk goes on to hypothesize that with the advent of VCRs and programs like the *Bobby Jones Gospel Hour*, much more footage of late-twentieth century gospel music will be available than was the case earlier in the tradition (Ibid., 101 – 2). This project addresses the omission that Funk has identified in the quartet literature.

3. Musical Analysis of Gospel Quartets

Several precedents exist for analyzing the musical style of Black gospel quartets. The earliest appears to be Charles Cobb's thesis "A Theoretical Analysis of Black Quartet Gospel Music" (1974). Cobb, a music theorist, transcribes one hundred and thirty gospel songs recorded by five quartets that achieved national commercial success in the 1950s and 1960s. The transcriptions consist of lyrics with Roman numeral chord symbols printed beneath the corresponding word or syllable. Transcriptions are categorized by criteria such as number of measures (Cobb does not specify whether this statistic refers to the verse, the chorus, or the vamp) and placement of significant chords such as the tonic and dominant (Cobb 1974, 562 – 3). Cobb identifies three basic harmonic schema in Black gospel quartet music, ultimately concluding that "the frequency of the above-mentioned patterns shows that there definitely is structural similarity in gospel music and, also, that there are "folk music patterns" (Ibid., 600). Cobb's transcriptions give no indication of structure in the recordings, as he neglects to indicate the length of choruses, verses, phrases, and vamps. The Roman numeral chord symbols communicate a limited amount of meaningful musical data when isolated from structural parameters. Further, Cobb does not justify his selection process for the song samples, nor document the dates of the recordings, the instruments involved, and the harmonic roles of those

instruments. His conclusions about recurring harmonic patterns are not specific to any era of gospel quartet music. Cobb also does not engage with the differences in musical style that might emerge when one compares quartet recordings with contemporaneous live performances by those same groups.

Samuel Buchanan's dissertation "A Critical Analysis of Style in Four Black Jubilee Quartets in the United States" (1987) assesses the development of the jubilee quartet style in general, and of four quartets in particular, primarily through reviewing historical documents and sound recordings and conducting interviews with gospel singers, promoters, managers, and related persons. Buchanan also transcribes and analyzes nine recordings of the four groups. Unlike the regionally-based work of Allen and Lornell, Buchanan's four groups came from Virginia, North Carolina, and New York. Buchanan uses open-score transcriptions; when indicating characteristics that are difficult to notate in Western classical notation, such as vocal slides, swoops, glissandos, or the exchange of voice parts, Buchanan uses verbal commentary rather than a system of symbols.

Cedric Dent's dissertation "The Harmonic Development of the Black Religious Quartet Singing Tradition" (1997) applies elements of jazz, tonal, and Schenkerian theory to transcriptions of four quartet recordings in order to trace harmonic development in the genre. Dent's use of standard Western notation is supplemented by a system of symbols to indicate blue notes and other moments of "indefinite pitch notation" that are derived from a speaking-preaching tone (Dent 1997, 13 – 14). The transcriptions are augmented by prose descriptions and Schenkerian graphs of harmonic and motivic activity at various levels. Dent contextualizes the tradition in general and each analysis in particular with historical background.

Stuart Goosman's article "The Black Authentic: Structure, Style, and Values in Group Harmony" (1997) is a different sort of analysis of Black harmony singing. Instead of presenting transcriptions and analyses of musical style in order to discuss harmonic development, Goosman analyzes aspects of Black vocal harmony traditions with a socio-cultural framework. In demonstrating that Black vocal harmony groups of the 1940s and 50s drew from both white and Black musical idioms, Goosman argues against those who critique the groups for having performed a "less authentic" Black music. Goosman's article contests the idea of a homogeneous standard of artistic authenticity applied to Black performers. Through verbal description of groups' musical style and social structure, Goosman demonstrates how the groups in question resolved tensions between white and Black musical (and, hence, cultural) identity. Although Goosman is discussing secular vocal groups of the 1940s and 1950s and not gospel quartets, scholars and participants in both traditions are in agreement that the two vocal traditions borrow heavily from one another in terms of style of vocal arrangements, personnel, and performance practice.

With the exception of Goosman, the aforementioned scholars listened to audio recordings and created transcriptions that presented specific gospel quartet performances in the format of a notated score--as a fixed, unchanging arrangement. Considering the roots of the gospel quartet tradition in the notated arrangements of nineteenth-century jubilee choirs, Euro-centric, keyboard-based analytical representations of quartet music can be useful. Such transcriptions display the polyphonic nature of quartet singing, allowing for clear visual representation of the stratification of ranges and antiphonal behavior between the lead and background voices. However, some prominent elements of the quartet aesthetic, such as extended polyphonic improvisation, part-switching for dramatic effect, ornate melodic embellishment, and spoken

interpolations, seem difficult to represent on a score. Goosman explicates links between musical characteristics (form, structure, antiphony, voice stratification, timbre) and social realities that he contends they represent. Unlike the transcriptions of Dent, Cobb, and Buchanan, Goosman's verbal analyses do not address specific recordings, but discuss normative patterns he discovered in his fieldwork. The analytical techniques employed in the current project draw on the various perspectives and methodologies of the above scholars.

D. Conceptualizing Improvisation

Parts of this study will discuss the religious, commercial, musical, and technological determinants that intersect when a gospel quartet is in the television studio. In such a setting, the quartet's highly improvisatory and expressive techniques must be both curtailed and permitted in order to result in an "authentic" and, therefore, marketable quartet product. Examination of these intersecting determinants is informed by scholarship that probes the musical workings and cultural significance of improvisation in a related African-American musical idiom, jazz.

Jazz and gospel music share a similar central idea of some sort of composition or arrangement used as a point of departure for performers to create a new, personalized rendition each time the tune, piece, or arrangement is performed. A significant difference between the two genres is that quartet arrangements typically invest only one or two singers per piece with extended improvisational freedom, while in a jazz performance this freedom to improvise might extend to more members of the ensemble (depending, of course, on the piece and the group's conception of it).

Another similarity between the two genres is in the ritual dialogue that takes place between performer and audience. Jazz and gospel performances frequently feature

acknowledgment from audiences following moments of intense virtuosity or expressiveness. Jazz scholar Ingrid Monson links the “participatory frameworks” of jazz and Black religious expression in her discussion of the similarities between congregants’ verbal responses to a preacher and audience members’ responses to jazz musicians (1996, 95 – 96). Gospel performances arguably feature a higher degree of audience interaction, including dancing, shouting, running, screaming, fainting, clapping, singing along, and calling out verbal interjections during the performance. For these reasons it is legitimate to apply frameworks from jazz scholarship to better understand the mechanisms and functions of improvisation in a gospel setting.

In *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, Monson (1996) critiques the conception of musical improvisation in jazz as a “text,” positing rather that the act of improvisation bears more resemblance to a conversation,

In jazz improvisation...the musicians are compositional participants who may “say” unexpected things or elicit responses from other musicians. Musical intensification is open-ended rather than predetermined and highly interpersonal in character—structurally far more similar to a conversation than to a text (1996, 81).

Monson’s conception of improvisation as a conversation impacted some of the dissertation’s analyses of gospel music performances on *POQ*.

Michael Jarrett’s essay “‘Cutting Sides’: Jazz Record Producers and Improvisation” (2004) discusses the role of jazz music producers in shaping and creating the recorded jazz product. Jarrett’s extensive interviews of jazz producers, along with his commentary, cover issues in recording jazz such as consumer conceptions of the product’s authenticity and purity, the role of evolving technology in mediating (or thwarting) the perceived authentic product, the behavior of improvisatory artists in a studio setting, and scholarship’s use of jazz recordings to “historicize” the genre (Jarrett 2004, 319 – 22). The essay raises an excellent set of issues and

questions regarding authenticity, commercialism, technological limits on artistic expressiveness, and the role of producers in mediating a supposedly “pure” product throughout the history of *POQ*. The dissertation occasionally and briefly engages with these issues.

E. Augusta’s African-American Community

Considering Augusta’s status as a racially-divided town for much of the twentieth century, a study documenting an African-American cultural product from that city must be understood against the backdrop of the cultural, economic, and political welfare of Augusta’s Black community. Two scholarly works assist in establishing such context. Stephen Tuck’s *Beyond Atlanta: the Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (2001) provides data on overt political resistance by African Americans in various regions of Georgia. The book discusses the climate of Georgia state politics and provides county/city statistics on voting registration records, Black-controlled media outlets, and racially-motivated violence. Of particular significance to this study is Tuck’s documentation of the foundering of overt political resistance and the extremely hardened segregationist stance in Augusta in the 1940s to the 1960s (2001, 109, 145, 153 – 4, 156 – 7). Tuck also documents the growing frustration of Black Augustans in the mid-1960s over their political impotence which erupted into violent riots in 1970 (Ibid., 207, 210, 217, 234 – 5). However, Tuck considers only indicators of *overt* political resistance, and neglects to examine Augusta’s Black cultural institutions and products that may have served as a more subtle source of survival, identity, and perhaps even resistance for the city’s African-American population during the Civil Rights years. This study examines *POQ* as an important cultural product that has shaped Black identity in Augusta. Tuck’s data provides a

theoretical platform for analyzing the social and political significance of *POQ* during the 1950s to the 1980s.

James Cobb's 1975 dissertation, "Politics in a New South City: Augusta, Georgia, 1946-1971," contains statistical data on the social, economic, and political welfare of Augusta's Black citizens during the decades preceding the 1970 riot. Like Tuck, Cobb focuses on explicitly political events such as elections, legislation, and protests. He does not assess the role of Augusta's Black cultural institutions in shaping the identity of the local African-American community. Most likely, the sustained media presence of Black gospel musicians in such an environment had a psychological impact on both the Black and white communities, even if it cannot be quantified in graphs and charts. This study briefly addresses this issue, thus supplementing the scholarship surrounding the experiences of Black Augustans in the late twentieth century.

Lloyd Preston Terrell's self-published book *Blacks in Augusta: A Chronology, 1741 – 1977* supplies information difficult to locate elsewhere, given the *Augusta Chronicle's* general marginalization of Black cultural and social history until the 1980s. Terrell's book contains names, dates, and achievements of local Black individuals in business, entertainment, and education, along with similar information for churches, theaters, stores, newspapers, radio stations, and other community establishments. The book mentions neither *POQ* nor the gospel quartets that were well-established in the area beginning in the late 1930s. Terrell does mention other types of musicians and ensembles, chiefly those active in classical/art music. The current project supplements this type of documentation by reconstructing the history and analyzing the musical and cultural significance of a longstanding Black cultural institution currently not discussed in the existing literature about the Black experience in Augusta.

F. Gospel Music in Augusta

Although there is no published scholarship about the history of gospel music in Augusta, several valuable journalistic works exist, including a photograph compilation, some scattered newspaper and magazine articles, and several websites. Don Rhodes's book *A History of Entertainment in Augusta/CSRA* [Central Savannah River Area] (2004) consists mostly of captioned photographs with introductions. The photographs provide visual detail on the history of art, popular, and folk music traditions in Augusta. The work mentions *POQ* once in the caption of a photograph of the Spirits of Harmony, a local quartet that appeared on the program many times and with which Henry Howard performed for many years. *POQ* received a brief write-up in the Spring 1998 issue of *Backstage*, the newsletter of the Georgia Music Hall of Fame. The information contained in the newsletter duplicates content found on the *POQ* website and various articles in the *Augusta Chronicle*. Several *Augusta Chronicle* items appearing in the past fifteen years include features on the program itself along with articles, obituaries, and brief announcements related to performing groups and personalities who have contributed to the program. Websites with historical data about the program and its performers include the program's website, www.paradeofquartets.com, and the promotional websites of several gospel music performing groups in the CSRA.

While the sources mentioned above provide historical data such as biographies of the show's performers and hosts, none of them analyze musical styles or repertoire on the program, establish comprehensive chronologies of groups' performances on the show, or provide much detail on the managerial, commercial, and political aspects of *POQ*. The current study addresses these issues as well as broadly theorizing how *POQ* has been significant to the area's musical and cultural development.

G. Media Studies

An informed examination of a television show featuring primarily Black musicians requires familiarity with ways in which African Americans, particularly musicians, have been represented in radio, on recordings, and on television throughout the twentieth century.

1. Radio

Because *POQ* began as a radio program in the late 1940s, and because gospel quartets were prominent on the nation's radio waves in that era, the current project is informed by literature relating to Black musicians on the radio. John Landes' 1987 article "WLAC, The Hossman, and Their Influence on Black Gospel" described 50,000-watt WLAC's gospel broadcasts as bridging the social gap between the races in mid-century Tennessee. Landes posited that although WLAC's entertainment and advertising in the 1950s and 1960s was aimed at Black consumers, the listening audience was integrated. Unfortunately no statistical data verifies this assertion; Landes's assessment relied on the recollections of a former DJ from WLAC. The article also discusses radio's role in the musical and cultural relationships between professional and amateur gospel musicians in the mid-twentieth century. The article provides a model for discussing the "virtual" relationship of the races via the airwaves and exploring how media outlets facilitate relationships between grassroots and full-time gospel musicians.

Mark Newman's 1988 study, *Entrepreneurs of Profit and Pride*, marked the first comprehensive history of African Americans in radio. For Newman, the development of a Black presence on the radio airwaves has been intimately linked to increased Black purchasing power and advertisers' desire to tap into it. The book describes and analyzes three case studies of seminal participation by African Americans in the radio industry: Jack Cooper, a Chicago deejay

and reporter in the 1940s; the “King Biscuit Time” blues program broadcast in Helena, Arkansas, beginning in the 1940s; and Memphis’s WDIA, the nation’s first radio station to feature solely Black personalities on-air. Newman’s emphasis on the economic impetus behind the opening of the airwaves to Black performers during the Jim Crow era is particularly relevant to the history of *POQ* in Augusta. Newman’s Marxist interpretation of Black media participation raises the need for the current project to investigate the advertising practices on *POQ*.

Kloosterman and Quispel’s 1990 article “Not Just the Same Old Show on My Radio: An Analysis of the Role of Radio in the Diffusion of Black Music Among Whites in the South of the United States of America, 1920 to 1960” attempts to explain why Elvis Presley achieved immediate success in a segregated society by performing styles and repertoire rooted in Black musical idioms. The article contextualizes segregation in the South, and describes pre-war instances of musical exchange between the races. After World War II, radio inserted Black musical sounds into a white world (and vice versa), substituting for the social interchange between the races that was largely nonexistent. The authors mention that TV was “lily-white” until the end of the 1960s, supporting their assertion that radio played a unique cultural role in shaping race relations in the Southern United States (Kloosterman and Quispel 1990, 164). The authors’ conclusions point to the possibility that in Augusta, a southern city structured by trenchant segregation, *POQ* may have substituted for in-person cultural exchange between the races. Kloosterman and Quispel’s work prompts the current project to investigate ways in which five decades’ worth of televised performances by Black musicians has impacted white Augusta’s receptivity to Black cultural products.

Louis Cantor’s *Wheelin’ on Beale: How WDIA-Memphis Became the Nation’s First All-Black Radio Station and Created the Sound that Changed America* (1992) discusses the

social impact of the radio station on Memphis's Black communal identity and purpose. Cantor describes technical and commercial aspects of the radio business in the 1940s and 1950s, typical ways in which Black Americans were presented on radio at the time, and how the deejays and performers at Memphis's WDIA began to slowly overcome those stereotypes. Cantor contextualizes Memphis as a deeply segregated town, a surprising location for a media revolution that abrogated racial and social norms. Cantor's work is especially relevant to any project that studies a Black media presence in Augusta, since the two Southern cities were segregated in similar ways. His book is also useful for understanding the workings of the early radio industry.

William Barlow's *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio* (1999) describes the development of a Black radio presence beginning in the 1920s. One of Barlow's guiding themes is the "racial ventriloquy" permitted by the unique medium of the airwaves (as a young white man during the Civil Rights era, Barlow had been involved in "Black-appeal" radio). The book discusses the development of Black radio in Memphis, Houston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and some West Coast metropolises. The book addresses the detrimental stereotypes of Black Americans habitually broadcast over the radio waves for much of the twentieth century. Barlow's comprehensive survey of the representations of Black Americans in radio history provides historical data that assists the current research to assess in what ways *POQ* constituted a unique media enterprise.

2. Recordings

Paul Oliver's *Songsters and Saints: Vocal Traditions on Race Records* (1984) discusses aspects of the "race record" phenomenon of the 1920s and 1930s including recruitment of Black

musicians, selection of repertoire, marketing of albums, seminal record companies, and financial and technological aspects of the early recording industry. Although he states in the introduction that the book does not explicitly address “organized” vocal traditions such as the jubilee quartets, Oliver documents generalized precedents set by the recording industry in commodifying and marketing Black religious products. His discussion of the content and marketing of Black sermons and religious songs provides historical context for the current project’s understanding of white America’s commodification of Black religious expression.

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham’s essay “Rethinking Black Vernacular Culture: Black Religion and Race Records in the 1920s and 1930s” (1997) questions scholarly myths that persistently link lower-class Black Americans primarily with blues instead of with religious music. Her essay shows a close relationship between the two genres by examining the content and marketing of race records. Higginbotham’s description of the content of early religious race records brings up the cultural tensions inherent in the attempt to commodify Black religious expression. The article informs the current project’s efforts to probe those tensions relative to the production and advertising aspects of *POQ*.

3. Television

Studies that focus on the Black presence in the television industry are useful for contextualizing *POQ* and demonstrating whether its content, production, and longevity has or has not been exceptional. J. Fred McDonald’s *Blacks and White TV: Afro-Americans on Television Since 1948* (1992) describes, decade-by-decade, the Black American presence on national television. McDonald describes the appearance of numerous Black singers, instrumentalists, and dancers on television during the industry’s earliest years. He also discusses

instances when Black entertainers transgressed unwritten social boundaries, resulting in audience and sponsor backlash against the entertainers, program hosts, and stations. McDonald also details the special resistance of Southern television audiences to Black televisual images in the early decades of television (1992, 8 – 9, 77 – 84).

Although McDonald focuses chiefly on the marginalization and stereotyping of Black Americans in nationally syndicated programs, he concludes from the available data that African Americans were equally marginalized at the local level through at least the 1970s. The data McDonald provides indicates that *POQ* was an anomaly in the television industry for at least the first twenty years of its existence merely for featuring Black performers as the sole and *consistent* focus of a TV program. McDonald mentions some local and national programs that featured Black gospel music performances sporadically or consistently; these were all short-lived. Although McDonald supplies valuable background information about the generalized role of African Americans in the television history, the limits of his survey preclude detailed description of programs featuring gospel music. The current study supplements the existing literature on the Black presence in television history by providing the first detailed study focusing on a gospel music television program.

Jannette L. Dates's essay "Fly in the Buttermilk: The Television Industry, Commercial Television" (1993) echoes McDonald's documentation of the televised presence of Black musicians from the industry's earliest years, expanding the discussion to critique their presence as a perpetuation of the tradition of Black Americans entertaining white audiences (1993, 309 – 10). In discussing the implicit social boundaries governing the behavior of Black performers on television, Dates concludes that through the 1960s, the white television industry

restricted [sexual and social] freedom for the black male in network TV appearances. Thus, the dominant group helped to maintain the practice,

enculturated by other media through the years, of channeling and controlling the behavior of African Americans, particularly male (Ibid., 314).

Dates's reading of network TV's "control" over the mediation of televisual images of African-American men is particularly germane to the current project, suggesting lines of inquiry and interpretation into the ways in which televisual images of Black males were mediated in Augusta during the decades Dates references.

Kay Mills's *Changing Channels: The Civil Rights Case That Transformed Television* (2004) discusses the FCC's revocation of the broadcast license for WLBT-TV (Jackson, Mississippi) in the late 1960s for gross transgressions of the Fairness Doctrine, particularly in the station's newscasts. Mills' book provides historical context on Southern television broadcasting policies during the years of *POQ*'s infancy, along with explanations of mid-century FCC regulations as well as data about television viewing habits in the South.

Methodology

The data collected for the study included socio-cultural context on the Black gospel quartet tradition, Augusta's African-American community, Augusta's gospel music tradition, the history of *POQ*, and the evolving musical style of quartets featured on *POQ*. The categories of methods for obtaining the data were secondary readings, archival/documentary research, ethnographic work, and screening footage to gather quantitative and musical data. Secondary readings assisted largely in establishing historical context for the Black gospel quartet tradition as a genre of national commercial importance. The other categories of research methodology used in data collection are discussed below.

A. Archival/Documentary Research

One category of primary sources consulted to prepare the project was newspaper articles. *Augusta Chronicle* articles from the late 1940s to the present were used to contextualize the history of television broadcasting, gospel music, race relations, and politics in Augusta. Articles from the *Augusta News-Review*, a local African-American newspaper that was published from 1972 to 1985, were examined for the same purpose. Efforts to locate copies of another local Black newspaper, the *Weekly Review*, were unsuccessful.

Unpublished ephemera directly related to *POQ* contributed data related to the program's history, managerial personnel, and impact on the community. These documents include an unpublished transcript of a speech prepared and delivered by a local music journalist for *POQ*'s fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, and a DVD interview conducted with J.B. Fuqua, one of the program's founders, by producers Henry and Karlton Howard (2005). Other unpublished documents consist of letters written by Augustans in support of *POQ*'s nomination for a Peabody Award for Excellence in Broadcasting from 1993 to 1995, housed in the University of Georgia Special Collections-Peabody Archive.

B. Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic research consisted of email, phone, and in-person interviews with members of the show's production team, performers who have appeared on the program, and other members of the Augusta community who were willing to discuss the program, Augusta's race relations, and the region's gospel music tradition (see Appendix B for a list of participants in the research). The interviews were used to establish the history of changing musical styles on the show, the role of *POQ* in Augusta's gospel music tradition, how gospel musicians deal with the

constraints of recording/broadcasting technology, and how participants and viewers conceive of the show's social significance.

In conducting group interviews, the project's ethnographic methodology initially aimed to experiment with a modification of a relatively new ethnographic technique known as "collective memory work" which has not yet been used in gospel music research.

Memory work is an approach to exploring the social construction of gender—and indeed other aspects of the way we are—by using structured writing on focused memories of specific relevant times, events or experiences in the past. The most well known text on this is Frigga Haug and colleagues' *Female Sexualisation*, but there have been many other examples and uses, in life story work, politics, education and training (<http://www.nikk.uio.no/mannsforskning/arrangementer/workshop2.pdf>).

In typical collective memory work, participants write a focused reminiscence on a particular topic; the memory is constructed in the third person with the goal of maintaining anonymity. During a follow-up focus group, participants read and discuss the written memories. Researchers collate the analytical remarks made by participants in the focus group and present both the original memory and the group's interpretation of it as part of their research findings. Collective memory work as an ethnographic technique offers a way to examine the intersection of individual and group memories in order to investigate whether common themes or ideas emerge from multiple narratives. Additionally, the technique offers a way for researchers to stay a bit more "out of the way" by interpreting the primary level of data through others' voices.

The current project initially attempted to experiment with a modification of the collective memory technique by conducting recorded group interviews, or conversations, with whole quartets, relying on their "collective memories" to create a rich dialogue about their musical experiences on *POQ* and in other places. Since one function of gospel music is the simultaneous articulation of individual and communal identity, an interview process that captures a similar dynamic might be useful. Taped conversations with entire quartets would have been transcribed

in much the same way that one would transcribe multiple lines of music onto a page, as a type of “speech polyphony.” The intended goal of using this technique was to represent, graphically, lexically, and visually, the timing and nuances of a group conversation. Unfortunately, it proved logistically difficult to arrange interviews with multiple quartet members at the same time. However, a modified version of the “collective memory transcription” is used in Chapter Five to represent the spoken, chanted, and sung interactions of several performers during a *POQ* episode.

C. Quantitative Data

Quantitative data obtained included statistics on types of groups on the show during certain eras, airtime devoted to each, types of songs performed, percentage of groups using certain types of instruments, and frequency of occurrence of certain types of expressive behavior/interjections/etc. These and other categories of data were obtained through watching videos and/or attending tapings of the show, as well as from information consistently mentioned in interviews.

D. Musical Data

Data for analyzing musical style in the quartet performances on *POQ* was drawn from available program footage, attendance at live events, and audio recordings of groups featured on the program. Footage screened included brief excerpts provided by research participants as well as approximately one hundred footage hours of *POQ* dating from around 1986 until the present (see Appendix C for a list of episodes viewed). I facilitated donation of extant *POQ* footage to the University of Georgia Media Archives in Fall 2007. The tapes donated contain performances

by local groups as well as nationally-known gospel musicians, along with interviews with political figures and community activists. A sample of quartet performances from videotapes of *POQ* episodes from the mid-1980s to the current time is analyzed in Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six in order to assess the development of musical style over time. Chapter Six also provides an analysis of non-quartet *POQ* footage. See Appendix C for a list of episodes viewed.

Other aspects of musical analysis were drawn from attendance at live events, including tapings of the show and gospel music performances in the Augusta area. Attending tapings provided insight into the musical and expressive behavior of gospel quartets in a televised situation. Observing the improvisatory/expressive behavior of some of the same quartets in live performance provided data about interactions with audiences, types and prevalence of certain musical/rhetorical/expressive devices, and repertoire selected. Audio (studio) recordings of groups featured on the show further assisted in describing the musical style of quartets who have appeared on the show. Audio recordings and non-*POQ* performance footage pre-dating the 1980s was particularly valuable for reconstructing the earlier sound and style of groups on *POQ*, since no program footage prior to the mid-1980s is thought to have survived. See Appendix E for a list of events attended.

Projection of Chapters

Preliminary evidence suggested that a chronological chapter sequence documenting the program's teleological evolution would best address the goals of the project. However, after collecting and analyzing data, the two themes of *longevity* and *community* emerged as central in the careers and *POQ* performances of local gospel musicians. These two themes were best engaged through a series of non-chronological case studies, rather than through a large linear

narrative. The dissertation consists of only one chapter of chronological, historical introduction followed by four case studies of performers on *POQ*. The first three case studies focus on particular local performers rooted in Augusta's quartet tradition with a longtime presence on *POQ*. These chapters offer narratives of Augusta artists seminal in the history of *POQ* who have achieved local, national, and even global musical significance. The first case study is of the Swanee Quintet, an Augusta gospel quartet that achieved national notoriety in the gospel industry as early as the 1950s. The second case study is of two local, non-professional quartets that have attained regional stature in the gospel industry. The third case study is of James Brown, a local secular performer with an ongoing relationship with Augusta's gospel music tradition, who eventually achieved global renown as an innovator in R&B, soul, and funk. The fourth case study uses a different approach. Rather than focusing on a single artist or group on *POQ*, it examines the performance of "Dr. Watts hymns" on *POQ* by a cross-section of local gospel performers. The fourth case study breaks with the previous "case study" organizational strategy in order to foreground theological, denominational, and cultural themes that resonate broadly across multiple *POQ* performances.

CHAPTER 2

“MY SOUL LOOKS BACK IN WONDER”: THE ROOTS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF *PARADE OF QUARTETS*

Parade of Quartets (POQ) began as a radio show in the late 1940s, at the height of the commercial popularity of Black gospel quartets and the apex of stringent racial segregation in the South. An understanding of both historical phenomena is necessary in order to comprehend the program’s cultural roots. This chapter discusses three related topics that comprise a contextual foundation and framework for subsequent chapters: the development of the twentieth-century gospel quartet as a national phenomenon, a history of race relations in Augusta, and an overview of the development of *POQ* and Augusta’s gospel quartet tradition. The chapter concludes by identifying two central themes emerging from the data presented in the chapter. The two themes will be addressed by case studies in subsequent chapters.

Development of the Twentieth-Century Gospel Quartet Tradition

In continuity with antebellum social practice, the Black church in the twentieth century was still the dominant site of community life, the locus of individual significance, and the means of political agency and social empowerment within the context of white repression.³ Much of this empowerment had historically been mediated through sacred song, a tradition which

³ For discussions of the social, cultural, and historic significance of Black Christianity in antebellum years, see Blassingame’s *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (1972), Raboteau’s *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (2001), and Raboteau’s *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* (2004). For an overview of the role of Black Christianity in African-American history during the twentieth century, see Mamiya and Lincoln’s *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (1990). For primary sources that document the cultural and political significance of Black Christianity, see Sernett’s *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness* (1999) and Murphy’s *Down by the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion* (2000).

continued after Emancipation. Following the Civil War, religious and cultural functions once fulfilled by the spirituals were now sustained by the emerging genre of gospel.⁴ This vibrant new genre of sacred music, disseminated by the mass music industry as a commercial product, became a soundtrack for the lives of many Black Americans in the midst of the massive social upheavals of the twentieth century.⁵

One of the most important subgenres of gospel music that emerged early in the twentieth century was the male gospel quartet. The gospel quartet became extremely popular in Black America over subsequent decades, fulfilling dual functions of religious expression and popular entertainment at community events, on recordings, and over the radio. The first section of this chapter outlines the development of the gospel quartet in four chronological periods: 1) the movement's roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; 2) its spread and popularization during the 1920s and 1930s; 3) its maturation or "Golden Age" from the early 1940s through the early 1960s; and 4) its decline as a genre of national commercial importance after the mid-1960s (Seroff 1985; Lornell 2001).⁶ The chronological outline engages issues such as developments in mass media, new religious trends in Black Christianity, evolving musical styles, and the social significance of the genre to Black America. Following this four-part outline

⁴ For various interpretations regarding the religious, historical, linguistic, cultural, and musical continuum on which spirituals and gospel music reside, and the emotive and cultural power of Black sacred song in general, see Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (1977), Stuckey's *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundation of Black America* (1987), and Floyd's *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (1995).

⁵ Many of these social upheavals were direct or indirect results of the "Great Migrations" of African Americans from rural to urban and southern to northern locations. Over 2.5 million Black Americans left the south between 1890 and 1930. They often followed transportation routes directly north to St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and New York City, settling in the Black districts of those cities (Raboteau 2001, 82). Individuals, families, and at times whole religious congregations relocated to northern urban centers armed with only their deprivations and needs (Ibid., 83). For more detail on the demographic contours and cultural impact of these migrations on both migrants and host communities, see Sernett's *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (1997).

⁶ Lornell dates the decline of the genre as a mainstream popular music to 1955 (1985). Seroff dates the same phenomenon a few years later (2001). Boyer loosely adheres to the four-period chronology outlined above in discussing the development of gospel music in general, under which gospel quartets are subsumed (2000).

is a discussion of the genre's cultural profile as a distinctively Black yet broadly American musical product and idiom.

A. Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

From the 1870s to the early 1900s, three tangled threads of African-American musical traditions merged to create the Black gospel quartet: the university/jubilee choir movement, folk/community quartets, and vaudeville/minstrel quartets (Seroff 1985; Lornell 2001). In the 1870s, Fisk University of Nashville, Tennessee, a Black institution, dispatched a “jubilee choir” to tour America and Europe, performing before mostly white audiences in order to raise money for the university. The choir's repertoire included Western art music and notated arrangements of spirituals, at that time a musical novelty. These “concert spirituals” were performed in four-part Western European harmony with the same vocal timbre, concert etiquette, and performance practice that the jubilee choir applied to its Western classical repertoire (Burnim 2006, 62).

The jubilee choir movement spread to other Black colleges, which also sponsored male “quartettes.” The “quartettes” (quartets) performed arranged spirituals in the style of the larger choirs. The quartets soon were favored by the colleges since it was easier for several male performers to tour than it was for an entire co-educational ensemble. The small quartets were also better-suited to the recording technology of the early 1900s than were large choral ensembles (Brooks 2000; Lornell 2001). The university quartets' repertoire was arranged in the following vocal stratification, from top to bottom: “high” tenor, tenor/lead singer (who carried the melody), baritone, and bass. This voice stratification is evident on some of the earliest commercial recordings of jubilee quartets, the 1909 recordings made by the Fisk Jubilee Quartet for Victor Records (Brooks 2000). The voice parts used by university/jubilee quartets have

largely remained the norm for Black gospel quartets until the present. By 1890, these male quartets had mostly replaced their parent choral ensembles at Black colleges and universities (Seroff 1985, 33).⁷

The jubilee/university quartet repertory, arrangements, and performance practice first began to be disseminated in commercial recordings in 1909. In that year, the Fisk Jubilee Quartet recorded twelve pieces for Victor Records. The Victor sessions contained primarily spirituals such as “Roll, Jordan, Roll” and “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” Also included were secular pieces such as Stephen Foster’s “Old Black Joe” and two recitations of poems by Black poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar (Brooks 2000, 283 – 5). The selection of spirituals, a secular song on Black subject matter, and a text by an African-American poet highlights the Black cultural identity and public image of the jubilee quartets. The gospel hymnody that had begun to emerge in Black churches in the late 1800s were notably absent from this disc and from the recordings of other minstrel and university quartets in the early twentieth-century (Lornell 2001, 151). Lornell identified several stylistic characteristics common to these 1909 recordings as well as those of minstrel quartets between 1902 and 1913, including “clear diction...little vocal embellishment...only occasional instances of syncopation...vocal timbre...reminiscent of formally trained musicians...homophonic textures...and [vacillations] between major and minor modes” (Ibid., 150).

Distinct from the college jubilee quartets in repertoire and performance venues were folk or community quartets of the late nineteenth century. These groups were formed in central locations in Black neighborhoods such as barbershops.⁸ Although such groups sometimes

⁷ For further historical background on the jubilee choir movement, see Ward’s *Dark Midnight When I Rise: The Story of the Fisk Jubilee Singers* (2001).

⁸ In a provocative article “‘Play That Barbershop Chord’: A Case for the African-American Origin of Barbershop Harmony,” Abbott argues that the genesis of the term and genre “barbershop quartet” lies in Black rather than white

entertained white audiences in hotels and other venues, they primarily provided recreation and private entertainment for the Black community. According to the reminiscences of W.C. Handy, Louis Armstrong, and Jelly Roll Morton, informal four-part harmonizing was widespread among Black males at the time (Abbott 1992). All three of these well-known Black popular musicians, later associated with jazz, sang in male quartets around the turn of the century (Ibid.).

Community quartets performed at rent parties, church socials, barbecues, and funerals. They sang a mixture of sacred and secular repertoire (Abbott 1992; Lornell 2001).⁹

The first known recording of a Black male quartet seems to have been by one of these community quartets. The Standard Negro Quartette of Chicago recorded for Columbia Records in 1894. Although the records have not survived, their existence highlights the presence of Black male quartets in the early years of the mass music industry (Lornell 2001, 150). According to Abbott, the repertoire sung by community quartets was secondary to their musical style. These quartets improvised closely-voiced harmonizations using a wide variety of repertoire: “ballads and sentimental tunes were most susceptible to it, but no song, religious or secular, traditional or Tin Pan Alley, was immune [to the quartets’ musical adaptations]” (1992, 290).

Newspapers, reminiscences, handbills, and advertisements indicate that Black quartets appeared in minstrel and vaudeville shows singing sacred and secular repertoire in the 1870s and 1880s (Lornell 2001, 141 – 3). According to Lornell, these quartets were influenced by the performance practice and repertoire of the university/jubilee choral tradition. Like the university quartets, minstrel and vaudeville quartets performed “eclectic” repertoire that included novelty

musical and communal origins. Abbott therefore uses the term “barbershop quartet” to describe Black community quartets of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, Abbott is the only scholar to use the term “barbershop” in this way (1992).

⁹ Abbott and Seroff’s *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895* attests to the widespread popularity of male quartets, the eclecticism of their repertoire, and the variety of their concert venues. The primary sources in the compilation make clear that a number of Black male quartets often traveled far beyond their hometowns to perform (2003).

songs, patriotic pieces, and spirituals (Ibid., 150 – 51). The difference between the style and repertoire of Black community/folk quartets and Black vaudeville/minstrel quartets is not entirely clear in the existing literature. It seems that perhaps the greatest difference between these two types of quartets may have been the itinerant nature of the latter type. It is probable that contemporary participants in these types of groups did not perceive a stark division between these types of quartets.

B. 1920s and 1930s

These three quartet traditions began to merge in the early twentieth century to become the gospel quartet. The earliest gospel quartets differed in musical style according to the geographical regions in which they were formed. Early regional quartet traditions emerged in centers of trade and industry, such as Jefferson County, Alabama.¹⁰ Drawn by the steel, iron, and coal mining industries, Jefferson County's Black population increased from 30,000 to 130,000 between 1890 and 1920 (Seroff 1985, 35). Few recreational opportunities existed for the new migrants. Performing in or listening to male gospel quartets was a valuable opportunity for leisure (Ibid., 36). Quartets attained a level of recognition and respectability in the community: early photographs of Jefferson County quartets show men wearing matching tuxedos and hairstyles. The area's first Black gospel quartet, the Foster Singers, was organized in 1915. Other groups soon were formed, and the area quickly gained a reputation as a vibrant center for quartet singing (Ibid., 36). In Jefferson County, former university/jubilee quartet singers who had moved there after graduation heavily impacted the emerging gospel quartets (Seroff 1985; Boyer 2000; Lornell 2001). The university/jubilee quartet singers brought the arranged spirituals and

¹⁰ Jefferson County, Alabama, encompasses Birmingham and other surrounding towns. Jefferson County attained further notoriety in the Black American experience when it became the site of highly-publicized terrorism and protest during the Civil Rights Movement.

classically-trained performance practice to Jefferson County. However, the Jefferson County quartets treated the arrangements more loosely than practitioners of the college choral tradition.

The Jefferson County quartets were

not constrained by outmoded prejudice [that favored the Western classical style].
The gospel style admitted contrapuntal and rhythmic elements accepted in jazz,
barbershop harmony and other popular secular music of the day (Seroff 1985, 37).

Specific spirituals that were arranged in this way by the Jefferson County community quartets were “Old Ship of Zion,” “Inching Along,” and “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” (Ibid., 38).

By the late 1920s, commercial recordings of Jefferson County quartets had been spread across at least the southeast and possibly to other regions (Ibid., 38). Extant recordings from one such group, the Birmingham Jubilee Singers, demonstrate influences from the jubilee choir movement and the blues. Seroff interviewed many elderly Black men involved in the Jefferson County gospel quartet tradition. He learned that many of those singers had been vocally trained by graduates of the Black colleges and universities who relocated to Jefferson County. These men distinctly recalled the very strict attention to diction, blend, and rhythmic accuracy that their musical mentors had demanded from them (Ibid., 38). The recordings differed from the university jubilee quartets in the “wailing [improvisatory] interjections by the tenor or baritone,” the high falsetto, and the up-tempo arrangements “propelled by agitated...bass singing” (Ibid., 38). The emotional expressiveness of the lead singer and a generous use of blue notes also contrasted with the style of the jubilee quartets and probably came from the blues (Ibid., 38). As was the case with virtually all gospel quartets until the early 1950s, the Birmingham Jubilee Singers performed strictly *a cappella*.

A more smooth and polished gospel quartet style was developing concurrently on the East Coast. As in Jefferson County, a regional quartet tradition grew up around the industrial and economic opportunities available to Black Americans in the Tidewater area of Virginia.¹¹ Ship-building and other nautical industries of the region drew a large Black population to the area in the early 1900s. Community quartets were formed “through family ties, neighborhood connections, or church affiliations” (Lornell 2001, 152). Compared to the Jefferson County quartets, the sound of the Tidewater groups in the 1920s and 1930s was characterized by a smooth vocal style, fewer blue notes, and crisp rhythmic declamation (Boyer 2000, 34). Unlike the Jefferson County quartets, which recorded exclusively religious material, the Tidewater quartets in some cases recorded secular repertoire. One such group was the Norfolk Jubilee/Jazz Quartet (the group recorded under both names at different times), which sang secular and sacred repertoire in vaudeville shows. The Excelsior Quartet also recorded both types of repertoire for Black Swan, Gennett, and Okeh Records in 1922. These recording sessions contained songs as diverse as “Sinners Crying Come Here,” “Down by the Old Mill Stream,” and “Jelly Roll Blues” (Lornell 2001, 153).

Some Tidewater quartets introduced stylistic features that influenced many later gospel quartets. The Silver Leaf Quartette, founded in 1919 in Norfolk, Virginia, expanded the polyphonic possibilities for quartets by assigning background singers a syllabic ostinato (such as “clank-a-lanka”). Lead singers were then free to extemporize against the background ostinato (Darden 2004, 152). This innovation in texture encouraged call-and-response structures, complex

¹¹ This area of Virginia lies along the eastern border of the state and denotes the regions of the state where water levels are affected by the tides of the Atlantic Ocean. It encompasses several metropolitan areas such as Newport News, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach.

improvisation, and more extreme voice stratification.¹² The Silver Leaf Quartette was also one of the first groups on the East Coast to exploit the use of falsetto by the tenor (Boyer 2000, 34). The Quartette's willingness to borrow the "complex chords" associated with popular music exemplified the East Coast quartets' involvement with secular music (Ibid., 34). At the same time, the Silver Leaf Quartette and other East Coast quartets continued to record and perform arranged spirituals.

The Golden Gate Quartet of Norfolk, Virginia, achieved international popularity in the 1920s and 1930s. Their career trajectory paved the way for later quartets to transcend regional stature and become powerful forces in the mainstream music industry. The quartet's arrangements included independent polyphony, animated ostinati, and jazz harmonies (Boyer 2000, 44 – 45; Darden 2004, 157 – 8). Their stage performances featured choreography. Their repertory was broad compared to other early quartets, and included arranged spirituals, secular pieces, and the new gospel compositions being published in the 1930s.¹³ The Golden Gate Quartet's successful performances and recordings of gospel songs were influential for later quartets.

In 1935, the Golden Gate Quartet attained regional popularity with their radio broadcasts on WBT in Charlotte, North Carolina (Darden 2004, 158). Later they performed at Carnegie Hall, Café Society in New York, and Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidential inauguration (Boyer 2000, 44 – 45). Thus from the early years of the quartet tradition, ensembles occupied cultural spaces of entertainment and religious expression. Of course, the blend of religious and commercial identities varied from quartet to quartet.

¹² Despite these early innovations, four-part homophony with fairly democratic vocal arrangements remained the norm in quartet singing until the mid-1940s, when the leader-group model was solidified (Boyer 2000, 94).

¹³ The emergence of the notated gospel composition and the gospel publishing industry in the 1920s and 1930s was seminal to the development of the gospel quartet and will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

The recording, marketing, and dissemination of “race records” facilitated the growing popularity of Black gospel quartets in the 1920s and 1930s. Beginning in the early 1920s, large record labels such as Okeh, Paramount, and RCA Victor released “race records” aimed specifically at the Black consumer. Talent scouts for record labels traveled to cities with large Black populations, making field recordings of local Black musicians performing secular and sacred music, including the new written and transcribed gospel compositions (Oliver 1984, 11). By the late 1930s, the gospel quartet tradition had spread from its largely southern roots to northern cities such as New York, Detroit, and Chicago. The quartet genre was carried north by race records and by the migration of performers and audience members.¹⁴

C. 1940s and 1950s

The role of radio in the history of the quartet became more pronounced after World War II. At this time, radio stations in areas with large Black communities started using “personality jocks” to host music and news programs marketed to Black listeners. DJs in Memphis, Nashville, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York spoke in Black vernacular English, discussed issues of social importance, advertised products that were marketed towards African Americans, and played a wide range of jazz, blues, sermons, and gospel music (Cantor 1992; Barlow 1999). In addition to having their recordings aired on the radio, gospel quartets were also broadcast live from the studio. Sponsored by a baking powder or shoe-polish company, for example, quartets performed fifteen-minute segments. Often the quartets performed daily, becoming well-known in

¹⁴ In this brief overview it is impossible to engage with the many overlapping cultural domains that constituted the historical web within which race records were created and sold. These domains include class, race, gender, regionalism, language, a growing advertising industry, and cultural commodification. Several detailed discussions of the complex dynamic between the performers and consumers of “race records” exist, including Oliver’s *Songsters and Saints: Vocal Traditions on Race Records* (1984), Shank’s “From Rice to Ice: the Face of Race in Rock and Pop” (2001), and Garofalo’s “The Popular Music Industry” (2006). For a contemporary journalistic perspective on race records and their white counterpart, “hillbilly records,” see Crichton’s 1938 article “Thar’s Gold in Them Hillbillies” (2005).

the station's listening radius. The quartets performed their sponsor's musical jingle, their own quartet theme song, and gospel arrangements. Stations like WLAC in Nashville and WDIA in Memphis broadcast with such powerful wattage that some gospel quartets achieved national prominence through radio broadcasts rather than through tours (Cantor 1992; Barlow 1999; Boyer 2000, 52).¹⁵ Quartet recordings proliferated in the mid-1940s, due to the emergence of independent recording labels that recorded only Black music (and sometimes only gospel music).¹⁶ Examples of independent labels that specialized in Black music were Apollo in New York City, Gotham in Philadelphia, Chess in Chicago, and Specialty in Los Angeles (Boyer 2000, 51). It is significant to the history of *POQ* that across the country, radio stations and record labels that targeted Black consumers in the 1940s and 1950s were white-owned (Cantor 1992; Barlow 1999).

Another development in the music industry that facilitated the national popularity of the postwar Black gospel quartet was the establishment of a tour route. Known as the "chitlin' circuit" by industry insiders, the route comprised towns and performance venues across the southeast and southwest for Black gospel and R&B performers (Boyer 2000, 54 – 56). A quartet's tour on the "chitlin circuit" consisted of a series of one-night concerts at school auditoriums, churches, or veterans' halls in different towns. Several hours of energetic performance were followed by hundreds of miles of driving, often in automobiles of

¹⁵ In addition to reaching a wider Black audience than might be possible with concert tours, quartets who sang on the radio were also heard by white listeners. Because of their accessibility on the radio, the sound and style of the postwar gospel quartets played a significant role in shaping the musical sensibilities of early white rock and roll musicians. For a case study of this phenomenon, see Kloosterman and Quispel's "'Not Just the Same Old Song On My Radio': An Analysis of the Role of Radio in a Diffusion of Black Music Among Whites in the South of the United States of America, 1920-1960" (1990). Conversely, Black quartets were influenced by sounds that they heard on the radio, including white artists. A discussion of this dynamic can be found in Landes' "WLAC, the Hossman, and Their Influence on Black Gospel" (1987).

¹⁶ This development in mass media differs from the "race records" phenomenon, in which a division of a large mainstream record company such as RCA Victor would create a subdivision within its larger catalogue for the production and marketing of Black musicians and preachers.

questionable efficiency and comfort. Hotel accommodations and restaurant meals were rare, since “Jim Crow” laws mandated legal separation of the races in public places. Often quartets slept in automobiles, in the homes of audience members, or on floors. They often ate canned food like sardines and crackers (Ibid., 54 – 56).¹⁷

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the quartet repertory was becoming increasingly sacred. The repertory was expanding from spirituals and late nineteenth-century hymnody to include notated gospel songs written in the 1930s. These songs were written by popular Black gospel composers such as Thomas Dorsey, Sallie Martin, William Brewster, and Lucie Campbell. Their songs blended harmonic, melodic, and structural elements of the blues with Protestant Christian doctrine. Initially more accepted in Pentecostal/Holiness churches, the new gospel compositions quickly became part of the worship of many Black Baptist and Methodist churches.¹⁸

The pieces were printed in standard Western notation and frequently were sold as single-sheet copies by Black-owned publishing houses.¹⁹ Once purchased by a soloist, small ensemble, or choir director, the score served as a harmonic and structural blueprint that encouraged improvisatory personalization. Much of this improvisation occurred in the refrains that were a

¹⁷ For gospel singers’ recollections of the difficulty of touring in this era as a Black artist, see Heilbut’s interviews with Golden-Age gospel singers in *The Gospel Sound* (1971), Young’s interviews of gospel singers in *Woke Me Up This Morning: Black Gospel Singers and the Black Gospel Life* (1997), Wolff’s interviews of members of the Soul Stirrers quartet in *You Send Me: The Life and Times of Sam Cooke* (1995), and Zoltan’s “Great God A’Mighty!”: *The Dixie Hummingbirds, Celebrating the Rise of Soul Gospel Music* (2003). The reminiscences about the difficulty of life on the “chitlin’ circuit” was confirmed in a recent interview with Percy Griffin, lead singer of Augusta’s Swanee Quintet, active as a gospel singer from the early 1960s until the present. Griffin remembered sleeping on audience members’ floors during the era when African Americans were denied lodging at hotels (2008).

¹⁸ In addition to being performed by special ensembles or soloists in church services, many gospel songs came to be included in the official denominational hymnals of both Black and white churches and are now sung congregationally. The early nineteenth-century gospel hymns of Charles Tindley had been intended for congregational worship, so this inclination was present in the gospel tradition since its inception. For more detail on the emergence of printed gospel compositions and their use in multiple performance contexts, see Reagon Johnson’s *We’ll Understand It Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers* (1992).

¹⁹ Printed gospel compositions were typically notated in the same format as a standard twentieth century hymnal: four voice parts notated on treble and bass staves for easy accompaniment by a keyboard instrument, with text underlay provided between the staves.

part of most gospel compositions. Refrains could be extensively personalized through improvisation and repetition by gospel artists.²⁰ This impulse for musical and rhetorical personalization through improvisation was a longtime hallmark of Black Christian worship (J.M. Jackson 1995, 278 – 9). The verse-refrain structures of the gospel songs were especially suited to the emerging quartet aesthetic, which was beginning to privilege individual vocal virtuosity.²¹

In tandem with the gospel song, the worship rituals of the Pentecostal/Holiness church were influencing the musical worship of mid-century mainstream Black Christianity.²² Distinctive Pentecostal/Holiness worship practices included rhythmically-driven music, shouting, groaning, and “holy dancing”; the chanted sermon; piano, guitar, drum, and tambourine; and the new gospel songs (Reagon Johnson 1992; Floyd 1995, 65; J.M. Jackson 1995; Boyer 2000; Burnim 2006). Pentecostal/Holiness elements used by quartets included call-and-response techniques that created emotional intensity, repetition of rhythmic cells, vigorously

²⁰ For more detail on the potential for improvisation that was built into these compositions, see Joyce-Marie Jackson’s discussion of the development of gospel song (1995, 278 – 81).

²¹ Gospel quartets often create their own arrangements of well-known gospel compositions, hymns, and spirituals. Original arrangements are achieved when quartets vary the composition’s musical parameters. Quartets might alter harmonization, number of verses used, and which textual and musical themes of the piece are extracted, truncated, and repeated during the vamp. This practice of each group arranging songs for itself has marked the quartet tradition from its inception to the present. Imitating other groups’ arrangements has historically been frowned upon in the quartet tradition. The extent to which quartets’ arrangements of well-known pieces are collectively improvised during performance or arranged or rehearsed prior to performance varies from group to group. It is an area for further research into the performance practice, aesthetics, and ethos of gospel music.

²² The Holiness movement emerged in the nineteenth century from the Methodist doctrine of Christian perfection, which taught that Christians could attain complete perfection or “sanctification” in this life by setting themselves apart rigorously from the vices of the world (Corrigan and Hudson 2004). The Pentecostal movement emerged several decades later in the early twentieth century and was characterized by emotional, demonstrative worship. After a highly-publicized extended series of revival services in Los Angeles in 1906, called the “Azusa Street Revival,” Pentecostalism spread across the United States. In the early twentieth century, Holiness and Pentecostal beliefs began to intersect, although not all Holiness groups were necessarily Pentecostal. The Pentecostal/Holiness movement developed throughout the twentieth century as a complex series of churches and denominations whose beliefs and worship greatly impacted mainstream white and Black denominations. For Black Americans, Pentecostal/Holiness congregations often met in small “storefront” churches in Black neighborhoods of large northern cities. Many of these storefront churches were affiliated with the largest predominantly Black Pentecostal denomination, the Church of God in Christ, founded in 1897 by two Black clergymen from the south (Jacobsen and Nelson 2005, 203). For a discussion of the offshoots and ramifications of multiple Pentecostal/Holiness movements in both white and Black religious groups, see Synan’s *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (1997).

embodied performances, the extremes of the vocal range, and later, the incorporation of musical instruments.

During this era, quartets performed on special afternoon or evening programs, rather than during morning church services. In a typical mid-century quartet program, several quartets performed. Lesser-known or local quartets performed first, followed by more famous groups. The program was facilitated by an MC, typically a local minister or radio disc jockey. The MC provided the opening prayer, group introductions, community announcements, transitions between groups, and levity. Each group's distinctive identity was highlighted by matching suits, unique vocal arrangements of standard repertoire or their own pieces, and "theme songs" that introduced the groups and their regional association (R. Allen 1991a; Lornell 1988; Boyer 2000).

Competition between quartets for audience reaction was fierce, and some quartet concerts were even advertised as "song battles." During a song battle, quartets were judged by a panel on performance practice, repertoire selection, and stage demeanor. Publicized well in advance with handbills, these competitions were much anticipated by audiences. The "battles" further blurred the line in the quartet genre between sacred expression and secular commodity. Competition between quartets for audience response was intense even during concerts that were not specifically billed as "battles" (Seroff 1990; J.M. Jackson 1995, 284).

This tension between entertainment and religious ecstasy at mid-century quartet performances was negotiated in various ways by performers and audiences. Some mid-century quartet singers later described their distaste for the growing showmanship of postwar quartets. Common performer behavior during a quartet program began to include performers jumping off the stage, running up and down aisles, and darting in and out of the audience. Audience members

responded by clapping, screaming, engaging in holy dance, and fainting (Heilbut 1971; R. Allen 1991a; Boyer 2000; Lornell 2001).

The following case study of the Soul Stirrers Quartet exemplifies how mass media developments, the emerging gospel song, and emotional performance practices intersected in the quartet tradition of the mid-twentieth century. Started in Houston, Texas, by lead singer Rebert H. Harris, the group moved to Chicago in the late 1930s to sing gospel music full-time. Before leaving Texas, the group was recorded by folklorist Alan Lomax in 1936. Lomax described their music as “the most incredible polyrhythmic stuff you’ve ever heard” (Lomax cited in Heilbut 1971, 76). While in Texas, group’s repertoire expanded from “Negro spirituals...and standard Protestant hymns to the songs of...such composers as Thomas A. Dorsey and Kenneth Morris” (Boyer 2000, 97). Within a few years of moving to Chicago, the group had toured every state in America. They had also become one of the first religious groups to host their own weekly radio show on Chicago’s WIND (Ibid., 97). In 1947, founder Rebert Harris helped organize the National Quartet Association of America, a group dedicated to increasing the professionalism of the genre through annual workshops and publications (Ibid., 98).

The Soul Stirrers drastically altered the genre with several musical innovations. First, they developed the “swing lead” technique, which featured a second lead singer who would perform some verses or refrains, sometimes in a higher pitch register. The second lead would frequently interact with the initial lead singer in call-and-response patterns. The innovation evoked intense enthusiasm in audiences and became a standard practice for other quartets that has continued until the present.²³ The addition of a “swing lead” singer brought the number of

²³ I have observed that quartets who use two lead singers frequently divide performance duties according to the singers’ timbres: singers with rougher, rawer, growling voices will sing uptempo songs, while singers with mellow, lyrical timbres will sing songs with ballad-like melodies at slower tempos. The practice seems to have been fairly standard for the past few decades and is still used today.

quartet singers to five rather than four. This explains why well-known “quartets” such as the Swanee Quintet contain more than four vocalists. Second, lead singer Harris claims to be the first gospel lead singer to use falsetto during his solos (Ibid., 96 – 97).

The group also pioneered the use of instrumental accompaniment for quartets, experimenting with a piano and drums in their recordings for Specialty Records in the early 1950s.²⁴ Once again, the Soul Stirrers were responsible for increasing the number of people in a “quartet” by adding instrumentalists. In later years, it became typical for quartets to include multiple instrumentalists and still be considered a “quartet” since the vocal parts were still stratified into four distinctive lines (three background vocal lines and the main melodic line, sung by a lead singer or split between two lead singers).

Harris reflected several decades later on the relationship between quartet singers, female audience response, visual appearance, musical virtuosity, religious expression, and social power within the gospel quartet field in the mid-1940s.

It was the middle forties when I began to notice the congregation would be filled with [enthusiastic female listeners]...the average woman when she sees a man, and he's sharp and he's clean...and a whole lot of people be shouting [i.e., achieving a state of religious ecstasy] off him because he's so emotional, well, it just motivates the whole thing (Heilbut 1971, 85 – 86).

According to Harris, his discomfort with the increasing showmanship and decreasing virtue of gospel quartet performers led him to retire from the group in 1951 (Ibid., 86). His replacement in the group, Sam Cooke, enjoyed great fame in gospel music, but left for a career in popular music in the early 1960s.

²⁴ Specialty Records in Los Angeles recorded and sponsored tours for many Black gospel quartets in the 1950s. The Soul Stirrers' early experimentation with instrumental accompaniment can be heard on the reissued compact discs of their recording sessions with Specialty Records. The discs include multiple studio “takes” that were never released commercially. Many of these takes reveal the problems with balance that the group struggled with as they tried to incorporate drums and piano. For further information about the Soul Stirrers' musical innovations in the quartet genre, see Daniel Wolff's detailed liner notes for *Sam Cooke with the Soul Stirrers: The Complete Specialty Records Recordings* (2002).

The Soul Stirrers' career illustrates how multiple social determinants intersected to facilitate the rise of the gospel quartet as a commercial phenomenon and an important Black cultural product. Among these determinants were migratory patterns among Black Americans, developments in the mass media, increasingly demonstrative performance behavior, the social power ascribed to Black male quartet singers, and the porous boundary between entertainment and worship in the quartet genre. Quartets like the Soul Stirrers had a powerful effect on their audiences. This effect has been linked by some quartet singers to a sexual dynamic between the male performers and female audience members.²⁵ Considering the gendered nature of this power, the role of the mid-century quartet in constructing a Black masculinity has not been adequately explored in the scholarly literature. Ray Allen (1991a), Boyer (2000), and Lornell (2001) acknowledge the powerful personal and performative presence of gospel quartets. They do not, however, explicitly theorize that the quartets participated in the construction of a Black masculinity that provided an alternative to mainstream white media representations of Black maleness.

In the early nineteenth century, the mass media began its long-standing tradition of depicting Black males as either lazy buffoons or rapacious villains. These stereotypes were perpetuated over the next century in film, onstage, in song, through advertising, and on the radio. At best, they implied idiocy; at worst monstrosity.²⁶ Partly due to these images and the

²⁵ Other quartet singers from the "Golden Age" recall that female audience members were particularly responsive and enthusiastic, both during and after performances. For evidence of this, see interviews with quartet singers in Heilbut's *The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times* (1971) and Wolff's *You Send Me: the Life and Times of Sam Cooke* (1995). My own preliminary observations at concerts and other events in 2007 and 2008 indicate that female fans still demonstrate the most visible and audible enthusiasm at quartet performances. A group of women will often stand at the foot of the stage, and quartet singers might kneel down to shake hands or otherwise physically contact them. Women are often involved with other aspects of quartet industry as well, seemingly in a higher proportion than men. For instance, the Swanee Quintet's fan club, based in Miami, Florida, appears from a photograph on the group's website to be composed entirely of women (www.swaneequintet.com).

²⁶ A graphic overview of caricatures of Black Americans in popular culture from the early nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries is presented in Riggs' documentary film *Ethnic Notions* (2004). Riggs uses examples from

stereotypes they upheld and reflected, Black men were consistently denied the opportunity to assert their masculinity through productive citizenship and economic achievement. The quartet phenomenon provided an opportunity for young Black males to invert these destructive media stereotypes and the debilitating social structures they re-inscribed. Black gospel quartet members, appearing in public with impeccable hairstyles, matching suits, polished shoes, and choreographed motions, performed an art form honed to perfection by hours of practice (Boyer 2001, 93 – 94).²⁷ Their status as well-traveled, accomplished musicians resulted in social prestige for quartet singers in Black communities. This prestige may have powerfully negated media stereotypes and social expectations of inferiority, laziness, and coarseness. In a striking inversion of the weekday social pyramid, the quartet singer assumed in live performance a position of ritual power. During performances, each quartet singer was implicitly charged by Black audiences with the duty of mediating the divine presence to consumers eager to experience transcendence of earthly trials.

For much of the twentieth century, society denied Black males the chance to participate in mainstream American constructions of masculinity. In the margins, therefore, many young Black males participated in self-constructed masculinity through the gospel quartet.²⁸

Understanding the quartet phenomenon as a social force rather than as merely a musical genre helps explain its widespread popularity in the mid-twentieth century. It also partially explains its

minstrelsy and vaudeville, advertisements, sheet music, albums, films, television, and decorative objects such as statues and figurines. The intersection of Black masculinities and related issues of constructions, subjectivities, and media production and consumption is examined in several essays in Harper's *Are We Not Men? Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity* (1996).

²⁷ Additionally, these men were able to travel extensively at a time when such an opportunity was rare for Black Americans. This privilege most likely heightened their social standing within the Black community.

²⁸ The assertion that there ever has been a "mainstream American masculinity" is open to debate. I use the term "mainstream masculinity" here in a very simplistic way to mean "positive images of American men disseminated by the media." By this definition, Black men were discounted from mainstream masculinity for many decades. Recent work such as Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890 - 1940* (1994) convincingly demonstrates that multiple constructions of masculinity, gender, and sexuality have existed simultaneously in American history.

decline as a national phenomenon later in the twentieth century when Black men enjoyed more opportunities to fully participate in mainstream society.

D. Post – 1960s

Beginning in the early 1960s, quartet tours were more sparsely attended, record sales declined, radio stations played less quartet music, and fewer Black men demonstrated interest in vocational quartet singing (Boyer 2000; Lornell 2001). Lornell attributes this decline to several factors: the “inevitable saturation of the market” by too many quartets; the increasing popularity of virtuosic quartet lead singers, which ironically increased audience demand for soloists in gospel music; the increasing popularity of large choral ensembles in the gospel industry; and the departure of many quartet singers for secular music careers (2001, 169). Ray Allen speculated that

the gradual secularization of black urban populations during [the 1960s], coupled with the growing numbers of young white listeners who avidly embraced black styles, created a huge pool of consumers who demanded black pop music but showed little interest in gospel. Further discouraged by the music industry’s failure to help them reach a broader, non-black audience, many professional quartet singers came off the road and returned to the home communities and churches where they had started (1991a, 7).

To these reasons I would add that quartets became victims of the success of their own musical innovations. Many of the musical characteristics, performance practices, and stage behaviors pioneered by mid-century quartets were adopted by soul and funk musicians who grew up listening to quartets. Additionally, the 1960s ushered in an era of increased social and economic opportunities for Black men. These opportunities may have led to a decreased dependence on the traditional structures of Black religion for social stature and financial support.

Since the 1960s, the quartet genre has receded as a dominant force in the mainstream music industry. However, it thrives as a strong local or regional tradition in areas including Mississippi,

Texas, Georgia, the Carolinas, and other eastern states.²⁹ My research and that of other scholars indicates that part-time quartets continue to perform in churches and community centers, release locally-produced albums, and maintain Internet websites and other fan publications. Quartet members typically have other full-time careers, and their concert travel is restricted to locations within a few hours' drive of their home area. Many non-musical hallmarks of the quartet product have remained the same since the 1960s. These include matching uniforms, a high level of interaction with audience members, and the combination of entertainment and religious sentiment still mark the genre. Musically, many elements of quartet performances differ greatly from the mid-century tradition. Almost without exception, quartets now sing with multiple keyboards, drums, guitars, and sometimes wind instruments. They have replaced the bass voice with a bass guitar that plays harmonically- and rhythmically-complex basslines. They typically perform contemporary gospel repertoire with expanded harmonic language.³⁰

E. Gospel Quartets as a Black and American Tradition

The above discussion treats the Black male gospel quartet as a discrete genre that evolved from a confluence of musical idioms and social conditions peculiar to the Black community. However, other quartet genres also developed concurrently with the Black gospel quartet as part

²⁹ Although the vast majority of quartets performing actively are local, non-professional groups, there are still some nationally-known vocational quartets that tour multiple regions of the United States. Examples include the Mighty Clouds of Joy of California, the Fairfield Four of Tennessee, and the Canton Spirituals of Mississippi. Many other nationally-known quartets limit themselves to a large geographical region. Examples of these are the Sensational Nightingales of Raleigh, North Carolina, and the Swanee Quintet of Augusta, Georgia, which tour mostly on the East coast.

³⁰ These observations about the musical and commercial evolution of the quartet industry in the past few decades draw on Feintuch's ethnography of a local, non-professional mixed-gender family quartet from Kentucky (1980), Allen's accounts of the local, non-professional quartet community in New York in the late 1980s (1991a), and my own observations as a researcher and consumer of gospel music during the past ten years in Mississippi and Georgia. My own observations are based on concert handbills, announcements during performances, informal conversations at product tables at concerts, radio announcements, announcements in newspapers, television announcements, advertisements in record stores, quartets' websites, online gospel fan publications, online promotional sites, CD and DVD liner notes, and recorded and live performances.

of a broader American musical taste for small male vocal ensembles. For instance, the barbershop quartet tradition emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although its roots seem to have been both Black and white, by the middle of the twentieth century it was perceived as an exclusively white musical tradition.³¹ The white (or southern/country) gospel quartet also developed in the early twentieth century as a commercial religious music. There is some documentation of crossover in repertoire and arrangements between Black and white gospel quartets in the twentieth century.³² It is valid to think of the mid-century Black gospel quartet as uniquely African-American. Its performance practice, repertoire, niche in the music industry, historical roots, and cultural roles are largely rooted in Black musical and cultural idioms. It is equally valid to think of the genre as one of several quartet genres embraced by white and Black Americans in the late nineteenth century. This broadly American trend saw quartets, Black or white, as vehicles of aesthetic pleasure, commercial gain, religious ritual, community bonding, and recreation and entertainment. This simultaneous occupation of two cultural spaces is explored in more depth below.

If American music can be characterized by any coherent observation, it is by the realization that there is no single “American music.” Unified only in their variety, the myriad of musical traditions practiced in North America for centuries do not hold in common a particular pool of musical and cultural resources. Instead, their common musical ground is found in the

³¹ For more information about the controversy surrounding the nomenclature and development of “barbershop” quartets as a predominantly white or Black phenomenon, see Abbott’s “‘Play that Barbershop Chord’: A Case for the African-American Origin of Barbershop Harmony” (1992) and Henry’s “The Origins of Barbershop Harmony: A Study of Barbershop’s Musical Link to Other African American Musics as Evidenced Through Recordings and Arrangements of Early Black and White Quartets” (2000). Averill’s *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (2003), while useful for some historical background, is an example of recent barbershop historiography that marginalizes the Black origins of the barbershop tradition so convincingly demonstrated by Abbott and Henry.

³² Even fewer resources on the white (or southern) gospel quartet tradition exist than on the Black gospel quartet tradition. Goff, Jr.’s *Close Harmony: A History of Southern Gospel* (2002) gives excellent biographical and discographic detail on white quartets. Goff acknowledges the crossover in style and repertoire between Black and white gospel quartets (9, 121, 159, 171, 199 – 200, 209 – 11, 268, 276 – 7, 348, 357).

process of synthesizing *any* available resource in order to create new artistic products. This process has been repeated in every cultural encounter that has occurred in North America through occupation, immigration, or the forcible import of other human beings.³³ Nowhere has this syncretistic approach to music-making been exemplified better than in the history of Black Americans. From the early seventeenth century until the present, African-American musicians have molded cultural materials from multiple continents into new forms, genres, styles, and instruments. The history of Black sacred music in particular is a story of unceasing synthesis.

In their performance practice, linguistic idiom, and cosmological and theological expression, the slave spirituals were one of the primary sites of such cultural collision. West and Central African musical practices such as call-and-response structures, microtonal inflections, and segments of repeated improvisation collided with the Christian doctrine of salvation. The spirituals were voiced in linguistic metaphors and narrative constructions that extended far beyond the verbal boundaries of contemporaneous White Protestant hymnody.³⁴ When the slave spirituals were recast as formally arranged and notated choral repertoire in the 1870s, another moment of cultural synthesis occurred. Distinctively Black notions of communal authorship, improvised rendition, and oral transmission met the Western European conception of individual composition, notated arrangement, and written transmission. The slave spirituals were re-claimed

³³ This is a sweeping statement meant to indicate an overall trend towards synthesis that characterize many American musical traditions as people, families, religious rituals, musical instruments, printed scores, and recordings have converged on this continent. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage with the many anthropological and ethnomusicological perspectives on culture groups and the musical results of cultural encounters. A detailed discussion of different historical models for conceptualizing culture groups and their encounters can be found in Nettl's "Location, Location, Location! Interpreting Geographic Distribution" (2005).

³⁴ For general discussions of the cultural processes by which the spirituals were created using elements of Euro-American and African musical and theological practices, see Lovell, Jr.'s, *Black Songs: The Forge and the Flame: The Story of How the Afro-American Spiritual Was Hammered Out* (1972), Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom* (1978), Stuckey's *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (1987), Peters' preface to *Lyrics of the Afro-American Spiritual: A Documentary Collection* (1993), Floyd's *The Power of Black Music* (1995), Southern's *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (1997), and Dena Epstein's *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (2003).

and given a new identity: that of a folk product worthy of the attention of the American concert-going public. The quartet movement was birthed in precisely this moment of cultural synthesis. The arranged spiritual, and its identity as a hybridized cultural product, remained significant in the quartet repertory throughout much of the twentieth century. The legacy of the spirituals, transmitted into gospel music, rendered the quartet a distinctively Black and broadly American phenomenon.

The gospel quartet tradition also synthesizes cultural influences in the ethos of performance. As discussed in the first part of this chapter, Western European choral music and art song heavily informed the early years of the jubilee quartet tradition. The physical separation of performer and audience, restrained stage demeanor, operatic vocal timbre, notated arrangements, and use of functional harmony were parts of the university/jubilee choral tradition. These Eurocentric characteristics mingled with distinctly Black notions of performance as the quartet tradition moved further from its university/jubilee choir roots. Spatial boundaries between performers and audiences were breached as performers began leaving the stage and running through the venue. Stage etiquette became much more informal and far more embodied than in the tradition's early years. The extensive personalization and improvisation of arrangements, often in repetitive vamps, became a hallmark of the quartet tradition by mid-century. The exploitation of non-classical vocal timbres such as falsetto tones, growls, and screams increasingly defined the style of Black gospel quartets.

Demonstrating how the gospel quartet has participated in cultural synthesis is one way of conceptualizing the tradition's identity as a broadly American phenomenon. Less abstractly, several stylistic elements of the quartet tradition have left an identifiable imprint on mainstream American popular music. In a satisfying irony, this cultural impact was enabled by racial

segregation, the very social force that sought to prevent it. The concern of white America earlier in the twentieth century was that Black and white Americans would mingle, especially in sexual contexts. Much of their legislative and social activism was expended on the prevention of racial “mixing.” However, by systematically marginalizing the Black community, white America created a space for the incubation of distinctly Black cultural idioms. A distilled Black musical aesthetic emerged, forming the core of varying modes of Black musical expression. At different moments in the repression of the Black community, these modes of expression have included spirituals, blues, ragtime, gospel, jazz, R&B, soul, funk, and hip-hop.³⁵ Every time a Black musical idiom has diffused through social boundaries to impact white musicians, it has dramatically altered them and the music they create. More often than not, “Black” music has actually *become* the mainstream popular music. The gospel quartet tradition was one of many musical idioms that acquired its primary cultural imprint in the Black community, then overflowed the boundaries of its social circumscription to transform America’s “mainstream” musical culture.³⁶

The impact of the gospel quartet tradition on American popular music can be seen in certain approaches to musical texture, arrangement, and vocal range. For instance, the call-and-response structures enabled by the combination of background singers and a lead singer are seen in gospel quartet recordings as early as the late 1920s, and became one of the primary hallmarks of the tradition during the Golden Age. Similar configuration is evident in the same-sex vocal groups of the 1950s and 1960s, and was often employed for the same dramatic effect: the

³⁵ For a deeply nuanced critical discussion of the substance and significance of distinctly Black musical idioms and genres as rooted in Black communities and experiences, see the section entitled “Daddy’s Second Line: Toward a Cultural Poetics of Race Music” in Ramsey’s *Race Music* (2003).

³⁶ Obviously a discussion of race and American music using the unproblematic designations “Black music” and “white music” can easily devolve into monolithic, uninterrogated essentialism. It is not possible here to provide a comprehensive review of how scholars have discussed race and American music; Shank presents an excellent, concise critique of multiple scholarly positions on race and music in “From Rice to Ice: The Face of Race in Rock and Pop” (2001).

escalation of tension. For example, the Temptations, a group of Black males who came of age during the Golden Age of the gospel quartet tradition, are patterned after the sacred quartets. Shared characteristics include matching suits, mild choreography, polished stage demeanor, the use of falsetto, and the interplay of a background vocal ostinato against the acrobatics of an independent lead singer. There are similarities in marketing, publicity, and image maintenance, too. Some of the Temptations' publicity photos and album covers feature poses and clothing indistinguishable from those of earlier and contemporary Black male gospel quartets.³⁷

The gospel quartet tradition also trained a generation of R&B, rock, and soul artists in how to create dynamic interactions with the audience through stage behavior. As mentioned in quartet reminiscences and verified in interviews with popular musicians, the stage antics of 1940s and 1950s quartet lead singers influenced artists like James Brown, Ray Charles, and Otis Redding. These and many other Black performers grew up attending quartet concerts, listening to quartet recordings, singing in gospel quartets, and absorbing the distinctive performance practices that engaged audiences' emotions.³⁸ Brown and others like him later made headlines jumping off stages and running up and down aisles during their concert. However, this kind of stage demeanor had been prominent in quartet programs since the 1940s. In the memorable words of Ira Tucker, lead singer of the Dixie Hummingbirds and well-known gospel showman:

"I jumped off my first stage in Suffolk, Virginia [in 1944]. I was singing 'I Don't Know Why' by

³⁷ Many Temptations album covers depict the men wearing matching formal suits arranged in symmetrical formations—precisely how gospel quartets had been photographed in publicity photos and album covers decades prior to the Temptations' formation in 1961. Examples of some album covers and publicity photographs that fit this description can be viewed at the website of Motown Records (<http://classic.motown.com/artist.aspx?ob=ros&src=lb&aid=52>). For purposes of comparison, publicity photographs from the 1930s of the Kings of Harmony, a Black gospel quartet from Alabama, can be viewed in a digital reprint of Ray Funk's article on the group (1990) at the Alabama State Council on the Arts website (<http://www.arts.state.al.us/actc/quartet/KINGS1.html>).

³⁸ These and other male R&B and soul artists discussed their recollections of listening to and occasionally performing with gospel quartets in multiple interviews in film and in print. The interactions of James Brown with the gospel quartet tradition will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter Five.

Thomas A. Dorsey, and the folks had fits...Shoot, what James Brown does, I've *been* doing” (Heilbut 1971, 80 – 81).

Quartets also employed vocal virtuosity to elicit responses from the audience. Extended melismas that explored the extremes of ranges, strategic repetition of verbal and musical patterns, interpolation of personal experiences in the form of “testifying,” and verbal exhortations for audience participation characterized the performances of gospel quartets. Later, many popular vocalists who imbibed the quartet style used many of the same techniques, and continue to do so in the present. The American popular musicians who were influenced by the Black gospel quartets in turn impacted global popular music through recordings and tours.³⁹

The gospel quartet for many decades has managed to retain a distinctly Black identity with distinctly Black roots, facilitated largely by racial separation. However, those roots grew in the soil of the broader American cultural process of synthesis. When the gospel quartet influenced American popular music, and through it music cultures across the world, this uniquely Black idiom demonstrated itself to be broadly American. This bifurcated assessment of the quartet tradition is significant for understanding *POQ* as a unique local media product whose development was also related to national narratives of gospel music, religious developments, mass media innovations, and social conditions in Black America.

³⁹ Recently PBS produced a documentary, *Sweet Soul Music: Stax Live in Europe 1967* (2008), documenting the 1967 European tour of Black artists from the Stax/Volt record label. Stax, located in Memphis, featured Southern Black soul musicians like Otis Redding and Sam and Dave. A *New York Times* review of the documentary describes recently-discovered footage in which a Norwegian audience responds vigorously when the musicians employed performative and musical devices rooted in Black sacred song, including engaging the audience in call-and-response patterns (Pareles 2009). This is but a single tangible example of the ways that American music, through Black musicians with backgrounds in gospel music (including quartet music), exported to global audiences a national product that drew heavily on Black sacred song. Further discussion of the link between gospel quartets and American popular music can be found in Neal’s “Sunday Singing: The Black Gospel Quartet” (2002).

Mid-Twentieth-Century Race Relations in Augusta, Georgia

As theorized above, the commercial popularity of the mid-century Black gospel quartet was enabled and sustained by segregation. Segregation created the quasi-insular mass media markets of race records and “Black appeal” radio in which the groups could flourish. The segregation that permeated every aspect of American life was nowhere more stringent than in Augusta. The town’s stark racial separation is the backdrop against which *POQ* emerged as a radio program in the late 1940s.⁴⁰

Even in the early twenty-first century, the historiography of Augusta is emblematic of a city that comprises two separate communities. Arcadia Press recently published a collection of nostalgic, sepia-toned photographs documenting “old Augusta” (Greene 2000). The book is more notable for its omissions than for its content. It contains almost no photographs of the Black citizens, residences, businesses, parks, schools, churches, and cemeteries that existed blocks away from the elegant buildings pictured in the book. The collection’s photographic bias and almost complete exclusion of evidence of Black life is not acknowledged in the book’s preface or captions. Only a reader informed by other historical sources would know that the book documents only half of “old Augusta.” In a reflection of the town’s deeply-rooted segregation, Arcadia later published photographs documenting Black life in Augusta in a separate “Black America Series” (Joiner 2004).⁴¹

⁴⁰ Although the following section treats race relations and the position of Black Augustans in the middle of the twentieth century, several books discuss this subject in an earlier era and are useful for understanding the antebellum roots of twentieth-century race relations. Among them are *Old Springfield: Race and Religion in Augusta, Georgia* (Cashin 1995) and *Paternalism in a Southern City: Race, Regionalism, and Gender in Augusta, Georgia* (Cashin and Eskew 2001).

⁴¹ Other examples of this divided historiography are the museums in Augusta. When I toured the Augusta History Museum in April 2008, its central permanent collection called “Augusta’s Story” documents small portions of African-American life in Augusta, including small exhibits on slave and plantation life, early educational efforts in the Black community in the decades following Reconstruction, and some memorabilia related to James Brown (<http://www.augustamuseum.org/>). A separate museum across town, the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History, documents the local Black experience separately and with greater scope, detail, and variety

Primary sources from Augusta's media in the middle of the twentieth century tell a similar story of two communities. As recently as 1966, the *Augusta Chronicle* reported news of interest to the Black community on the "colored page" (Terrell 1977, 33). Its sister newspaper, the *Augusta Herald*, also confined news related to African Americans a page titled "News of the Augusta Negro Community."⁴² Local radio station WAUG broadcast a five-minute "Negro News" segment on weekday afternoons at 5 p.m. (Augusta Radio Clock 1953). The existence of several separate Black newspapers from the late nineteenth century through much of the twentieth century also indicates the depth and breadth of racial separation in Augusta.⁴³

Despite marginalization in history and by historiography, Black life in early twentieth-century Augusta blossomed. Newspapers and other records list many Black doctors, pharmacists, dentists, lawyers, teachers, ministers, and business owners active in Augusta. Photographs and other records document important Black institutions such as schools, mortuaries, nursing homes, grocery stores, insurance agencies, and countless churches. Black musicians such as the Swanee Quintet and James Brown and places of entertainment such as the Lenox and Palace Theaters attest to a thriving Black cultural life. Community-improvement initiatives such as benevolent

(<http://www.lucycraftlaneymuseum.com/>). Although I have not visited the museum yet, its staff historian, Corey Rogers, has been very helpful in the effort to locate extant copies of Black newspapers.

⁴² These pages included mostly social announcements such as weddings, travel notes, graduations, pageants, births, or deaths; church news such as revival meetings, service times, celebrations of pastors' and churches' anniversaries; and educational news such as academic achievements by local Blacks. Also included on some of the pages were advertisements from Black businesses. Further evidence of the separation of the races in mid-century Augusta can be gleaned from other sections of the newspaper. Entertainment pages listed separate movie theaters for Blacks and whites. Advertisements for local entertainment indicated that many events had segregated seating. In general, examples of positive Black achievements were confined to the "Black interest" sections or pages, while stories of African Americans committing crimes were usually printed in the "mainstream" pages of the newspaper. The above assessments are based on my screening of hundreds of *Augusta Chronicle* and *Augusta Herald* newspapers on microfilm from the 1940s to the 1960s.

⁴³ The two Black newspapers that seem to have enjoyed the longest run of publication in the area were the *Weekly Review*, published from 1947 until at least 1970 (Terrell 1977, 30) and the *Augusta News-Review*, published from 1971 to 1985. For detailed publication dates and titles of other local and regional Black newspapers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Lloyd Terrell's *Blacks in Augusta: A Chronology, 1741 - 1977* (1977). The availability of surviving copies of these two newspapers will be discussed later in a review of available research resources for studying *POQ*.

associations, orphanages, a Y.M.C.A., women's clubs, Payne College, and a local NAACP chapter flourished in the first half of the century (Terrell 1977; Joiner 2004; J. Carter 2008).⁴⁴

This flowering of Augusta's Black community occurred in the context of the same social and political frustrations experienced by Black communities across the southeast. In Augusta, as elsewhere in the south, the Black community's access to political, educational, and economic opportunities was severely limited by legalized and *de facto* segregation. In the early 1950s, Augusta's Black constituency still lacked basic government services such as playgrounds, schools, and paved streets with lights (Cobb 1975, 66). During this era, lynchings of Black citizens sometimes occurred in the area. The median Black income in Augusta in 1949 was 44.4% of the median white income (Ibid., 99). Only 2.5% of Black citizens over age twenty-five were high school graduates, and 75% of Augusta's Black population was "crowded into an area in southeast Augusta where [most of the dwellings] were dilapidated" (Ibid., 99).

While the 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown vs. the Board of Education* officially mandated integration in public schools, it effected only minimal change for Augusta's Black youth. Many of them faced personal and institutional efforts by some white citizens to impede school integration (Ibid., 104 – 5).⁴⁵ When the races interacted in Augusta during this era, they did so in heavily segregated public spaces. For example, the 1955 *City Guide* to Augusta lists

⁴⁴ Other historical evidence of Black community life in the first half of the twentieth century can be found in many retrospective articles and letters to the editor in the Black newspaper the *Augusta News-Review* during the 1970s and 1980s.

⁴⁵ A vivid example of white obstruction of Black civil rights in Augusta is the political career and publishing activities of legislator and lawyer Roy Harris (1895 – 1985), a member of the Georgia legislature in either the senatorial or representative capacity intermittently from 1921 to 1946. Harris was a vehement segregationist and member of the racist and violent Citizens Council. He fought vigorously to impede integration in Georgia, particularly in public education, at governmental levels from the local to the state. Harris moved to Augusta in 1931 and in 1946 founded a tabloid, the *Augusta Courier*, which he used from 1947 to 1974 to disseminate segregationist and racist propaganda (Huff 2007). Huff describes the contents of the *Courier* in this way: "Headlines appeared in bright red ink, and most articles focused on the inferiority of African Americans, the evils of integration, and the need to defeat liberals" (Ibid.). Harris' political activities and printed propaganda are an example of the open and vocal resistance to integration and equal rights faced by Blacks in Augusta during the middle of the twentieth century and, unfortunately, into the latter years of the century.

“Places of Amusement” such as bowling alleys and pool parlors which were divided into white and “Negro” sections (X-XIII).

Frustrated by the impotency of its political agency, the Black community in Augusta began to use protests and demonstrations in the early 1950s. However, the few victories won by these means were minimally effective. According to James Cobb, only limited concessions to the Black community were strategically permitted by Augusta’s white businessmen. The businessmen were eager to vaunt the city’s “progressiveness” to potential investors by instituting minor social reforms. However, the reforms scarcely improved the economic and social situation of the city’s Black community. Black political activism and protests had tapered off by the end of the 1950s (Cobb, 76).⁴⁶

POQ, Early 1940s – 2008: A Synopsis

POQ emerged into this mid-century world of Black gospel quartets and stringent segregation. The following section provides an overview of the development of *POQ* in five chronological segments: late 1940s to 1969, 1970 to 1980, 1981 to February 1995, March 1995 to 2004, and 2005 to 2008. The segment divisions are based on changes in the program’s managerial personnel and in local race relations. Each section engages with issues such as the program’s musical participants, performing styles, managerial operations, commercial sponsors, relationship to the local gospel community, relationship to the national gospel industry, interaction with the local economy, role in community politics, and the surviving documentary and media record from each era.

⁴⁶ For more detailed discussion on the entrenched segregation and racial tension in Augusta and how its civil rights history compares with other Georgia cities, along with data on the political and economic status of Augusta’s Black community in the twentieth century, see Tuck’s *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia* (2001).

A. Late 1940s – 1969

Sometime in the late 1940s, a radio program called the *BeBop Hour* was conceived of and hosted by Steve Manderson on Augusta's WJBF-AM 580 (J. Carter 2008). Manderson was a white advertising account executive at the radio station. The *BeBopHour* broadcast live daily performances by musicians including local Black gospel quartets. It is believed by some Augustans to be the forerunner of *POQ* (Rhodes 2007c; J. Carter 2008).⁴⁷ The phenomenon of Black musicians performing on a white-owned radio station was common in the American mass media of the time. In addition to the *BeBop Hour*, local Black gospel quartets such as the Abraham Brothers and the Swanee Quintet were heard on local radio in the late 1940s. Both of these groups broadcast daily fifteen-minute programs on Augusta's WGAC and WJBF.⁴⁸ Well before *POQ* was broadcast on television in 1955, Black gospel quartets already maintained a strong presence on Augusta's airwaves.

POQ's roots as a radio program were part of a common trend in the national media towards airing Black music in the late 1940s. However, its transition to television and its subsequent longevity made it a unique media institution. In November 1954, WJBF radio became WJBF television, the first television station licensed to broadcast in Augusta. A few months later, on April 17th, 1955, *POQ* made its first television broadcast with Steve Manderson as the host. The program was initially broadcast for over three hours on Sunday mornings (Rhodes 2005).⁴⁹ WJBF owner J.B. Fuqua was involved in the program, although he never

⁴⁷ An *Augusta Chronicle* radio log from March 14, 1952, lists the *BeBop Hour* on WJBF radio from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on weekday afternoons. The title *Parade of Quartets* seems not to have appeared in newspaper radio logs from the early 1950s. The first documentary record of this title is from newspaper television logs in April 1955.

⁴⁸ For more detail about duration and frequency of these broadcasts, see *Augusta Chronicle* radio logs from the late 1940s to the early 1950s.

⁴⁹ The precise television beginnings of *POQ* are as murky as its origins in radio. The Abraham Brothers, a local Black gospel quartet, had their own television program called the *Abraham Brothers Show* on WJBF on Tuesday and Thursday nights in late 1953 and early 1954. In early 1954, the *Abraham Brothers Show* was moved to Sunday mornings. It is unknown who hosted the *Abraham Brothers Show* (Thomas, Abraham, and Abraham 2004). The

hosted it. Fuqua was a fan of white and black gospel music. Fuqua stated many years later that while most Southern media executives were “generally too chicken to do something like that [put Blacks on television], I felt that it was something that I could do and directly make a difference” (Norton 2004). According to Fuqua’s later reminiscences, both white and Black viewers soon came to enjoy the program (Ibid.).⁵⁰

In its early years, the television program consisted of performances by local and out-of-town Black gospel quartets. The quartets sang several gospel pieces, discussed their upcoming concert appearances, and advertised their commercial sponsors. Like many mid-century American towns in the 1950s and 1960s, Augusta and its surrounding areas boasted dozens of local Black gospel quartets. Groups from Augusta and the surrounding areas appeared regularly on the *POQ* during the program’s early years. Local quartets that performed regularly on the program in its early years included the Abraham Brothers, Veteran Harmonizers, Southern Six, Brewsteraires, and the Swanee Quintet (<http://www.paradeofquartets.com/history>).⁵¹ Nationally-known quartets from other parts of the country traveled to Augusta as part of the “chitlin’ circuit” in the 1950s and 1960s. These visiting quartets performed on the Sunday morning *POQ*

relationship between Manderson’s radio program the *BeBop Hour* and the television program the *Abraham Brothers Show* is unclear. Dr. James E. Carter, III, remembers Black gospel quartets being televised on WJBF every afternoon (2008). He did not recall the name of this program, but did recall a sudden switch in program time to Sunday mornings and believes this show became the *POQ* (Ibid.). It does seem that *POQ* emerged from a combination of the Sunday morning *Abraham Brothers Show* with the weekly afternoon television broadcasts of Black quartets on WJBF, since Carter recalls an abrupt cessation of the weekday quartet broadcasts when *POQ* began broadcasting (Ibid.). *Augusta Chronicle* television logs indicate that prior to Sunday, April 17, 1955, *POQ*’s Sunday morning time slot on WJBF-TV was occupied by the *Abraham Brothers Show*. Despite the lack of clarity regarding program titles and broadcast times, the presence of Black participants in the very earliest stages of television broadcasting in Augusta is unusual in Southern media history.

⁵⁰ Extant data indicates that neither Fuqua nor Manderson received much harassment by the white community for interacting with and broadcasting Black musicians (Fuqua 2004; J. Carter 2008). Although Fuqua’s role in managing *POQ* appears to have been somewhat limited, Manderson was associated with the program and with local entertainment, including Black gospel music, for a long time and seems to have had more extensive ties to the Black community. His economic relationship to the Black community will be explored later in the chapter.

⁵¹ Although the majority of quartets on *POQ* were male in its early years, a few female quartets appeared regularly on the program. Sister Novella Smith and the Gospel Echo Soul Stirrers were one such group (K. Howard 2008; www.paradeofquartets.com).

in order to created publicity for their Sunday evening concerts, often in Augusta's Bell Auditorium. Although no *POQ* footage of these nationally-known performers seems to be extant, evidence of their televised appearances remains in the reminiscences of local gospel artists and in concert advertisements printed in the *Augusta Chronicle*.⁵² From its inception, the *POQ* functioned as a point of intersection between the local/regional gospel tradition and the national gospel market.

Quartets performed a variety of sacred repertoire in the gospel style on *POQ*. Although no documentary or footage records exist from the program's early years, participants and viewers recall that quartets sang their "theme songs" on *POQ*. Sung week after week by local quartets, the theme songs identified the quartets to the audience, creating a memorable aural imprint and a good marketing tool. Recollections of these theme songs shed light on the types of repertoire performed on the program in the late 1950s. Examples of theme songs sung in the early years of *POQ* include arranged spirituals, nineteenth-century hymns by white authors, and twentieth-century white gospel songs.⁵³ Other information regarding musical styles and repertoire on early *POQ* episodes must be deduced from extant recordings of local and national quartets and from

⁵² When interviewed by Henry Howard on *POQ* (2004), Swanee Quintet member James "Big Red" Anderson and gospel DJ Marion "Mal Your Pal Cook" list some of the nationally-known quartets that appeared on *POQ* in the program's early days. These included Sam Cooke and the Soul Stirrers, the Dixie Hummingbirds, and the Blind Boys of Alabama. The men emphasized that all of the significant mid-century gospel quartets appeared on *POQ* during their tours (Anderson and Cook 2004). Augusta's Swanee Quintet, which was developing a national reputation during the 1950s, often acted as a liaison to draw these quartets to the area (Ibid.). Local gospel DJs would also broadcast visiting quartets on the radio prior to the groups' performances on *POQ*, giving the groups two opportunities to promote their live concerts to potential audience members (Ibid.). Collaboration between *POQ* and other local gospel media outlets was crucial in promoting the visiting quartets who came to Augusta.

⁵³ Specific examples of theme songs used by local quartets on *POQ* include the Abraham Brothers' "Rock A My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham," (Cook and Anderson 2004), the Southern Six's "Where He Leads Me I Will Follow (I'll Go With Him All the Way)," the Golden Trumpets' "I'll Fly Away," the Veteran Harmonizers' "Jesus Is a Waymaker" (Thomas 2004), and the Gospel Echo Soul Stirrers' "Deep Deep Deep (I Got the Love of Jesus Deep Down In My Soul)" (K. Howard 2008). "Rock My Soul" is a spiritual, "Where He Leads Me" is a nineteenth-century hymn, "I'll Fly Away" is an early twentieth-century white gospel hymn, and the origins of the last two songs are unknown to me. A reconstructed performance of the Abraham Brothers' 1950s arrangement of "Rock My Soul" took place on *POQ* in 1996 and will be discussed in Chapter Four.

viewer/participant recollections.⁵⁴ According to a viewer from the 1960s, early quartets on the show sang very “traditional” religious music (Billingsley 2008). A viewer from the 1950s specifically recalls the singing of “meter songs” in the early years of the program (J. Carter 2008).⁵⁵

Exceptions to the strictly religious repertory on *POQ* were the commercial jingles that quartets sang to promote the local businesses that sponsored their airtime on *POQ*. This vividly highlights the economic relationship between mass media and gospel quartets of the 1950s. According to the program’s official account of its early years,

Each group had its sponsors to pay for their time on the air. This allowed many businesses that normally could not get on television, an opportunity to advertise their products and services. Also, with its vast viewing audience, many businesses found the program to be an excellent vehicle to reach the Black community (<http://www.paradeofquartets.com/history>).

For example, the Traveling Singers quartet sang the Claussen Bread jingle during all of their appearances on *POQ* (Fryer, Williams, and Thomas 2004).⁵⁶

In addition to advertisements targeting Black consumers, the program also included information about local church events and about that day’s performers. Church announcements often related to “benefits for [Black] churches and groups to raise money for needed projects” (www.paradeofquartets.com/history). According to Joyce Billingsley, who watched the program throughout the 1960s and 1970s,

They would interview [the groups], ask them how did they get started with the group, how many started off in the beginning and stuff like that, and how long did they—the original group stay together, things like that (2008).⁵⁷

⁵⁴ More specifically, some of the Swanee Quintet’s recordings from the 1950s and 1960s have been reissued on commercial CDs in recent years.

⁵⁵ The significance of “meter hymns” on *POQ* will be explored in-depth in Chapter Six.

⁵⁶ The Traveling Singers also used the spiritual “Low Down the Chariot” as a theme song (Fryer, Williams, and Thomas 2004). The use of a “jingle” and a religious theme song by the same group demonstrates that local gospel quartets on *POQ* simultaneously projected religious as well as commercial identities.

⁵⁷ This would have been a marketing tool for Manderson’s own benefit, since he was a promoter of Black gospel quartets in the area and would have benefited from increased audience attendance at quartet concerts.

From its roots, *POQ* was linked to the economic and religious fabric of local Black community life. Even in its early years when the program was still under white ownership, it served a more complex social function for the Black community than simply musical entertainment.

The precise viewing radius of the program during this era is difficult to confirm. Longtime performers on the program estimate that *POQ* broadcast within a seventy-to-one-hundred-mile radius in eastern Georgia and western South Carolina for many decades (Walker 2007; J. Abraham 2007). A 1953 newspaper advertisement for the opening of WJBF-TV stated that the station “will reach 808,220 people, or 207,000 homes—plus a million additional people in the fringe area” (Local Television 1953). A WJBF advertisement in the 1955 *Augusta City Directory* estimated a lower figure, stating that the 100,000-watt station reached “over a million people” (143). Either way, a viewing radius of one to two million people in the mid-1950s made *POQ* a powerful marketing tool for performers and their commercial sponsors. Viewer demographics for this era are extremely difficult to establish. One white viewer from the 1960s suggested that since there were only two television stations broadcasting in Augusta in the late 1950s and 1960s, white viewership of *POQ* was probably substantial (Young 2007).⁵⁸ Since the program was broadcast for several hours on Sunday morning during the 1950s and 1960s, people could view portions of it prior to or after church services (Billingsley 2008).

This first era of *POQ*’s development is marked by the fact that until 1969, Steve Manderson, the program’s white originator, was also its sole host. Manderson’s pre-*POQ* involvement in local entertainment laid the foundation for his successful commodification of gospel music on *POQ*. Prior to moving to Augusta, he worked at the Ritz Theater and Cox

⁵⁸ Bob Young, a white man who is a former mayor of Augusta and former anchorman at WJBF, grew up in Augusta and stated that “*POQ* was the only thing on [television on] Sunday mornings” (2007). Young and other WJBF employees prepared *POQ*’s nomination packets for the Peabody Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting and Journalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Capitol Theater in his native Macon, Georgia, and at a movie theater in Atlanta. He opened Augusta's first drive-in movie theater in 1938, on Sandbar Ferry Road (Manderson 2008).

Manderson also was known in the Black community prior to *POQ* as the MC of the weekly all-Black "Harlem Talent Revue." The review was broadcast on radio from a local Black theater in the early 1950s. Longtime Augusta native Dr. James E. Carter, III, recalls:

In the early '50s, probably '51 or '52, [Manderson] had something called the "Harlem Talent Revue" at the Harlem Theater. A Black theater. On Saturday, 1:00, for a half hour, he would feature people in the neighborhood that wanted to come and sing. And, ah, later on he moved it to the Lenox Theater, but he kept that show... He would be the MC, and Wilbur Smith was the MC, I remember as well, because I was working at the Lenox part-time. I had a high school job, and I knew him. And of course I knew Steve already, but I knew Wilbur Smith already. And I would go down there and help him haul his equipment, help him with the telephone lines, set the mikes up and all that kind of stuff. [Allen: What kind of groups?] Oh, oh, just the popular music of that day. There would be a little combo called the Dukes of Rhythm that would open the show...and it was a half-hour show, and it went very well. Now it started on WGAC (2008).

Sometime in the 1940s, Manderson began to promote white and Black gospel musicians in Augusta. Local Black gospel quartets that Manderson promoted included the Brewsteraires, the Abraham Brothers, and the Swanee Quintet (Manderson 2008).⁵⁹ As stated earlier in the chapter, Manderson hosted the *BeBop Hour*, a daily program of Black music on WJBF-radio in the late 1940s and early 1950s that sometimes featured Black quartets. Sometime shortly after *POQ* began broadcasting in 1955, Manderson founded and hosted the long-running Lewis Family program on WJBF. The Lewis Family of Lincolnton, Georgia, performed bluegrass gospel music on the program; they also occasionally performed bluegrass gospel on *POQ*

⁵⁹ Gospel promoters have played an important logistical role in the American quartet industry for many decades, and still play an important role in gospel music in general. They organize gospel concerts by contacting artists, locating and reserving venues, and overseeing publicity. Gospel promoters often work in a limited geographical radius and are known by their connection to that region; they work with regional and non-regional groups to organize gospel programs. Over time, out-of-town groups know they must contact particular regional promoters in order to organize concerts in a certain area. Promoters differ from managers in that a manager typically works for a particular quartet, while a promoter works for him/herself and negotiates with multiple ensembles.

(Rhodes 2007b; Billingsley 2008).⁶⁰ *Augusta Chronicle* music journalist Don Rhodes reflected on Manderson's commercial relationship to local gospel music:

One thing to keep in mind is that the *POQ* came out when local programming of TV was in its experimental stages. Manderson was basically the old school advertising guy who was looking for ways to sell advertising on the new WJBF TV station and had been selling advertising on radio. My guess is that he saw the Black gospel *POQ* and the white gospel Lewis Family Show that he both [sic] founded as ways of selling advertising to business people who knew they would be reaching a wide audience in the heart of the southern Bible Belt and in a town just full of Black and white churches. My guess is that Manderson did not create the *POQ* or Lewis Family shows because he was that religious but because he saw them as a way of making money for both the stations he worked for and himself (2007e).

Manderson's personal charisma has been mentioned as another reason for the success of *POQ* despite the fact that the show featured Black musicians. Carter described him as a "snazzy dresser; a cool cat" who projected an image of confidence upon entering a room (2008). Carter explained that there was a relationship of trust between Manderson and the Black community. He also felt that Manderson was a "risk-taker," which was why *POQ* succeeded despite televising only Black performers in a segregated era (Ibid.). Carter, an African American, recalls spending time as a child in the radio studio with Manderson during his broadcasts of the *BeBop Hour*. The anecdote confirms that in the context of musical entertainment, Manderson was willing to transgress the boundaries of segregation. Wayne Howard affirmed that Manderson was "really well known in the Black community" and was "like one of the family" (2008).⁶¹

After *POQ* attained a degree of popularity, Manderson opened a variety store in a Black Augusta neighborhood. His visibility as host of *POQ* likely helped him gain further economic traction in the Black community (K. Howard 2008). The date of the store opening has not been

⁶⁰ The Lewis Family's weekly gospel program, which apparently started not long after *POQ*, was broadcast for more than forty years on WJBF (Rhodes 2007d).

⁶¹ In testimony to Manderson's relationship with the local Black community, several prominent area gospel performers were involved with his funeral: Henry Howard gave a eulogy, and two members of the Original Abraham Brothers quartet were pallbearers (Manderson 2008).

verified, but Karlton Howard recalls its opening day when he was a boy, probably sometime in the 1960s (2008). The store was on Forest Street (Manderson 2008). Manderson's wife Mildred worked there (Ibid.). Thus Manderson's economic ties with the Black community were the foundation on which *POQ* rested and were strengthened by Manderson's role on *POQ*.

As established in the first chapter, no scholarly research on *POQ* exists. Therefore information about every era of the program must be assembled from primary sources such as footage, photographs, interviews, and documents. Unfortunately, footage of *POQ* prior to the 1980s appears to be virtually non-existent.⁶² The program was broadcast live on a weekly basis, and was one of several local musical and variety programs that WJBF aired during this era. Therefore, the station does not seem to have deemed the program historically-valuable in its early years. Despite the lack of footage, the visual appearance of early *POQ* performers can be described using extant publicity photographs and album covers.⁶³ In 2004 *POQ* interviewed elderly local quartet singers who sang on the program in the 1950s and 1960s. The interviews are available in the *POQ* collection at the University of Georgia Media Archives and will be referenced throughout the dissertation to refer to, reconstruct, and deduce information about the program's early years. Additionally, my own interviews with viewers and performers who recall the program's early years help reconstruct early data.

No paper evidence of the program's logistical and managerial operations, viewer ratings, performing personnel, or commercial sponsorship seems to have survived from this era. Inquiries about records made at WJBF and to the widows of Steve Manderson and J.B. Fuqua and other

⁶² As of March 2009, the Howard family had located some footage of the program that might date from before 1980. The footage has not yet been added to the *POQ* collection at the University of Georgia, and its contents are uncertain.

⁶³ Many of these images are available at *POQ*'s website. Some older album covers and publicity photographs of local quartets were displayed on *POQ* episodes in 2004 as part of the show's fiftieth anniversary celebration. The images from the 2004 episodes and on the *POQ* website indicate that quartets appearing on the program in the 1950s and 1960s are dressed in matching formal suits, sometimes with matching hairstyles and/or facial hair, which was typical for gospel quartets of the era across the country.

early participants on the program have yielded no results.⁶⁴ During my own appearance on the program in May 2008, host Karlton Howard and I broadcast an appeal to viewers to contact the station with any *POQ* memorabilia. Nothing resulted from this appeal. None of the other Augustans I have interviewed have any paper memorabilia dating from or related to this era of the program, although some have shared materials from later years. According to a comprehensive searchable database, the *Augusta Chronicle* did not print feature articles about the program until the 1970s, even in the African-American sections of the paper.⁶⁵ When the newspaper mentions personnel involved with the program during the 1950s and 1960s, such as J.B. Fuqua, Steve Manderson, and various local gospel quartets, the articles do not connect these people with *POQ*. The only paper traces of the program's existence in this era that I have discovered are the *Augusta Chronicle*'s television logs. It is difficult to find local Black newspapers from this era; attempts to find copies of the *Weekly Review*, which began publishing in 1947 and seems to have been the only Black newspaper published in Augusta in the 1950s and 1960s, have been fruitless.⁶⁶ It is therefore unknown if the *Weekly Review* printed feature articles about *POQ*.

⁶⁴ Manderson's widow Mildred granted me an interview in 2008 in which she stated that she does not have photographs or other memorabilia pertaining to the program. Dorothy Fuqua, widow of J.B. Fuqua, was in contact with me via telephone and email in 2008, but ultimately declined to sign a release form to participate in the research. I am therefore not at liberty to quote our conversations but can state that it was not entirely clear whether or not she possessed materials related to *POQ*. Last summer she was in the process of preparing her late husband's papers to be donated to Duke University. It may be that when that collection is processed and open to the public, materials relating to *POQ* might be discovered.

⁶⁵ Almost two centuries' worth of the *Augusta Chronicle* has been scanned from microfilm into an online subscription database that is searchable by Boolean search terms with the range of applicable dates selected by the researcher. The database claims to be extremely complete with the exception of very old pages that suffered damage prior to being filmed on microfilm.

⁶⁶ The archives at Payne College (a Black college in Augusta), the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History, microfilm records at the University of Georgia, and the personal papers of Lloyd Terrell (author of *Blacks in Augusta*, 1977) at Virginia Union University do not contain copies of the *Weekly Review*. Wayne Howard mentioned in February 2007 that an elderly woman in Augusta may possess copies of the paper, but he has not yet confirmed this. A librarian at Payne College suggested that Pyramid Records of Augusta may have extant copies of local Black newspapers, an option that remains to be investigated. Corey Rogers, staff historian of the Augusta History Museum, has confirmed to me the notorious difficulty of obtaining copies of the *Weekly Review*. The University of

B. 1970 – 1980

During the 1950s and 1960s, Augusta's Black citizens experienced little progress towards social and economic equality. In May of 1970, racial tensions that had simmered in the city for many years exploded into a fatal riot. In retrospect the event seems to have marked the beginning of some tangible change in Augusta's race relations (Cobb 1975).⁶⁷ One indication of Augusta's changing social climate post-riot was that *POQ* engaged a Black co-host in 1970.⁶⁸ The new co-host, Henry Howard, was the lead singer and manager of the Spirits of Harmony, a gospel quartet that had frequently performed on the program since the show's early days (<http://www.paradeofquartets.com/history>). He was also a well-known businessman in the Black community, and had been active as a gospel promoter in the Augusta area (Rhodes 1984).⁶⁹ In 1971, possibly encouraged by his visibility as *POQ* co-host, Howard ran for the Augusta City Council, placing "second to a white candidate in a heavily black ward" (Ibid.).⁷⁰

Howard's prior economic relationship with Steve Manderson partially explains why Manderson selected him as program co-host. Henry Howard operated a concession stand at the Bell Auditorium where Manderson promoted wrestling for eighteen years, and the two men developed a relationship during that period (Manderson 2008). Manderson's widow, Mildred,

Georgia owns scattered issues of the *Weekly Review* from 1967 to 1970 on microfilm, but has no issues that date from *POQ*'s earlier years.

⁶⁷ The immediate cause of the riots was the death of a young mentally-handicapped African-American man in an Augusta jail; there were reports that he had been physically abused during custody. The reports sparked outrage in the Black community. For contemporary media accounts of the riots, see various *Augusta Chronicle* from 1970. The *Chronicle* editorials and letters to the editor following the riot contain mostly perspectives from the mainstream white citizenry.

⁶⁸ Howard's involvement as co-host predated by two years the hiring of Augusta's first Black television reporter (Highlights 1977). Howard thus seems to have pioneered the involvement of Black participants on local television programs as anything other than performers in Augusta.

⁶⁹ Howard started Howard's Upholstery in 1960. In 1972 he opened Supreme Fashions, a downtown clothing store (Supreme Fashions 1972).

⁷⁰ In another sign of progress in race relations during the 1970s, Augusta began to recognize local Black sacred music as a valuable cultural legacy, with special attention to the local quartet legacy. In 1976, Henry Howard served on the committee for the Augusta Black Festival as the "concert and quartet coordinator" (other genres of Black sacred music recognized at the Festival included "spirituals" and "gospel") (Augusta Black Festival 1976).

also recalls that her husband selected Howard as co-host because he was “very intelligent” and “very polite” (Ibid.). Howard’s own history of performing on *POQ* with the Spirits of Harmony quartet probably gave him a familiarity with television broadcasting that strengthened his potential as a viable co-host.

Local and out-of-town quartets still constituted the bulk of the program’s musical content throughout the 1970s. Clear information about the musical style and repertoire on the program at this time must be deduced from other sources, given the apparent lack of extant footage prior to the 1980s. As with previous years, the repertoire and general style of groups on the *POQ* can be deduced through contemporary albums released by local groups such as the Swanee Quintet and nationally-known groups of the era who are representative of contemporary quartet style.⁷¹ Although the gospel quartet was being replaced in popularity by soloists and choirs in the national gospel industry of the 1970s, some well-known quartets continued to tour to perform in Augusta and on *POQ*.⁷² Despite their growing popularity in the mainstream gospel market, soloists and choirs did not appear on *POQ* until the 1980s (K. Howard 2007c).

Several notable exceptions to the roster of Black quartets performed on *POQ* in the 1970s. Flo Carter, a white gospel performer who sang with her family group the Sounds of Joy, began performing regularly on *POQ* during this time. Around 1972, Henry Howard invited Carter to perform on the show (Rhodes 2007f).⁷³ The Lewis Family, a white bluegrass group

⁷¹ Without minimizing the individualized musical profiles and imprints of local quartets, which will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters, it is true that general stylistic characteristics of nationally-known quartets can be considered representative of any given era’s quartet style.

⁷² The dates of their presence in the city can be documented through advertisements in the *Augusta Chronicle* and in the Black newspaper the *Augusta News-Review*. Concert advertisements indicate that nationally-known gospel performers including Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the Sensational Nightingales, the Mighty Clouds of Joy, and the Fantastic Violinaires performed in Augusta in the early 1970s (Appreciation Ceremony 1973; World’s Heavyweight Gospel Program 1973).

⁷³ Carter was already well-known to WJBF audiences; she had hosted or co-hosted variety shows for the station, including “Today in Dixie,” since the late 1950s (Rhodes 2007f; F. Carter 2007a).

from Lincolnton, Georgia, also appeared on *POQ* during this time. The novelty of their young banjo-playing son was an attraction for some viewers (Billingsley 2008).⁷⁴

Primary sources for research on *POQ* during this era are still limited due to the lack of available footage. Interviews with participants and viewers constitute good sources of data, as does historical context gleaned from the *Augusta Chronicle*. As in the first phase of *POQ*'s history, little printed documentary evidence related directly to the program from the station or managerial personnel seems to have survived. A new source of historical context for *POQ* in the 1970s is the Black newspaper, the *Augusta News-Review*, available in almost its entirety on microfilm. The *News-Review* began publishing in 1971 not long after the race riots and was printed until 1987. Although a fairly close screening of the *News-Review* on microfilm yielded no feature articles on *POQ* from this era, the newspaper does provide valuable information about related persons and institutions. This information can be drawn from advertisements, community announcements, letters to the editor, feature articles, and editorials. All of these items give data on Black history, Black artistic and cultural achievements, Black businesses, concerts and entertainment marketed towards Blacks, Black media outlets, the community's political desires and aspirations, and the myriad of activities related to local Black churches. The *Augusta-News Review* provides information that, while not directly related to *POQ*, establishes a rich context of religious, economic, social, and political life for Augusta's Black citizens in the 1970s.

C. 1981 – February 1995

In 1980, Howard became the sole host and producer of the program, and began to involve other Howard family members in the program's managerial operations.⁷⁵ This shift in

⁷⁴ As stated earlier, the Lewis Family were promoted by Steve Manderson and had their own musical program on WJBF for many years. The group has achieved national fame in the southern gospel industry. Attempts to contact members of the group for interviews have not succeeded.

managerial personnel dramatically impacted the program's musical and non-musical content. For the first time in the program's history, managerial and artistic decisions were now made by African Americans.⁷⁶ The program's roster expanded from its core of gospel quartets to include soloists, choirs, and other gospel ensembles (K. Howard 2007c). Henry Howard also extended the program's content beyond musical performances to include Black community news, political information, and religious instruction. The political content consisted of interviews with Black political leaders and news segments highlighting local and national Black cultural, economic, and educational achievements. Political leaders featured on the program during this era included Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rev. Al Sharpton, and numerous city, county, and state officials (www.paradeofquartets.com).⁷⁷ Religious components added by Howard included a weekly prayer, interviews with Black ministers, Sunday School lessons, and more announcements of church events (Ibid.).⁷⁸ Although still ostensibly aimed at the general public, and aired by a mainstream television station, the program was beginning to function like an extension of the Black church.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Steve Manderson retired from his career in television broadcasting in 1980 (Manderson 2008).

⁷⁶ Of course WJBF-TV maintained ultimate editorial control, as they did over all their programs, but the weekly operations of the show (such as which artists would perform) were in the hands of the Howard family.

⁷⁷ Sharpton has stated to Don Rhodes that his appearance on *POQ* "was among his very first TV exposures. Sharpton, of course, would know of the *POQ* from his early association with James Brown and visiting Brown in Augusta. I think that also is true of Jesse Jackson from Greenville, South Carolina—that the *POQ* was among his early TV appearances" (Rhodes 2007d). Brown's musical and social relationship to *POQ* will be expanded upon in Chapter Five.

⁷⁸ The weekly prayer segment will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, since it is the only one of these new components that included music. The Sunday School lesson consisted of a local African-American minister reading a printed ecumenical, non-denominational Sunday School lesson, often while wearing robes and standing in front of a church-themed studio set with a pulpit and stained glass windows. The segment occupied approximately two to three minutes. Although women have occasionally delivered the Sunday School lessons, this segment was typically provided by a male minister. Announcements of church events typically are scattered throughout the program, are read by hosts and co-hosts or mentioned by the program's guests, and sometimes are also printed on the screen simultaneously. Events announced include special revival meetings; anniversaries of churches, ministers' tenure with a specific church, or the founding of an organization such as a church's deacon's board or choir; celebrations of Women's Days or Men's Days; gospel music programs; Vacation Bible Schools; Bible seminars; banquets; and events hosted by churches and geared towards community improvement such as health fairs or career fairs.

⁷⁹ It is important to note that even as the *POQ* honed its political and religious focus on the area's Black community, the white musical participation that began prior to 1980 continued in this new era (Rhodes 2007b).

POQ became even more explicitly linked with the Black political and religious community when Henry Howard was elected to several city and county offices in the 1980s. In 1990 he was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives, a seat he held until his death in 2005. His political career was partially possible thanks to his weekly television appearances on *POQ* (K. Howard 2007a). Moses Todd, an Augusta-Richmond County city commissioner from 1992 to 1998, reflected upon the intersection of Howard's political career and *POQ*'s role in local politics:

If you're running for political office at the time that I was working for other folks in the early '80s and you didn't go on the *Parade of Quartets* on Sundays, forget about winning...When you go on the *Parade of Quartets*...it meant you had Henry's blessings if he interviewed you or gave you an opportunity to say a few words or put your commercial on *The Parade of Quartets*. It was very important to have his backing (Wynn 2005).

Once again, as in 1970, the story of *POQ* in the 1980s and early 1990s aligns with the local and national narrative of changing race relations and new opportunities for the local Black community.

During this era, the leadership of the program projected a new self-awareness about *POQ*'s significance to the Black community. This assessment of the program can be found in the documents accompanying the program's self-nominations for the Peabody Award in Broadcasting and Journalism Excellence in 1993 and 1994. The letters, written by Black community members in support of *POQ*'s nomination for the award, indicate that by the early 1990s, the program played a multifaceted role for Augusta's Black citizens:

Eight years ago I was called from Atlanta, Georgia to pastor the Antioch Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia. Upon my arrival one of the first things I heard about was the Sunday Morning Program the *Parade of Quartets*...I often hear from Antioch's members that they were reared watching the show (Kenneth B. Martin, Pastor, Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, December 15, 1994).

This dynamic program...was a pioneer back in the early 1970's [sic] when the local public schools was slow on Black History [sic]. The program has a long and very distinguished tract [sic] record of presenting leaders on air who are visiting from out of town...One of these was Rev. Jesse Jackson who called the *Parade of Quartets* "one of the finest programs of its kind anywhere" (J. Philip Waring, Chair/Editor, Augusta Black History Committee, December 12, 1994).

Three short years ago I was a Georgia State Representative, representing urban constituents in Atlanta, GA. Today, as a congresswoman, I represent 22 Georgia counties...I shall never forget where I came from, who helped me get there and who still has the eyes and ears of my constituents. When the majority press ignored me, my grassroots efforts and the challenges we continue to face in the district, I could always count on the *Parade of Quartets*...I firmly believe that none of my accomplishments, nor my transformation from big-city legislator to rural congresswoman, would have been possible without this program and the support of other African-American media programs (Cynthia McKinney, United States House of Representatives District 11, December 12, 1994).

I have been watching the *Parade of Quartets* for 26 years. The program promotes a heritage that is dear to African American [sic]...Conflicts narrow as we expand our commonalities. Gospel music is an excellent connection between those commonalities (Charles Walker, Georgia State Senate District 22, December 13, 1994).

This show has been instrumental particularly to the Black community for years. It has provided a religious outlet in times, when nothing else was available. It has served as a voice of the people to expand to include talk shows, as well as very informative of current events...It has also crossed the racial lines to include the majority population (Patricia Jefferson-Jones, President, Pat Jefferson Reality, Augusta, Georgia, December 8, 1994).

Earliest extant footage of *POQ* dates from this period. The *POQ* collection in the University of Georgia Media Archives contains scattered program footage beginning from 1986 and some undated footage that may date from even earlier in the decade. Prior to February 1995, the program was still broadcast live on Sunday mornings. Since the live broadcasts often were not made using a master copy, the footage record in the Media Archives collection from 1986 until early 1995 is incomplete. It often appears to have been taped off-air from a home recording device. However, since footage was frequently taped off-air, commercials from this era are typically preserved on the tape, which provides a good source of historical context.

During this time, the Howard family became even more active in promoting major gospel concerts in the area, bringing nationally-known artists such as Shirley Caesar, Yolanda Adams, Mary Mary, and Kirk Franklin to Augusta (<http://gadistrict121.com/>).⁸⁰ Extant footage of gospel concerts promoted and produced by the Howard family in Augusta during the 1980s is also in the *POQ* collection, and includes footage of both local and nationally-known gospel musicians. Frequently, *POQ* episodes would incorporate clips from these live concerts, demonstrating the links between *POQ* and the national gospel industry. Because of the extant footage dating from 1980 to early 1995, it is possible to more clearly reconstruct musical participants' styles and repertoire during this era. In addition to the footage available from this phase of the show's history, the *Augusta Chronicle* printed several feature articles on *POQ*, the Howard family, and the local gospel tradition in the 1980s and early 1990s. The articles create at least a small documentary record of the program. As is true for other eras of the show, WJBF and other managerial sources such as the Howard family do not have paper records of the program's participants during this era.

D. March 1995 – 2004

An important shift in the broadcasting logistics of *POQ* occurred in March 1995. In that month, the program went from being broadcast live on Sunday mornings to being taped on Tuesday (and later Monday) evenings.⁸¹ At this time, the length of the program was reduced permanently to sixty minutes.⁸² This new program format impacted and seems to have reduced

⁸⁰ The visibility gained by their gospel promotional work can be seen in the fact that when Wayne Howard ran for congressional office in 2006, his election flyer contained multiple mentions of the Howard family's promotional work (<http://gadistrict121.com/>).

⁸¹ The change in program taping is discussed on multiple *POQ* episodes from 1995.

⁸² As stated earlier in various sections of the chapter, the program's length had fluctuated throughout its history from lasting for three or four hours in its early years to lasting ninety minutes immediately prior to a shift to the taped format.

the types of groups that could feasibly appear on the show. Out-of-town gospel musicians who visited Augusta to perform on Saturday evenings or Sunday afternoons concert were not in Augusta on weeknights for *POQ* tapings. According to the footage available in the University of Georgia Media Archives, after March 1995, participation of nationally-known artists decreased considerably, especially compared to the program's early decades.⁸³ The shift to weeknight taping also affected local gospel groups since some members worked at their normal jobs on weeknights.⁸⁴ Current producer Karlton Howard attributes WJBF's decision to pre-record *POQ* to the station's desire to control potentially-incendiary political content and increase production standards (2007c).

The musical participants, styles, and repertoire on the program from March 1995 to 2004 are much more clearly documented than in previous years. Pre-recording the program meant that master copies of complete episodes were created much more frequently. The musical analyses in later chapters use samples of footage dating from 1995 to 2004. To date I have screened approximately seventy tapes from the collection, most of which date from this era (see Appendix C for a list of episodes viewed).⁸⁵ Frequently the tapes contained clips of multiple episodes, or

⁸³ From this point forward, the inclusion of nationally-known gospel artists on *POQ* occurred when the program aired clips of commercially-produced music videos or of local concerts promoted and filmed by the Howard family.

⁸⁴ According to Joel Walker, lead singer for the Brewsteraires of Johnston, South Carolina, "We don't really sing on there that often anymore because they started taping it on the weeknights, but before they started taping it, it was live every Sunday morning, and we was there every Sunday morning. We was on there every Sunday morning for about thirty-five or thirty-six years...Now we probably do it a couple of times a year" (2007). James Abraham, lead singer for the Dynamic Abraham Brothers (a group that derived from the original Abraham Brothers quartet active in Augusta and on *POQ* from the 1940s to 1980s), confirmed that now his group sings approximately twice a month on *POQ*; the change to a prerecorded format has affected the group's ability to sing on the show due to members' work schedules. Abraham implied that the same dynamics affected other local gospel singers (2007).

⁸⁵ The primary reason for screening footage from this era as opposed to footage from the late 1980s and early 1990s is related to the Media Archives' concern for archival preservation. Tapes from prior to 1995 tend to be VHS tapes recorded off-air, which are notoriously weak and susceptible to damage compared to video formats such as Betas and ¾" (U-Matic) tapes. Unfortunately many of these VHS tapes are already in poor condition and were very difficult to digitally transfer for viewing. A second and related reason for not viewing many tapes prior to 1995 is that a fire at the Augusta storage facilities damaged many of the VHS, Beta, and U-matic tapes from this era. Although some of the fire-damaged items may be recoverable, their recovery and preservation will take considerable time and money.

even several complete episodes, meaning that portions of episodes viewed far exceeds the actual number of tapes. Some tapes include footage of live concerts filmed in Augusta by the Howard family which were incorporated into later *POQ* episodes. The tapes screened allow for detailed observations about types of ensembles, instrumentation, musical styles, performance practice, and textual sources commonly used on *POQ* during this era. An overview of these characteristics from 1995 to 2004 is presented below.

The footage screened reveals a diversity of mostly local Black gospel ensembles, although the majority of them were still male quartets. Other groups included female quartets and trios, mixed-gender small ensembles, a wide variety of church choirs (men's choirs, women's choirs, mixed-gender choirs, youth choirs, children's choirs), the occasional instrumental ensemble, soloists, and more contemporary gospel artists such as rappers, mime artists, and puppeteers.⁸⁶ Typically, groups in this era performed two or three songs on an episode. In brief interviews, performers described upcoming concert appearances, longevity and geographical origins of the ensemble, contact information, and new recording projects such as albums or videos.

Footage indicates that a wide variety of accompanying instruments were used during this era. By far the most ubiquitous instrumentation, regardless of the type of vocal ensemble, included the drum set, bass guitar, rhythm guitar, lead guitar, and electric keyboards. Popular patches on the keyboard included acoustic piano, Hammond B-3 organ, horns, strings, and a range of electronic sounds. Saxophones appeared on the program occasionally. Although the majority of gospel artists on *POQ* between 1995 and 2004 were accompanied by instrumentalists, a few vocalists performed with pre-recorded instrumental soundtracks.

⁸⁶ Occasionally non-gospel performances occurred on the program, including recitations of poems and speeches by Black authors to commemorate Black History Month, or brief dramatic skits performed by local youth drama troupes.

Sometimes these tracks also included background vocals. Even among the older quartets that continued to appear frequently on the program, almost no *a cappella* singing was observed in the samples viewed between 1995 and 2004.

Styles of sacred music represented on *POQ* during these years included traditional gospel music, a wide variety of contemporary gospel music, and contemporary Christian music. Also prominent was the incorporation of elements of “secular” genres such as New Jack Swing, 1990s rhythm-and-blues, blues-influenced styles, funk-influenced styles, and rap. Often several elements of these musical styles were employed by the same group within the same song or in different pieces. Every *POQ* episode I screened from this era demonstrated the co-existence of this plurality of styles within the span of one hour. The age of performers during this era varied widely, and older groups did not necessarily restrict themselves to traditional gospel styles. However, younger groups did tend to perform exclusively in more contemporary gospel styles in the samples viewed. For example, only teen-aged participants on the program during this era performed gospel raps. The wide age ranges of musical performers on *POQ* included preschool-aged children, high school students, middle-aged men and women, and elderly participants.

Two related stylistic elements were common to nearly all *POQ* performers in footage samples from 1995 and 2004. First was the use of various call-and-response strategies and motifs, and second was the personalization of music through vocal, instrumental, and textual improvisation. Call-and-response motifs and techniques occurred in textual phrases, lines, verses, refrains, and vamp sections. They were conducted between two instruments, an instrument and a vocalist, two vocalists, a vocalist and background singers, two halves of a choir, or an instrument and a group of singers. Personalization of pieces through vocal and instrumental improvisation was used by many *POQ* participants during the vamp section of a piece, a common structural

feature of many arrangements on the program. These two elements have been idiomatic to Black sacred song for centuries; *POQ* tapes from this era demonstrate that Augusta's Black gospel artists continually reinvent their music by blending old musical techniques with new musical and textual elements.

Common sources of texts on *POQ* from 1995 to 2004 spanned several centuries. These sources included: 1) white Protestant hymnody of the past few centuries such as "Dr. Watts hymns" and nineteenth-century revival hymnody; 2) early Black gospel hymns such as the late-nineteenth-century hymns of Charles Tindley; 3) spirituals; 4) compositions by early twentieth-century gospel composers such as Thomas Dorsey; 5) texts from contemporary Christian music used in many white and Black churches (also called "praise and worship" music); and 6) contemporary texts written by either nationally-known Black gospel musicians or the local artists themselves. The use of older texts in updating musical settings was a common feature among many different types of performing ensembles on the program, regardless of age or musical style. Theological themes of texts performed during this era focused on divine deliverance from spiritual or material problems. Many texts particularly emphasize the saving work of Jesus Christ and the possibility of a personal relationship with Him as the assistance the singer needed to overcome troubles in this world and the next.

An increasing self-awareness of the show's historical importance as a religious entity, gospel institution, and media product was evident in footage of this era. This awareness culminated in the fiftieth anniversary celebration of *POQ* in November 2004, held in the Bell Auditorium and featuring performances by many nationally-known and local gospel groups. The anniversary celebration, which included a banquet and awards ceremony, was discussed on program episodes for months in advance. Preparation for the celebration included an interview

with WJBF's first owner J.B. Fuqua on the September 24, 2004, episode of *POQ*, as well as interviews of seminal figures in Augusta's gospel quartet tradition.⁸⁷ Sometime around 2004 or 2005, the program also launched its own website, containing biographies of managerial personnel, a program history, photographs of previous performers, and the text of weekly Sunday School lessons (www.paradeofquartets.com).

Also evident on *POQ* from 1995 to 2004 was the effort to promote, document, and celebrate Black cultural achievements. This occurred through interviews with community members, announcements of cultural and religious events in the Black community, and attention to local Black citizens involved in social activism. Nationally-significant Black celebrations such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Day and Black History Month and nationally-known Black historical figures were also highlighted on the show. Continuing the tradition begun by Henry Howard in the 1980s, local Black politicians and community leaders continued to appear on *POQ* to discuss the economic, educational, political, and social welfare of the local Black community.

Footage from this era demonstrates that *POQ* had come to act as a mediator of explicit religious ritual and practices. Participants on the program frequently referred to viewers in the audience who are sick, shut-in, or in prison as recipients of the prayers, religious music, and Sunday School lesson taught on the program. In the words of James Abraham, longtime area gospel performer and pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Graniteville, South Carolina, "the *POQ* is the only church they get" (Abraham 2007).⁸⁸ Under Steve Manderson's guidance from 1955 to 1980, *POQ* was mostly an economic enterprise built on musical performances. By the

⁸⁷ For more information on the anniversary, see various *POQ* episodes from January-November 2004 and Norton's "Gospel Show Will Celebrate Anniversary Program at Bell" (2004). Steve Manderson's widow Mildred attended the anniversary celebration and recalled the glamour and professionalism of the evening; she and others were honored for their contributions to *POQ* (2008).

⁸⁸ Abraham's assessment of the program's role as a type of church service is supported by many others' statements in interviews, newspaper articles, and *POQ* episodes. The details and implications of this assertion will be explored in Chapter Six.

end of this era, the show had evolved into an organ of political, religious, and cultural information and communication produced by Blacks for Blacks.

Since extant footage is most prominent during this era, some sense of the program's typical format can be established. Figure 1.1 outlines the progression of many *POQ* episodes from this era, all of which lasted sixty minutes. In any given episode the length and/or ordering of these segments were variable. Occasionally segments such as "Past, Present, and Future" were not included in episodes at all. Two-minute commercial breaks were inserted approximately three or four times per episode.

Opening Credits; Participants Announced: 1 minute	Musical Performances, Interviews: 3-5 minutes (<i>recurs several times in episode</i>)	"Past, Present, and Future": 3-5 minutes	Community announcements: 2-4 minutes (<i>recurs several times in episode</i>)	Weekly Prayer: 2-4 minutes	Sunday School Lesson: 2 minutes	Closing Remarks, Credits: 2 Minutes
Credits use clips of past <i>POQ</i> episodes. A pre-recorded gospel theme song is sung. Occasionally episode date is included. Episode participants announced by Host and/or Co-host(s). Includes exhortation for viewers to praise God.	Live studio performance or commercially-produced gospel footage. Performers interviewed about upcoming concert appearances, recent album releases, and contact information. Group names typically appear in captions. Typically at least three different groups are featured in an episode.	Host and/or co-host(s) interview community, political, and religious leaders about subjects of interest to Black community. Sometimes host discusses issues alone. Interviewees' names typically appear in captions.	Host and/or co-host(s) read announcements from notes. Announcements cover local Black religious, community, economic, and political events. Occasionally announcements are also printed on-screen while being read.	Host or local minister prays in the middle of a musical performance. See Chapter Six for more detail on this segment.	Local Black minister reads printed, interdenominational Sunday School lesson while dressed in robes and standing at a pulpit. The Bible text and title of the lesson typically appear in captions.	Over live background music, host and/or co-host(s) thanks viewers for watching, exhorts them to attend church. Closing credits for hair, makeup, production team, managerial staff, etc., run on-screen over live background music.

Figure 1.1: Typical *POQ* Episode, March 1995 to 2004.

E. 2005 – 2008

In October 2005, Henry Howard died, marking the end of an era on *POQ*. For the first time since the early 1980s, a visible Black political presence on the program was missing. Although Howard was no longer regularly hosting the show at the time of his death, he did appear often to interview community members and give inspirational talks on topics of political importance.⁸⁹ Even after Howard's death, however, the program continued its reputation of fulfilling multiple functions for its viewers, as evidenced by its support for a political event of national significance in 2006. On August 14 and 15 of that year, the annual National Dialogue Social Justice in the Black Church, sponsored by the National Action Network, was held at the Good Shepherd Baptist Church in Augusta. Participants included the Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, the Reverend Al Sharpton, Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney of Georgia's 4th District, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and ministers and university professors from across America. The conference addressed "pressing issues in the Black Community such as health, employment, increased high school drop outs, high rate of incarceration, [and] voter apathy" (<http://www.paradeofquartets.com/guests/html>). Participants in the Dialogue also appeared on the *POQ* during their time in Augusta, thus confirming the vibrant power of the program's voice in Augusta.

Although *POQ*, nearing its fifty-fifth anniversary, is clearly targeting an African-American audience, it is also viewed regularly by some whites (Rhodes 2007d; Manderson 2008). According to Don Rhodes,

I know a lot of whites in Augusta like me do watch the *POQ*; maybe not every week but fairly often. I think that especially has been true during political seasons

⁸⁹ Henry Howard's son Wayne Howard eventually ran for and successfully won his father's seat in the Georgia Legislature, vacated by the elder Howard's death in 2005. Wayne has remained involved with the *POQ*—for instance, I have noted his presence at the studios during program tapings—but his involvement is far less visible than brother Karlton's, who still is the program's host.

when white politicians want to know what Black political leaders are saying when they appear on the *POQ* show (2007d).

Ratings from May 2008 indicated that the program was viewed on 14,000 televisions on Sunday mornings at that time.⁹⁰

The range and extent of surviving footage from 2005-2008 is uncertain. The *POQ* collection in the University of Georgia Media Archives currently contains only a few tapes from after 2004, although the Howard family stated in March 2009 that DVDs of episodes from the past few years are available and will be brought to the Media Archives soon. It is therefore difficult to describe musical and non-musical data from the program's recent history. However, the family is considering posting a streaming broadcast of the program on the *POQ* website on a weekly basis. If this occurs, the program will once again reinvent itself with new technology, expanding its potential viewership to a global demographic.

Central Themes in the Legacy of *POQ*

Two central themes have emerged from ethnographic research, documentary records collected, and footage viewed. The first theme is the role *POQ* has played in the building, shaping, reinforcing, and maintaining of overlapping local Black communities. Any given episode of *POQ* reveals a myriad of ways that these multiple communities intersect in front of the television camera. These intersecting communities include, first of all, Black religious community in a general sense and Black religious community in a denominational sense. *POQ* exists within, broadcasts to, and includes participants from a religious community comprised of churches, religious leaders, religious doctrines and values, and musical/liturgical practices that

⁹⁰ This statistic was shared with me by Cindy Adams, an independent journalist who obtained the statistic from Wayne Howard during a telephone conversation she had with him in late 2008. Howard received the statistic from WJBF.

reflect particular local Black religious identities. Chapters Five and Six will interpret ways in which *POQ* reflects disparate parts of the local Black religious community and how the show enables its participants to reaffirm their bonds with local religious community.

POQ also exists within and helps sustain a closely-related community: the local gospel music community. This community includes artists, promoters, DJs, radio stations, performance venues, and record shops. Frequently participants on the program make reference to these other members of the gospel community. The historical account of the program's development presented in this chapter gives some evidence of this, and the local gospel community will be explored more in-depth in Chapters Three and Four. This theme of *POQ* sustaining and shaping the gospel music community can be extended also to encompass the interaction *POQ* has facilitated between Augusta's regional gospel community and the national gospel "meta-community." Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six will explore how local gospel artists' performances on *POQ* can be read as articulations of musical and religious identities within the local gospel community and, at times, the broader Black sacred song tradition/religious community.

The second major theme emerging from the overview of *POQ*'s history is the tension between continuity and change. The program seems to have achieved longevity through its continual musical (and non-musical) reinvention of itself. Somehow it manages to remain musically relevant over the decades by simultaneously retaining the legacy and roots of Black sacred music while continuing to evolve. The theme of reinvention-grounded-in-roots on *POQ* is accomplished through the longtime participation of local quartets that have engaged in this process of musical reinvention for decades. Chapters Three and Four will explore how local gospel quartets in particular have reinvented themselves musically and textually. Chapter Six

will explore how a cross-section of performers on *POQ* have engaged in a dialogue with Black religious and musical roots and renewal. The chapters use local musicians' performances on *POQ* as a lens for examining their unique approaches to interweaving continuity and change to engage in an ongoing dialogue with key parameters of Black sacred song.

At times the musical, textual, and cultural analyses in the subsequent chapters will deal with these two themes as relatively discrete. Often, however, the analyses will treat the two themes concurrently, for they are closely related and intersect in various ways in the careers and performances of different local musicians. Footage samples from 1995 to 2004 and ethnographic research, documentary data, secondary readings in historical context, and non-*POQ* gospel recordings of multiple eras will inform the musical and cultural analyses to create richly-textured case studies that engage with the themes of community and continuity.

CHAPTER 3

“YOU WOULD HAVE SHOUTED TOO”: SEVENTY YEARS OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE SWANEE QUINTET

Introduction

In 2004, *POQ* conducted interviews with longtime members of Augusta’s gospel community to commemorate the show’s fiftieth anniversary.⁹¹ A significant theme that emerged from these interviews was the Swanee Quintet’s impact on the development of the local quartet tradition and on *POQ*. The Quintet was founded in 1939, fifteen years prior to *POQ*’s first broadcast. The men interviewed by *POQ* as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebration recalled that the Quintet’s musical style heavily influenced other local mid-century quartets. Joe Thomas, longtime vocalist in the Southern Six quartet, stated that in the 1950s, the Southern Six “was kind of stuck on the Swanee Quintet and would sing a lot of Swanee Quintet songs” (Thomas 2004). He mentioned that “major groups such as the Swanee Quintet, Soul Stirrers, Highway QCs, and Pilgrim Jubilees...had a standard way of singing” that was aurally identifiable (Ibid.). Inspired by these examples, Thomas’ quartet aspired to create an easily-identifiable sound (Ibid.). The interviewees also recalled details about the Quintet’s group members and their radio broadcasts, including their theme song “Way Down Upon the Swanee River” (Anderson and Cook 2004; Fryer, Thomas, and Williams 2004; Thomas 2004). Other interviewees in the 2004

⁹¹ The interviews were conducted by current *POQ* host and producer Karlton Howard and his father, former host and producer Henry Howard. The interviewees were elderly local quartet singers and Marion “Mal Your Pal” Cook, a local gospel DJ. All were active in Augusta’s gospel community since the late 1940s, prior to the emergence of *POQ*, and were involved with *POQ* in its early years. The interviews shed light on the early years of *POQ* and its relationship to other local gospel music institutions such as radio stations, DJs, and performance venues. They also provide detail on the personnel, recordings, and traveling radiuses of local and nationally-known groups that appeared on the program in the 1950s and 1960s. In the absence of footage from *POQ*’s early years, these 2004 interviews also supply missing information about early technology, musical styles, and repertoire on *POQ* in the program’s first few decades.

anniversary interviews recalled names of local quartet singers who at some point performed with the Swanee Quintet (Fryer, Thomas, and Williams 2004).⁹² The interviews highlighted how the Quintet provided links between *POQ*, Augusta's gospel tradition, and nationally-known quartets in the 1950s.

Prior to *POQ*'s initial broadcast in 1955, the Swanee Quintet had already attained regional popularity. Through this, they had established professional relationships with nationally-known gospel quartets like the Blind Boys of Alabama and the Dixie Hummingbirds (Anderson and Cook 2004).⁹³ The Quintet would bring these famous quartets and others to Augusta to perform in the Bell Auditorium and other local venues in the early 1950s (Ibid.).⁹⁴ Before *POQ* began broadcasting, local gospel radio DJs played the visiting quartets' records on-air or broadcast them performing from the studio. This generated audience interest in the groups' concerts. After *POQ* began broadcasting, out-of-town quartets also performed on it to promote their Sunday afternoon and evening concerts in the Augusta area (Ibid.; Fryer, Thomas, and Williams 2004). *POQ* host Henry Howard stated that the Swanee Quintet, local gospel radio, and *POQ* created a gospel "family affair" in Augusta in the 1950s (Anderson and Cook 2004). These three gospel institutions worked together to give nationally-known quartets the local media exposure they needed to ensure large audiences at their Augusta concerts (Ibid.).⁹⁵

⁹² Performing in several local quartets was a fairly common phenomenon in Augusta earlier in the twentieth century. However, many of Augusta's most well-known quartet singers were predominantly identified with only one group.

⁹³ The Quintet's movement into the national quartet industry will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

⁹⁴ For evidence of the Quintet's pre-*POQ* involvement with large quartet concerts in Augusta, see *Augusta Chronicle* advertisements such as "The Swanee Quintet Presents Quartets on Parade" (1949). This brief notice advertised the Quintet as sponsors of a concert at Augusta's City Auditorium on Sunday, April 24, 1949. The concert included the Mellowtone Quartet of Atlanta, Georgia; the Clouds of Joy of Cleveland, Ohio; the Jersey City singers of New York; the Your Favorite Quartet of Macon, Georgia; the Star Light Singers of Dallas, Texas, and others (Ibid.).

⁹⁵ An example of a concert sponsored by the Quintet after *POQ* began broadcasting can be found in a 1957 *Augusta Chronicle* advertisement. The concert was held in Augusta's Bell Auditorium on Sunday, October 13, 1957, at 8 p.m. and featured some of the era's most prominent gospel artists. Performers included singer and guitarist Sister Rosetta Tharpe and female quartets such as the Caravans and Clara Ward and the Ward Singers. Most of the performers were male quartets, including the Soul Stirrers, the Five Blind Boys of Alabama, the Sensational

In addition to nourishing the region's early appetite for quartet music, *POQ* and the Swanee Quintet continued to anchor Augusta's quartet tradition in subsequent decades. Even in recent years, the group has continued to perform on *POQ*. The *POQ* collection in the University of Georgia Media Archives contains five *POQ* episodes with Quintet performances from the early 1980s to 2006.⁹⁶ Also in the *POQ* collection are two non-*POQ* tapes of Swanee Quintet concerts produced by the Howard family in Augusta in the early or mid-1980s.⁹⁷ The Quintet continues to use *POQ* to promote upcoming concert appearances in the Augusta area. As recently as August 2008, Percy Griffin, lead singer of the Quintet, appeared on *POQ* to promote the group's annual anniversary concert in Augusta's Bell Auditorium. Griffin gave information about ticket prices, purchasing locations, and other quartets that would perform at the concert. He also brought concert flyers and handbills to pass out to interested people at the WJBF studios.⁹⁸

This chapter contends that the ongoing vitality of *POQ* and the Swanee Quintet are intertwined. *POQ* has thrived for nearly six decades partly through the support of the Swanee Quintet, a gospel ensemble that has mastered the art of reinventing itself for its audience. This story of reinvention will be traced in two sections. The first section will provide basic historical data about the group's development, foregrounding how the Swanee Quintet has adapted to changing social and media contexts to remain a viable performing ensemble for seven decades. The second section of the chapter analyzes the Quintet's adherences to and evolutions beyond the distinctive musical style they forged in the 1950s and 1960s. The analyses in the second

Nightingales, and the Harmonizing Four (The 16th Anniversary 1957). It is almost certain that some of these groups, particularly the male quartets, would have performed on *POQ* that morning to promote the concert.

⁹⁶ One of these five tapes consists of older videotaped footage of the Quintet that was broadcast on *POQ* many decades after it was recorded. A second one is fire-damaged and cannot currently be viewed.

⁹⁷ Clips of these performances were occasionally broadcast on *POQ*, although the dates that they were broadcast is unknown. As is the case with other footage cited in this document, more examples of the group's *POQ* performances will probably surface as the collection is viewed, catalogued, and transferred.

⁹⁸ Observed at *POQ* taping, WJBF studios, August 25, 2008.

section trace the group's musical evolution using their performances on *POQ* and other gospel television shows, footage of their concerts in Augusta, and several songs from their most recent album.

The data and analyses presented in this chapter are of particular significance to research on Black gospel music. Currently, little accurate or detailed information exists in scholarly literature on this influential, prominent gospel quartet. Horace Boyer mentions the Swanee Quintet briefly in his *Golden Age of Gospel Music*, stating that

the Swanee Quintet was a prime example of the downhome unaffected quartet...The group's membership remained constant for decades...Unlike most quartets who gained popularity in gospel, the Swanee Quintet kept Augusta, Georgia, as their home base...consciously [cultivating] the rural sound of early quartets (2000, 178).

The group's influence and prominence in the late 1950s is mentioned in passing by Alan Young in his book *The Pilgrim Jubilees* (2002). In the book, Young interviewed members of the Pilgrim Jubilees, a successful Black gospel quartet that knew the Swanee Quintet from both groups' days at Nashboro Records in the 1950s. Members of the Pilgrim Jubilees recall that the Quintet was highly regarded in the mid-century gospel quartet industry. Likewise, Peter Guralnick's 2005 biography of Sam Cooke, *Dream Boogie*, refers to the Swanee Quintet several times as an ensemble of historical significance in the quartet industry of the late 1950s (146, 190 – 1).

The Quintet's musical style in recordings from the late 1950s and 1960s is discussed briefly by Anthony Heilbut in *The Gospel Sound* (1971). Heilbut describes the Quintet's style as rural, raw, and "funky." He quotes the Quintet's original lead singer Rev. Ruben Willingham as saying "We shouts like that in Georgia" and describes Willingham's execution of a "funky dance step" (1971, 24).⁹⁹ Heilbut later references Willingham's ability to "preach funkily" and

⁹⁹ The source of this quotation is unclear. Heilbut may have interviewed Willingham himself (he interviewed many "Golden Age" gospel singers during his research), but he does not explicitly state this in the book.

describes the Quintet as one of the “country-oriented” performers recorded by Nashboro (Ibid., 73, 298).

There are short entries about the Swanee Quintet in two recent gospel music encyclopedias, *Uncloudy Days: the Gospel Music Encyclopedia* (2005) and the *Encyclopedia of American Gospel Music* (2005). Carpenter’s article in *Uncloudy Days* describes the group as “a country quintet with a hard backbeat” (2005, 400). His article contains errors related to the group’s personnel. He asserts that Rev. Willingham and Johnny Jones both left the group in the mid-1960s (Ibid., 401). In fact, Willingham was still performing with the Quintet at least as late as 1969, when he and the group appeared on the Chicago gospel television program *Jubilee Showcase*. Jones continued performing with the group until his death in October 2000. His ongoing involvement with the Quintet is evidenced by album liner notes, *Augusta Chronicle* articles about the quintet’s activities in the 1980s and 1990s, program footage from *POQ*, and his obituary in the *Augusta Chronicle* (Mr. Johnny Jones, Sr. 2000).¹⁰⁰ Robert Sacré’s article about the Quintet in the *Encyclopedia of American Gospel Music* asserts that the group stopped performing altogether several decades ago (2005, 268).

Hayes and Laughton’s *Gospel Records 1943 – 1969: A Black Music Discography* (1970) contains a four-page discography of the Quintet’s recording session dates, repertoire, and personnel from 1951 to 1970. Hayes and Laughton’s 1970 gospel discography is currently the most detailed and reliable source of information about the group’s early personnel and musical output, at least in the context of recordings. It is used frequently in this chapter. I have compiled

¹⁰⁰ Carpenter’s misconception about Rev. Ruben Willingham’s leaving the group in the mid-1960s may be due to the fact that Percy Griffin was hired to be the Quintet’s lead singer in 1966 (Griffin 2008). It is very unclear from available articles and interviews when Willingham actually left the group. His last recordings with the Quintet seem to have been made for Nashboro, Creed, and Federal Records in 1966 (Hayes and Laughton 1970). Carpenter’s misconception about Jones’ retirement from the group in the 1960s is more difficult to understand. Jones did leave the Quintet briefly in 1957 to perform with the Soul Stirrers, a Chicago gospel quartet, after their lead singer Sam Cooke left suddenly (Guralnick 2005, 190). However, Jones returned to Augusta and to the Quintet quickly (Ibid.). Jones has been a central part of the Quintet’s discography and concert performances for the last four decades.

a post-1970 discography of the Quintet's output to supplement Hayes and Laughton's research (see Appendix N).

The Quintet continued to record regularly until 2005 and still performs several concerts every weekend on the East coast. Despite the group's extraordinary longevity in the gospel music industry, distinctively rural musical identity, and role in anchoring Augusta's longstanding gospel quartet tradition, the ensemble's total career trajectory has been ignored by scholars. It is therefore imperative to examine this unique group's career, particularly in the context of their involvement in building and sustaining Augusta's quartet tradition.

Creating and Sustaining a Presence in the Local and National Gospel Music Industry

The Swanee Quintet was formed in Augusta in 1939, fifteen years prior to the emergence of *POQ* (www.swaneequintet.com).¹⁰¹ The group's original five members included Rev. Ruben Willingham, an ordained minister who sang the lead; James Anderson, who sang a high falsetto; background singers Rufus Washington and Charlie Barnwell; and guitarist William "Pee Wee" Crawford (Ibid.).¹⁰² Although five men were involved, only four of them consistently sang the vocal parts. This explains why the quintet is technically considered a "quartet" in the gospel industry. Because these original five men remained with the Quintet for a number of years, imprinting their musical styles on the group, it is important to provide basic historical data on their involvement with the group.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ A discrepancy regarding the date of the group's founding will be discussed later in this section.

¹⁰² The Swanee Quintet's official website lists the names of four other men involved with the Quintet in 1939: Willie Bush, Floyd Fouch, Oscar Bing, and Purcell Dunbar. However, none of these men are mentioned in any gospel literature and are mentioned only rarely in later interviews with longtime Quintet members. Because of this, and because they apparently did not record with the Quintet, this section does not include biographical information about them. It is possible that these four men substituted for the group's main vocalists (Anderson, Washington, Barnwell, and Willingham) in the Quintet's early years before they became a full-time, professional group.

¹⁰³ Later in the chapter, basic historical and biographical data will also be given for Johnny Jones and Percy Griffin, who joined the Quintet in 1956 and 1966, respectively. Although they were not original members of the group, their

Rev. Ruben Willingham's vocal style, which relied on preaching and chanting, was one of the reasons the Quintet attained a reputation as "funky" and "downhome" in the 1940s and 1950s (Heilbut 1971; Young 2002; Carpenter 2005). It is unclear what year Willingham was born in Barnwell, South Carolina. A 1990 interview with other Swanee Quintet members indicated that the group's original members were teenagers in 1939 when the group was founded (Wellington 1990).¹⁰⁴ At some point in his youth he became a Baptist minister (Rev. R. Willingham 1994). Willingham performed with the Swanee Quintet for nearly thirty years. According to the American Gospel Quartet Association, Willingham left the group in 1967 to begin a solo career around the time that Percy Griffin was hired as the Swanee Quintet's lead singer (<http://www.americangospelquartet.org/soundstage.html>).¹⁰⁵ He recorded solo albums beginning in the late 1960s, and apparently never joined another gospel group.¹⁰⁶

The last evidence I have found of Willingham's performances with the group was on the Chicago gospel television program *Jubilee Showcase* in 1969.¹⁰⁷ No information on the reason for Willingham's decision to leave the group seems available. At some point in his career Willingham was inducted into the Gospel Hall of Fame (Rev. R. Willingham 1994). Willingham was still well-known in Augusta when he died in February 1994. According to his obituary in the *Augusta Chronicle*, his funeral was so large that it was held in Augusta's Bell Auditorium (Ibid.).

James "Big Red" Anderson was born in Augusta in 1925 (Cox 2005). Anderson performed with the group from 1939 until his death in 2005, making him a musical and social

long tenure and musical styles were just as influential on the group's trajectory as if they had been founding members.

¹⁰⁴ Barnwell, South Carolina, is approximately fifteen miles from Augusta. The town was also the birthplace of soul singer James Brown.

¹⁰⁵ This is the official professional organization for Black gospel quartets. It is based in Birmingham, Alabama, and holds an annual multi-day conference with performances by old and new quartets, awards for media achievements and for historical longevity, and professional development workshops.

¹⁰⁶ Willingham's solo albums can be purchased online at various music vendors' websites. He recorded singles and full-length albums for Nashboro and Creed in the 1970s.

¹⁰⁷

anchor for the group. Although he was predominantly known for his falsetto voice, colleagues describe him as a versatile performer who also sang bass, tenor, and other vocal parts (Ibid.). Like Willingham (and, later, lead singer Percy Griffin), Anderson was described as a “showman” by audience members and colleagues (Ibid.). In 2005, when Anderson was the only original Quintet member still performing with the group, longtime *POQ* host and local gospel singer Henry Howard attributed the group’s “traditional sound” to Anderson’s influence (Ibid.). Howard added that Anderson “never went contemporary” (Ibid.). Anderson was at some point a member of the Silver Bluff Baptist Church in Beech Island, South Carolina, a Black congregation dating from the late eighteenth century (Mr. James Anderson 2005).¹⁰⁸

Little is known about the biographical backgrounds and musical roles of Charlie Barnwell and Rufus Washington. Barnwell was the group’s manager for many years (Augusta Singers 1959; Griffin 2008). Barnwell performed with the Quintet until his death in November 1992 (Chronology 1993). A 1959 *Augusta Chronicle* newspaper article describes Rufus Washington as a “second tenor” along with James Anderson, but the term is musically unclear (Augusta Singers 1959). Washington performed with the Quintet until his death in 1979 (R. Washington 1979; Rhodes 1985). Like Willingham and Anderson, Washington also was Baptist (R. Washington 1979). The relative lack of information about Barnwell and Washington is probably due to the fact that neither of them ever sang lead in the Quintet. Therefore their musical roles onstage and in recordings were not foregrounded like some of the group’s other singers. Also, neither of them seems to have been known for a particular vocal timbre, unlike Anderson who was known for his falsetto range and Willingham who was known for his raw, rough timbre.

¹⁰⁸ Beech Island, South Carolina, is only a few miles from Augusta. More information about this historic Black congregation is provided in Chapter Six in a discussion of the Black Baptist “Dr. Watts” tradition as practiced in the Augusta area.

Guitarist William “Pee Wee” Crawford was born in 1921 to sharecroppers in McDuffie County, Georgia. He moved to Augusta as a child and was eighteen when he and the other men formed the Swanee Quintet in 1939 (Hill 2003).¹⁰⁹ According to Crawford, “We didn’t have any future plans. We just wanted to get together to sing gospel songs” (Ibid.). Crawford was a self-taught musician who learned to play on his older brother’s guitar:

When I was old enough, somebody gave me a guitar, and I continued from there. I would listen to any music I could get near and hear. I wasn’t able to get music training. I would play by ear (Ibid.).

Crawford performed with the group until sometime in the 1970s and eventually became a janitor in a local public school (Ibid.). Although it is uncertain why Crawford left the group, I suspect it might have been because his rural, blues-influenced style was no longer in vogue in the gospel industry of the 1970s. Crawford was still living in 2008, when he attended the Swanee Quintet’s sixty-ninth anniversary concert in Augusta’s Bell Auditorium. He was recognized from the stage by current lead singer Percy Griffin as the group’s only surviving original member.

The group’s early career development was inseparable from their involvement with local radio. Originally called the Hallelujah Gospel Singers, on the advice of local radio disc jockey John Vance they renamed themselves the Swanee Quintet in the 1940s (Anderson and Cook 2004). Vance felt that the group name was “catchier” and easier for radio listeners to remember (Anderson and Cook 2004).¹¹⁰ Vance also suggested that the group adopt Stephen Foster’s “Way Down upon the Swanee River” as the theme song for their daily radio broadcasts (Ibid.). In

¹⁰⁹ In this 2003 interview with an *Augusta Chronicle* journalist, Crawford states that he and his friends Charlie Barnwell and Rufus Washington began to sing together in Georgia and South Carolina in 1944. He also states that Ruben Willingham and James Anderson were added to the group in 1945, which is when they became the Swanee Quintet. The chronology he gives contradicts the Quintet’s official version of the group’s history, which gives 1939 as the group’s origin and states that all five men listed by Crawford in the interview—Barnwell, Washington, Willingham, Anderson, and Crawford himself—were singing together in 1939 (www.swaneequintet.com).

¹¹⁰ The name change apparently took place at least as early as 1947, which is when the group is listed in the *Augusta Chronicle* radio logs and advertisements as the Swanee Quintet. I have not found printed documentation in Augusta newspapers of the Hallelujah Gospel Singers, and the group seems not to have recorded any albums under this name.

shifting from a sacred to secular group name and adapting a secular piece as a theme song, the group showed an early willingness to navigate the demands of the commercial music industry. The new name and theme song are also notable for the regional, rural identity that they assigned to the group. The “Swanee River” in Foster’s song, although located in Florida and not in Georgia, was generally associated in the American mind with the south.¹¹¹

It is unknown precisely when the Quintet began broadcasting on the radio, but it is clear that they performed on several different Augusta stations in the 1940s and 1950s. The group’s official website states that the Quintet’s earliest radio broadcasts were on Augusta’s WTNT. Guitarist William “Pee Wee” Crawford recalled the same thing (www.swaneequintet.com; Hill 2003). By the late 1940s, the group had also performed daily broadcasts on radio stations WGAC and WJBF.¹¹²

Performing daily on various Augusta radio stations helped build a local audience. It also solidified the Quintet’s relationship with other members of the local gospel infrastructure such as disc jockeys and promoters. Original Quintet member James “Big Red” Anderson recalls that “people would stop what they were doing in the fields, come in and listen to the battery-powered radio” to hear the Quintet’s 6:15 radio program on WJBF in the early 1950s (Anderson and Cook 2004). Anderson also recalled the many supportive disc jockeys at Augusta radio stations who enthusiastically promoted the Quintet (Ibid.). Guitarist Crawford stated that in the late 1940s,

¹¹¹ Foster’s racially-derisive lyrics in “Swanee River” used by a Black group within the context of predominantly-white media ownership raises many social and cultural issues that cannot be fully grappled with in this chapter.

¹¹² I have been unable to find documentation of the Quintet’s earliest performances on WTNT in newspaper radio logs or in newspaper advertisements. The earliest printed evidence of their radio career is in the May 1947 *Augusta Chronicle* radio logs, which indicate that the group broadcast from 8:00 to 8:15 p.m. on weekdays on WGAC. The Quintet seems to have performed regularly on local radio prior to May 1947, however. An *Augusta Chronicle* advertisement for a concert on May 24, 1947, describes the Swanee Quintet and other local musicians as “radio stars” (Everybody Is Talking). The term “radio stars” implies that the Quintet’s radio presence was already established. In late 1949, the Quintet moved its fifteen-minute program on Mondays through Saturdays to WJBF (Augusta’s Most Popular Singing Group 1949).

The group, it sort of bloomed out like a flower, like a weed, and the more it would grow, the more we would put into it. We were going around to churches and singing, and they would take up money for us. They would broadcast us on the radio, and it would reach out to people who would hear us and write letters to the station asking us to come sing (Hill 2003).

Local newspaper documentation from the 1940s illustrates that even at this early date, the group was learning to function within the parameters of a secular music industry by performing gospel music at non-religious functions. For example, a 1947 *Augusta Chronicle* advertisement for the “Home Folks Frolics” concert included the Swanee Quintet and secular artists performing in the Municipal Auditorium (Everybody is Talking 1949).¹¹³ In April 1949, the group sang at an Augusta Lions Club meeting, presented by Steve Manderson (Swanee Quintet Sings 1949). Later in 1949, the Quintet performed at the Aiken, South Carolina, Cotton Festival’s Fashion Show, providing “a colorful background” (Martin 1949). In that same year, the *Augusta Chronicle* ran an advertisement for the Quintet’s WJBF show describing the ensemble as “Augusta’s Most Popular Singing Group.” The advertisement did not include qualifiers such as “gospel” or “religious” (Augusta’s Most Popular Singing Group 1949). The group’s ability to successfully perform gospel music in non-religious contexts, cultivated in its first decade as an ensemble, has remained a distinctive characteristic throughout its career.

The group had already begun to tour outside Augusta in the late 1940s, although at that time they were not yet full-time professional gospel singers. James Anderson reminisced in 1990 about the financial and personal difficulties of touring in the 1940s, stating, “Whew. In those younger days, things were tough” (Wellington 1990). In the late 1940s, Anderson made \$75.00 per week at his regular job, and leaving it to travel and sing gospel music was risky. “[\$75.00] was a lot of money back then,” Anderson stated in the interview (Ibid.). The Quintet’s increasing

¹¹³ *POQ* founder Steve Manderson helped host this 1947 “Home Folks Frolics” concert, suggesting that he had contact with the Quintet at least eight years prior to *POQ*.

travel in the late 1940s also caused domestic difficulties. Anderson's wife told him at one point before he left on a tour, "When you get back I won't be here." Fortunately, said Anderson, she was still there when he returned from the tour (Ibid.). The scope of the group's traveling radius in the 1940s is unclear, but it was probably limited to within a few hours of Augusta since the men still kept their regular jobs.

In 1951, records became the Quintet's next method of disseminating their music, helping them achieve even broader popularity. That year, the group began recording for Nashboro Records, based in Nashville, Tennessee (Hayes and Laughton 1970, 736). The terms of the recording contract gave the Quintet three percent of sales, and according to guitarist Crawford, their first check from Nashboro was for \$2,500 (Hill 2003). When the group recorded "Sit Down, Servant" for Nashboro in 1952, the song became so popular that the Quintet members were able to stop working other jobs and travel full-time as singers (Wellington 1990).¹¹⁴ Nashboro recorded exclusively southern Black gospel artists, and their distribution and marketing focused on the south. Nashboro's output was distinguished more for its raw, rural, southern sound than for the quality of its audio production or its album packaging (Heilbut 1971; Young 2002). Nashboro owner Ernie Young highly regarded the Quintet's musical style in the 1950s. He even encouraged the Pilgrim Jubilees, another Black gospel quartet that recorded on his label, to imitate the Quintet's style and sound in the 1950s (Young 2002, 67).

The Swanee Quintet became one of Nashboro's best-selling artists in the 1950s, along with other gospel musicians from the south such as the Fairfield Four and Edna Galmon Cook

¹¹⁴ It is uncertain how the group came to Nashboro's attention. According to a 2003 interview with the Quintet's original guitarist William "Pee Wee" Crawford, the Quintet performed on a Nashville, Tennessee radio station in the early 1950s (Hill 2003). Crawford implies that this radio exposure in Nashville led to the group's recording contract with Nashboro (Ibid.). Crawford also names 1950 as the date of the group's first recording with Nashboro (Ibid.). However, Hayes and Laughton's thoroughly-researched gospel discography states that the Quintet's first recording sessions with Nashboro were "circa" December 1951 (1970, 736).

(Young 2002, 66, 71). A photograph from the group's Nashboro years in the mid- or late 1950s is pictured below in Figure 3.1.

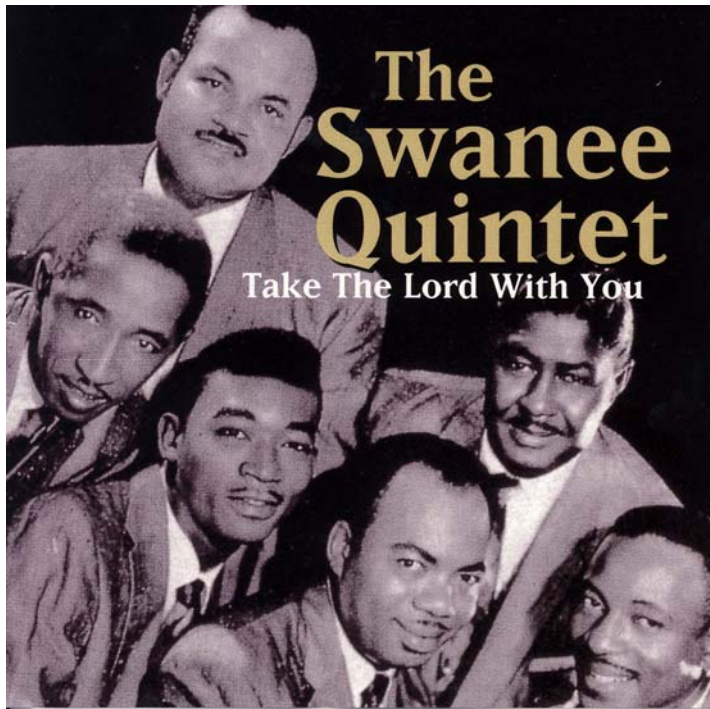


Figure 3.1: Swanee Quintet, Mid- or Late 1950s.¹¹⁵

Between 1951 and 1956, the Quintet recorded at least thirteen double-sided discs for Nashboro, each of which contained two songs (Hayes and Laughton 1970, 736 – 7). Their first recordings with Nashboro, in December 1951, were marketed under the spelling “Sewanee Quintet” (Hayes and Laughton 1970, 736). The personnel featured on the discs recorded in this five-year period included Willingham, Barnwell, Anderson, Washington, and guitarist Crawford. Tenor singer Johnny Jones began to record with the Quintet in October 1956 (Ibid., 736 – 7). Repertoire

¹¹⁵ From top, clockwise: James “Big Red” Anderson, Rufus Washington, William “Pee Wee” Crawford, Rev. Ruben Willingham, Johnny Jones, and Charlie Barnwell.

recorded by the Quintet during these years included spirituals such as “That Old Time Religion,” “Sit Down Servant,” and “Low Down Chariot” (Ibid., 736 – 7).¹¹⁶

In the mid-1950s the Quintet also took advantage of the new television medium that had just come to Augusta, performing on *POQ* since its earliest days in 1955 (Anderson and Cook 2004). Anderson recalls *POQ*’s early broadcast technology in the 1950s, when WJBF had only a single microphone around which all the singers would crowd. They were still all audible, according to Anderson (Ibid.). Marion “Mal Your Pal” Cook specifically recalls the Quintet performing their highly dramatic piece “The New Walk” on *POQ* in the program’s early years (Ibid.). Although the group’s touring calendar was rapidly expanding around the time that *POQ* began broadcasting, when they were home in Augusta, they performed on the program (Anderson and Cook 2004; Thomas 2004).

The Quintet experienced significant milestones in their professional and musical development in 1956. During that year, the Quintet purchased a tour bus; they were apparently the first Black gospel quartet to own a bus (www.swaneequintet.com; Griffin 2008). The bus enabled them to tour outside the southeast, exceeding the geographical boundaries of their previous record and radio exposure. The first major trip the group made outside of Augusta was to sing at the Mount Olive Baptist Church in Long Island, New York (www.swaneequintet.com). The concert at Mount Olive marked the first time the group received a guaranteed concert fee, \$150.00 (Ibid.). According to James Anderson, who clearly recalled this trip to Long Island,

¹¹⁶ I am uncertain of the genre or origin of many of the song titles recorded by the Quintet from 1951 to 1956. Since I was unable to locate old recordings aside from a few isolated pieces that have been digitally remastered and released on commercial CD, I cannot state with certainty whether the other pieces listed in Hayes and Laughton’s discography were gospel compositions, spirituals, or hymns. For example, the Quintet’s 1952 recording titled “Well Done” might have been Lucie Campbell’s famous 1933 gospel composition “He’ll Understand, He’ll Say ‘Well Done.’” However, without a more complete title listing and without hearing the disc, it is impossible to state whether this is Campbell’s composition.

“that was big money to us then. They had places for us to eat and sleep, so all we had to pay for was fuel and other travel costs, It was enough to cover all our expenses” (Rhodes 1985).

According to a 1990 interview, the Quintet was struggling financially in 1956. James Anderson stated that “around ’56, things got slow. Money was a little tight. It wasn’t flowing as freely as it was before, but it was not long before it bloomed back up again” (Wellington 1990). Anderson’s remarks about the Quintet’s financial “blooming” may refer to the purchase of their bus and the new performing opportunities and independence it provided. According to the reminiscences of guitarist William “Pee Wee” Crawford, the group’s career during their early touring years began to be lucrative. Sometimes each group member netted three hundred dollars per night in the mid-1950s (Hill 2003). When the Quintet started touring more consistently during this period, they stopped performing regularly on Augusta radio stations. Even today, however, the Quintet often acknowledges the national network of gospel radio announcers and DJs for their role in the group’s success.¹¹⁷

In 1956, the group was joined by tenor Johnny Jones, who also occasionally sang lead in recordings and concerts (Hayes and Laughton 1970, 737). Jones, who had a distinctive vocal timbre and singing style, remained with the group until his death in 2000 (Mr. Johnny Jones, Sr. 2000). Jones departed from the Quintet briefly a few times during his tenure with the group. The most significant of these hiatuses from the Quintet occurred in the summer of 1957. That year, Jones was approached by the Chicago gospel quartet the Soul Stirrers about replacing their lead singer Sam Cooke. Cooke had suddenly left the Soul Stirrers in June to embark on his secular

¹¹⁷ In the liner notes for the album *Just One Rose Will Do*, the Quintet writes, “The Swanee’s [sic] say thanks to all of the religious announcers who have played and are still playing their product” (1994). In the liner notes of the album *Still Holding On*, the group writes, “This project is a reflections [sic] of the support that we have received from our families, fans, and radio personalities throughout the world. For that we say ‘Thank You and May God Bless You’” (2005). I also observed at the Quintet’s most recent anniversary programs in Augusta that the group repeatedly thanked members of the broadcast media for their role in the group’s success. They specifically mentioned the Howard family on *POQ* and local gospel DJs (October 7, 2007, and October 5, 2008).

career (Guralnick 2005, 190). When the Soul Stirrers visited Augusta in June or July of 1957, after experimenting for several weeks with other unsuccessful replacements for Cooke,

They picked up “Little” Johnny Jones, the lead singer for the Swanee Quintet, who was in many ways the perfect substitute [for Sam Cooke]: he knew all of Sam’s material, had sung with Sam occasionally, possessed a similar vocal style with a spectacular falsetto and a wider natural range, and, best of all, he had learned from Sam “how to carry myself, [he] gave me a lot of advice about singing [and] was the first to appreciate that I was not trying to sing like him but had my own style.” They brought him back to Chicago at the end of the tour, but Johnny got homesick for Augusta, and for his girl, and he left as quickly as he came, on the eve of their upcoming July tour (Ibid., 190).¹¹⁸

The anecdote is significant for two reasons. It confirms the Quintet’s professional connections with other nationally-known quartets in the late 1950s. It also indicates that the Quintet’s early personnel, several of whom remained with the group for many decades, had distinctive musical identities recognizable within the gospel industry. Jones’ lyrical, smooth timbre and restrained singing style may have been related to his denominational affiliation with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The denomination has historically featured less-demonstrative musical rituals than, for example, Black Baptists or Pentecostals (Boyer 2000). Jones was a member of the Greater Ward Chapel A.M.E. Church at the time of his death in 2000 (Mr. Johnny Jones, Sr. 2000).

The mid-1950s also saw expansions in the Quintet’s instrumentation. Like other quartets of this era, the group began to include instruments other than the guitar in their recordings.¹¹⁹ Hayes and Laughton’s discography shows that in 1957, the Quintet’s recordings for Nashboro and Creed Records began to use piano, drums, bass guitar, and organ (1970, 737).¹²⁰ These instruments supplemented the Quintet’s original guitarist, “Pee Wee” Crawford. Repertoire

¹¹⁸ The Swanee Quintet had performed on a large gospel concert with the Soul Stirrers in Atlanta in August 1956, one year before Cooke’s departure from the group (Guralnick 2005, 146). Cooke and Jones may have interacted at this concert.

¹¹⁹ It is unknown whether the group brought these instrumentalists with them on tour as well.

¹²⁰ Creed Records was a subsidiary of Nashboro. According to Hayes and Laughton, the names of the instrumentalists other than Crawford were unknown (1970).

recorded by the group using their newly-expanded instrumentation in the late 1950s and early 1960s included spirituals (“Lay This Body Down”), gospel songs (“How I Got Over”), and Protestant hymns (“[There’s Not a Friend Like the] Lowly Jesus”).

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Quintet began to disseminate their music through other media formats, including film and long-playing albums. A brief announcement in the *Augusta Chronicle* states that they appeared in the 1959 Warner Brothers film *A Night in Harlem*. In the film, they performed a five-minute rendition of their “newest hit, ‘The New Walk’” (Augusta Singers 1959). The article indicates that the Quintet’s appearance in the film was mentioned by newspapers in Philadelphia and New York (Ibid.).¹²¹ During the early 1960s, the group began recording discs longer than the two-song discs they had recorded up to that point. Their album labeled “Nashboro 7008” contained nine songs and was recorded sometime in or immediately prior to 1963 (Hayes and Laughton 1970, 737).¹²² In 1964 the group began to release long-playing albums. They also continued to record two-song discs throughout the 1960s (Ibid., 738 – 9).

The year 1966 represented several landmarks in the group’s professional and musical evolution. That year while performing on or attending a Fairfield Four concert near Norfolk, Virginia, the Swanee Quintet overheard a local quartet singer named Percy Griffin. Griffin was performing with his group prior to the Fairfield Four’s performance (Griffin 2008).¹²³ According to Griffin, it was the Quintet’s guitarist, William “Pee Wee” Crawford, who suggested the group

¹²¹ Extensive searching has yielded no evidence of the film *A Night in Harlem*. The article states that the movie was filmed in Harlem’s Apollo Theater and was scheduled to be released in early 1960.

¹²² Some uncertainty about the precise dates of the Quintet’s recordings between 1957 and 1963 exists in Hayes and Laughton’s discography (1970). Apparently the discs themselves were not dated precisely.

¹²³ It is unclear from Griffin’s recollection whether the Swanee Quintet was performing on the program or only attending it. The Fairfield Four were a nationally-known quartet based in Nashville, Tennessee.

add Griffin to its personnel.¹²⁴ The Quintet hired Griffin, then twenty-three years old, to return with them to Augusta and become the group's lead singer (Norton 2006; Griffin 2008). Griffin had been raised in the United House of Prayer. The Pentecostal/Holiness denomination was known for its ecstatic worship and emotional, raw music. Griffin had sung with quartets since he was a young teenager (Ibid.). Griffin, who had aspired to be a professional gospel singer since he was a child, left his parents and siblings in Norfolk to move to Augusta. His earliest recordings with the Quintet date from 1967 (Hayes and Laughton 1970, 738). He still performs with the Quintet.

The Quintet's professional relationship with soul singer James Brown also began in 1966. The collaboration resulted in tours and at least one album produced by Brown for the Quintet (*Step by Step*, 1966). The group maintained a personal and musical relationship with Brown until his death in 2006. Their relationship with Brown is another example of the group's ability to retain their identity as performers of religious music within the secular framework of the music industry. A graphic illustration of the Quintet's ability to negotiate these boundaries is a handbill from a 1966 concert with James Brown and other secular artists at the Apollo Theater.¹²⁵ The handbill includes a series of small photographs arranged like spokes of a wheel emanating from a larger central photograph. The central photograph, dominant on the poster, features a scantily-clad female dancer in motion. Three of the smaller photographs feature the Swanee Quintet dressed in its traditional suits, hovering around their microphone. In a striking juxtaposition, Rev. Reuben Willingham's head is visible immediately above the head of the suggestive female dancer. Other performers advertised on the handbill were all secular, popular artists such as

¹²⁴ Griffin mentioned this onstage during the Swanee Quintet's sixty-ninth anniversary concert in Augusta in October 2008.

¹²⁵ A copy of the handbill appears Payne and Weinger's *The Great Drummers of R&B, Funk, and Soul* (2006, 71). The authors do not discuss the Quintet at all. The handbill contextualizes the authors' discussion of James Brown's percussion section in R&B and funk.

James Brown, Bobby Byrd, James Crawford, and Vickie Anderson (Payne and Weinger 2006, 71).¹²⁶ The Quintet later developed musical relationships with other secular musicians in Augusta. In 1976, several members of the Quintet sang backup for Larry Jon Wilson, an Augusta country singer, on his arrangement of “Farther Along.” Although the song is a gospel composition, it was part of a secular album entitled *Let Me Sing My Song for You* (Monument Records KZ 34041).

The Quintet used other visual media besides *POQ* to disseminate their performances in the 1960s. They performed on Chicago’s well-known gospel program *Jubilee Showcase* on July 11, 1965, and June 14, 1969.¹²⁷ In the 1965 episode, the Quintet performed “Let’s Have a Little Talk with Jesus” with Johnny Jones on lead and “New Walk” with Jones and Rev. Willingham on lead. In the 1969 episode, the Quintet performed “New Walk” and “Strong Determination,” featuring Rev. Willingham and Percy Griffin, respectively, as lead singers. In 1969, the Quintet expanded their audio recording horizons by making their first live recording. The group recorded six songs that year for Creed Records at Chicago’s Mercy Seat Baptist Church (Hayes and Laughton 1970, 739). Known vocalists on this recording included Percy Griffin, Johnny Jones, Lee Wallace, and Charles Barnwell (Ibid., 738).¹²⁸ Hayes and Laughton list “unknown vocalists” on this recording too, which likely included falsettist James Anderson. Instrumentalists on the live recording included an unidentified guitarist, bass guitarist, and percussionist (Ibid., 739).

¹²⁶ The Quintet had also performed on all-gospel programs at the Apollo Theater prior to their appearances on secular concerts there, such as in October 1962, when they performed with the Soul Stirrers at an Apollo gospel revue (Wolk 2004, 25).

¹²⁷ *Jubilee Showcase* was broadcast nationally from the 1960s to early 1980s and included performances by many well-known Black gospel musicians. The Quintet’s 1965 and 1969 performances on *Jubilee Showcase* were re-broadcast in 1991.

¹²⁸ Lee Wallace had apparently joined the group in the mid-1960s (Hayes and Laughton 1970, 738; Carpenter 2005, 401). Wallace’s name is not mentioned in any other resource cited in this chapter aside from Carpenter (2005) and Hayes and Laughton (1970). Although Johnny Jones performed on the live recording at Mercy Seat Baptist Church, he was not actually a member of the Quintet at the time (Ibid., 739).

Nashboro collapsed as a business entity sometime in the late 1960s or early 1970s, and the Quintet began to record with Atlanta International Records, or A.I.R. (Griffin 2008).¹²⁹ Despite the Quintet's confidence that A.I.R. would remain in business indefinitely, the label recently declared bankruptcy and was absorbed by the much-larger Malaco Records of Jackson, Mississippi (Ibid.). The Malaco catalogue currently stocks some of the Quintet's older A.I.R. inventory (Ibid.). After 1970, no comprehensive discography of the Quintet has been published, making it difficult to assess the scope of their recordings on A.I.R. and Malaco records.¹³⁰ The Quintet's most recent CD, *Still Holding On* (2005), was recorded in Augusta by Onyx Entertainment, a local music distributor (*Still Holding On* liner notes). Percy Griffin noted that whereas the Quintet used to travel to Atlanta to record albums, they are now able to record in studios in Augusta (Griffin 2008). This reflects the Quintet's willingness to adapt to changing parameters of the music industry as modes of production fragment into local and regional studios.

As the market for audiovisual home entertainment has grown in recent decades, the group began to make video recordings. They released a VHS tape in 2001, *The New Walk*, which contains 1970s footage of the Quintet. The group sings four pieces and the Rev. Ruben Willingham performs three pieces, not with the Quintet, but with other backup singers that include women.¹³¹ All of the footage seems to have been filmed, apparently without an audience,

¹²⁹ In the 1960s, the collapse of labels like Nashboro that had specialized in Black gospel music was common, as larger record labels began to show interest in recording gospel artists (Boyer 2000, 257). It is unclear from Griffin's remarks and Hayes and Laughton's 1970 discography precisely when Nashboro Records collapsed. The Quintet was still recording on Creed (one of Nashboro's subsidiary labels) in 1969, but seems to have moved to Atlanta Records International soon afterwards.

¹³⁰ Other reasons for the difficulty of assessing the group's post-1970 discography include the death of elderly Quintet members in recent years. Percy Griffin, the oldest active performing member of the Quintet, has stated that he cannot distinctly recall the sequence and chronology of the group's numerous recordings (Norton 2006).

¹³¹ Among other pieces, the Swanee Quintet performed "Something Got Ahold of Me" on the tape. Rev. Willingham sang "New Walk," his signature piece which he first sang with the Quintet in the 1950s.

on a television studio set.¹³² There was no host. Some of this 1970s footage has been played on *POQ* as recently as 2006.

In 1998, the Quintet appeared in a gospel concert video hosted by quartet-singer-turned-secular-performer Lou Rawls. The video featured performances by several legendary gospel quartets still active as performers at the time the video was filmed. This tape, part of a series entitled *Living Legends of Gospel*, was filmed before a live audience in the format of a concert. In the *Living Legends* series, the Swanee Quintet performed “Dr. Jesus” and “Sit Down Servant,” two pieces which they were known for performing and recording for several decades. This media product contextualized the Swanees as gospel “legends” whose performances are valued by the gospel music community for their historical significance.¹³³

The Swanee Quintet has in recent years embraced the digital upheaval in mass media. The group has a website, maintained by its fan club, and a MySpace page (www.swaneequintet.com; www.myspace/theswaneequintet.com). The MySpace page includes a section of comments posted by site visitors. Many of the comments posted in October 2008 included well-wishes for the group’s sixty-ninth anniversary celebration, or compliments on the Quintet’s musical performance at the anniversary. When I attempted to reach the Quintet by sending a message to their MySpace address, I received a polite reply stating that “it’s an honor to know that Quartet/Southern Gospel is still being appreciated” (Swanee Quintet 2008). Both the website and the MySpace page include photographs of the group from various stages in its

¹³² The description of the tape’s contents is taken from several internet film vendors where the tape is listed as no longer in stock (http://www.fattvideos.com/videos_and_dvds_by/27496/SWANEE_QUINTET). The videotape is extremely difficult to find. Portions of it have appeared on YouTube and on *POQ*, but I have been unable to locate the actual videotape to ascertain production credits. The footage I have viewed from the tape clearly dates from the 1970s. It is unclear why the tape was released in 2001.

¹³³ The group at the time of the 1998 filming included lead singer Percy Griffin, lead singer Johnny Jones, tenor James “Big Red” Anderson, bass player and background singer Eddie Bynes, guitarist and background singer Johnny Mims, and organist and background singer Steven Jefferson, Jr. The performance was recorded prior to the deaths of Jones (2000) and Anderson (2005) and therefore did not feature the Quintet’s newest members, added within the past two years to replace Jones and Anderson.

history. The website was updated in mid-October 2008 to include photographs from the group's sixty-ninth anniversary celebration earlier in the month (<http://www.swaneequintet.com/69anniversarypage.html>). Although the MySpace page discusses the group's historic legacy, the sound files on the page all date from the last few years. This suggests that the group wishes to present an updated aural version of itself to the public. Several YouTube clips posted on the MySpace page, however, include performances by deceased group members Rev. Ruben Willingham, Johnny Jones, and James "Big Red" Anderson, demonstrating the group's projection of its historical legacy into cyberspace.

Both the webpage and the MySpace page include schedules of upcoming appearances, although these online schedules list only the names of towns the Quintet will perform in. The lack of venue listings or performances times on these sites suggests that they target "insiders" in the gospel community who have other means of gaining more detailed information about Quintet performances. The "friends" of the Swanee Quintet on the MySpace page include other gospel quartets active since the mid-twentieth-century or earlier. Some of these digital contacts include the Pilgrim Jubilees and the Blind Boys of Alabama—some of the very groups the Quintet toured with in the 1950s. This digital evidence suggests that several mid-century quartets have maintained relevance by expanding into digital media for purposes of dissemination, publicity, and interaction with fans.

The Quintet's use of print media such as newspapers and handbills for publicity purposes has remained fairly consistent from the 1940s until the present. The Quintet's local performances, particularly their annual anniversary concerts, are still advertised in the *Augusta Chronicle* much as they were in the 1940s and 1950s.¹³⁴ The Quintet has also used handbills and

¹³⁴ Numerous examples of these advertisements can be found scattered throughout the *Augusta Chronicle* beginning in the late 1940s and 1950s. Even to the current time, the content of the advertisements have remained fairly

flyers, a common method of publicizing Black gospel concerts, throughout its history. Currently these handbills and flyers can be found in the windows of Pyramid Records in Augusta, on product tables at gospel concerts, and in digital formats on the websites of gospel promoters or on the Quintet's website. Group members sometimes carry handbills with them for distribution at religious or media events. For example, on August 25, 2008, Quintet lead singer Percy Griffin brought a stack of 8.5" x 11" yellow flyers promoting the Quintet's sixty-ninth anniversary program to a *POQ* taping and distributed them to many people in the studio. A much larger version of the flyer, printed on cardstock, was used in the same *POQ* episode to promote the anniversary program (see Appendix K).

Since the 1980s, the group has had to replace some older members with younger ones. Some of these "newer" members have become a fixed part of the ensemble's sound and public image. Examples include guitarist Johnny Mims, who replaced "Pee Wee" Crawford in the mid-1970s, and Eddie Bynes, who joined the group as their bass player in the mid- or late 1980s (www.swaneequintet.com). In some cases these members were added as recently two years ago. These newest members include Mario Smith and Marciano McKey, both of whom joined the group since James Anderson died in 2005. Both group members sing and play instruments in the Quintet. The musical effect of these personnel changes on the group's ability to maintain its distinctive performing style and public identity will be explored in the analyses presented later in the chapter.

The group continues to tour regularly every weekend, typically performing three or four concerts per weekend. Mostly they travel on the East Coast (Griffin 2008). They still travel in their own tour bus (see Appendices L and M for concert flyers of some of the group's concerts in

consistent, mentioning venue, date, time, ticket price, locations for ticket purchase, and the names of performers on the program. Regardless of era, the newspaper advertisements typically do not contain photographs of the Quintet.

2008). The Quintet still performs largely on concerts with other nationally-known quartets who also have achieved longevity in the gospel profession (see, for instance, Appendix L, a concert flyer for the Quintet's appearance on the sixty-first anniversary concert of another famous quartet). As of mid-2008, the group was working on material for another album (Ibid.). Lead singer Percy Griffin has mentioned retiring several times in the past few years. When he does retire, the group will lose its oldest member, and its sound will undoubtedly change.

The Quintet's ability to maintain its religious identity within secular cultural spaces, evident beginning in the 1940s, is still apparent today. Its sacred repertoire, musical style, marketing, and stage behavior is largely aimed at the Black religious community. Many of its current performances occur at Black churches or on all-gospel programs that attract African-American audiences. The Quintet regularly performs this very same sacred repertoire in a near-identical manner in non-religious contexts. For example, the group performed gospel pieces at James Brown's funeral in Augusta in December 2006. The program also included secular artists such as Bootsy Collins and Brown's former backup musicians who performed many of Brown's more racy compositions (Craig, Edwards, and Bostick 2006). In May 2008, the Quintet was the opening act for Augusta's Payback Festival in commemoration of James Brown. At the event, they performed sacred compositions in much the same manner they perform them at explicitly religious concerts. At the event, lead singer Percy Griffin declared his intention to the crowd of "having church today." He even cajoled the audience into expressing religious sentiment in a manner idiomatic to Black tradition by saying, "Y'all know if y'all were down at the Bell Auditorium away from all these white folks you'd be shouting."¹³⁵ This ability to perform Black sacred song in multiple entertainment contexts has been a marked feature of the Quintet's history since its inception.

¹³⁵ Observed at the Payback James Brown Festival, May 3, 2008, Augusta, Georgia.

Analyses: Balancing Musical Roots and Reinvention

The “non-musical” strategies of reinvention, outlined above, are secondary to the Quintet’s ability to reinvent and sustain itself *musically*. The remainder of the chapter will explore the Quintet’s musical evolution and longevity. According to my research and analysis, their musical output is characterized by a dialogue with the group’s distinctive musical style as it was forged in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The analyses demonstrate that the group’s evolving style is rooted not only in their own earlier style but also in centuries-old texts, theological ideas, and musical practices idiomatic to Black sacred song. The analyses will also demonstrate that the Quintet combines their retention of their mid-century sound with more contemporary musical elements. The following analyses trace the group’s musical journey primarily through the lens of their performances on *POQ* and the Howard family’s footage of the group performing live in Augusta. In the absence of available *POQ* footage from a given era, additional musical analyses are drawn from other Quintet performances. These include performances on *Jubilee Showcase*, various albums, and observations from my attendance at some of the group’s concerts in 2007 and 2008. The analyses include samples of musical performances in each decade from the 1960s through the early twenty-first century to demonstrate a thread of continuity and change in the group’s output.

In a 2004 interview, Marion “Mal Your Pal” Cook, a longtime Augusta gospel DJ, recalled the Quintet’s distinctive performing style on *POQ* in the late 1950s or early 1960s. According to Cook, Rev. Willingham and the Swanee Quintet performed a memorable version of their hit song “New Walk” on *POQ* in the show’s early years (Anderson and Cook 2004). Even after nearly fifty years, Cook’s memory of the Quintet’s performance of this song on *POQ* was clear. His recollection implies that the group’s musical, performative, and televisual presence

was striking. No footage of the Quintet performing “New Walk” on *POQ* in the late 1950s or early 1960s exists. However, their distinctive mid-century musical and performative identity can be deduced from 1965 footage of the group performing “New Walk” on the Chicago gospel program *Jubilee Showcase*.¹³⁶ The Quintet’s five vocalists, Rev. Ruben Willingham, Johnny Jones, Charlie Barnwell, Rufus Washington, and tenor James Anderson, are arranged in a symmetrical formation on the *Jubilee Showcase* set. The Quintet’s guitarist, William “Pee-Wee” Crawford, is positioned away from the main set where the singers stood, visible only when the camera panned to him. This rendition of “New Walk” is structured in three parts, each with an increasingly-rapid tempo. The dramatic tension escalates as the Quintet progresses through the song. The piece begins with an ametrical introduction played by a guitar and an unseen and unnamed pianist. The two instrumentalists riff up and down the blues scale rapidly.¹³⁷ During these introductory riffs, the Quintet harmonizes on the vowel “oooh” in closely-voiced chords. Harmonic suspense builds as the singers shift from the tonic to the subdominant and back again, with added flattened-sevenths in each chord.

During this introduction, the Quintet’s original lead singer, Rev. Ruben Willingham, leaves the Quintet’s symmetrical formation and walks to the front of the television set. He begins to chant introductory text in the raw, gravelly preaching style for which he was famous in the gospel industry (Heilbut 1971). Willingham’s chanted text hovers around the tonic and the flattened-seventh scale degree immediately below the tonic. The background singers stop

¹³⁶ The Quintet’s 1965 performance on *Jubilee Showcase* was re-broadcast in 1991 as part of a special retrospective, although *Jubilee Showcase* was no longer a regular program at that point. More information about the program’s history can be found at <http://www.jubileeshowcase.com/>. The Quintet originally recorded “New Walk” for Nashboro Records in 1957 using the same vocal and instrumental personnel mentioned in this analysis. The only exception is the pianist, whose identity is uncertain in the *Jubilee Showcase* performance and in the 1957 Nashboro recording (Hayes and Laughton 1970).

¹³⁷ Although the Quintet’s Nashboro recordings in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including “New Walk,” often used a pianist, the pianists were unidentified in album credits and were not a part of the Quintet’s traveling personnel. The pianists were probably provided by Nashboro (Hayes and Laughton 1970).

“ooing” as soon as Willingham begins to chant. The piano and guitar punctuate his remarks with brief blues riffs on the tonic chord as he extemporizes briefly about his religious conversion.

The four verses of text that follow Willingham’s chanted introduction are a dramatic retelling of a religious conversion and its tangible, embodied effects on the convert. The four verses, which constitute the middle section of “New Walk,” are sung in a slow 12/8 meter. The verses are accompanied by blues riffs played by the piano and guitar on the tonic with passing motions to the subdominant. The four verses are transcribed below; text in brackets indicates moments when the background singers sing the text with Willingham:

I looked at my hands, and I had [new hands].
Somebody say, you oughtta been there the day the Lord laid His hands on me.
But here’s what happened then, children, lookie here.

I looked at my feet and I had [new feet].
Whoa, they put me on the right road and started me a-walking up the King’s highway.
And here’s what happened then, children, lookie here, Lord God.

I started to walk, and I had a [new walk].
A whole lotta people don’t like to see you shout, but the Bible tells me to shout anywhere I go.
Lord God, lookie here. And here’s what happened, children, lookie here.

I started to shout, and I had [a new shout].
I cried, Oh! [Oh!] Whoa! [Whoa!]
I can travel now.

During the first two verses, Willingham physically acts out the song’s text, dramatically gesturing towards his hands and his feet as he mentioned them in the verses. During the third verse, he begins to walk back and forth in front of the group, taking large, exaggerated steps in time with the rhythm.

After these four verses, with little warning, the slow 12/8 meter suddenly gives way to an up-tempo, duple-meter “shout,” the final section of the song.¹³⁸ Johnny Jones moves quickly to

¹³⁸ The term “shout” or “shout song” is sometimes used in Black churches to refer to a very fast duple-meter song. The term also describes a state of religious ecstasy accompanied by dancing and crying out. The two uses of the

the front of the ensemble and sings the lead for the rest of the piece. The text of the shout section is different than, but thematically related to, the 12/8 section of the song. It consists of repetitions of the line “I got on my traveling shoes” interspersed with “whoas” from Jones and the background singers. During the “shout” section, Jones and the Quintet are joined by a large Black mixed-gender choir singing and clapping. The choir was unseen until the camera panned to the right during the final section of the three-part piece. Despite the choir’s presence, the Quintet is still very audible during the “shout” section, with James Anderson’s piercing falsetto particularly prominent in the texture.

The entire performance lasted no more than two minutes, but it contained musical and performative characteristics that marked the Quintet’s music for the next few decades, even when their personnel changed. Among the characteristics evident in the 1965 televised version of “New Walk” that were still part of the Quintet’s musical style many years later were: 1) an ametrical instrumental and chanted introduction in a blues mode; 2) an embodied approach to performance in which song lyrics are enacted with dramatic physical gestures; 3) the prominence of a rural or country-style blues guitar; 4) the prominence of male falsetto; and 5) the use of heightened or chanted speech in a “preaching style” at various points in a song. Because this footage appears to be the earliest extant footage of the Quintet, the following analyses will use it as a reference point for the group’s early musical/performative style onstage.

Sometime in the 1970s, the Quintet recorded several pieces in an unknown television studio performing four pieces. The footage was released three decades later on the 2004 videotape, *The New Walk*, discussed earlier in this chapter. Again, in the absence of *POQ* footage of the group in the 1970s, the next analysis uses footage from the *New Walk* to examine

term are related but in this context refer chiefly to the song’s tempo. For a description of how “shout songs” can encourage worshipers to “shout,” see Hinson’s discussion in *Fire in My Bones: Transcendence and the Holy Spirit in African American Gospel* (2000, 99 – 102).

their televised performance style in the 1970s. The Quintet's 1970s performance of "Something Got Ahold of Me," was actually broadcast on *POQ* in the August 27, 2006 episode (Appendix C, #36). Therefore it can be considered a "surrogate" for missing *POQ* footage of the group in the 1970s.

"Something Got Ahold of Me" featured Percy Griffin singing lead and James Anderson, Rufus Washington, and Charlie Barnwell singing background. The vocalists were dressed in matching orange leisure suits. Their positions on the television set indicated their vocal roles. Griffin was standing on an elevated platform at some distance from the background singers, who were grouped together around a single microphone on a lower platform. As in the 1965 footage of the Quintet, the instrumentalists were not pictured in the main television set. In some ways the television set evoked a church scene with a faux stained glass window erected behind the singers. Other elements of the set were visually neutral, however, and included potted plants, archways, and a wrought-iron gate.

The piece's title is an old gospel piece that, by the 1970s, had been recorded by many gospel groups. According to Hayes and Laughton, the Quintet did not record the piece on any of their albums prior to 1970 (1970). The Quintet's arrangement of the piece included many of the musical characteristics foregrounded in the 1965 television performance of "New Walk." The first and perhaps most noticeable musical element linking "New Walk" with "Something Got Ahold of Me" is the very active rural or downhome-blues guitar. Although the guitarist is never shown in the footage, it was most likely William "Pee Wee" Crawford, based on the blues style used. The guitarist is active throughout the vocalists' phrases as an independent, autonomous voice within the arrangement. Instead of only punctuating the ends of vocal phrases with blues riffs, the guitar's blues licks are heard throughout the entire texture of the piece. A second

distinctive trait of the Quintet that was also evident in the 1965 “New Walk” performance and in “Something Got Ahold of Me” was the piercing, prominent falsetto timbre of James Anderson.

In contrast to the 1965 footage of their performance on *Jubilee Showcase*, the group’s stage demeanor in “Something Got Ahold of Me” is restrained. They move back and forth to the rhythm, and Griffin uses some hand gestures, but they do not leave their platforms or make large physical gestures. During this television footage, the group is also accompanied by an invisible organist. The organist’s bouncing, repetitive accompaniment figures are similar to the raw soul sound of Booker T and the MGs, the house band at the Stax record label in Memphis, Tennessee. Also unlike the earlier footage, “Something Got Ahold of Me” includes a vamp section. This may have been because the Quintet had more time to perform during this television shoot in contrast to their brief spot on *Jubilee Showcase*.

A performance of “Dr. Jesus” by the Swanee Quintet in Augusta’s Bell Auditorium in the early 1980s exemplifies the group’s relationship to *POQ* and their ability to maintain a distinctive musical style still related to their mid-1960s style as epitomized by “New Walk.” The video footage of this concert is undated. Judging by the group’s personnel and the clothing and hairstyles of audience members, it seems to have been filmed in the early 1980s. The entire concert footage lasted approximately seventeen minutes and featured the Quintet performing seven pieces. The concert was promoted and produced by the Howard family, since the master copy of the tape is part of the *POQ* collection at the University of Georgia Media Archives. It is probable that footage of this Quintet concert was broadcast on *POQ* at some point, although it is unknown when this occurred (Appendix C, #65).

Several elements in this performance demonstrate continuity with the Quintet’s musical style and stage presence in the 1965 footage from *Jubilee Showcase*. These include James

Anderson's prominent falsetto timbre, Johnny Jones' distinctive timbre on lead, a "shout" tempo, repetitive and raw melodic motifs, a simple and repetitive harmonic scheme. Most striking of all in its consistency with the 1965 footage, however, is the Quintet's projection of physical drama onstage. In the 1965 footage of "New Walk," Rev. Ruben Willingham "acted out" the words to the song. During the extended vamp at the end of "Dr. Jesus," Johnny Jones and Percy Griffin engage in a dramatic improvisation that climaxes when both men drop to their knees and hop across the stage on their knees. Their musical dialogue, created by rapidly-echoed motifs that coalesce into a funky rhythmic "groove," is transcribed in Figure 3.2. When Jones begins to sing "down," he drops to one knee and pointed at the stage, motioning for Griffin to do the same. Griffin follows suit. The men are then each on one bent knee, facing one another and continuing their sung exchange. Towards the end of Figure 3.2, when Griffin changes the verbal pattern from "Jesus" to "Holy" and "got that Holy," both men begin hopping across the stage on their knees. The exchange concludes when Jones breaks into a stuttering repetition of a musical motif on "Je-Je-Je-Je-sus" and Griffin screamed "Aaaaah!"

The exchange pictured in Figure 3.2 was part of a dramatic climax initiated by the Quintet's refusal to leave the stage when the MC tried to usher them off.¹³⁹ Three times near the end of "Dr. Jesus," the MC walked onstage with a microphone and said something like "Thank you to Augusta's very own Swanee Quintet!" All three times, the vocalists started to leave the stage, then ran back, grabbed a microphone, and began to sing the vamp again, apparently

¹³⁹ I have observed that this ritual is a common feature in gospel quartet concerts, meant to elicit the audience's approval, enthusiasm, and engagement with the group. Quartets' refusal to leave the stage after they perform is typically accompanied by exaggerated gestures such as grabbing microphones or pretending to push the MC away. Often the quartet members appear to be overcome with religious ecstasy, thus "incapable" of stopping their worship. The audience enjoys this part of a quartet concert, often clapping and shouting enthusiastically when a quartet decides to overstay its welcome onstage.

overcome with religious fervor.¹⁴⁰ The audience responded with increasingly wild enthusiasm. The exchange pictured in Figure 3.2 occurred after the Quintet had “left” the stage the second time.

Jones

Je - sus! Je - sus! Do - wn! Do - own!

Griffin

Je - sus! Je - sus! Je - sus! Shout!

3

Get down! Do - wn! Talk to Him! Talk to Him!

Shout! Talk to Him! Talk to Him! Je - sus!

5

Je - sus! Je - sus! Je - sus! Je - sus! Je - Je - Je - Je - sus!

Je - sus! Je - sus! Ho - ly! Got that Ho - ly! Je - sus! Je - sus!

8

Je - Je - Je - Je - sus!

Ahhhh!

Figure 3.2: “Dr. Jesus,” Vamp, Griffin’s and Jones’ Musical Exchange.

Jones’s and Griffin’s return to the stage was actually facilitated by *POQ* host and producer Henry Howard. Howard, an MC and probable promoter for the concert, was visible at the side of the stage during the Quintet’s second “exit” during the vamp. The Quintet’s vocalists seemed intent on actually leaving the stage during their second exit. However, Howard tugged on lead

¹⁴⁰ The instrumentalists continue to play vamp patterns on the tonic as the vocalists walk offstage. Therefore there is a continual accompaniment pattern to support the singers’ re-entry into the vamp situation.

singer Griffin's coat-tails, handed him a microphone, and pushed him back towards the center of the stage. As an experienced promoter and former gospel quartet singer, Howard knew that this would cause the audience's enthusiasm to surge. Jones saw what was happening, turned around, and ran back onstage. It was at this point that the exchange transcribed in Figure 3.2 occurred.

Following Griffin's and Jones' climactic exchange, the Quintet's vocalists were ushered offstage a third time. After the Quintet exited the stage the third time, only lead singer Griffin returned to the stage. Griffin briefly engaged in a musical exchange with Henry Howard that graphically illustrates the group's relationship to *POQ* and to the local gospel tradition. The Quintet's instrumentalists continue to play the vamp material from "Dr. Jesus" when Griffin leaps back onstage after the third exit. He grabs a microphone, throws his arm around Henry Howard's neck, and begins to improvise with Howard on the repeated text "Jesus!" and "I love Him!" During their improvisation, which lasted only a few seconds, Griffin and Howard leap up and down rhythmically as they sing. Howard's musical participation in the Quintet's vamp illustrates the personal and musical links between local non-professional quartets, the Swanee Quintet, *POQ*, and Augusta's gospel music audience. The audience screams and claps with pleasure when Griffin and Howard vamped together briefly.

Another 1980s example of a Quintet performance illustrates their adherence to and evolution beyond their stage demeanor and musical style from the mid-1960s. "I've Been Washed in the Blood" was performed by the Quintet at an Augusta concert that was promoted by the Howard family; it appears to date from the late 1980s or early 1990s. This performance was actually broadcast by the Howard family on the Augusta television program *Gospel Museum* (Appendix C, #10).¹⁴¹ The piece is performed with Johnny Jones singing lead. Like the 1965

¹⁴¹ *Gospel Museum* was a thirty-minute Black gospel program produced occasionally by the Howard family in recent decades. It was aired on a local cable channel in Augusta on Sunday evenings. The family's intention,

footage, this piece begins with an ametrical instrumental introduction over which Jones provides personalized testimony. Like the 1965 clip, the effect of the introduction is to build musical suspense. This is achieved through the introduction's ametrical quality, Jones' chanting, and the instruments riffing restlessly on scalar patterns while remaining harmonically static on the tonic.

When the piece begins, the guitarist is very active and prominent in the texture, as has been typical of the group throughout its history. However, the guitarist in this footage is no longer "Pee Wee" Crawford, the blues-influenced guitarist for the Quintet from 1939 until the 1970s. Now it is Johnny Mims, the group's guitarist from the late 1970s until the present. Mims' style is much less blues-oriented than Crawford's. It consists of more delicate finger-plucked motifs, duple rather than triple subdivisions of the beat, and major and minor diatonic figures rather than blues-based patterns. Additionally, in this performance Mims mostly avoids blues-related techniques such as pitch bending and glissandi. His style sounds much more like a white, rural, country-style guitarist. Although there is continuity with the group's past style in the prominence of a rural guitar in the texture, there is evolution too as Mims' style differs from Crawford's.

The Quintet's 1994 album *Just One Rose Will Do!* highlights two methods of musical and cultural reinvention used by the group (see Figure 3.3 for album cover). The first method of musical and cultural reinvention is the Quintet's use of its longtime vocalists' distinctive musical styles to create a wide timbral variety on the album. A second means of musical reinvention

according to Karlton Howard, was to broadcast gospel music to local viewers who were unable to watch *Parade of Quartets* on Sunday mornings. The University of Georgia Media Archives owns three tapes of *Gospel Museum*, all of which consist of commercially-produced footage of nationally-known gospel singers. None of the three tapes are dated, but judging by the performers' appearances, repertoire, and musical style, they seem to date from the late 1980s or 1990s. *Gospel Museum* footage held by the UGA Media Archives includes performances by the Williams Brothers, the Mississippi Mass Choir, Slim and the Supreme Angels, and Shirley Caesar. The Swanee Quintet is the only local group featured in the three tapes. *Gospel Museum* was hosted by Augusta gospel DJ Garfield Turner. The show's set was designed to look like the interior of a radio disc jockey's booth and was decorated with albums and photographs of various gospel artists. It is uncertain how long or how often the program was produced and broadcast.

evident on the 1994 album is the creation of many newly-composed texts. These texts are simultaneously in dialogue with current cultural issues and centuries' worth of Black theological and textual issues. The group performed pieces from this album on two *POQ* episodes in the mid-1990s. The following analyses will examine several of these performances.

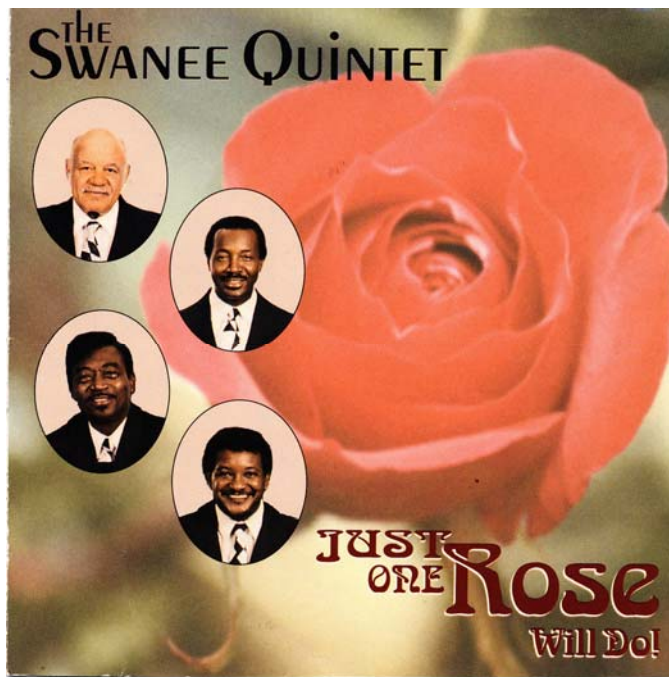


Figure 3.3: Swanee Quintet Album Cover, *Just One Rose Will Do!*

“Living in the Last Days,” from the album *Just One Rose Will Do!*, was performed by the Quintet on the April 16, 1995 episode of *POQ* (Appendix C, 95041 PST Tape 2).¹⁴² Johnny Jones sings lead on the piece, as he did in the album version. The piece’s text demonstrates a didactic textual engagement with contemporary culture. The text, given below, is a commentary on decaying morals in the mid-1990s.¹⁴³

¹⁴² The term “last days” in Christianity means that the speaker believes the return of Christ and the catastrophic end of the world is imminent. Those who use this term are typically implying that the world’s social and moral fabric is decaying rapidly.

¹⁴³ The album liner notes state that the author of “Living in the Last Days” is unknown.

Refrain

Living in the last days,
Oh, we are living in the last days.
We're living in a time
When men won't change their ways.
They are calling the right wrong,
Calling the wrong right.
We're living in the last days,
When men won't change their ways.

Verse 1

Turn on your radio.
Sit down and watch your TV.
Go out to a candy store,
Buy a newspaper and read.
Back in the Bible days
All over this land,
Men and women, boys and girls
Are dying on every hand.
We're living in the last days
When men won't change their ways.

Verse 2

For God said heaven and earth will pass away;
If we ever needed the Lord before, we need him all on this very day.
When Jesus comes back again,
He's coming for the ones that have been born again.
We're living in the last days
When men won't change their ways.

The text mentions various media outlets in the first verse, which states that the listener can “turn on your radio, sit down in front of your TV, go out to a candy store, buy a newspaper and read.” If the listener does these things, they will learn, in the words of the refrain, “we’re living in the last days, when men won’t change their ways.” The refrain further elucidates that the last days are marked by people who “call the right wrong, and call the wrong right.”¹⁴⁴ By embedding contemporary social ills within the framework of Christian eschatology (“we’re living in the last days”), the text looks *forward* to the teleological endpoint of earthly existence. This is denoted in

¹⁴⁴ This line seems to echo the Biblical text of Isaiah 5:20 (“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil”).

the second verse, when the narrator anticipates the time “when Jesus comes back again...for the ones that have been born again.”¹⁴⁵

The song’s text may comment on contemporary culture and look forward to Christ’s future return, but elements of its musical setting are very traditional. For example, Jones’ vocal style is extremely reminiscent of Sam Cooke, in his smooth timbre, avoidance of growls and groans, and diatonic approach to melismatic ornamentation.¹⁴⁶ Jones’ timbre might be described as crooning, and was not fashionable in either gospel music or secular music in the mid-1990s. Jones’ clear text-declamation evokes Nat “King” Cole’s precise diction, further strengthening aural ties with the vocal crooning popular in the 1950s and 1960s. Jones’ restrained delivery is highlighted by his relatively sparse use of text interpolations between phrases, his remaining in the middle register of his voice, and body language that is restricted to hand gestures.¹⁴⁷ The Hammond B-3 organ punctuates the ends of vocal phrases. Lead guitarist Johnny Mims plays in a diatonic southern or country-gospel style with very little pitch-bending or use of the blues scale. Combined with Jones’ vocal timbre and approach to improvisation, the musical setting evokes a white or country-gospel sound rather than a “hard” Black gospel quartet style. Several elements of the performance demonstrate continuity with the Quintet’s mid-century style as seen in the 1965 performance of “New Walk.” These elements include Jones’ distinctive, anachronistic timbre and diction, as well as the prominence of a rural guitar timbre.

¹⁴⁵ An extended review of the many eschatological views espoused by various Christian groups is impossible here. In brief, several Biblical texts seem to inform the song’s core eschatological sentiments, including Matthew 24:35 (“Heaven and earth shall pass away”); John 14:1-3, Matthew 24:27, I Thessalonians 4:16, and Revelation 1:7. Many mainstream Christian groups interpret these texts as alluding to Christ’s literal return to earth at the end of temporal existence to collect the faithful for eternal bliss.

¹⁴⁶ No analysis exists of Cooke’s unique approach to ornamentation; it is sometimes called “yodeling,” and after careful listening to his secular records and his recordings with the Soul Stirrers gospel quartet, it seems that one distinguishing mark of Cooke’s improvisatory approach is that it was very *diatonic* as opposed to using elements of the blues such as blue notes and bent pitches. As stated earlier in this chapter, Jones was influenced by Sam Cooke and was hired briefly by the Soul Stirrers quartet as Cooke’s replacement in the mid-1950s.

¹⁴⁷ The earlier analysis of the Quintet’s live performance of “I Found the Lord One Day” suggests that Jones’ stage demeanor was more physically expressive during live concerts.

“I Found the Lord One Day,” with Percy Griffin singing lead, contrasts markedly to the previous piece in harmonic language and in the performance behavior of the Quintet. Also performed on the April 16, 1995, episode of *POQ*, the song demonstrates a very different approach to improvisation by the lead singer. Unlike the version on the album *Just One Rose Will Do*, this television rendition of “I Found the Lord” begins with an ametrical introduction. It features the guitarists playing riffs based on the blues scale and the percussionist rattling the cymbals to create drama while Griffin extemporizes in a chanting tone. The resemblance to Willingham’s preaching style over blues-based instrumental riffs in the 1965 footage is striking. The textual content of Griffin’s chanted introduction also bears a striking resemblance to Willingham’s chanted introduction in the 1965 footage. Both mens’ chanted introductions, as well as the songs they sing after the introductions, center on an emotional conversion experience. It becomes quickly apparent during the chanted introduction that Griffin’s approach to improvisation differs greatly from Jones’ approach in the previous analysis of “Living in the Last Days.” Griffin begins by directly addressing the unseen television audience. He chants mostly on the tonic, occasionally flitting up to the fifth scale degree above or down to the dominant pitch below the tonic:

Is there anybody here this morning knows the Lord’s been good to you? One thing about me: I wouldn’t have a religion that I couldn’t feel sometimes. If you know God been good to you, you oughtta let somebody know. If you know He been good to you, I’d like y’all to sing and put your hands together while we tell you this.

Griffin’s movements to and from the tonic are echoed and embellished by Mims’ guitar playing, creating a distinct call-and-response dialogue between voice and guitar that was mostly absent from “Living in the Last Days.” Throughout the introduction and in the song proper, Griffin’s style is much more blues-oriented than Jones’ was in the previous analysis. He bends

itches, uses many blues notes, exploits the extremes of his range, experiments with varied timbres such as growls and shouts, and declaims the text in a much more slurred or rural fashion. Griffin's body language is also much more dramatic than Jones' on "Living in the Last Days." At one point he kneels down on the stage to illustrate the text "I found the Lord on my knees." Griffin's heavily personalized and dramatic performance matches the text's ethos, which centers on a personal and individual testimony of the singer's encounter with God.¹⁴⁸ It also demonstrates great continuity with Willingham's highly embodied performance, precisely thirty years earlier, of "New Walk," in which he physically acted out the song's lyrics.

These two pieces performed by the Quintet on the April 16, 1995, *POQ* episode illustrate individual members' versatility with different texts and contrasting approaches to improvisation and arrangement. Griffin has been with the group since 1966, and Jones since the 1950s. Their contrasting vocal timbres and improvisational styles have provided the group with continued opportunities for variety and reinvention, as evident from these performances in the mid-1990s.¹⁴⁹ *Just One Rose Will Do!* is filled with other examples of the musical versatility achieved by maximizing group members' disparate vocal styles and timbres along with a broad variety of texts. For example, the album's title song features tenor James "Big Red" Anderson speaking two verses of poetry, which are interspersed with verses of sung text.¹⁵⁰ Although

¹⁴⁸ According to album liner notes, the piece was written by group member James "Big Red" Anderson. The fact that the text is a personal, individual testimony written by one man and sung convincingly by another is at the heart of the gospel song tradition. Like many other gospel compositions, Anderson's text expresses individual religious experiences that are similar enough to *other* individual experiences that they will elicit communal affirmation and participation during performance.

¹⁴⁹ Jones' and Griffin's differing approaches to improvisation may also be affected by their denominational affiliations. As stated earlier, Jones was a longtime member of an African Methodist Episcopal Zion church (Mr. Johnny Jones Sr. 2000), which traditionally employs a more formal liturgy in the service. Griffin is a longtime member of the United House of Prayer for All Nations, a Pentecostal/Holiness denomination noted for the expressiveness and dramatic qualities of its worship rituals.

¹⁵⁰ According to the album's liner notes, Anderson wrote the song.

Anderson is not one of the group's lead singers, and does not have a strong solo voice, the Quintet used his songwriting skills and his ability to declaim text to create a unique piece.

These 1995 *POQ* performances are the most recent footage of the Quintet on the program that I have found. Likely this is due to poor record-keeping in the *POQ* footage collection; judging from numerous interviews, the Quintet has continued to perform on *POQ* in the past ten years. In the absence of recent *POQ* footage, the final analyses will discuss the Quintet's engagement with its own musical and performative legacy, as well as the broader legacy of Black sacred song, in live performances and on an album. Although these examples do not come from *POQ* footage, the group's continued connection to the program during the past ten years justify analyzing these non-*POQ* performances to develop a holistic view of the Quintet's musical and historical trajectory.

The Swanee Quintet's most recent album is titled *Still Holding On* (2005). As the next four analyses demonstrate, the album displays a largely retrospective approach to repertoire, musical style, group legacy, and choice of texts. The album was the group's final release featuring material arranged and performed by the sole surviving original member of the Quintet, James "Big Red" Anderson. Anderson died soon after the album's release in spring 2005. The album is therefore historically-important for its inclusion of Anderson as well as for its self-reflective approach to the Quintet's musical legacy. The group's self-awareness regarding its legacy is visually apparent: the album cover is printed with the words "The Legendary Swanee Quintet." The group's legacy is acknowledged once again in the liner notes: "We, the Swanee Quintet, would like to thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the privilege of spreading the good news for over 65 years." As described earlier in the chapter, the Quintet has replenished its

personnel in recent years with younger members. The photograph on the cover shows a group of elderly and young men, pictured in Figure 3.4.



Figure 3.4: Swanee Quintet Album Cover, *Still Holding On*.

“Wings of a Prayer,” the second piece on *Still Holding On*, demonstrates the Quintet’s balance of tradition and innovation. This balance is evident in the song’s structure and vocal arrangement, which is a considerable expansion from the traditional male quartet style of arrangement. The piece’s formal structure is: solo verse, solo verse, refrain, solo verse, refrain (sung twice), truncated refrain (sung twice). Solo verses are performed by Percy Griffin without backup singers of any sort; each refrain sung by Griffin and a large mixed-gender choir.¹⁵¹ Near the end of the repeated refrain, a female vocalist begins to improvise with Griffin. The track is the only one on the album that features female vocalists of any sort, and the only track that

¹⁵¹ The choir featured on the track is His Own C.O.G.I.C. Choir. The album’s liner notes give no further information regarding which church(es) the choir is affiliated with. “C.O.G.I.C.” is the acronym for the Church of God in Christ, the largest predominantly-Black Pentecostal denomination in North America.

includes a choir. Aside from Griffin, the Quintet's other vocalists are entirely absent from the piece. Quartet background singers frequently sing during verses and refrains, often creating call-and-response patterns with the lead singer in both parts of the piece. Therefore, the choir does not seem to act as a replacement for the quartet in this instance since it sings only on the refrain. The use of the soloist-choir format, particularly with a female soloist, deviates from the quartet tradition as practiced by the Quintet in prior performances and albums. Without the album cover, the listener would not identify this piece as part of a quartet album.

Another departure from the quartet tradition inherent in the structure of "Wings of a Prayer" is the lack of a vamp section. The choir never moves into singing a brief, truncated rhythmic, melodic, or textual motif against which Griffin can improvise. The lack of a vamp section is extremely uncharacteristic of quartet albums throughout the genre's history. It is particularly uncharacteristic of the Swanee Quintet's recorded output and concert performances. In the absence of a vamp, Griffin's only opportunity for extensive personalization with the help of an ensemble is when Cassady Bynes improvises with him during the second iteration of the truncated refrain. The truncated refrain does not substitute for a vamp section. For one thing, it uses the complete chord progression from the refrain instead of reducing the harmonic motion to stasis on the tonic. Second, the truncated refrain is repeated only twice rather than multiple times. Both of these characteristics differentiate the truncated refrain from the vamp section that is standard in quartet recordings and performances. The lack of a vamp section represents the Quintet's willingness to expand beyond traditional quartet boundaries.

The song's instrumentation represents a collision between contemporary musical practices and older practices rooted in Black religious tradition. The piece features an ethereal synthesized string patch throughout the entire track (the use of electric keyboards and

synthesizers is common in gospel music of the past two decades). The synthesized strings may be a contemporary musical device, but they are employed in a very traditional manner. Instead of sustaining harmonies throughout each phrase, the strings punctuate the *ends* of vocal phrases with short riffs. This creates the call-and-response pattern between Griffin and the strings so typical in gospel music, albeit with unusual instrumentation.

Other musical elements of “Wings of a Prayer” represent a much clearer connection with traditional Black gospel music. The Hammond B-3 organ, gospel-style piano, and guitar used on the piece are instruments used by many quartets and by the Quintet itself since the late 1950s. The piece is performed in the lilting 12/8 meter common in Black gospel music (Boyer 2000). Lead singer Percy Griffin sings many bent pitches and blue notes, particularly at the ends of phrases, using his characteristically rough vocal timbre. His vocal style and timbre lends a rural ethos to an otherwise-contemporary arrangement. Griffin’s very traditional delivery of the solo portions of the piece retains some element of the Swanee Quintet’s rural, raw imprint. Griffin has indicated his fondness for “Wings of a Prayer,” stating that the song was written specifically for the Quintet by Hals Rachael Newman, a white Nashville songwriter (2008). Griffin sang the piece’s opening bars during an interview, describing it as “beautiful” (Ibid.). Overall, the piece sounds much more like white Southern gospel music than like Black gospel quartet music, due to the structural and instrumental elements discussed above.

“What’s the Matter with Jesus” represents a different type of collision between musical and cultural roots and reinvention on the album. Unlike “Wings of a Prayer,” this piece is very idiomatic to the quartet style. According to the album’s liner notes, Griffin himself composed the song, a duple meter minor-mode “shout” that consists of three verses. There is no refrain. Each phrase in the song is comprised of a call-and-response motif between the lead singer and the

background singers. The first verse is transcribed in Figure 3.5 to show the call-and-response structure between Griffin and the backup singers.

The musical score is written in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of three systems of staves.

- System 1:** Griffin's part (top staff) has two measures of music, each followed by the lyrics "What's the mat-ter with Je-sus?". The Background Singers' part (bottom staff) has two measures of music, each followed by the lyrics "He's all right!".
- System 2:** Griffin's part (top staff) has two measures of music, each followed by the lyrics "What's the mat-ter with Je - sus?". The Background Singers' part (bottom staff) has two measures of music, each followed by the lyrics "He's all right!".
- System 3:** Griffin's part (top staff) has two measures of music, each followed by the lyrics "What's the mat - ter with Je - sus?". The Background Singers' part (bottom staff) has two measures of music, each followed by the lyrics "He's all right!".

Figure 3.5: “What’s the Matter with Jesus?”, Verse One, Griffin and Background Singers.

The quartet idiom, reliant upon exchanges between soloists and background singers, is embedded in the very phrase structure of the text. The “call” is sounded three times by Griffin: “What’s the matter with Jesus?” and the background singers respond: “He’s all right!” On the fourth iteration of the question, the background singers provide both the “call” and the

“response,” as indicated in Figure 3.5. The same rhetorical and musical structure is repeated in the second verse when Griffin asks “Won’t He stand by you?” The background singers complete the phrase with the answer, “Yes, He will.” The third verse is built around the question “Won’t He be your doctor?” It is answered with the same response by the background singers, again using the same harmonization and rhythmic motifs transcribed in Figure 3.5.

Another hallmark of the quartet idiom in the piece is the extended vamp built around truncated, percussive interactions between Griffin and the background singers. The vamp occupies half of the four-minute song, and is initiated after the third verse when Griffin shouts, “Come on, boys, let’s have a little church here.” In the vamp, the background singers repeat the phrase “He’s all right; my God’s all right!,” derived from the text of the verses. Figure 3.6 is transcription of the background singers’ repeated ostinato during the vamp. The most prominent interval in the vamp pattern transcribed in Figure 3.6 is the motion between the first scale degree and the flattened-third scale degree. As is common in a gospel vamp, the harmonic motion is reduced to the tonic with passing motions to the subdominant. During the vamp the instruments play many intervals and riffs against the tonic pitch, mostly drawn from the blues scale.

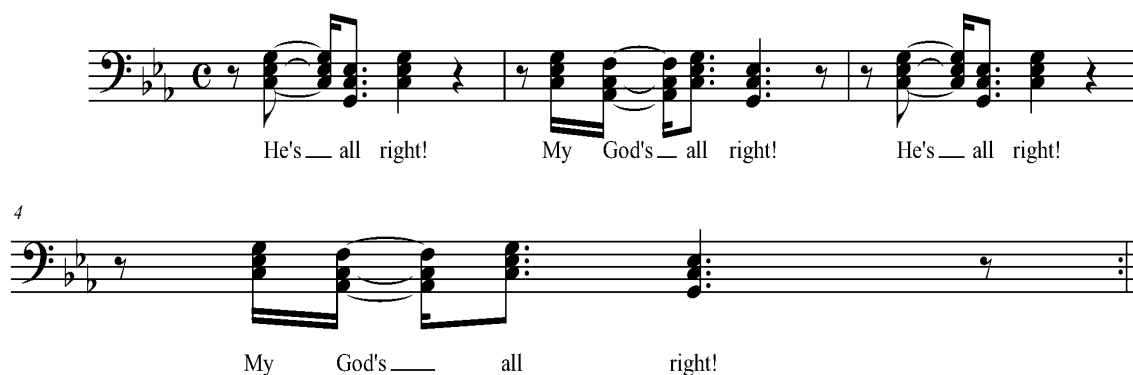


Figure 3.6: “What’s the Matter With Jesus?”, Vamp, Background Singers.

Other aspects of the piece that are deeply-rooted in the Black sacred song tradition include textual content, harmonic language, and the piano and Hammond B-3 organ. The text's Christological focus, stated in a question-and-answer format, is a common element of gospel music. Unlike the spirituals, gospel songs often focus on the centrality of the Christ figure.¹⁵² The piece's harmonic scheme could date from the gospel music of fifty years ago, using only the minor tonic and subdominant (with the exception of the dominant outlined in the instrumental introduction, discussed below).¹⁵³ The pianist, Steven Jefferson, performs in a style influenced by ragtime and honky-tonk.¹⁵⁴ The organist, Marquet Abraham, uses the Hammond B-3 organ to provide blues-influenced punctuation and riffs between vocal phrases, a typical role for the organ in Black church services of many denominations.¹⁵⁵

Evidence of a more contemporary approach to musical arrangement can be found in other elements of the instrumentation, such as a synthesized horn sound on the electric keyboards.¹⁵⁶ The synthesized horn, along with the drums and organ, occupies a prominent role in the arrangement. The synthesized horn and organ perform a monophonic, mostly-unison introduction to the piece, transcribed in Figure 3.7. The three-measure introduction roughly outlines the blues scale in the first measure. In the second two measures, the introduction creates harmonic context for Griffin's opening phrase in the tonic. The introduction implies the

¹⁵² For general discussions on theological themes prevalent in the spirituals, see Howard Thurman's *Deep River: Reflections on the Religious Insight of Certain of the Negro Spirituals* (1955); John Lovell, Jr.'s, *Black Songs: The Forge and the Flame: The Story of How the Afro-American Spiritual Was Hammered Out* (1972); Lawrence Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom* (1977); Jon Michael Spencer's *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* (1990); Erskine Peters' preface to *Lyrics of the Afro-American Spiritual: A Documentary Collection* (1993); and Eileen Southern's *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (1997).

¹⁵³ According to Charles Cobb's survey of harmonic structure in Black gospel quartet recordings of the 1950s and 1960s, three basic harmonic patterns involving only a few chords dominated the harmonic language of mid-century quartets (1974).

¹⁵⁴ Jefferson had been a part of the Swanee Quintet as a keyboardist for nearly ten years when this album was recorded. He is Baptist (www.swaneequintet.com).

¹⁵⁵ Abraham does not seem to be a member of the Swanee Quintet.

¹⁵⁶ In the absence of a different keyboardist listed in the liner notes, it is probable that Marquet Abraham, who played organ on this track, also played the synthesized horn sound on a keyboard.

dominant (beats two and three of measure two) and plays the subdominant (beat four of measure two and beats one and two of measure three). Immediately prior to Griffin's first notes (shown in Figure 3.5), the instruments introduce the tonic. The use of the synthesized horn, and the inclusion of this jazz-like unison head motif at the beginning of the arrangement, illustrates the Quintet's ability to balance contemporary and traditional instruments and instrumental roles.¹⁵⁷



Figure 3.7: “What’s the Matter With Jesus?”, Instrumental Introduction.

Also distinctive in this piece's instrumentation is the addition of a trombonist performing throughout the piece, which is very unusual in the quartet tradition. The style in which trombonist Leon Johnson performs is perhaps different than one might expect.¹⁵⁸ Johnson does not punctuate the ends of phrases as might be expected with an electric guitar or other melodic instrument in the gospel tradition. Instead, the trombonist plays complex lines that last the duration of the vocalists' phrases. The trombone and the piano engage in collective improvisation in the New Orleans/Dixieland style, with each instrument performing long rhythmically and melodically active lines throughout each phrase.¹⁵⁹

The use of trombone is most likely linked to the Quintet's denominational makeup. Lead singer Percy Griffin is an Elder in the United House of Prayer, a predominantly Black

¹⁵⁷ Unlike a jazz arrangement, however, the unison introduction never returns in “What’s the Matter with Jesus?” After playing in the three-measure introduction, the synthesized horn performs short, repeated rhythmic motifs throughout the piece that punctuate the singer's phrases.

¹⁵⁸ Johnson is not a member of the Swanee Quintet.

¹⁵⁹ These long melodic lines are in marked contrast to the synthesized horn's short motifs and the punctuating riffs of the Hammond organ.

Pentecostal/Holiness denomination which has used brass “shout bands” as part of its worship services since its founding in the 1920s. The United House of Prayer has a particularly strong presence in Augusta; its church on Wrightsboro Road has been a religious mainstay in the community for decades (McKevie 2007; Griffin 2008).¹⁶⁰ The United House of Prayer “shout bands” are composed of trombones which play collectively-improvised polyphony in the manner of a Dixieland ensemble.¹⁶¹ Griffin has mentioned the “exciting” bands at his church, inviting me to attend a service and hear them (Griffin 2008). The presence of a trombonist performing in the House of Prayer “shout band” style points to the Quintet’s ability to creatively import denominationally-specific Black religious practices into their music, thus reinvigorating the quartet idiom.

“Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” demonstrates the Quintet’s ability to embed a text deeply-rooted in Black Christian hymnody within a modern musical setting. Although the liner notes attribute the song to album producers Rod Nickerson and Tommy Burgess, Jr., the refrain’s text is the first verse of Charles Wesley’s 1741 hymn, “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee.” Wesley’s hymn has been used as a “meter hymn” or “Dr. Watts hymn” in Black churches, particularly Baptist, for centuries (Dargan 2006).¹⁶² Wesley’s first verse, which becomes the refrain in the Quintet’s piece, is an imploring cry for help.

¹⁶⁰ In May 2008, Apostle C.M. Bailey, the pastor of the Augusta House of Prayer, was appointed bishop of the national denomination. Bailey became only the fourth leader of the denomination; his election was celebrated at the denomination’s headquarters in Washington, D.C., with parades and musical festivities (Augusta Pastor Named Denomination’s Leader, *Augusta Chronicle*, May 26 2008, online edition).

¹⁶¹ Little extensive documentation exists for this unique liturgical tradition. Some description of the history and worship rituals of the United House of Prayer can be found in Marie Dallam’s *Daddy Grace: A Celebrity Preacher and His House of Prayer* (2007). Dallam does not extensively describe the shout band tradition in musical terms. A dissertation also exists on the tradition, Sherri M. Damon’s “The Trombone in the Shout Band of the United House of Prayer for all People” (University of North Carolina, 1999). Documentary footage and description of the tradition in Washington, D.C. can be seen in the film *The Music District* (1996). The documentary is currently available for free streaming at www.folkstreams.net.

¹⁶² The Dr. Watts hymns on *POQ* will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

Wesley, Verse 1/Swanee Quintet Refrain

Father, I stretch my hands to Thee.

No other help I know.

If Thou withdraw Thyself from me,

Oh, whither shall I go?

Around this textual anchor, Nickerson and Burgess, Jr., created newly-composed verses.

Although these verses are new, they reach backwards into the theology and language of the spirituals to recount Old Testament stories of deliverance that formed the lyrical nucleus of the spirituals. Verse one discusses Moses and the Red Sea, and verse two mentions Daniel and his three companions in the fiery furnace.¹⁶³ Even when “updating” Wesley’s 1741 text, the songwriters draw on theological constructs foundational to the earliest forms of Black sacred song. The text of Nickerson and Burgess, Jr.’s, two verses and bridge are printed below:

Verse 1

Nobody knows the trouble I see; nobody knows what I went through.

But I know the Lord, He heard my cry; He’ll do the same for you.

Moses standin’ by the Red Sea; how to get across, they could not see.

He said, “Stand still.” He said, “Peace be still.”

Verse 2

Way down, way down on my knees; seems like my prayer wasn’t going nowhere.

When trouble came my way, you know what? My Lord, He made a way for me.

The Hebrew boys in a fiery furnace; they weren’t worried, this I know—

They know the Lord will make a way; He’ll do the same for you.

Bridge

Every time I go and take time to pray, and let the Lord have His way.

There’ll be no secret, God can do—what He done for others, He’ll do the same for you.

In addition to evoking the ethos of the spirituals by recounting Old Testament stories of deliverance, the opening line of the first newly-composed verse quotes the actual title of a well-known spiritual: “Nobody knows the trouble I see.”¹⁶⁴ The first line of the second verse also

¹⁶³ These Old Testament stories are located in Exodus 14 and Daniel 3, respectively.

¹⁶⁴ In his compilation of spiritual texts from nineteenth- and twentieth-century collections, Peters gives three variants of this text: “Nobody Knows the Trouble I Feel,” “Nobody Knows the Trouble I See,” and “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” (1993, 32 – 3).

seems textually and thematically related to the first two lines of the spiritual “I Couldn’t Hear Nobody Pray.” The spiritual’s first two lines are “In the valley on my knees! With my burden and my Savior! And I couldn’t hear nobody pray” (Peters 1993, 18).

The use of Wesley’s 1741 hymn and the evocation of antebellum spirituals meshes with the song’s contemporary instrumentation, formal structure, and harmonic scheme. The most prominent timbre in the instrumentation is the keyboard or synthesizer, set to a distinctly electronic sound. The bass guitar is also prominent, playing brief, diatonic, non-blues-based melodic motifs. The lead guitar also uses the diatonic major scale, avoiding bent pitches and blue notes. The piece includes a bridge and instrumental interludes, making its structure more similar to a popular song than a hymn or gospel song. The harmonic language of the bridge expands considerably from the tonic, dominant, and subdominant of the verse and refrain. In a further structural departure from quartet tradition, there is no vamp section in “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee.” The background singers sing the entire text of the refrain, but are silent in the verses. This use of the background singers also deviates from the quartet norm, which typically features background singers in a call-and-response capacity during verses as well as refrains.

In contrast to these more contemporary musical elements, Griffin’s lead singing style is much more rural and blues-influenced. In comparison to younger quartets, his style dates from an older era of quartet singing. His distinctive vocal style actually sounds out-of-place in a musical setting that in many other regards sounds like adult contemporary music of the mid-1990s. “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” exemplifies the Quintet’s ability to juxtapose diverse theological, musical, and textual elements from the Black sacred song tradition to create a new composition.

The album's title track, "Still Holding On," is subtitled "A Tribute to Big Red" (tenor James Anderson's nickname). At the time that the album was recorded in 2005, Anderson had been performing with the Quintet for sixty-six years. The piece was written by Anthony Ferris, who although is not a member of the Quintet, played piano and organ on the album. The song is a self-referential tribute to the group's legacy that, ironically, is couched in some of the most contemporary musical language used on the album. The song, with Griffin singing lead, recounts the group's journeys from "coast to coast, singing praises to the Lord of hosts." Griffin's text focuses on the group's longevity, deceased members, and geographical locations the Quintet has performed. Towards the end of the piece, after Griffin has woven the group's history into his extemporization, he addresses James "Big Red" Anderson directly:

I don't know how you feel, Big Red, but I'm gonna run on and see what the end gonna be...We all livin' on borrowed time; one of these old days we gonna leave this old world, see Him face to face...I'm gonna stay til Jesus comes back for me...Big Red, I love you...Sometimes I get mad at you, but I still love you.

Griffin's improvisation includes a celebration of the group's history, a concern for perpetuating the Quintet's tradition, and an awareness of eventual death. The tribute's instrumentation is dominated by synthesized bell sounds and horn patches and delicate diatonic patterns on the guitar. The only hint of the group's reputation as a downhome or rural quartet is in Griffin's raw, blues-influenced timbre and approach to improvisation. His style here includes pitch-bending at the ends of phrases, growling, and moaning. Similarly to several other contemporary tracks on the album, the background singers sing only during the refrain, constituting another departure from the norm for quartet arrangements. A textual celebration of the group's legacy embedded within a contemporary musical setting testifies to their ability to musically project their legacy *without* actually using their early musical style.

On the 2005 album *Still Holding On*, the Quintet dialogues with layers of the musical, textual, and historical past, including the quartet tradition, spirituals, Protestant hymnody, worship traditions of Black Baptists and the United House of Prayer, and the group's own legacy in the gospel music industry. The album also draws on contemporary musical and textual elements including synthesized instruments, newly-composed texts, and expansion beyond quartet boundaries in structure, form, and arrangement. The four pieces analyzed here are emblematic of the album's tendency towards retrospection. The album contains fewer new compositions than some of the Quintet's albums from recent years, and includes a large number of old, well-known Protestant hymns and gospel songs. Pieces recorded on *Still Holding On* that have circulated as part of Black and/or mainstream Protestant hymnody for many years include "Old-Time Religion," "Pass Me Not," "Glory, Glory," "How I Got Over," and "Where Could I Go But to the Lord." These pieces were recorded with the melodies traditionally associated with them and included no new textual interpolations aside from personalized interjections such as "oh yeah" and "Amen." Based on the four analyses and the remainder of the album's content, *Still Holding On* can be described as thematically retrospective within new musical boundaries.

A recent performance observed at the group's sixty-ninth anniversary concert in Augusta in October 2008 completes this chapter's overview of their musical dialogue with their mid-century style. At the program, the group sang "You Brought Me from a Mighty Long Way." In his spoken introduction to the song, Griffin asked the audience if the group could "sing one of those old Swanee Quintet songs." The Quintet performed the same arrangement of "A Mighty Long Way" that they used on their 2004-2005 album, *Still Holding On*. The second half of the minor-key arrangement highlights the tight harmonic blend of the background singers, as they sing an extended syllabic pattern on the vocable "doo." On the album, Griffin introduces this

syllabic section with the sung instructions, “Big Red, take your time and moan it, son.” The syllabic pattern features a distinctive falsetto part—the vocal part that James “Big Red” Anderson had performed in the Quintet since the 1940s. Anderson died in 2005, however, three years before the 2008 concert in question. During the 2008 performance, Griffin cued the song’s syllabic section by introducing the group’s new falsettist to the crowd as “Little Red.”¹⁶⁵ Griffin remarked throughout “Little Red’s” performance, with spoken and sung interjections, that “‘Little Red’ did it just like ‘Big Red’ used to.” Griffin appealed to the audience for approval, and received it. The song’s arrangement and the falsettist’s musical role in the arrangement seemed to be well-known to the hometown crowd, who roared their approval when “Little Red” sang the high notes that Anderson used to sing. If Griffin’s actions at the anniversary are any indication, the Swanee Quintet is continuing to reinvent itself by incorporating new personnel into its pre-existing musical legacy.

Conclusion: *POQ* and the Swanee Quintet

The Swanee Quintet and *POQ* have both demonstrated an ability to reinvent themselves musically and culturally for many decades. Together they have grounded and sustained a vibrant regional gospel quartet tradition. The longevity of *POQ* and the Swanee Quintet is symbiotic. The Quintet began bringing nationally-known gospel quartets to Augusta prior to the advent of *POQ*, laying the groundwork for *POQ*’s future broadcasts and for Augusta’s embrace of the quartet tradition. When *POQ* began broadcasting in the 1950s, it gave the Quintet and their famous colleagues crucial visual exposure to potential audience members. In a cyclical gesture,

¹⁶⁵ At a distance from the stage, it was difficult to tell which of the two new members Griffin was referring to as “Little Red.” It was either Mario Smith or Marciano McKie, both of whom have joined the group in the last few years to replace Johnny Jones and James Anderson. It was most likely McKie, who joined the group in 2006 after Anderson’s death (www.swaneequintet.com).

POQ built on the Quintet's pre-existent legacy to ensure that Augusta became an entrenched stop along the gospel music circuit for many years (Abraham 2007). When asked about the reason Augusta has such a thriving quartet tradition today, current *POQ* host Karlton Howard replied without hesitation that the Swanee Quintet was "no doubt" the reason for this. According to Howard, their professional success and musical influence has heavily impacted and inspired other local quartets (2007c). Earlier in the century, their sound literally defined the musical performances of area quartets who imitated their songs and style (Thomas 2004; K. Howard 2007c). The Quintet performed on the *POQ* as recently as October 2007, demonstrating their continuing relationship with the venerable gospel music media institution (Griffin 2008). The intertwined legacies of these two crucial members of the Augusta quartet tradition have continued to evolve. Their evolution ensures that neither institution exists as an anachronism, but as a dynamic contributor to local gospel music.

CHAPTER 4

“ROCK MY SOUL”: THE LONGEVITY OF LOCAL, NON-PROFESSIONAL QUARTETS ON AND THROUGH *PARADE OF QUARTETS*

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the strategies used by the Swanee Quintet to engage in musical and cultural renewal through their involvement with and performances on *POQ*. The case study of the Quintet focused on a professional group for whom gospel performance was its members' chief source of income for most of the ensemble's history.¹⁶⁶ The Quintet, with its wide traveling radius, national reputation in the gospel industry, and lengthy discography, represents a longtime professional quartet presence on *POQ*. However, the majority of quartets that have appeared on *POQ* in recent decades are either non-professional or semi-professional. Their members have full-time jobs, perform within a limited geographical radius, are known primarily within the southeast, have recorded fewer albums, and typically have not had national media exposure.

The Quintet and several local non-professional quartets with a consistent presence on *POQ* do share the important characteristic of longevity. Several of these other quartets have, like the Swanee Quintet, managed to sustain themselves as viable gospel ensembles since the late 1940s and early 1950s. Even more so than the Swanee Quintet, which ultimately developed a national audience, some local quartets achieved and maintained longevity largely due to regular appearances on *POQ*. The ability of the Brewsteraires and the Abraham Brothers, two local non-

¹⁶⁶ The Quintet's provision of a full-time salary for its members seems to have changed approximately ten years ago. At that time Percy Griffin, the group's lead singer, accepted a part-time job at Elliott and Sons Funeral Home in Augusta in order to supplement his income from gospel performances and record sales (Griffin 2008).

professional quartets, to remain active as performers for multiple decades through their *POQ* involvement is the focus of this chapter.

Why focus on the Brewsteraires and the Abraham Brothers out of the many local, non-professional quartets active on *POQ* and in the Augusta gospel tradition for decades? The musical legacies of these two quartets intersect with one another and with *POQ* in ways that merit detailed attention. Both have been regularly involved with the program since the 1950s, with the Abraham Brothers actually predating *POQ* as performers on WJBF-TV.¹⁶⁷ Both quartets were promoted by Steve Manderson in the 1950s (Manderson 2008). *POQ* personnel and members of the local gospel community often mention the two groups as historically and musically significant in the region's quartet tradition.¹⁶⁸ The two quartets have a musical and social relationship with each other.¹⁶⁹ Finally, both groups exhibit a keen awareness of *POQ*'s role in their development.

The chapter supplements existing scholarship on regional quartet traditions in two ways.¹⁷⁰ First, no quartet ethnography discusses local quartets' involvement with television media. By structuring the historical development of these two quartets around their involvement with a local television show, this chapter presents a new way of examining the evolution of local

¹⁶⁷ The Brewsteraires began performing on *POQ* in 1959 (*Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* 2006). According to the reminiscences of Dock and Willie Abraham, members of the original Abraham Brothers quartet, their group performed on WJBF at 7:30 p.m. on the first day of its initial telecast on Thanksgiving Day, 1953 (Abraham and Abraham 2004). Both groups' early years with *POQ* will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

¹⁶⁸ Don Rhodes and Karlton Howard have mentioned the Abraham Brothers several times in interviews when reminiscing about the early years of *POQ* and of Augusta's quartet tradition. When the Brewsteraires or the Abraham Brothers perform on *POQ*, the announcer or host nearly always remarks on the group's longevity in the area's quartet tradition and on *POQ*.

¹⁶⁹ For example, according to a November 2004 *POQ* episode, the Dynamic Abraham Brothers were one of several groups performing at the Brewsteraires' fifty-third anniversary concert in Johnson, South Carolina. The two quartets also performed at a concert on September 9, 2004 at Augusta's Bethlehem Baptist Church (Faith Calendar, *Augusta Chronicle*). On an April 2005 *POQ* episode, Rev. James Abraham, lead singer of the Dynamic Abraham Brothers, performed several songs with the Brewsteraires. Abraham alternated between singing lead and background at various points during the performance.

¹⁷⁰ For a more detailed review of regional quartet ethnographies, see literature review in Chapter One of Seroff (1985), J.M. Jackson (1988), R. Allen (1991a), and Lornell (1995).

non-professional gospel quartets. Second, none of the existing quartet ethnographies engage the issue of longevity as a central element of the inquiry. Other ethnographies are mostly retrospective, focusing on the “Golden Age” of local quartet traditions in the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁷¹ This chapter focuses on the activities of local quartets not only during the mid-century “Golden Age” but also during subsequent decades. It therefore augments quartet literature by focusing on the musical activities of local non-professional quartets in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.¹⁷²

The chapter’s discussion of the quartets is divided into two sections, each focusing on one of the quartets. The discussion of each quartet is further divided into an overview of the group’s development and involvement with *POQ*, followed by musical and textual analyses. The analyses foreground issues of musical, cultural, and textual renewal and reinvention primarily in selected *POQ* performances of each quartet. The chapter concludes with an assessment of how *POQ* is sustained by the ability of its participants to engage in cultural and musical self-renewal while remaining rooted in distinctively Black religious rhetorical and musical idioms. The chapter’s data and analyses are drawn from footage of the Brewsteraires’ and Abraham Brothers’ interviews and performances on *POQ* from 1995 to 2006, observation of local events, interviews with members of Augusta’s gospel community, internet websites, newspaper articles, and albums. Because more *POQ* footage of the Brewsteraires exists than of the Abraham Brothers, greater analytical attention is given to the Brewsteraires’ performances on the show.

¹⁷¹ A notable exception to this is Ray Allen’s ethnography on gospel quartets in New York City in the late 1980s (1991a). Although he provides historical background for the region’s quartet tradition, his focus is on the tradition as it flourished in the late 1980s.

¹⁷² The most recent study of local non-professional quartets was written by Kip Lornell in 1995, meaning that nearly fifteen years have passed since data on this tradition was gathered and analyzed.

Brewsteraires' History and Involvement with *POQ*

In 2006, the Brewsteraires released a DVD entitled *The Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever*. The DVD features Brewsteraires performances from several *POQ* episodes, all of which appear to date from the 1990s.¹⁷³ The DVD's title, *Yesterday, Today, and Forever*, indicates the group's self-awareness of its own longevity and legacy as a performing ensemble. The disc's content, consisting solely of Brewsteraires' performances on *POQ*, points to the role of the program in forming the quartet's self-awareness of its own legacy. Additionally, the Brewsteraires' 2001 album liner notes dedicate the recording "to the late Steve Mandison [sic], Henry and Karlton Howard and staff for having supported us for many years on WJBF-TV, Channel 6, *Parade of Quartet* [sic], every Sunday morning." The statement further highlights the Brewsteraires' awareness of *POQ*'s role in sustaining the ensemble's career.

There is equal appreciation for, and acknowledgment of, the Brewsteraires' legacy from *POQ*. When *POQ* staff nominated the show for Peabody Awards in the 1980s and 1990s, performances by the Brewsteraires were included on three out of the seven episodes chosen by *POQ* for review by the Awards committee.¹⁷⁴ When *POQ* celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in November 2004 with performances by local and national gospel musicians, the staff selected the Brewsteraires to perform a musical tribute to other local quartets with a longtime presence on the show (*POQ* January 10, 2005). During the tribute, the Brewsteraires performed other quartets' repertoire from several historical periods, imitating each group's distinctive style and the broader musical characteristics of the era being evoked. The selection of the Brewsteraires for the

¹⁷³ No dates are provided in the footage or in the DVD's liner notes. The hairstyles and clothes of performers and hosts on the DVD's *POQ* footage appear to date from the early or mid-1990s. Opening credit sequences and other graphics used in the *POQ* footage on this DVD also date the material from the early or mid-1990s.

¹⁷⁴ *POQ* episodes submitted by the program for Peabody Award consideration on which the Brewsteraires performed were February 2, 1989; January 3, 1993; and December 11, 1994 (Appendix C, 94015 PST Tapes 3 – 4; 94015 PST Tapes 1 – 2; 94015 PST Tape 6).

musical tribute indicates that *POQ* regards them as representative of the area's quartet tradition, and of the show's legacy. Their selection of the group also indicates that the Brewsteraires are considered musically conversant with local quartet history, able to reproduce the style and repertoire of quartets from different eras.

This conversance in, and ability to combine elements of, multiple Black musical idioms is a central feature of the Brewsteraires' *POQ* performances from the early 1990s to 2006. It is probably also a major factor in their longevity as local performers. Their longevity also seems due to a second, related characteristic visible in their *POQ* performances: their incorporation of older lyrics in updated musical contexts. The musical analyses in this section will investigate their use of these two strategies during *POQ* performances from the past fifteen years. The analyses will demonstrate how the group remains musically invigorated after decades as a performing ensemble, and how they in turn invigorate *POQ*. The analyses are preceded by a brief summary of the group's history, personnel, travel radius, relationship to other local quartets, relationship to the national quartet industry, use of digital media and new recording mediums, and involvement with *POQ*.

The Brewsteraires were formed in 1951 in Johnston, South Carolina, although they were not called the "Brewsteraires" for some time.¹⁷⁵ Originally created by five young men, the group's first few decades of existence were marked by frequent personnel turnover. Original members from 1951 were Leonard Andrews, James Edwards, Van Paine, George Paine, and Leonard Nicholson (Brewsteraires Celebrate 2006). Apparently "it took a long time to find just the right name for the new quartet group" (48th Anniversary 1998). The time period indicated by "a long time" is uncertain. At some point, probably by the late 1950s, the group received the name "Brewsteraires" from Mary Nicholson (Ibid.). Nicholson, the wife of original member

¹⁷⁵ Johnston, South Carolina, is approximately thirty miles from Augusta.

Leonard Nicholson, encountered the name “Brewsteraires” during her travels to Tennessee (Ibid.).¹⁷⁶ As is typically the case throughout the group’s history, it is unclear from extant sources which group members sang which vocal part.

Within a few brief years, the group’s original membership underwent what seems to have been almost a complete personnel change. Although the date of this personnel change is uncertain, shortly after its founding in 1951, the Brewsteraires consisted of Freddie Bussey, J. B. Valentine, James Jones, and Wyman Johnston (Ibid.). None of these men were involved in the group’s founding only a short time before. At this point the group still appears to have performed entirely *a cappella*, which was typical during that era of quartet singing. Another major personnel change occurred “three years later” at an unspecified date in the 1950s, when “the Brewsteraires decided to get more involved into their works [sic] and really make a difference” (Ibid.). Membership of the Brewsteraires now consisted of Leonard Andrews, original member James Edwards, James (Jake) Gomeleon, Oscar Moore, lead singer Ernest Edwards, and guitarist Cefus Price (Ibid.).

When guitarist Cefus Price moved to Washington, D.C., sometime in the late 1950s, he was replaced by guitarist John Thomas Calliham (Ibid.). When the Brewsteraires were invited to perform on *POQ* in 1959, Calliham was still their only instrumentalist. However, the *POQ* invitation spurred the group to acquire a second instrumentalist, bass guitarist Charlie Jackson (Ibid.).¹⁷⁷ The group’s connection to *POQ* probably stemmed from their professional relationship

¹⁷⁶ In her travels to Tennessee, Mary Nicholson may have seen the well-known mid-century gospel group called the Brewsteraires. The original Brewsteraires were active in Memphis, Tennessee and associated with gospel composer William Herbert Brewster. For more information on Brewster, see essays in *We’ll Understand It Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers* (1992).

¹⁷⁷ Quartets’ use of only a guitarist and/or a bass guitarist for accompaniment in the early years of *POQ* is confirmed by other older quartet singers (Thomas 2004).

with Steve Manderson, who had promoted them earlier in the 1950s (Manderson 2008).¹⁷⁸ The group continued to experience personnel changes in the 1960s. As in the previous decade, the precise dates of these changes are unknown. Not long after the Brewsteraires began to sing on *POQ* in 1959, lead singer Earnest Edwards left the group. Edwards was temporarily replaced by Joel Walker, who later became the group's permanent lead singer (48th Anniversary 1998). Walker's first stint as lead singer ended when "he and other members knew he was still too young to meet the responsibilities that were required of him" (Ibid.). It is unclear from extant information who replaced Walker as lead singer. Other vocalists including Heyward Griffin, L. H. Washington, Herman Allen and Tom Dukes also sang with the group during the 1960s (Ibid.). Wallace Lee, Calliham's cousin, had begun playing guitar for the group at some point. Lee left the group in the mid-1960s and guitarist George Jones was recruited to fill the vacancy (Ibid.).

In 1967, James Edwards, one of the original five Brewsteraires, died. Edwards was performing with the group again at the time of his death, and his passing heavily impacted remaining group members (Ibid.; Brewsteraires Celebrate 2006). Although it is uncertain, Edwards probably was the lead singer, because Joel Walker joined the group around 1967 as its permanent lead singer. Shortly after 1967, the group's vocal membership began to stabilize. Over the next few years, Walker recruited background vocalists George Mathis and Floyd Washington to join the Brewsteraires. Walker, Mathis, and Washington have performed with the Brewsteraires until the present time (48th Anniversary 1998; *Keeping It Real* 2001; Brewsteraires Celebrate 2006).

Although the precise dates are unknown, sometime after 1967, guitarists Curtis Price and George Marshall joined the group. Both were able to play lead guitar and bass guitar (48th

¹⁷⁸ Unlike many other local and regional quartets, the Brewsteraires do not seem to have broadcast on local radio prior to their involvement with *POQ*.

Anniversary 1998). Multiple men with unspecified musical roles joined and left the group in subsequent years, including Johnny Mathis, Charles and Mason Cumming, Bud Dawkins, and James Burton and his son Calvin Burton (Ibid.). Although the men's musical roles are unclear, it is perhaps notable that some of them were family members (the Cummings and the Burtons) (Ibid.; Brewsteraires Celebrate 2006). These personnel changes appeared to occur throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

In the 1990s, the group's instrumental section stabilized. In 1991, the Brewsteraires acquired bass guitarist Robert Turner, who has remained with the group until the present. Turner joined the Brewsteraires after performing with various church choirs for many years (Brewsteraires Celebrate 2006). As *POQ* footage from the early 1990s indicates, drummer Patrick Burton and lead guitarist Haywood Weaver joined the group shortly after Turner. Burton and Weaver have also remained with the group until the present (*Keeping It Real* 2001; Brewsteraires Celebrate 2006). Although Burton, Weaver, and Turner are listed as instrumentalists in album liner notes, they also sing during *POQ* performances (*Keeping It Real* 2001).¹⁷⁹

Throughout their history, the Brewsteraires have traveled mostly within a hundred miles of their hometown of Johnston, South Carolina.¹⁸⁰ During the years that Steve Manderson promoted them, in the 1950s and possibly the 1960s, the Brewsteraires were part of a complex regional system of deploying Black gospel quartets to perform in different geographical areas. Manderson and other promoters based in Augusta would place three quartets in a "unit," then

¹⁷⁹ Lead guitarist Haywood Weaver also performed on *POQ* in the mid-1990s with a mixed-gender family quartet, Mamma and the Weaver Brothers. According to an interview with the group on *POQ* on March 17, 1996, Mamma and the Weaver Brothers included Haywood Weaver playing lead guitar and singing backup; his unnamed wife singing lead; and their two young sons playing bass guitar and drums (Appendix C, #47).

¹⁸⁰ Walker states in discussing the group's involvement with *POQ* prior to 1995 that the Brewsteraires "went maybe a 100-mile radius, or maybe a little bit more than that, and everywhere you went, they would talk about the *POQ*" (2007).

book each unit to perform in a different area of Georgia or South Carolina. The system ensured efficient dispersion of performers across a large radius every weekend.¹⁸¹ As gospel quartets have decreased in popularity, the “unit” system was discontinued. The Brewsteraires currently perform approximately fifty concerts per year, mostly within a few hours of Johnston, South Carolina (Brewsteraires Celebrate 2006).

As is typical for a local non-professional quartet, the Brewsteraires have historically performed on concerts with other local singing groups. The venues for these concerts range from civic venues like the Mirror Auditorium in Johnston, South Carolina, to local churches, many of them Baptist.¹⁸² On rare occasions, the Brewsteraires have performed on concerts with nationally-known gospel artists such as the Mighty Clouds of Joy and the Caravans, both of whom have toured in Augusta (48th Anniversary 1998).¹⁸³ The Brewsteraires’ musical relationships with well-known performers included a *POQ* appearance with soul singer and Augusta resident James Brown, who frequently watched the group on *POQ*. During a *POQ* episode on which Brown and the group performed, he told host Karlton Howard that he “liked their spunk, ‘cause it kinda goes with the way I perform.” Brown was so impressed with the group’s talent that he added, “I expect to see this group go all over the world” (*The Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* 2006).

Although fewer concerts by nationally-known quartets are now performed in the Augusta area compared to earlier years, the Brewsteraires still perform occasionally with famous quartets.

¹⁸¹ The unit system has been discussed in considerable detail by Joe Walker (2007) and by other quartet singers active with Manderson in the 1950s and 1960s (Fryer, Thomas, and Williams 2004; Thomas 2004). Later the units became known as “packages” (Ibid.).

¹⁸² A typical recent local performance by the Brewsteraires was an appearance with the local Friendly Five quartet at Augusta’s Antioch Baptist Church on July 11, 1998 (Brewsteraires and the Friendly Five 1998).

¹⁸³ For evidence of their appearances with well-known gospel groups, see a 1985 *Augusta Chronicle* advertisement of a concert by nationally-known gospel quartets the Williams Brothers, the Mighty Clouds of Joy, Willie Banks and the Messengers, and the Jackson Southernaires. The Brewsteraires were the only Augusta-area group to be featured on this concert, according to the advertisement (Gospel Music Groups 1985).

On January 10, 2009, they were billed to perform at the seventh anniversary of Rev. Billy Smith and the Radio Angels (also from the Brewsteraires' hometown of Johnston, South Carolina).

Other nationally-known gospel quartets performing on the program included Doc McKenzie and the Hi-Lites, Darrell McFadden and the Disciples, and the Swanee Quintet

(http://www.reunionministry.com/dyn/gospel_concerts.php).

The Brewsteraires' methods of disseminating their music, information about their historical legacy, and concert publicity have changed along with the changing music industry.

Like many other non-professional and professional quartets, the group now maintains a website with data about their history, personnel, and contact information

(<http://scgospelquartet.com/Brewsteraires.html>). As of mid-November 2008, at least one video of the group performing at an outdoor concert was available for streaming on YouTube. The video included graphics that referenced the Brewsteraires' fifty-four years as an ensemble, drawing attention to their legacy in the digital medium of cyberspace

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IACGXnq-7aY>). Currently the Brewsteraires do not have a MySpace page, unlike many other current quartets.

In addition to maintaining an internet presence, recently the group made recordings for the first time in its history. These recordings include a CD in 2001 (*Keeping It Real*; cover pictured in Figure 4.1) and a DVD in 2006 (*Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever*). The group also appeared on a DVD compilation of South Carolina gospel quartets in 2005

(<http://www.soteriadistribution.net/retail/music/scgqvvolume1.html>).

Despite changes in personnel, the quartet industry, and mass media since the group was founded in the 1950s, *POQ* has been an unbroken thread in the group's development. From 1959 to approximately 1995, the Brewsteraires performed on *POQ* on a weekly basis (*Keeping It Real*

liner notes 2001). According to the Brewsteraires' current lead singer Joel Walker, the group sang two or three songs on the program every Sunday before *POQ* began to pre-record its broadcasts early in 1995 (2007). The group's weekly involvement with the show lasted approximately thirty-five years—a stunning period of consecutive, regular performances (Ibid.).



Figure 4.1: Brewsteraires Album Cover, *Keeping It Real*.

The Brewsteraires' frequent performances on the show for over three decades ensured their regional popularity. According to Walker, at Sunday afternoon concerts during these years, audience members eagerly discussed the group's performance on that morning's episode of *POQ*. Audience excitement about the group's television broadcasts was such that "you would think you was Elvis Presley or James Brown, you know, the way people would respond to you" (2007). Viewers reacted to the Brewsteraires' *POQ* performances with such detailed feedback that the group could gauge the effectiveness of its repertoire and style from viewers' comments.

According to Walker, “When you get back home during the week [after performing on *POQ*], people would tell you that whether they liked it or not, and then you just continued doing what you feel like the people wanted to hear” (Ibid.).

No footage of the Brewsteraires on *POQ* prior to the early 1990s seems to have survived. Since the Brewsteraires did not make any recordings until 2001, it is difficult to establish their precise musical style and repertoire on *POQ* prior to the 1990s. When asked about the selection process and originality of repertoire that the group performed on *POQ* in the earlier years, Walker did not offer details about songs or styles. Instead, he stated that “most of the time, what we did, we--my group sung our own arrangement of whatever we did, and maybe it was even...our own songs. We never did really sing too much of anybody else’s songs” (2007). One piece of data about their musical style on *POQ* prior to the 1990s has survived. Apparently part of the group’s musical popularity on *POQ* in earlier decades was due to a local singer named Nathan White. While not a regular performer with the group, White often sang with them on *POQ*. White was regarded by the local gospel community as a talented, charismatic singer whose frequent *POQ* performances with the Brewsteraires were musically memorable.¹⁸⁴ Even recollections about White, however, do not include specific detail on the Brewsteraires’ musical style or repertoire in earlier decades.

After 1995, the group’s involvement with *POQ* has been limited to occasional performances due to the inconvenience of weeknight tapings. Walker estimates they currently sing “a couple of times a year” on *POQ* (2007.). Fortunately the shift to a pre-recorded format

¹⁸⁴ According to the Brewsteraires’ 48th Anniversary Souvenir Booklet, “[they were] often joined on Sunday Morning [*POQ* performances] by Brother Nathan White. Brother White enjoyed the group so much that he often would take part in their performance.” Current *POQ* co-host and owner of Augusta’s Pyramid Records, Robert “Flash” Gordon, reminisced with the Brewsteraires on the January 10, 2005, *POQ* episode about White’s regular appearances with the group and his prowess as a singer (Appendix C, #28). Other veteran quartet singers from the Augusta area recall White’s longtime association with the Brewsteraires and with *POQ*. Their remarks also indicate that White was not a regular member of the group (Fryer, Thomas, and Williams 2004).

ensured that footage of Brewsteraires performances now exists. Currently, twelve episodes containing Brewsteraires performances have been identified in the *POQ* collection in the Media Archives. The footage ranges from the early 1990s (day, month, and year unspecified) to 2006. Some of the footage is undated. Despite the infrequency of their appearances on *POQ* after 1995, the Brewsteraires are still regarded as a significant part of the program's legacy, as described earlier in this chapter.

Musical Analysis of Brewsteraires' Performances on *POQ*

Extant footage of the Brewsteraires on *POQ* from the early 1990s to 2006 reveals a quartet deeply-rooted in musical, textual, theological, and rhetorical practices idiomatic to Black sacred song. At the same time, the footage reveals a group able to evolve beyond these roots in unique ways. Using several samples of this footage, the following analyses will engage with this tension between musical and cultural roots and reinvention. The analyses focus on three dimensions of this multifaceted tension present in the Brewsteraires' performances: 1) their juxtaposition of old texts with newer musical styles; 2) their borrowing from Black secular genres dominant at different periods in American popular music; and 3) their familiarity with discrete musical styles dating from different eras of the gospel quartet tradition. These three dimensions are interrelated and are often present on multiple layers within a single performance, as the following analyses will demonstrate.

During a conversation with lead singer Joel Walker about whether the Brewsteraires' musical style had changed over the years, Walker stated:

Well, the style hasn't changed a whole lot. The only thing, sometimes you have to do things a little bit different. [His wife Mary inserts "It's more variety."]. Yeah, it's more variety you have to do, because different people like different kinds of music. [Allen: In terms of different types of songs?] Yeah, different types of

songs—you're really singing pretty much the same song, but you have to arrange them a little different, because, you know, some people like this pop gospel, which I don't—but, you know, that's not me *but you have to kind of go along with the flow if you're going to stay in the thing*, cause like I said, my group been singing—we'll celebrate fifty-six years this year (2007, emphasis mine).

Walker's assertion that the group is "singing pretty much the same song" over time is supported by two performances the group gave on *POQ*, spaced approximately ten years apart. In both performances, the group sang a piece entitled "Old Ship of Zion." Although both performances shared similar thematic and theological ideas, their musical arrangements and actual lyrics varied greatly. The following analysis demonstrates how the Brewsteraires used the same theological and linguistic trope, the "Old Ship of Zion," in two performances that engaged with distinctively Black musical idioms in vastly different ways.

The title "Old Ship of Zion" evokes deep cultural and historical resonance in Black Christian circles. Several pieces by this title exist in Black sacred song, stretching from antebellum spirituals to late nineteenth-century gospel compositions. Many variants of "Old Ship of Zion" appear in collections of spirituals in the nineteenth and twentieth century.¹⁸⁵ Dena Epstein states that a variant of "Old Ship of Zion," a performance of which was described in Maryland in 1850, marks the first historical documentation of a spiritual (2003, 223). The central refrain of the spiritual is the same in different variants collected in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although the verses may vary:

Refrain

'Tis the old ship of Zion.
'Tis the old ship of Zion.
'Tis the old ship of Zion.
Get on board—get on board.

¹⁸⁵ Erskine Peters' collection of spirituals, which collates the lyrics of nineteenth- and twentieth-century collections of spirituals, includes three variants of "Old Ship of Zion" (1993, 185 – 6).

In the twentieth century, the spiritual “Old Ship of Zion” was printed in standard notation in the hymnals of several Black denominations and some predominantly white denominations.¹⁸⁶ In 1950, Black gospel composer Thomas Dorsey wrote a gospel song entitled “Old Ship of Zion.” Dorsey’s text bore little lyrical relationship to the spiritual(s) of the same title. Additionally, his melody differs from the melody used in notated hymnal versions of the piece. However, Dorsey’s central motif of a ship’s journey from trouble to safety recapitulates the theme of the spiritual and draws on the spiritual’s historical cachet by using its title. By using the title of the old spiritual, Dorsey was evoking over a century’s worth of collective memory in Black performers and audiences. Both Dorsey’s song and the old spiritual/hymn by the same title have been recorded multiple times by well-known Black gospel performers in the twentieth century. The song is so central in Black religious history that religion scholar Walter Pitts used the title in his book about Black Baptist ritual in the Americas, *Old Ship of Zion: The Afro-Baptist Ritual in the African Diaspora* (1996).

The first Brewsteraires performance of “Old Ship of Zion” occurred on *POQ* in the early 1990s. Soul singer James Brown sang lead throughout most of the piece, and the Brewsteraires sang backup for him.¹⁸⁷ According to Walker, it was Brown who suggested the song, and the Brewsteraires performed it with him on that morning’s episode without prior rehearsal (2007). On this episode, James Brown and the Brewsteraires perform the refrain of “Old Ship of Zion” found in variants of the antebellum spiritual. Brown and the group re-interpret the refrain of the old spiritual as a sixteen-bar blues in a minor mode.¹⁸⁸ In many respects, with different lyrics, the

¹⁸⁶ Black hymnals which include some variant of the spiritual are the *New National Baptist Hymnal* (2002, 311) and the *African American Heritage Hymnal* (2003, 349). Among predominantly white denominational hymnals that include the spiritual is the United Methodist Church’s hymnal (1989, 345).

¹⁸⁷ This 1990s footage of Brown and the Brewsteraires is from the DVD *Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* (2006).

¹⁸⁸ The *African American Heritage Hymnal* notates the spiritual/hymn “Old Ship of Zion” in a major mode, and it is typically performed in a major mode on commercial gospel recordings. The melodic contour of the

performance could “pass” as a secular blues. The refrains and verses use the basic harmonic scheme of the sixteen-bar blues, and the refrain uses the (aab) text format common in twelve and sixteen-bar blues. These markers of the blues as seen in the refrain are indicated with lyrics and chord symbols below:¹⁸⁹

‘Tis the old ship of Zion;
i
‘Tis the old ship of Zion.
iv I
Step on board if you wanna see Jesus, and follow me.
i VI V/V V i

In addition to the harmonic and textual schema, both of which derive from the blues, the guitarist's playing style also derives from the blues.¹⁹⁰ Consisting of deep pitch-bending on an electric guitar, the guitarist's performance is reminiscent of the Delta blues style after it was transformed through amplification in Chicago in the 1940s.¹⁹¹ Much like its role in many secular blues recordings, the guitar here assumes the role of "respondent" in a call-and-response pattern with the lead vocalists. James Brown and Joel Walker take turns singing lead on the piece, and the guitar responds by playing blues-based riffs at the ends of their vocal phrases.

Brown/Brewster's performance of "Old Ship" roughly resembles the contour of the notated version found in most hymnals.

¹⁸⁹ See Appendix G for a full verbal transcription of this rendition of “Old Ship of Zion.” Note that the verse uses a four-line format instead of the three-line blues format used in the refrain. The variants of “Old Ship of Zion” given in Peters’ lyrical collection all have a four-line structure (1993, 185 – 6). According to Peters, four-line verses were typical for the spirituals (*Ibid.*, preface).

¹⁹⁰ The name of the lead guitarist playing on “Old Ship of Zion” is unknown.

¹⁹¹ The use of electric guitar in the blues was developing concurrently in the West Coast and the South in the 1940s and 1950s (Evans 2006, 94). The Brewsteraires' guitarist's style, however, is more reminiscent of Southern guitarists, particularly Mississippians Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. Waters and Wolf migrated to Chicago and performed in small electric blues combos. The Brewsteraires' guitarist was also conversant with other blues subgenres, as demonstrated on a June 1997 *POQ* episode (Appendix C, #31). During a performance of "Everywhere I Go," the guitarist plays throughout the texture, instead of only at the ends of vocalists' phrases, in a jump-blues style. His guitar line works contrapuntally against a boogie-woogie bassline in a modified twelve-bar blues form.

Although the blues influence is foregrounded in the harmonic scheme, text structure, and guitar style, other musical components of the piece derive from Black sacred song.¹⁹² For instance, the synthesizer's use of the Hammond B-3 organ setting immediately evokes the soundscape of Black worship.¹⁹³ In fact, the Hammond "organ" and the blues guitar play an instrumental prelude while James Brown provides a spoken introduction to the song. Thus these highly evocative, culturally resonant instrumental timbres are the first heard in the performance. The 12/8 or "gospel" meter also immediately evokes Black sacred music. According to Horace Boyer, because of its prevalence in gospel music "since 1950, the so-called gospel meter has been 12/8" (1992, 156). The lyrical focus on ultimate deliverance ("it has landed many a thousand") roots the performances in the textual and theological conventions of Black gospel song. During the second iteration of the refrain, the background singers sing a repeated ostinato using the text, "Old ship of Zion." The ostinato creates a foil for Brown's and then Walker's performance as lead singers. This background ostinato is typical for gospel quartets—another sign of the Black sacred song traditions that inform this hybridized performance.¹⁹⁴

Sacred and secular frameworks intersect graphically in the Brown/Brewsteraires performances of "Old Ship of Zion." Sung by a globally-known innovator of popular music in the twentieth century, this "sacred blues" evokes the longstanding tension between the spirituals

¹⁹² The cognitive and cultural validity of the "sacred/secular" binary distinction in Black musical genres and idioms has been discussed by many scholars of Black music and culture. See, for example, discussions in Floyd (1995), Stuckey (1997), Murray (2000), and Ramsey (2003). I believe that commercial market forces in the music industry, combined with music journalism, coalesce to create categories and sub-categories of Black music that many listeners would recognize and define as chiefly secular (for example, funk, disco, and rap) or predominantly sacred (such as gospel or spirituals). Therefore analyses and discussions that appeal to the binary division of "sacred" and "secular" musical elements and genres can, I believe, have semantic meaning and importance for many readers.

¹⁹³ The Hammond organ, an electronic keyboard instrument, was marketed beginning in 1935 by the Hammond Company in Chicago. The instrument soon came to be associated with church music. According to Davies, "A feature of most Hammond organs is the external Leslie loudspeaker, which affects the sound like a tremulant stop on a pipe organ" (2001, 738). This distinctive timbre has been a central part of music in many Black churches since the late 1930s.

¹⁹⁴ Like many gospel performances, this rendition of "Old Ship of Zion" actually begins with a statement of the refrain. Typically this would be followed with the first verse, but in this case the Brewsteraires essentially repeat the refrain for the entirety of the performance.

and the blues. The coexistence and symbiotic relationship of the two genres stretches back to the very roots of Black music-making in North America.¹⁹⁵ The rendition of the song prompted an unusual response from *POQ* host Henry Howard. Immediately after the performance of “Old Ship of Zion,” Howard said to Brown, “the one you just did, that’s got a good feeling—that’s downhome.” Howard also stated that other *POQ* guests observing the performance from the edge of the studio set were so moved by “Old Ship of Zion” that they wanted to join Brown and the Brewsteraires in the musical performance. (Upon hearing this, Brown enthusiastically cried, “Tell them to come on!”)

The observers Howard mentioned included Elder Percy Griffin (lead singer of the Swanee Quintet), Howard himself (a former gospel singer in the Spirits of Harmony quartet), Reverend Simmons (a local pastor), and an unnamed Black attorney. Most of these observers were deeply involved in Black sacred song and religious community. Their enthusiastic response indicates that Brown and the Brewsteraires successfully evoked an impulse towards communal musical and religious participation. The resulting “downhome feeling” coalesced from the combination of traditional modes of Black musical performance (the blues and “church” elements) and a text whose central trope of a journey towards deliverance is foundational in Black sacred song.

¹⁹⁵ A number of authors have observed conceptual and musical links between the blues and Black spirituals (and, later in history, gospel). Black theologian James Cone’s *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (1991) describes the symbiosis between the two genres in Black cultural expression. Cone theorizes that both genres are central to understanding Black musical, theological, and philosophical response to radical white oppression. The *Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music* is organized around the premise that “there was no clear dividing line between the blues and gospel in the lives of (some of) their exponents” (Moore 2002, 1). Floyd names the ring shout as the foundational musical and cultural impulse for both sacred and secular Black musics, listing the spirituals and the blues specifically. Floyd argues that a binary division of “sacred and secular” cultural expression was unknown in the slaves’ worldview (1995, 6). In the twentieth century, gospel composer Thomas Dorsey explicitly linked musical devices from the blues with Black sacred music in his gospel compositions. His pieces from the 1930s and 1940s represent a distinctive historical merging point between blues and gospel. For a detailed discussion of this binary tension in Dorsey’s life and music, and in gospel music in general, see Michael Harris’ *The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church* (1992).

Approximately ten years later, during the January 10, 2005, episode of *POQ*, the Brewsteraires performed a vastly different song with the same title and the same central theme (Appendix C, #28).¹⁹⁶ The composer is unknown to me. As seen by comparing Appendix G with Appendix H, the text has little in common with variants of the old spiritual by the same title. It is also not Thomas Dorsey's gospel composition by the same name. The musical setting is drastically different from the blues setting performed by Brown and the Brewsteraires a decade earlier. The harmonic language is much more contemporary; many chords have added sevenths, ninths, and elevenths. The melodic and harmonic elements sung and played by the Brewsteraires eschew the blues scale entirely and use only the diatonic major scale. For example, the same guitarist that performed in a Delta/Chicago blues style now plays a diatonic ostinato throughout most of the verses and refrains. The guitar ostinato is transcribed in Figure 4.2, along with a reduction of the synthesizer's harmonic motion to indicate the diatonic nature of the piece.



Figure 4.2: “Old Ship of Zion,” Guitar Ostinato and Harmonic Reduction of Synthesizer.

Figure 4.2 shows that the guitar's ostinato consists entirely of pitches from the diatonic major collection. The pitches are played without bending, sliding, or other techniques used by the Brewsteraires' guitarist in the blues version of “Old Ship.” The avoidance of blue notes, bent

¹⁹⁶ See Appendix H for a transcription of these lyrics.

pitches, and call-and-response motifs between singers and guitarist at once “updates” the musical setting and eliminates the “downhome” ethos projected in the earlier version of “Old Ship.”

Unlike the earlier rendition of “Old Ship of Zion,” the instrumentation in the second version does not clearly evoke discrete Black secular or sacred musical idioms. The synthesizer is set on a shimmering bell-like setting—an audibly synthetic timbre rather than a timbre meant to imitate an older or more traditional instrument. Timbrally, the vocalists approximate smooth soul music more than raw gospel music. Lead singer Walker avoids the growling timbre, raspy effects, and range extremes that he frequently uses in other *POQ* performances. He employs a smooth, lyrical timbre until the vamp at the very end of the song, when he and the background singers volley back and forth the single word “leaving.”

Although a vamp is present, it differs from most of the Brewsteraires’ vamps and from a standard quartet vamp in many respects. The harmonic structure of the vamp sounds more like contemporary soul music than like traditional gospel music. It uses the same chord progression employed in the refrain and verses, thus avoiding the “groove” feeling that occurs in typical gospel vamps that feature harmonic stasis (see Figure 4.2 for this chord progression). In contrast, typical vamps by the Brewsteraires reduce the harmonic motion to a single chord to generate emotional intensity through variation and repetition of text and small melodic cells. The vamp, and the song in general, evokes mellow, polished soul music rather than a raw or hard-edged traditional gospel song.

Theologically, the central theme from the Brewsteraires’ early-1990s version of the “Old Ship of Zion” remains at the core of the 2005 performance. The metaphorical ship still takes believers “across the Jordan river” to heaven. The old journey metaphor is linguistically updated, however, with reference to new transportation technology. The refrain admonishes that “you

can't get to heaven by riding on an *airplane*; you can't get to heaven by riding on a *train*" (emphasis mine). Significantly, these new modes of transportation are presented as a foil to the tested and reliable means of transport by the "old ship." When the lyrics state "you can't get there by an airplane," the message is conveyed that the old ship of Zion reliably ferries its passengers across the river of death to heaven. Other means of transport, no matter how newfangled and flashy, will fail. Ironically, a lyric that privileges traditional imagery—the "old ship of Zion"—is embedded in a contemporary musical setting. Considered side-by-side with the blues rendition of "Old Ship of Zion," this second version demonstrates the ability of the Brewsteraires to harness multiples musical styles and devices to convey a central and unchanging theological message.

An analysis of "Somebody Prayed for Me," performed on *POQ* in the early 1990s, demonstrates the Brewsteraires' ability to combine elements of another distinctly secular music—funk—with musical elements of the Black church tradition.¹⁹⁷ According to David Brackett, characteristics of funk include

syncopated interlocking rhythm patterns based on straight quaver and semiquaver subdivisions, a vocal style drawn from soul music, extended vamps based on a single and often complex harmony...and strong emphasis on the bass line (2001, 348).

The musical elements Brackett identifies permeate "Somebody Prayed for Me." The influence of funk is immediately evident in the musical roles of the instruments. The percussionist subdivides the beat into Brackett's "straight quaver and semiquaver" patterns rather than into the swinging triple-division associated with gospel music.¹⁹⁸ The same guitarist who played in a blues style on the "Old Ship of Zion" demonstrates his musical versatility again. Instead of punctuating the

¹⁹⁷ This performance is included on the DVD *The Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* (2006).

¹⁹⁸ See Boyer's remark, quoted earlier, on the triplet subdivision so common in gospel music. For a more detailed discussion and analysis of the duple rhythmic subdivision associated with funk, see Stewart's "Funky Drummer: New Orleans, James Brown, and the Rhythmic Transformation of American Popular Music" (2000).

ends of phrases in order to create call-and-response patterns with other group members, he plays lengthy lines active throughout entire vocal phrases. Combined with the continual rhythmic activity of the other instruments, the result is the layered polyphony achieved in funk music when instruments play repetitive, interlocking rhythmic cells.

The synthesizer in this piece is the pivotal instrument in which funk timbres and styles merge with timbres that evoke Black sacred music. This is accomplished when the unnamed keyboardist alternates between using the synthesizer's Hammond B-3 organ setting (evoking the sounds of church) and the horn setting (mimicking the horn section seminal in funk music since its inception). When the keyboardist uses the horn setting, he plays repetitive rhythmic cells, just as a "live" horn section would in a funk group. The cells are typically repeated throughout the duration of vocalists' phrases, rather than simply responding to them at the ends of phrases in a call-and-response pattern. At times the keyboardist changes timbral settings mid-phrase, starting a phrase with the sound of the Hammond organ and ending it with the sound of the funky horns. The keyboardist's rapid fluctuation between settings and styles encapsulates in miniature the Brewsteraires' mastery of multiple musical styles and genres drawn from sacred and secular Black idioms.

The vamp constitutes another critical juncture of secular and sacred expression in the piece. In the vamp section, the instruments foreground elements of funk, while the vocalists draw more clearly on Black sacred song. During the vamp, which consists of riffs and elaborations on the tonic, the interlocking rhythmic cells of the instruments achieve a polyrhythmic "groove" effect. The harmonic stasis of the vamp, prolonged even by the Brewsteraires' standards, prominently foregrounds the aural parallels to funk music. As is the case with much gospel music, this rendition's vamp reduces harmonic motion to a single chord, the tonic, over which

the instruments riff. Gospel's musical strategy for creating rhythmic impetus is virtually inseparable from funk's generation of rhythmic interest against a static harmonic background. The primacy of the instruments in this performance of "Somebody Prayed for Me" is unusual for *POQ* performances by any group. The instruments' sustained and intense rhythmic activity during the vamp culminates in an extended guitar solo towards the end of the piece during which the vocalists are silent.¹⁹⁹ The unusual instrumental solo towards the end of the vamp is cued by Walker's singing the words, "I come this morning to tell you, ain't no harm in playing music—Jesus is good all the time." To realize that Walker is cueing the instrumentalists with this phrase, one must understand that in gospel terminology, "music" refers to only "instrumental music," and the term "musicians" refers only to "instrumentalists." Vocalists are referred to in the gospel community as "singers" and vocal performance as "singing," and the terms are very distinct from the "music" which is played by "musicians." Walker's verbal cue signifies his approval of instrumental virtuosity used for the purposes of religious expression.

At the same time that the instrumentalists and harmonic stasis draw heavily on funk influences, vocalists employ elements of a distinctly sacred tradition. A younger lead singer joins Walker on the vamp and the two men exchange call-and-response patterns while the background singers repeat their ostinato. This is an example of the "swing lead" technique prominent in quartet singing since the 1950s. In a textually significant moment during the vamp, lead singer Walker departs from the lyrics proper of "Somebody Prayed for Me" to quote the first verse of an old gospel song, "Jesus Is on the Mainline." The refrain of "Jesus Is on the Mainline" is:

Jesus is on the mainline, tell Him what you want.
Jesus is on the mainline, tell Him what you want.

¹⁹⁹ The episode was filmed during *POQ*'s tenure as a live broadcast, when the program was allotted much more airtime than it was after the switch to pre-recording in 1995. The availability of more broadcast time might account for why there was time for an extended instrumental solo.

Jesus is on the mainline, tell Him what you want.
Call Him up, and tell Him what you want.²⁰⁰

During this part of the vamp, the background singers begin sing an ostinato based on text from the final line of the refrain of “Jesus Is on the Mainline.” This background ostinato, repeated multiple times, is transcribed in Figure 4.3.

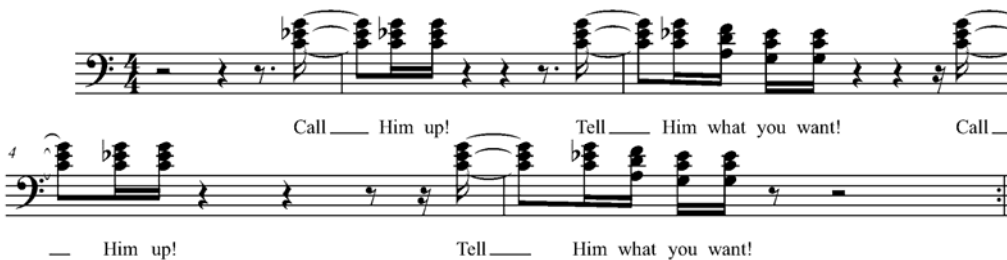


Figure 4.3: “Somebody Prayed for Me,” Vamp, Background Singers.

Figure 4.3 demonstrates how the Brewsteraires musically updated a fragment of old text in the vamp. “Call Him up! Tell Him what you want!” is sung in parallel chord inversions without a functional bassline. This is a more contemporary approach to voice-leading than earlier gospel quartets that featured a bass singer singing the roots of the chords. Once again, the Brewsteraires’ use of an old, familiar text in the Black sacred song repertoire is strikingly juxtaposed with modern musical elements. The old text of “Jesus Is on the Mainline” becomes the textual centerpiece of the vamp, which lasts for several minutes. Neither Walker nor the background singers ever return to the original lyrics of “Somebody Prayed for Me.”

Aside from quoting “Jesus Is on the Mainline,” another lyrical link to the Black sacred song tradition occurs in the vamp when Walker sings that “prayer was good enough for my

²⁰⁰ Although the song’s composer is unknown, “Jesus Is on the Mainline” has been recorded by numerous Black and white gospel musicians for many decades.

mother, and prayer is good enough for me.” The phrase is drawn from the spiritual “Old-Time Religion,” and evokes the shadow of religious ancestors whose faith has been inherited, embraced, and celebrated.²⁰¹ As in the blues version of “Old Ship of Zion,” the Brewsteraires once again meld elements of secular, popular style—funk—with elements of traditional gospel music.²⁰² The performance exemplifies why James Brown, a progenitor of funk, enjoyed the Brewsteraires’ performances, perceiving an affinity between their “spunky” performing style and his own (*The Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* 2006).

In addition to using elements of blues and funk, in some performances the Brewsteraires fuse elements of early rhythm-and-blues or rock-and-roll with practices prominent in the quartet tradition. Both of these secular genres originated with Black musicians.²⁰³ The following analysis demonstrates the group’s application of these two styles to lyrics written by the prominent white gospel composer, Bill Gaither. The analysis also focuses on how the Brewsteraires used idiomatic Black performance practices to musically and textually personalize and even recreate Gaither’s composition.

In an April 2005 episode of *POQ*, the group performed their arrangement of Gaither’s 1971 gospel composition, “Because He Lives” (Appendix C, #59).²⁰⁴ The refrain of Gaither’s

²⁰¹ References to mothers and their religious influence and legacy are manifold in gospel music (Boyer 2000, 200 – 201).

²⁰² Like blues, funk and gospel obviously have a complex cultural, historical, and musical relationship that cannot be fully discussed here. The characteristics named by Brackett—interlocking rhythmic patterns, soul-influenced vocal styles, and the use of repetition over harmonic stasis in order to generate energy—derive from Black sacred expression in the first place.

²⁰³ Aural distinctions between rhythm-and-blues and early rock-and-roll in the late 1940s and early 1950s are quite difficult to make. For a discussion of the marketing categories designated by these terms, as well as the genres and subgenres associated with them, see Witmer and Marks’ article “Rhythm-and-Blues” in the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (1986, 36 – 7).

²⁰⁴ Gaither’s texts are composed with matching tunes, unlike many older hymn texts which often were composed independently of a musical setting and were meant to be paired with any tune that fit the poem’s metrical pattern. “Because He Lives” can be found in many hymnals, such as *The Celebration Hymnal: Songs and Hymns for Worship* (1997, 358) and the *African American Heritage Hymnal* (2003, 281).

composition, the text of which the Brewsteraires used in their performance, is included in the *African American Heritage Hymnal* (Batastini 2003). The refrain is printed in Figure 4.4.

HIS RESURRECTION JESUS CHRIST

Be-cause He lives I can face to - mor - row,

Be-cause He lives all fear is gone;

Be-cause I know He holds the fu - ture.

And life is worth the liv-ing just be-cause He lives.

Last time to Coda D.C.

Figure 4.4: “Because He Lives,” Refrain, *African American Heritage Hymnal*.

The intersection of white gospel composition practices with Black gospel performance practice highlighted in the performance. For one thing, the group’s arrangement of Gaither’s song uses only the composer’s refrain and first verse (see Figure 4.4 for text of refrain). The Brewsteraires intersperse their own verses with Gaither’s original first verse and refrain. In addition to personalizing Gaither’s text with their own additions, they also personalize Gaither’s *musical* setting. Instead of singing Gaither’s melody as notated in standard hymnal versions of the piece,

they create a new melody based on the same harmonic progression that underlies Gaither's original melody.²⁰⁵

Further evidence of the group's application of a distinctly Black performance practice to Gaither's composition is in their addition of a vamp, a section that Gaither did not compose. The vamp exhibits standard quartet performance practice in several regards: the reduction of harmonic motion to the tonic with passing motions to the subdominant; the repetition of a background ostinato on a shortened phrase derived from the text proper ("because He lives"); the secondary vamp ostinato on another shortened phrase derived from the text proper ("He lives in me"); and the use of a second lead singer in addition to Walker to create another layer of call-and-response motifs.²⁰⁶

Several elements of the performance were reminiscent of R&B groups of the early 1950s. These included the simple harmonic palette of the tonic, subdominant, dominant, and a few secondary dominants; uptempo shuffle rhythms; the use of only drums and the country-influenced guitar; and the echo effect used by the backup singers on the refrain.

The previous three analyses illustrate the group's ability to aurally reference a wide palette of secular musical styles within the framework of Black sacred song. The fourth analysis demonstrates the Brewsteraires' mastery of musical styles and repertoire prominent at various periods in Augusta's long quartet tradition. This fourth analysis illustrates their familiarity with their own localized sacred musical traditions. As stated earlier, the Brewsteraires were the only

²⁰⁵ This practice is somewhat analogous to bebop jazz musicians' creation of a new tune over chord progressions taken from a jazz standard.

²⁰⁶ The second lead singer in this case is not a member of the Brewsteraires. Instead, Rev. James Abraham, lead singer of the Dynamic New Abraham Brothers, sang lead on several songs with the Brewsteraires during this *POQ* episode. During the performance of "Because He Lives," Abraham began by singing in the background; during the vamp, he switched places with Walker and completed the song as the lead singer. Towards the end of the vamp, Abraham looks over his shoulder towards Joe Walker and sings the phrase, "Joe, He lives in me." The phrase, and the performance as a whole, encapsulates the intersection of another kind of musical community on the program: personnel from two different local quartets, with distinctive performing styles and historical legacies in the Augusta area.

group chosen by *POQ* staff to perform a musical tribute to local quartets at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of *POQ* in November 2004. The tribute consisted of the Brewsteraires' imitations of local quartets' signature styles and repertoires by performing other groups' theme songs in the style of that group. The Brewsteraires' mastery of the repertory and styles of these diverse groups indicates their central position in the local quartet tradition, their awareness of local quartet history, and their ability to imitate a plurality of sacred musical styles.²⁰⁷

Although footage from *POQ*'s 2004 anniversary celebration is not available, the Brewsteraires performed two songs from the tribute on the January 10, 2005, episode of *POQ* (Appendix C, #28). The first, "Jesus, He's a Waymaker," was the theme song of the Veteran Harmonizers, a quartet active in the Augusta area in the 1950s and 1960s. The song will be the focus of this analysis. The Brewsteraires' rendition of the song shows their familiarity with the quartet style predominant in the 1950s, particularly in instrumentation, harmonic language, and texture. The piece is sung nearly *a cappella* with only a lightly-strummed and nearly-inaudible guitar, as was typical for mid-twentieth-century quartets. The group's percussionist, bass guitarist, and keyboardist stand by silently on the studio set during this song. As demonstrated in the three previous analyses, the Brewsteraires' typically rely on the guitar as a prominent contributor to the musical texture. In contrast, the guitar's role is limited here to giving pitches before the performance and quietly strumming the chords to provide a steady pulse. The harmonic language is restricted to the tonic, subdominant, and dominant that characterized much

²⁰⁷ The musical versatility of the Brewsteraires' tribute performance is even more remarkable when one realizes that the Brewsteraires were mimicking the sound, range, and style of non-male quartets as well. The Gospel Echo Soul Stirrers were an all-female group and the Flying Clouds were a mixed-gender group. In addition to demonstrating the Brewsteraires' musical versatility and knowledge of historical performance practice in the local quartet tradition, their tribute performance also highlights the distinctive musical and performative identities that characterized many quartets in the Augusta tradition.

mid-century quartet singing.²⁰⁸ The bass singer anchors the harmony by singing the roots of many chords, an anachronism in contemporary quartet singing. The use of an extremely low male voice in quartet singing was gradually replaced by the bass guitar in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁰⁹ The Brewsteraires do not use an extremely low male voice to sing the roots of chords in any other recording I have heard.

The homophonic texture of “Jesus, He’s a Waymaker” is much more similar to the older jubilee style of quartet singing that predominated in the early twentieth century before the advent of independent lead singers who sang virtuosic, embellished melodic lines. No one voice is prominent in the texture, and lead singer Walker’s role consists of singing the melodic line within the homophonic context. Walker sings the melody in a straightforward manner, with no personalized interpolations such as “oh yeah” or “Lord have mercy.” He also does not sing melismatic runs and ornamentation, and avoids the extremes of his vocal range. This simpler approach to performing the melodic line is atypical for Walker and for most quartet lead singers after the 1950s.

The performance of “Jesus, He’s a Waymaker” consists of the refrain and one verse. There is no vamp, which is also uncharacteristic of the Brewsteraires.²¹⁰ The central idea of the text—that Christ will help the singer overcome spiritual and material obstacles—is still fundamental in modern gospel repertoire. The refrain of the song states simply,

Jesus, He’s a waymaker.
Jesus, He’s a waymaker.

²⁰⁸ There were, of course, exceptions to this rule of harmonic simplicity in earlier quartet singing. A prominent example was the Golden Gate Quartet, a group that used an expanded harmonic range that included jazz chords (Boyer 2000).

²⁰⁹ In recent years the bass guitar in quartet singing has evolved further away from playing the roots of functional harmonic progressions, instead playing independent, rhythmically active lines that rarely use the root of the chord, at least on strong beats.

²¹⁰ Theme songs used by quartets in their media appearances in the 1950s and 1960s most likely did not include a vamp in those settings, due to time constraints of radio and television.

Jesus, He's a waymaker.
He'll make a way for me.

The group's ability to replicate the style of a mid-century gospel quartet is emblematic of their conversance with multiple genres and subgenres of Black sacred and secular song. It also highlights how deeply the Brewsteraires are embedded within the consciousness of the local gospel community.

The Abraham Brothers' History and Involvement with *POQ*

Like the Brewsteraires, members of the Abraham family have played a seminal role in the development of *POQ* and of Augusta's quartet tradition. However, since the 1950s, the substance of their musical and social evolution differed greatly from that of the Brewsteraires. Several distinctions between the two quartets demonstrate that Augusta's quartet tradition is comprised of groups with diverse historical and musical trajectories. First, the original Abraham Brothers quartet, which began in the early 1940s, broke off into a second quartet in 1983, called the Dynamic New Abraham Brothers (DNAB) (J. Abraham 2007; *Family Reunion* 2007).²¹¹ Although the Brewsteraires dealt with frequent personnel turnover, especially in their first two decades, none of their personnel seems to have left the original group to form a derivative ensemble. Second, unlike the Brewsteraires, the original Abraham Brothers and the DNAB were composed primarily of family members. The original group consisted of the six Abraham brothers, and the new quartet consists of grandsons and nephews of the original quartet (Abraham and Abraham 2004; J. Abraham 2007).²¹² Third, the original Abraham Brothers

²¹¹ The original Abraham Brothers have continued to perform sporadically in the region even after the second group was formed, although much less frequently than in the 1950s and 1960s. After the advent of the Dynamic New Abraham Brothers, the initial quartet began calling itself the Original Abraham Brothers to avoid confusion with the newer ensemble (Abraham and Abraham 2004).

²¹² The Brewsteraires included members of the same family on several occasions, but never more than two at a time.

entered gospel media and gained initial exposure to local listeners through their 1950s radio broadcasts in Augusta. I have found no evidence that the Brewsteraires ever had a regular radio broadcast. Last, membership in the two Abraham Brothers' quartets (particularly the original one) was stable for many decades with no record of personnel turnover. This contrasts with the Brewsteraires' frequent turnover in personnel, discussed earlier. The following section outlines the history of the original and Dynamic New Abraham Brothers and their involvement with *POQ*. After the outline, the chapter analyzes *POQ* and non-*POQ* performances that include members of the original and Dynamic New Abraham Brothers. The analyses demonstrate how the younger quartet engages in a broad dialogue with aspects of Black sacred song traditions and in a narrower dialogue with their family's own quartet legacy.

During *POQ*'s 2004 anniversary celebrations, hosts Henry and Karlton Howard conducted interviews with several older members of Augusta's quartet tradition, including Dock and Willie Abraham of the original Abraham Brothers. Their interview is an invaluable source of information about the group's early years and about *POQ*'s early broadcasts. The interview highlights the intertwining of these two gospel institutions earlier in the twentieth century. According to the interview, the original Abraham Brothers quartet were formed sometime in the 1940s.²¹³ At some point early in their development, the eldest brother, Lewis Abraham, had to leave the group. Isaac, Dock, Willie, Eugene, and a fifth brother remained. The group initially referred to themselves as the Friendly Five, but changed their name to the Abraham Brothers at Isaac's suggestion.²¹⁴

²¹³ According to Rev. James Abraham, the group started in the early 1940s (2007).

²¹⁴ It is unclear which members of the group sang which vocal part.

After changing their name, they adopted “Rock My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham” as their theme song for radio, television, and live performances.²¹⁵ The group performed on WJBF radio for fifteen minutes every evening in the late 1940s and early 1950s. On Thanksgiving Day, 1953, the first day that WJBF-TV went on the air, the original Abraham Brothers performed live at 7:30 p.m (Rhodes 2003; Abraham and Abraham 2004). When asked by Karlton Howard why the group was selected to perform on television, Willie and Dock said that because of their daily radio broadcasts, they were musically prepared to perform on television in a similar setting. Their theme song, “Rock My Soul,” was the first piece they performed on television, after rehearsing it thoroughly (Abraham and Abraham 2004).

The original Abraham Brothers quartet performed on WJBF-TV on Tuesdays and Thursday evenings for approximately a year after their television debut, until the advent of *POQ* (Ibid.).²¹⁶ This program was hosted by a man named Steve Thomas, from Columbia, South Carolina (Ibid.). At times the Abraham Brothers seem to have invited other local quartets to perform on their program (Ibid.).²¹⁷ If the Abraham Brothers did feature other quartets on their

²¹⁵ “Rock My Soul” is a spiritual that exists in several textual variants. Erskine Peters’ *Lyrics of the Afro-American Spiritual: A Documentary Collection* gives two variants of the text. Both include the central refrain used by the Abraham Brothers in their theme song: “Rocka my soul in the bosom of Abraham; Lord, rocka my soul” (Peters 1993, 94, 406). The song has been arranged as a concert spiritual multiple times. An analysis later in this chapter demonstrates that the concert spiritual tradition heavily influenced the original Abraham Brothers’ arrangement of “Rock My Soul.” The arranged concert spiritual was the earliest repertoire inherited by Black gospel quartets from the jubilee/university quartets that preceded them.

²¹⁶ Sources indicate that Steve Manderson promoted the Abraham Brothers while they sang on WJBF radio in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Abraham and Abraham 2004; Manderson 2008). According to Dock and Willie, the Abraham Brothers preceded Manderson on television at WJBF by six months. In contrast, Joe Thomas of the Southern Six recalls that Steve Manderson was affiliated with the television station *while* the Abraham Brothers had their own television program on WJBF. It is unclear from Thomas’ interview whether Manderson was involved with the Abraham Brothers’ television program (Thomas 2004). The earliest documentary evidence of the Abraham Brothers having their own program on WJBF television is in the *Augusta Chronicle*’s television log from Tuesday, December 8, 1953. The log lists their program from 7:30 to 7:45 that evening on WJBF-TV.

²¹⁷ According to a 2004 interview with Joe Thomas, his quartet, the Southern Six, were the first guests of the Abraham Brothers on their television program in late 1953 or early 1954. The Abraham Brothers’ manager Sinclair [first or last name omitted in interview] discussed potential television appearances with Southern Six manager J.C. Cannon. Cannon approached Steve Manderson about having the Southern Six perform on WJBF-TV. According to Thomas, “[Manderson] gave us a chance to be on Channel 6, and from that day on we been on Channel 6. We have been many places through this station, all through Georgia, and it was wonderful” (Thomas 2004).

Tuesday and Thursday evening television broadcasts, then the format and content of their program was the immediate precursor to *POQ*. When *POQ* began broadcasting in 1954, the Abraham Brothers were among the first groups to appear on the program regularly.

The group sang every Sunday on *POQ* for a long time, performing the same repertoire they would sing at concerts later on Sunday afternoon (J. Abraham 2007). In absence of footage from the time, the recollections of the original Abraham Brothers about the WJBF-TV's broadcast technology in the 1950s provides valuable data on the early years of *POQ*. Dock and Willie recalled two cameras and two microphones in use on the *POQ* set during the 1950s and possibly the 1960s. One microphone was for the lead singer, and one microphone was for the background singers, who "just hovered around [it] as best we could." The two men described a particular formation that the background singers stood in to be audible in the single microphone. They stood with "all our bodies turned in the same direction—not like they do today." Unfortunately the men did not discuss specific repertoire they performed on *POQ* in its early years.

The original Abraham Brothers never made audio recordings, and no television footage of their performances seems to be extant. However, old photographs displayed on the *POQ* set during the 2004 interview give visual data about the group's mid-century appearance. The two photographs displayed on the episode appear to date from the late 1940s and early 1950s since they included six brothers. As stated earlier, the sixth brother had stopped performing with the quartet by the time they began singing on WJBF-TV in 1953 (Abraham and Abraham 2004). One photograph was a formal publicity photograph, which most quartets, even amateurs and semi-professional quartets, used during that era. It depicts the six brothers wearing matching suits and ties. They are arranged in a symmetrical formation, and the photograph appears to have

been taken in a photography studio with no backdrop. The other photograph captured a seemingly-impromptu outdoor occasion. The six brothers, still dressed in matching suits, appear to be singing near a wooden building. One of them is playing a guitar. Since the men in the photograph are not identified on the episode, it is unclear which brother played the guitar.

POQ host Karlton Howard remarks, as the television camera focuses on these photographs, about how “sharp” the suits were, and asks if such elegant dressing was common for mid-century quartets. Dock and Willie respond that the Abraham Brothers had their clothes tailor-made by a friend, a Reverend Erwin, who made suits. According to the brothers, “We thought that was one of the greatest things we could have done, have some suits tailor-made” (2004). Later in the *POQ* interview, Dock and Willie refer to the matching suits as “uniforms” (Ibid.). Clearly, a professional visual appearance was a high priority even for local non-professional quartets in the 1950s.

Dock and Willie’s 2004 interview indicates that their performances on WJBF radio and television created publicity for the Abraham Brothers in the early 1950s, helping them expand the number and geographical radius of their concerts. According to the interview, the quartet received its first request to perform out-of-town in the form of a letter sent to WJBF radio in the early 1950s. Dock and Willie recalled that after their initial out-of-town performance in Avery, Georgia, the volume of requests mounted rapidly.²¹⁸ The quartet at times performed at two or three different locations on a single Sunday (Ibid.). Prior to their regular presence on radio and television, the group did not have concert engagements every Sunday (Ibid.).

²¹⁸ Avery is located north of Atlanta, approximately one hundred and eighty miles from Augusta. It is unclear whether listeners in Avery were actually able to hear the Abraham Brothers’ WJBF radio broadcasts from such a distance. It is possible that someone from Avery visited the Augusta area, heard the original Abraham Brothers sing, and invited the group to Avery to perform.

After the group was established on television as regular *POQ* performers in the 1950s, Dock and Willie estimated that they received “twenty-odd invites per week” to perform (Ibid.). The group’s traveling radius seems to have been broadened considerably by its media exposure: the quartet was “blessed to sing in seven states before we quit” (Ibid.). They traveled by car. The two brothers specifically recalled an old black Buick they used for transportation in the late 1950s. The Abraham Brothers had apparently attained some degree of regional popularity in the late 1950s. When asked by Karlton Howard to recall their largest audience at a concert, Dock and Willie reminisced about singing at Brewer High School in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1957. They stated that “there was as big a crowd outside as there was inside,” trying to enter the high school to attend the concert (Ibid.).²¹⁹

After performing on *POQ* from the late 1950s through the 1970s, the original Abraham Brothers began to disband in the early to mid-1980s (J. Abraham 2007). According to James Abraham, the disbanding of the older quartet occurred in stages as older members gradually retired from the original group (Ibid.). Some of the original Abraham Brothers were persuaded to come out of retirement after the group disbanded, continuing to perform sporadically in Augusta through the 1990s (Ibid.). On a June 1997 *POQ* episode, members of the original Abraham Brothers quartet and the Dynamic New Abraham Brothers appeared on the program (Appendix C, #31). They performed together and discussed an upcoming joint “reunion anniversary” which included both quartets. The “reunion anniversary” was held at the Mount Transfiguration Baptist Church in Belvedere, South Carolina. During this episode, Willie Abraham stated of the elder Abraham Brothers, “We never have quit doing something for the Lord. You may have missed us, but we’ve been down here singing in the churches and the choirs.” This footage indicates that at least some members of the original quartet were regularly active in the area into the late 1990s.

²¹⁹ Greenville, South Carolina, is approximately one hundred and twenty-five miles from Augusta.

There are other, later examples of the original Abraham Brothers' continued performances after their "retirement" from singing. Mildred Manderson recalled that two of the surviving members of the original quartet sang religious music at her husband Steve Manderson's funeral in 2001 (2008).²²⁰ Mrs. Manderson stated that at the time of her husband's funeral, most of the original members of the quartet were already deceased. The two living Abraham Brothers, Willie and Dock, maintained a presence in the local gospel community as recently as late 2007. I observed that Dock Abraham attended the Swanee Quintet's sixty-eighth anniversary concert in Augusta in October, 2007. He wore a formal suit and greeted people near the DNAB's display table at which albums and other group merchandise were sold. Dock and Willie Abraham also arranged and performed on the last song of the DNAB's 2007 album *Family Reunion*. The piece will be analyzed in more detail later in this chapter.

Although the original Abraham Brothers did not record albums, their consistent presence on *POQ* imprinted them into the collective memory of Augusta's gospel community. Percy Griffin recalled watching the Abraham Brothers frequently on *POQ* when he moved to Augusta in the mid-1960s from Norfolk, Virginia, to join the Swanee Quintet (2008). Mildred Manderson listed them as one of the first quartets her husband promoted in the area, and as some of the earliest participants on *POQ* (2008). *Augusta Chronicle* music journalist and local music historian Don Rhodes likewise knew of the quartet's early history on radio and on *POQ*. Early in my research he described them to me as a "popular black gospel act" in the area during the 1950s and 1960s (2007b). Joe Thomas recalled that "The Abraham Brothers...had a style of singing—when you hear them, you know who they was" (2004). Thomas was a longtime member of the Southern Six quartet, a local group which was active from 1949 until at least

²²⁰ The older Abraham Brothers performed "Jesus Is Listening (All Night Long)" and "The Blood of Jesus Is Against You" at Manderson's funeral (Rhodes 2001).

2004. *POQ* host Karlton Howard summed up regional opinion of the original Abraham Brothers when he called them “trailblazers” who marked out a path for younger quartets to follow (Abraham and Abraham 2004).

The Dynamic New Abraham Brothers (DNAB), an Augusta quartet composed of “sons and nephews” of the original group members, was founded in 1983 when the original quartet disbanded (J. Abraham 2007; *Family Reunion* 2007). The original Abraham Brothers had at that point grown to ten members, and the family felt it was time to break off into a second, younger quartet (J. Abraham 2007). The younger group’s development and role in the local gospel tradition and on *POQ* shares some similarities with the older quartet. At the same time, their historical trajectory demonstrates how they have used different musical and social strategies compared to their predecessors to sustain their career.

The DNAB includes men of varying ages and musical experience. Arthur Abraham, a background singer, had already been singing gospel for two decades before the DNAB formed. James Abraham, the group’s lead singer, is considerably younger and had been singing thirteen years before helping to found the DNAB (A. Abraham 2007; J. Abraham 2007). Five of the current members have been performing with the DNAB since the group’s founding in 1983. Percussionist Darius Courtney joined the quartet in 1998, and keyboardist/baritone Steven Jefferson and organist Maurice Ferris joined the group in 2004 (<http://abrahambrothers.com/AbrahamBios.html>).

The quartet is carefully organized into specific musical and logistical roles for each group member. James Abraham is the lead singer and songwriter, and Arthur Abraham is the booking manager, secretary, and baritone singer (A. Abraham 2007; J. Abraham 2007). Although the group includes twelve members, they still consider themselves a quartet since their arrangements

are created for four stratified voice parts (Ibid.). The group's instrumentation includes keyboards, bass guitar, lead guitar, and drums (Ibid.). The DNAB try to rehearse on a weekly basis (Ibid.). All of the group's personnel are active members of Baptist churches, with the exception of two members who attend non-denominational churches (<http://abrahambrothers.com/AbrahamBios.html>). Like the original quartet, the DNAB is a non-professional regional quartet whose members have other jobs. Although the professions of other group members are not known, the lead singer, James Abraham, is the full-time pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Graniteville, South Carolina, approximately ten to fifteen miles from Augusta (J. Abraham 2007).

Like the original Abraham Brothers quartet, the younger group has maintained a strong relationship with *POQ*. They currently perform on the program approximately twice a month, although they have no set time slot (Ibid.). When the DNAB perform on *POQ*, they typically sing ten to fifteen minutes of music, selected by the group in advance (J. Abraham 2007). Like other local quartets, the frequency of the DNAB's performances on *POQ* was reduced when the program began taping on weeknights in 1995 (Ibid.). As with the original Abraham Brothers, *POQ* gives the DNAB media exposure throughout the viewing radius. James Abraham states that viewers as far away as Sandersville, Georgia, have been able to see the DNAB perform on *POQ* (Ibid.).²²¹ Also like their predecessors, the DNAB's traveling radius at times has exceeded the broadcast radius of *POQ*. The DNAB seem to have traveled in a much wider radius than the original Abraham Brothers. The liner notes of their 2007 CD *Family Reunion* state that the group has sung "throughout several cities in the southeast. The group has at times traveled as far as eight hundred miles to perform (J. Abraham 2007). James Abraham stated that in recent years, the DNAB have been limited to engagements within approximately a three-hundred-mile radius.

²²¹ Sandersville is approximately sixty-five miles from Augusta.

He clarified that this self-imposed limitation was due to the time commitment involved in recording their 2007 album (Ibid.). Now that the DNAB have finished recording the album, their recent travel schedule seems to have expanded. For example, the group performed at a concert on November 16, 2008, in Pensacola, Florida, nearly five hundred miles from Augusta (www.myspace.com/dynamicabrahambrothers).²²²

The relationship of the DNAB to mass media has of course diverged from that of their predecessors. Unlike the older quartet, the group has never had a regular radio broadcast (live quartet radio performances are nonexistent now). However, the group has recorded two song CDs and a full-length album (J. Abraham 2007; *Family Reunion* 2007).²²³ The DNAB, like many current quartets, maintain an internet presence with a webpage and a MySpace page.²²⁴ Both pages include historical data on the quartet, biographical information on its individual members, photographs, and event calendars. The MySpace page also includes an audio clip from the group's 2007 album, a method of disseminating music that the older quartet never had access to. The group's grooming and clothing are well-maintained, in the tradition of the gospel quartet, but reflect contemporary casual fashions. Instead of wearing matching suits on their album cover, as their forebears did in their publicity photographs sixty years ago, the DNAB wear matching casual shirts and pants, with shiny matching shoes. The image of their matching shoes is also printed on the group's full-color glossy business cards.

²²² Concert dates are typically removed from the Abraham Brothers' MySpace calendar after the date of the concert has passed and thus may not be accessible at the URL at which they were originally located. Additionally, some MySpace URLs cited in this research may not be accessible to users who do not have a MySpace account.

²²³ The album was self-produced and can be purchased at some Black businesses in Augusta such as the Living Water Hair Salon (<http://livingwaterbeautysalon.com/>) and at the merchandise product tables at gospel events such as the Swanee Quintet's anniversary concerts.

²²⁴ These can be viewed at www.dynamicabrahambrothers.com and <http://www.myspace.com/thedynamicabrahambrothers>. Some content on the MySpace page may be restricted to members of the MySpace community.

The DNAB's development has also diverged from that of the older quartet in their choice of performance venues. For example, in September 2008, they were part of Augusta's Choral Artist Series held in the Jesse Norman Ampitheatre. The Choral Artist Series was a civic arts-and-culture endeavor that also included secular artists. The concert demonstrated the quartet's ability to appeal to audiences and gain artistic recognition outside of the Black religious community.²²⁵ Other evidence of the group's expansion into newer contexts is James and Arthur Abrahams' performance in Eugene Beverly's gospel play, "Is God Still Working Miracles?" The play premiered in November 2008 at Winston-Salem State University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.²²⁶ James played the role of a pastor in the play. Available documentation indicates that the original Abraham Brothers' performances mostly occurred in churches or on gospel concerts at civic centers and high schools. The original group seems not to have performed outside the context of gospel concerts, although their radio and television performances would certainly have been accessible to those outside the Black religious community.

The DNAB have obviously built on and expanded beyond the musical and media foundations laid by the original Abraham Brothers and other local quartets from earlier eras. Despite their use of modern innovations to promote their music, the group has projected an awareness of Augusta's role as a historic center for gospel music. James and A. Abraham have theorized about why Augusta developed a reputation as a gospel "epicenter" in the gospel industry. They first cited longtime local gospel media outlets, specifically *POQ* and the radio

²²⁵ The concert listing can be viewed at

<http://calendar.augusta.com/ptemp?tid=26663&m=9&d=20&y=2008&event=71947270&display=day>.

²²⁶ Gospel plays are musical theatre productions that use gospel music and other elements of Black church culture to tell stories of human conflicts resolved within the framework of Christian morals. According to the play's promotional website, it was written by Eugene Beverly, directed by Donald Gray, and presented by Genealogy Productions and All Black Events, LLC. The play was produced by Roy J. Williams, Audrey J. Williams and Arnold "A. T." Tyler. The play was a nominee for "Best Stage Play and Playwright" at the fourth annual Agape Awards. Tickets were sold for \$39.00 at the door. The playwright, Eugene Beverly, has been active in the Augusta gospel tradition for some years, and played a role in the fiftieth anniversary celebration of *POQ* in 2004. Information about the play can be viewed at <http://www.giswm.com/about.htm>.

station 94.7 FM, as reasons for gospel's enduring popularity in Augusta (A. Abraham 2007; J. Abraham 2007). Both men stated that the venerable Bell Auditorium still draws gospel performers due to its atmosphere of "nostalgia" (Ibid.). The men specifically recalled seeing the Swan Silvertones, Julius Cheeks, Rev. Ruben Willingham, the Dixie Hummingbirds, and the CBS Trumpeteers perform at Bell Auditorium many years ago (Ibid.).²²⁷ They also mentioned ancillary social institutions such as the Red Star Café on Ninth Street, where visiting gospel stars ate and mingled with fans. The restaurant, now defunct, was a mainstay in the Black community for many decades (Ibid.). In the words of James Abraham, "the region is geared towards traditional gospel singing; people will leave traditional gospel but they always come back to their roots" (2007).

The DNAB also are aware of their family's legacy in the local quartet tradition. In the liner notes of their album, the DNAB state "We would like to thank The Original Abraham Brothers for their inspirational input and encouragement." The DNAB described the older group as "passing the torch" musically to the younger generation (J. Abraham 2007). On their MySpace page, the DNAB list the original Abraham Brothers quartet as their "musical influence."²²⁸

Musical Analysis of Abraham Brothers' Performances on *Family Reunion* and *POQ*

Explicit musical evidence of the DNAB's respect for their familial legacy exists in the final song of the group's album *Family Reunion* (2007), entitled "Tribute." James Abraham specifically identified "Tribute" as an example of the older group's "passing the torch" to the younger group (2007). "Tribute" is a medley of songs that the original Abraham Brothers used to

²²⁷ The quartets mentioned by the men had attained national fame in the middle of the twentieth century. With the exception of Rev. Ruben Willingham, the first lead singer for the Swanee Quintet from the early 1940s until the mid 1960s, the other groups they listed were non-local.

²²⁸ The category of "musical influences" is part of the webpage template for any musician who maintains a MySpace page.

perform, and which Dock and Willie Abraham arranged especially for the album. The medley comprises three songs performed at the same tempo and in the same key: “So Glad,” “Jesus Is Real,” and “Rock My Soul,” the older quartet’s theme song many decades ago.²²⁹ The medley was recorded on the album by the DNAB and by “surviving members” of the original Abraham Brothers quartet. As the following analysis demonstrates, the medley’s music and texts create a tapestry of self-referential moments and broader references to thematic elements central in the Black sacred song tradition.

The medley largely adheres to musical norms of mid-twentieth-century quartet styles. Occasionally, the anachronistic quartet style used in the medley is combined with musical techniques more common in later quartet styles. The harmonic language is restricted to mostly tonics, dominants, and subdominants. Treatment of the bassline throughout the medley is interesting, since it varies from piece to piece. During “Jesus Is Real,” the bassline is performed by a bass guitar. The basslines of “So Glad” and “Rock My Soul” are performed by a vocalist. One of the most prominent elements of quartet voice stratification in the 1930s through 1950s was their use of a vocalist to sing a moving bassline. The moving bassline typically used the root of the chord, creating an anchor for the harmony. This vocal device has not been popular in quartet singing since the advent of instrumental accompaniment, and its use in “Tribute” aurally signifies quartet traditions of the past.²³⁰

Another archaic and highly evocative vocal device used in the arrangement is the syllabic ostinati sung by the background singers. The ostinati, performed on the syllables “doo-doo-doo,” are employed between the verses of “So Glad.” Over the syllabic pattern, Dock Abraham provides spoken interpolations that create a coherent narrative within “So Glad.” The

²²⁹ See Appendix I for a complete lyrical transcription of the medley.

²³⁰ The variances in bass performance between the two songs may reflect the actual performance practices of the older quartet’s mid-century versions of these songs.

syllabic device is updated through its creative placement in the inter-verse sections (see Appendix I for placement of the syllabic ostinati). In early and mid-century quartet singing, these kinds of syllabic ostinati appeared in many arrangements, as well as in the arrangements of secular doo-wop groups. The precise execution of syllabic patterns indicated a quartet's prowess in *a cappella* singing. When sung by quartets of earlier eras, syllabic ostinati typically occurred *during* verses or refrains rather than *between* them. The use of an archaic quartet element in a new part of the arrangement marks the medley as the site of musical synthesis between older and newer approaches to quartet arrangements.

Another site of musical collision between newer and older vocal styles is the collaboration of two lead singers whose contrasting vocal styles represent their respective eras in the quartet tradition. Dock Abraham, whose timbre sounds like a rural or downhome blues singer, performs the lead on "So Glad" and "Jesus Is Real." His performance style is restrained, eschewing the extremes of his range and avoiding vocal devices such as growling or yelling. Even his inter-verse interpolations are chanted or spoken rather than sung or shouted, and in a very mild timbre. The much younger James Abraham takes over the lead role during the two verses of "Rock My Soul," and his performance style contrasts with Dock's in many respects. His timbre is fuller, richer, and sounds more soul-influenced rather than blues-influenced. He exploits much more of his range, and ornaments his performance with many more melismatic passages.

The instruments used in the medley—drums, bass guitar, and lead guitar—were typical of some mid-century quartets in Augusta and across the country.²³¹ The roles of the instruments in

²³¹ At least one of the pieces in the medley, "Rock My Soul," was performed entirely *a cappella* on *POQ* in June 1997 by members of the original Abraham Brothers and the DNAB. It is probable that the original Abraham Brothers would have performed the medley's songs in the 1950s using only a guitar. At some point the older quartet

the medley are mostly limited to the keeping of a steady tempo and strumming arpeggiated chords, probably to help the singers stay on-pitch. This would have been typical of mid-century quartets, when the primacy was still on the vocal part of the arrangement. The instrumentation clearly contrasts with the type and roles of other instruments used in the newly-composed songs on the 2007 album.

The medley's style evokes the mid-century quartet tradition to listeners familiar with it, despite the fact that a few of the older musical devices have been subtly updated. Even listeners unfamiliar with the evolving gospel quartet tradition could hear the vast differences in harmonic language, formal arrangement, vocal style, and instrumentation between "Tribute" and the rest of the album. In brief, the rest of the album encapsulates the musical changes that have occurred in the quartet tradition since the original Abraham Brothers were formed in the 1940s. These include extensions in harmonic language, complex vamps, virtuosic vocal styles, extensive personalization of texts through interpolation and improvisation, and fuller, more independent instrumentation.

The spectrum of texts used in the medley reference specific elements of the Abraham Brothers' legacy and general themes common in the history of Black sacred song. The medley begins with James Abraham declaiming a text that describes the formation of the older Abraham Brothers quartet. Abraham alternately speaks and chants the following text in a preaching tone over an instrumental introduction:

Back in the early forties, there was a trend-setting group called the Abraham Brothers who started singing gospel in the Deep South. As they pass the torch along to the DNAB, which are the second and third generations, we have these gospel legends performing on this project. Willie and Dock Abraham of this original group sing [at this point Dock begins to sing the text of "So Glad"].

probably expanded its instrumentation, particularly since it managed to sing successfully through the early 1980s. This indicates that the original group probably adapted to changing musical conventions in the quartet tradition.

James' introduction communicates important elements of the DNAB's social values. These include their awareness of their family's legacy, heritage, and longevity situated in a regional ("Deep South") gospel tradition. After James' spoken introduction is complete, Dock begins to sing in a raspy voice "So Glad." As seen below, the song's text encompasses the themes of memory, familial and ancestral religious legacy, and the motif of a journey by train. All of these thematic ideas and images are central in Black sacred song.

Refrain

Mother looked down and she saw the train a-coming, she was so glad (2x).
She looked down the road, she saw the train coming.
She stepped on board, you know the train kept running; she was so glad.

Spoken inter-verse material

(Spoken by Dock over background singers' ostinato on the syllable "doo": Now wait a minute, I got something else to tell you. Before she stepped on board, she said something like this.)

Verse 1

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound—so glad (2x).
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.
I once was lost, but now I'm found, and I'm so glad.

Spoken inter-verse material

(Spoken by Dock over background singers' ostinato on the syllable "doo": Now wait a minute, I believe somebody here got a father gone. I know I got a father gone, but one thing I wanna tell you.)

Refrain [lyrics slightly adjusted from first iteration of refrain]

Father looked down and he saw the train a-coming, he was so glad (2x).
He looked down the road, he saw the train coming.
He stepped on board, you know the train kept running; he was so glad.

Verse 2

I once was blind, but now I see—so glad (2x).
I once was blind, but now I see.
The gospel train is coming after me, and I'm so glad.

A further layer of theological and cultural resonance is evoked by the first verse of John Newton's "Amazing Grace" (1779). Newton's first verse, an enduring part of the hymnody of

white and Black churches, is spliced to create two verses of “So Glad.”²³² Newton’s text is contextualized as part of Black religious heritage by Dock’s inter-verse narrative, which literally puts Newton’s words into the mouth of his mother: “Now wait a minute, I got something else to tell you. Before she stepped on board, she said something like this: ‘Amazing grace, how sweet the sound...’”

The third and final piece in the medley, “Rock My Soul,” also references multiple levels of Black religious and cultural heritage, national and local. First, its melody and text is from a spiritual. Second, the Abraham Brothers’ classical choral arrangement and precise text declamation derive from the arranged concert spiritual tradition of the late nineteenth century.²³³ Third, the song signifies localized group identity to Augusta listeners who recall it as the Abraham Brothers’ theme song for many years.

After “Rock My Soul,” the medley concludes as it began, with a brief fragment of spoken text that confirms the primacy of familial legacy to the DNAB. At the very end of the medley, James Abraham says to Dock, “How was that, huh?” The older singer answers, “Y’all did it just right.” Thus the final sound on the album is the older generation’s approval of the younger generation’s effort to recreate an older quartet style. Although the original Abraham Brothers are nowhere pictured on the album’s cover art, their vocal and familial legacy permeates “Tribute.”

The third song included in the medley, “Rock My Soul,” was also performed on *POQ* in June 1997 by members of the Original Abraham Brothers and Dynamic New Abraham Brothers (Appendix C, #31). Like the version on the 2007 album, the televised performance of “Rock My Soul” was clearly contextualized as a deliberately retrospective moment. The performance was

²³² Newton’s original text is “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found; was blind but now I see.”

²³³ Figure 4.5, which transcribes the Abraham Brothers’ June 1997 performance on *POQ* of “Rock My Soul,” demonstrates the arrangement’s close relationship to the arranged spiritual tradition.

defined as a site of musical and cultural memory *POQ* when co-host Frank Brown introduced the song as “a collaboration of the old and the new.” Immediately following their performance of “Rock My Soul,” the two quartets performed a very contemporary gospel song, “I Can Hear Him Calling.” The contrasts in the musical styles employed, and the versatility and attitude towards roots and reinvention embodied in the Abraham family’s *POQ* performance, forms the subject of the next analysis.

The version of “Rock My Soul” performed on the June 1997 episode was sung *a cappella* by Dock and Willie Abraham of the original Abraham Brothers. They were joined by James Abraham, Arthur Abraham, and an unnamed DNAB member who sang bass. The rendition of “Rock My Soul,” almost identical to the one heard on the 2007 album, mimics precisely the jubilee/university choir style in several musical aspects. These include its precise text declamation, homophonic texture, bass singer singing the roots of the chords in a very low range, restrained stage demeanor, non-independent lead singer, repeated syncopated pattern in each phrase, and harmonic language of only a tonic and dominant. Figure 4.5, a transcription of the refrain of the Abraham Brothers’ version of “Rock My Soul,” demonstrates most of these musical characteristics. Figure 4.5 is transcribed in open score to emphasize the relationship between the Abraham Brothers’ version of “Rock My Soul” and the spirituals arranged for choirs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The rendition appears to be a historically-accurate recreation of the arrangement and performance style used by the original Abraham Brother when “Rock My Soul” was their theme song in the mid-twentieth century. During the *POQ* rendition of “Rock My Soul,” the melodic line is sung by one of the original quartet members (either Dock or Willie—it is difficult to tell who is singing which part). Interestingly, the bass line, which as stated earlier is the most

anachronistic of all the voice parts in the arrangement, is sung by an unidentified member of the younger quartet rather than by Willie or Dock Abraham.

Soprano
soul in the bo-som of A - bra-ham. Rock my soul in the bo-som of A - braham.

Alto
soul in the bo-som of A - bra-ham. Rock my soul in the bo-som of A - braham.

Tenor
soul in the bo-som of A - bra-ham. Rock my soul in the bo-som of A - braham.

Bass
Rock my soul in the bo-som of A - bra-ham. Rock my soul in the bo-som of A - braham.

S
soul in the bo-som of A - bra-ham. Lord, rock my soul.

A
soul in the bo-som of A - bra-ham. Lord, rock my soul.

T
soul in the bo-som of A - bra-ham. Lord, rock my soul.

B
Rock my soul in the bo-som of A - bra-ham. Lord, rock my soul.

Figure 4.5: “Rock My Soul,” Refrain, Performed by Abraham Family.

Immediately after “Rock My Soul,” the Abraham family performs “I Can Hear Him Calling” in a musical style separated from the first piece by decades of development in gospel music. Now the younger lead singer of the DNAB, James Abraham, performs the melody. As is typical of his other *POQ* and album performances, he begins by preaching, chanting, and singing

over an instrumental introduction. Instrumentalists from the DNAB, who were silent during “Rock My Soul,” now join the vocalists. They play a synthesizer set on a distinctly electronic sound, percussion, and lead and bass guitars. The instruments are prominent in the texture, at times playing solos that extend beyond filling in the “space” between vocal phrases. The harmonic palette is vastly expanded from the tonic and dominant used in “Rock My Soul.” The roots of the chords are omitted in the instrumental bassline and in the vocal arrangement. Instead, the vocalists move mostly in parallel first and second inversion chords.

Although very contemporary in musical style, “I Can Hear Him Calling” contains textual elements that reference Black religious heritage. For example, the ubiquitous call-and-response pattern is built into the very structure of the refrain. It consists simply of the following text (words in parentheses are sung by the background singers in response to lead singer James Abraham; words in brackets are sung by the lead singer and background singers together):

I can hear Him (calling).
I can hear Him (calling).
[I hear the Lord calling me.]

Abraham’s chanted introduction provides further links to a narrower familial religious heritage within a broader Black religious tradition: “I’m so glad He gave me a good family—a mother who taught me how to pray. Gave me a father that told me, ‘Son, whatever you do, let the Lord have His way.’” The text proper of the song also includes extensive reference to familial religious heritage. Verse two centers on the singer’s mother teaching him to pray and quotes the well-known children’s prayer, “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.” When James Abraham wails during the second verse, “let me tell you about my mother: she taught me how to pray,” he references his own religious roots. By implication, he also references those of the broader Black church community, to whom the trope of maternal piety is common in

songs and sermons. While the musical arrangement essentially sounds contemporary for the late 1990s, the text looks backwards in order to affirm and celebrate religious heritage. The affirmation of familial religious legacy located within the wider context of Black Christianity is reminiscent of “Tribute” on the album analyzed earlier.

In the middle of “I Can Hear Him Calling,” Rev. Martrise Mims, a pastor of a local Missionary Baptist church, walks to the middle of the set. The singers become silent, and Mims intones the weekly prayer while the instruments continue to play quietly in the background. Mims’ prayer explicitly acknowledges members of the viewing audience as part of the religious community, stating that “many people await this very hour and this very moment.” Unlike many ministers that participate in *POQ*’s weekly prayer segment, Mims does not employ a chanting or singing tone during the prayer. He tends instead towards regular speech that has heightened ascents and descents in its phrase contour. The members of the original and new Abraham Brothers affirm Mims’ prayer after nearly every spoken phrase with interjections such as “amen” and “mm-hmm” and “yes, Lord.” The interjections, frequently sung on pitches rather than spoken, indicate the family’s familiarity with and participation in the religious ritual. At the end of Mims’ prayer, which lasts several minutes, James Abraham provides a musical transition back into “I Can Hear Him Calling” with a melisma sung in a high falsetto timbre. Soon after this transition, the program fades to a commercial break. The multi-generational performance of the very contemporary setting of “I Can Hear Him Calling” includes elements of chanting/preaching, singing, and praying. The melding of several rhetorical elements used in Black church services highlights the DNAB’s relationship to religious community and to longstanding ritual traditions of the Black church.

When asked about how groups on *POQ* had evolved musically over the decades, Karlton Howard cited the DNAB as a group that sings “traditional lyrics” with a contemporary musical style (2007c). Howard specifically stated that the DNAB use “different harmonies” than earlier quartets (Ibid.). As demonstrated in the above analyses, this synthesis of textual continuity with musical innovation is apparent in the DNAB’s appearances on *POQ* and on their 2007 album. The synthesis creates a tapestry of aural and textual references to Black religious heritage and to the Abraham family’s own religious and musical legacy.

There is continuity, too, in the shared ethos with which the original and new Abraham Brothers quartets have approached their mission to spread the Christian message through song. James and Arthur Abraham of the DNAB have both expressed concern over the reputation of quartet singers for impious behavior off-stage. The two men described their group’s desire to live a life consistent with the message of their music (A. Abraham 2007; J. Abraham 2007). As James Abraham stated as he promoted an upcoming DNAB concert on the June 1997 episode of *POQ*, “we are about our Father’s business.” The comment indicates that the DNAB are primarily concerned with carrying out a divinely-appointed mission in their performances. The same concern is reflected in interviews with members of the original Abraham Brothers. As Willie Abraham told Karlton Howard during the commemorative interview in 2004 on *POQ*, when asked if he had any advice to pass on to younger quartets:

The first thing, they need to be Christian people. There’s been too many people just getting up singing, and that kills the whole thing. You’ve got to be a Christian and live as a Christian, and, ah, people will believe in what you’re doing, but if they see you doing any and every thing, livin’ all kinda raggedy life, it just don’t help the quartet.

Thus fundamental continuity is maintained between the older and younger quartets through texts and performance ethos, even if the surface aspects of musical style have changed over the years.

Conclusion

The Brewsteraires and the Abraham family have been central to *POQ*'s development since the 1950s. Each group built its regional reputation largely through frequent appearances on *POQ*. Both groups have achieved longevity as regional, non-professional quartets. In their *POQ* and non-*POQ* performances, both groups are in dialogue with multiple musical, theological, and cultural layers of the Black sacred song tradition. The group's historical legacies in the southeast and on *POQ* have evolved quite differently, however, as have their musical dialectic with the past.

The Brewsteraires' longevity as an ensemble is partially sustained by their mastery of a plurality of musical styles prominent at different times in Black musical history. Blues, funk, and early R&B particularly informed the group's *POQ* performances in the analyses presented above. Related to this is the Brewsteraires' technique of updating historical texts central in Black sacred song with performance styles of later eras. The group's textual choices engage in a dialogue with Black religious heritage, while their musical styles primarily manifest a dialectic with Black secular/popular song. At times the group's musical dialogue with the past becomes more narrowly-focused on regional gospel legacies. This is exemplified by their musical imitation of other local quartets in the 2004 *POQ* anniversary tribute. The DNAB engage in a similarly broad dialectic with Black religious heritage, too, in their choice of texts. However, included in this dialectic is a narrower, self-referential element. In these moments, they enshrine the familial legacy of the original Abraham Brothers through musical imitation and evocative texts.

Each quartet balances an awareness of musical and cultural roots with elements of musical renewal, expansion, and evolution. The differences in the groups' musical output

demonstrate that within a regional quartet tradition that values longevity and heritage, groups can forge their own musical dialogues with the past. The fact that each group has been involved with *POQ* for many years implies that the program's survival is due to the longevity achieved by local performers who have learned to renew themselves musically and culturally. As demonstrated in this chapter's analyses, the Brewsteraires and Abraham Brothers have performed their dialogues with Black musical and religious heritage in the public space of WJBF's studio. Because its performers engage in public renewal grounded in musical and historical roots, *POQ* also undergoes a process of artistic renewal resulting in ongoing cultural relevance.

CHAPTER 5

“I GOT THAT SOMETHING THAT MAKES ME WANT TO SHOUT”: JAMES BROWN, RELIGION, AND GOSPEL MUSIC IN AUGUSTA

Introduction

On the May 26, 1992, *POQ* episode, James Brown was interviewed by host Henry Howard. Brown, the “Godfather of Soul” and a former gospel quartet singer, told Howard earnestly during the interview:

This is professional, believe me. Believe me, because I know Detroit, Chicago, New York, and all those major places—L.A.—they don’t have nothing like this. And I tell everybody about the *Parade of Quartets*. And I’m telling you, this is a landmark. A lot of times when I don’t feel like going to church and I just can’t make it—I always feel it in my heart—but I get that same feeling if I done come in from a long trip, I don’t care what happens, I turn on to get the *Parade of Quartets*.²³⁴

Brown’s statement reveals significant elements of his interactions with *POQ*. First, Brown viewed the program frequently. Second, he considered it a unique, well-crafted media product with cultural significance that exceeded its local broadcast radius.²³⁵ Third, and most significant for this chapter, he regarded it as a sufficient substitute for attending church services. To a reader familiar with Brown’s secular career and controversial public image and unfamiliar with his

²³⁴ Only a seven-minute fragment of this episode appears to have survived (#66 on Appendix C). It contains approximately four minutes of musical performance by a female gospel quartet called the Banks Sisters and Henry Howard’s three-minute interview with Brown and local gospel musician Leon Austin. During the remainder of the interview, Brown and Austin discuss their childhood friendship, which included Austin teaching Brown how to form chords at the piano with the left hand. Howard also asks Brown to directly address the youth of Augusta about the need to avoid drugs. The interview concludes with Brown’s exhortations to area youth to look to Black male athletes and performing artists as models of success that they can emulate. Brown did not perform any music on the seven-minute fragment.

²³⁵ This critique from Brown is meaningful in light of the strict professional standards he enforced in his own music career. Brown’s high expectations for the professionalism and musical accuracy of his band are documented in interviews with him and with his fellow musicians (George and Leeds 2008).

religious convictions, Brown's mention of attending church and viewing a religious program might come as a revelation.

Thirteen years before the 1992 *POQ* interview, Brown had experienced a religious rebirth at St. Peter's Baptist church in Williston-Elko, South Carolina, approximately forty miles from Augusta (Millender 1979). He discussed this spiritual catharsis with the local Black newspaper the *Augusta News-Review*, describing the event as a "great awakening" that constituted the "high point" of his life (Ibid. 1, 5). Brown explained to the local journalist that his conversion had resulted in changed behavior. He had begun singing in the church choir, intended to start helping the choir improve vocally, and was now "hurt" by hearing profanity (Ibid. 1, 5). Brown clarified to the journalist that although he had always considered himself a Christian, he had decided only recently to attend a church regularly and support it financially (Ibid.).²³⁶ According to my research, other evidence of Brown's (re)turn to Christianity after 1979 included his participation in the local gospel music community until his death in 2006. During the early stages of fieldwork in 2007, I noticed that in interviews, during musical events, and in newspaper articles, Augustans often mentioned James Brown as being closely linked to the local gospel tradition. According to these sources, Brown attended and performed at local gospel music events, performed on and viewed *POQ*, and maintained personal relationships with local gospel performers.

The relationship between James Brown and Augusta's gospel community during his later years is a crucial part of his rich musical legacy and complex public persona. However, it has remained unexplored in the scholarly literature. Scholars openly acknowledge the rhetorical and

²³⁶ Although Brown asserted that conversion to Christianity and external commitment to the church was "a direction I was heading all my life," he also acknowledged having had a negligent attitude towards the church prior to his "great awakening" (Millender 1979, 1). According to Brown, his youthful avoidance of organized Christianity was shaped by factors such as economic necessity and the demands of his career. "Basically I haven't had time [to participate in religious community]. I didn't take time. I was so desperate trying to overcome my poverty base I didn't even take time to help churches" (Ibid., 1). In the interview, Brown indicated that before his 1979 religious crisis, institutional Christianity held little emotional appeal for him. "You know when it's there. It's got to come from within" (Ibid.1, 5).

musical influences of gospel music on his secular music. They typically briefly discuss his early career as a gospel singer in north Georgia in the early 1950s. After the 1950s, scholars tacitly assume that Brown stopped performing gospel music and moved teleologically through the secular genres of rhythm and blues, soul, and funk.²³⁷ Scholars also acknowledge that Brown used gospel musicians as opening acts during his tours in the mid-1960s. However, no-one has performed detailed cultural or musical analysis of Brown's complex relationship to the genre. The neglect of Brown's relationship with gospel music and the Black church prevents a full, nuanced interpretation of his musical trajectory and public persona.

The evidence that Brown maintained a lively and complex relationship with gospel music and the church was in plain sight throughout his career. He discussed his religious convictions in widely-known interviews and autobiographical writing both before and after his 1979 spiritual awakening.²³⁸ He also recorded at least one piece of religious music several years prior to his religious awakening in 1979.²³⁹ After his (re)conversion, he again included religious repertoire in his recorded output at least one time.²⁴⁰ Brown even played the role of a Black Pentecostal minister in the 1980 film *Blues Brothers*, backed by James Cleveland's gospel choir. Awareness

²³⁷ For musicological scholarship that briefly acknowledges Brown's early career in gospel music in the 1950s and the genre's continuing influence on his secular career, see Brackett (2001), Frith (2001, 85 – 87), Straw (2001, 85 – 87), Crawford (2001, 796 – 8), Potter (2001, 144 – 7), Brackett (2005, 151), and Maultsby (2006, 273). I agree with their assessments of gospel music's influence on Brown's secular work, and understand that a full account of his biography and musical activities was beyond the scope of their writing. These musicological essays, surveys of American and African-American music, and dictionary entries were intended to briefly acquaint the reader with Brown's background and to historically and stylistically contextualize his seminal contributions to popular music. However, these works constitute some of the best-known and most recent scholarship that mentions Brown, and they demonstrate no real awareness of his relationship to gospel music beyond the 1950s. Available analyses and close readings of Brown's music also do not mention his ongoing relationship with the gospel genre. The available analyses focus exclusively on his recordings of popular music (Brackett 1992; Stewart 2000; Ramsey 2003, 151 – 5).

²³⁸ See multiple interviews with journalists in *The James Brown Reader: Fifty Years of Writing About the Godfather of Soul* (George and Leeds 2008). See also multiple statements Brown made in his autobiography about the role that Black denominations, ministers, and sacred music have played in his personal and professional development (1986).

²³⁹ Brown recorded "When the Saints Go Marching In" on his 1974 album *Hell*.

²⁴⁰ Brown recorded "God Has Smiled On Me" (Parts 1 and 2) with Rev Al Sharpton and The Gospel Energies in 1981. Sharpton had been a part of Brown's entourage for many years at that point.

of these musical “clues” could have stimulated scholars to obtain ethnographic and biographical data on Brown’s lifelong involvement with the Black church and with Black sacred song. The failure of scholars to seriously engage with the religious element of Brown’s public persona may be due in part to his highly-publicized legal, domestic, and financial troubles.²⁴¹ Much of his involvement with gospel music was negotiated in Augusta’s local tradition after his 1979 awakening. Therefore the localized data gathered in this research is indispensable to forming a fuller picture of Brown as a human being and as a musician.

In order to extend the existing narrative of Brown’s personal and musical trajectory, this chapter will address four aspects of his participation in Augusta’s gospel music community and on *POQ*. The chapter will first give an overview of Brown’s involvement with gospel music, particularly quartets, from his childhood to his religious awakening in 1979. Second, the chapter will give an overview of his involvement with *POQ* in the 1980s and 1990s, providing close readings of some of his televised performances. These analyses focus on how Brown used the rhetorical and musical codes of gospel music during *POQ* performances to self-identify as a member of the Black religious community. Third, the chapter will discuss his social and musical relationship with Augusta’s Swanee Quintet, another longtime participant on *POQ*. These musical analyses probe how Brown and the Quintet negotiated the boundaries of sacred and secular expression in their careers. Fourth, the chapter will situate Brown’s involvement in gospel music within a local tradition of sacred-to-secular “crossover” common to many *POQ* participants. The chapter concludes by assessing potential reasons for the scholarly neglect of

²⁴¹ Broad journalistic documentation of Brown’s problems, which spanned the late 1960s to his death in 2006, can be found in articles compiled by George and Leeds (2008) and in articles from the *Augusta Chronicle*. His public struggles included tax issues with the IRS, charges of drug possession, encounters with the police, accusations of violence towards his wives and sometimes towards local citizens, complicated marital relationships, and miscellaneous financial problems.

Brown's return to gospel music. The conclusion also discusses how various musical, religious, and social communities intersect and are affirmed through Brown's affiliation with *POQ*.

Brown's Relationship to the Black Church and to Gospel Music, 1933 – 1979

In 1933, James Brown was born into extreme poverty in Barnfield, South Carolina, forty miles from Augusta. At a very young age he moved to Augusta to live with his aunt in the brothel she ran on Wrightsboro Road (Brown and Tucker 1986). During his early years in Augusta, Brown had a great deal of contact with local Black churches, ministers, and church musicians. Some of these made a great impression on him, particularly in terms of their performative strategies. Brown's 1986 autobiography indicates that his early contact with local Black churches initiated his lifelong awareness of distinctive worship traditions in different Black denominations. He particularly recalled attending worship services and musical parades held by the United House of Prayer in Augusta.²⁴² Brown later described distinctive elements of the United House of Prayer's worship that he observed as a child. These included their use of drums, which he had never seen in church before, the flamboyant persona and preaching of the denomination's founder during his frequent visits to Augusta, the brass bands that marched in church parades, and the use of the ring shout during worship (Ibid., 152 – 3). Brown described these musical rituals he observed in the United House of Prayer as "sanctified" worship by a congregation that "*had the beat*" (Ibid., emphasis Brown's).

²⁴² The United House of Prayer is a predominantly Black Holiness/Pentecostal denomination founded by the charismatic leader "Daddy Grace" in 1919. The denomination, known for its ecstatic worship and unique theological positions, established many churches on the East Coast in the 1920s and 1930s. The United House of Prayer has enjoyed a particularly strong presence in Augusta. The large House of Prayer church on Wrightsboro Road that Brown used to visit as a child in Augusta has been a religious mainstay in the community since the 1940s (McKevie 2007; Griffin 2008). A more comprehensive description of the history and worship rituals of the United House of Prayer can be found in Dallam's *Daddy Grace: A Celebrity Preacher and His House of Prayer* (2007). The denomination's own perspective on its history, doctrine, and practices can be found on its official website (<http://www.tuhopfap.org/index2.html>).

Brown's first personal contact with a well-known gospel quartet also occurred in Augusta in the 1940s when he met the Swanee Quintet. Brown worked as a shoe-shine boy outside the WGAC radio studios where the Quintet performed their daily radio broadcast (www.swaneequintet.com). Members of the Quintet were kind to the young boy. It is unclear from Brown's autobiography, interviews with Swanee Quintet member Percy Griffin, and other sources such as newspaper articles and the group's official website what the nature of their musical relationship with Brown was in these early years. Presumably Brown would have heard the group rehearsing and/or broadcasting during their days at WGAC. Dr. James Carter, III, grew up across the street from Rufus Washington, an original member of the Swanee Quintet, and recalls being able to hear the group practice from his house in the early 1950s (2008). It seems likely that Brown would also have heard the group rehearsing or performing if he was in such close proximity to the radio station on a daily basis. The Quintet's early contact with him later blossomed into a significant musical and personal relationship that lasted until Brown's death in 2006.

Brown was sent to prison for automobile theft in June 1949 (Millender 1979; Hay 2003). He originally was incarcerated at a juvenile detention center in Rome, Georgia. In November 1951 he was transferred to a facility for male delinquents in Toccoa, Georgia (Hay 2003, 112). His musical talents were noted among fellow inmates, who recommended Brown as a potential singer to a popular Toccoa gospel quartet, the Flames (Ibid.). Brown began to sing with the Flames soon after his arrival in Toccoa. His first professional experiences as a musician were with this gospel quartet. Brown spent approximately five years in Toccoa, although less than two

years of that time were spent in prison.²⁴³ Brown's musical activities in Toccoa were described in detail for the first time in Hay's 2003 article "Music Box Meets the Toccoa Band: The Godfather of Soul in Appalachia." Hay's archival and ethnographic research in Toccoa revealed that Brown's involvement with local gospel quartet music impacted his secular music career in many ways.

First, Brown traded musical roles with other members of the Flames, all of whom shared the duties of lead singer, percussionist, and keyboard player (Hay 2003, 115, 117). The experience he gained singing multiple vocal parts and playing different musical instruments probably helped him become a more effective band-leader and arranger later in life. Second, Brown's performances with the Flames were marked by tremendous onstage physical energy. Also, Brown was deeply concerned with being immaculately dressed for performances and off-stage appearances (Ibid., 117 – 8, 120). Throughout his secular career, Brown was known for his virtuosic and energetic dancing. He was also known for his carefully-coiffed hair and flamboyant stage clothing. Third, the Flames were particularly influenced by two Black gospel quartets from the south known for their raw, rural sound: the Blind Boys of Alabama and the Swanee Quintet (Ibid., 112). As will be discussed later in this chapter, Brown's own vocal and improvisational style was influenced by the raw timbres and intense call-and-response strategies of these quartets.

The fourth element that emerged from Hay's research is the most relevant to this chapter. The Flames approached sacred and secular boundaries in their repertoire, style, and performance venues with great fluidity. The group performed gospel music and rhythm-and-blues at the same time in their career. They performed secular music at movie theaters and nightclubs and gospel

²⁴³ Brown was able to obtain an early release from prison by claiming to a parole board that he wanted to sing gospel music. According to Brown, "I wrote a letter to the Board of Pardon and Parole. I told them I wanted to sing for the Lord. They let me out" (Millender 1979, 1).

music at religious functions. Several group members even sold “bootleg” liquor in the Toccoa area while still involved in gospel music (Ibid., 120). Brown and his fellow performers apparently felt comfortable singing both secular and sacred music. However, some older members of the local Black religious community frowned on this practice. Following the Flames’ growing success in late 1952, members of Toccoa’s Mt. Zion Baptist Church “censured” Brown and Bobby Byrd, the Flames’ founder, in the basement of the church.²⁴⁴ According to Byrd, the church leaders told them that they were “either going to play blues music or gospel music,” but they could not continue to perform both (Ibid., 118). The young men apologized to the church members but did not change their behavior, continuing to perform both kinds of music (Ibid., 118).²⁴⁵ Although I have not found any statement by Brown about their official censure, the church’s explicit position on the incompatibility of secular and sacred music probably affected him personally.²⁴⁶

In the early 1950s, Brown received input about pursuing professional quartet singing that dramatically impacted his career trajectory. In the 1979 interview with the *Augusta News-Review* given a week after his religious awakening, Brown stated that he was “talked out of” singing gospel by other gospel groups back in the 1950s (Millender 1979, 1). Brown refused to tell the reporter exactly what those groups told him (Ibid.). I have not found any other interview in which Brown made this statement. If it is true, it reveals significant information about his early

²⁴⁴ Byrd described the censure as “hauling up the Covenant, I guess that’s what they called it” (Hay 2003, 118). Presumably he means that the church had a written covenant describing appropriate moral lifestyles which church members were expected to observe.

²⁴⁵ It is perhaps notable that other band members who attended Toccoa’s Trinity CME Church were not censured for their participation in the Flames (Hay 2003, 118). The distinction in local churches’ treatment of the young men might point to differing denominational ideologies about the boundaries and tensions between sacred and secular music in the lives of congregation members. The Christian Methodist Episcopal church is a predominantly Black denomination.

²⁴⁶ The incident also foregrounds the relationship between entertainment and religious expression inherent in the gospel quartet genre as a whole. The fact that the Flames could perform gospel or secular music using the same instruments, style, stage tactics, and vocal parts points to the close musical and social relationship of gospel and early rhythm-and-blues.

relationship with gospel music. Brown's statement implies that he initially intended to pursue a career in gospel music rather than in secular music.²⁴⁷ By early 1956 Brown and the group had begun to record secular music. The Flames became his backup singers for his secular shows and recordings without even changing their group name (Hay 2003).²⁴⁸ Brown's experience singing gospel quartet music in Toccoa was the first stage of his lifelong negotiation between sacred and secular musical styles and the expectations of listeners, audience members, consumers, and the Black religious community.

When Brown and the Flames left Toccoa in late 1955 or early 1956, they all abandoned gospel music as a career choice. However, James Brown continued to develop personal and professional relationships with gospel performers and Black ministers even prior to his 1979 conversion. No information seems to be available regarding Brown's interactions with gospel musicians from 1956 to 1965. In 1966, Brown invited Augusta's Swanee Quintet to tour with him as his opening act. Over the next year or so, the Quintet opened his concerts by performing gospel music at venues like Madison Square Garden and the Apollo Theater (Brown and Tucker 1986; www.swaneequintet.com; J. Carter 2008; Griffin 2008). In 1973, Brown formed a close and public relationship with the Black minister and emerging politician Al Sharpton. Ultimately the relationship acquired media attention as Sharpton joined Brown on tours (Suggs 2006). As

²⁴⁷ The enormity of this statement is yet another argument for the need to understand Brown's relationship to religion and gospel music in order to more fully grasp his professional and personal development.

²⁴⁸ In another indication of how closely gospel and secular song were intertwined in Brown's early career, he and the Flames performed the gospel song "Looking for My Mother" at an audition in Macon in late 1955 for a secular recording contract (Hay 2003, 125). According to Brown's reminiscences of the audition, "During [the Flames'] short gospel career we had developed a little routine where we walked around like we were doing what the words said: 'When I get to heaven, I'm going to look for my mother.' It brought tears to [the nightclub owner's] eyes" (Brown [1990] quoted in Hay 2003, 125). The owner was so impressed that he immediately arranged for the group to record a demo album of the secular song "Please, Please, Please" at a Macon studio (Ibid., 125). When the recording was distributed to radio stations across the country, it became Brown and the Flames' inroad into national prominence.

stated in the introduction, Brown also released one or two recordings of religious music prior to his 1979 conversion.

Around the time of his 1979 religious (re)birth, Brown was involved in the filming of the popular *Blues Brothers* movie (Millender 1979). In the film Brown played the role of a charismatic Black preacher, Rev. Cleophus Brown. As in his 1976 recording of “When the Saints Go Marching In” on the album *Hell*, Brown’s performance of Black sacred music in the film is embedded within a secular framework. Although an analysis of his role in the film exceeds the scope of this chapter, Brown’s performance is notable for his conversance in the distinctive rhetorical and vocal characteristics of Black preaching traditions. Brown’s mini-sermon in the film concludes with his performance of the gospel song “Old Landmark” with a Black choir.

The beginning of this section described Brown’s early exposure to the United House of Prayer as the springboard for his lifelong awareness of multiple forms of Black religious expression. This familiarity with various Black denominations and churches was foregrounded in the 1979 interview with the *Augusta News-Review*. Brown described to the journalist his deliberate choice to join a Baptist church rather than a Pentecostal or a Methodist church. He had investigated all three denominations and, from his comments in the interview, actually seemed to prefer the Methodist church. He stated that “the Methodist Church expressed my ideals. I didn’t want a lot of yelling” (Millender 1979, 1). He acknowledged to the reporter that “I’m loud and I’m a whooper. I guess I just wanted to be quiet and relaxed in church” (Ibid.). It is unclear in the interview why Brown ultimately chose to join a Baptist church, since his stated preference seemed to be a Methodist church.²⁴⁹ Brown described the church he joined, St. Peter’s Baptist Church, as “tiny and rural” (Ibid., 1).

²⁴⁹ Brown also stated in the interview that at some point he considered “joining the Muslims”; however, he did not offer further elaboration (Ibid.).

These scattered pieces of evidence from his childhood to his 1979 religious crisis constitute an important conceptual thread woven throughout Brown's life and career. Musically, artistically, professionally, and personally, Brown was intermittently involved with gospel music. He also acquired a deep knowledge of multiple musical expressions of Black Christianity, particularly within various Black denominations. After his 1979 religious crisis, other evidence began to emerge that even more explicitly linked him with local gospel music.

Performing on and Viewing *POQ* in the 1980s and 1990s

Aside from Brown's longtime relationship with the Swanee Quintet, he seems not to have been closely affiliated with Augusta's gospel music tradition as an adult until the 1980s. Some of the most compelling evidence of Brown's enthusiastic involvement with local gospel in the 1980s and 1990s are reports that he faithfully viewed, supported, and occasionally appeared on *POQ* (*POQ* May 26 1992; *POQ* May 16 1993; *The Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* 2006; Rhodes 2006; F. Carter 2007b; K. Howard 2008). Flo Carter, a longtime white performer on *POQ* and one of Brown's friends and musical colleagues, recalled that at the time of Brown's death in December 2006,

He frequently watched the *Parade of Quartets* TV show that airs on WJBF on Sunday mornings that I and my family sing on, and he came to sing on the show quite a few times. The host, Henry Howard, thought the world of him (quoted in Rhodes 2006).²⁵⁰

As stated in the introduction to the chapter, Brown professed a high opinion of the program's professionalism, uniqueness, and capacity to convey religious sentiment and ritual. He confirmed

²⁵⁰ Flo Carter's relationship with James Brown included performing at local musical events as well as maintaining a personal friendship. She related to me a particularly memorable instance when Brown saw Carter and her husband celebrating their wedding anniversary at a local restaurant. He came to their table and serenaded the couple with a quiet, ballad-like rendition of "As Time Goes By." Carter attended Brown's funeral in Augusta in December 2006, and characterized him to me as "spiritual" (2007b). Both she and *Augusta Chronicle* journalist Don Rhodes stressed to me that Brown's excellence as a gospel singer was openly known in Augusta (Ibid.; Rhodes 2007h).

this opinion during another interview on a *POQ* episode from the 1990s when he stated that “this is the best gospel show there is” and that he would “like to see it go all over the world” (*The Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* 2006).

According to Karlton Howard, Brown appeared on the program approximately four or five times since the early 1980s, singing and granting interviews (2008). Extant footage from the 1990s in the Media Archives currently includes three episodes on which James Brown either performed gospel music or was interviewed. Interview subjects related to the local Black community and included political issues, religious beliefs, artistic and cultural developments, and gospel music. The episodes were filmed on May 26, 1992 (Appendix C, #66); May 16, 1993 (Appendix C, #54); and on an unspecified date in the early 1990s (*The Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* 2006). The May 26, 1992, episode contains only three minutes of interview footage of Brown with Leon Austin and host Henry Howard, part of which was quoted in the introduction of this chapter. Brown’s remarks and performances in the other two episodes will be analyzed in this section of the chapter. In each analysis, the episode will be briefly described in its entirety before Brown’s performances and interviews are interpreted using musical, cultural, historical, and textual analysis.

The May 16, 1993, episode, hosted by Karlton Howard and his father Henry Howard, included performances by local gospel musicians and two nationally-known popular musicians. *POQ* was still being filmed live at this time and lasted for ninety minutes. Local ensembles on the show included the Dixie Jubilaires, a quartet that performed frequently on *POQ* in the 1990s; the Banks Sisters, a female gospel quartet that appeared several times on *POQ* in the 1990s; the Ben Johnson Choir from the Hayden Baptist Church of Aiken, South Carolina; and the Sanctuary

Choir from the Macedonia Baptist Church in Martinez, Georgia.²⁵¹ Each of these groups performed approximately two pieces, and each group brought its own accompanying instrumentalists. The two choral performances also used soloists from within the group. The two nationally-known performers appearing on the show were James Brown and Rev. Joe Simon. Simon was a nationally-known R&B singer who stopped singing secular music when he was converted to Christianity. He later dedicated his life to Christian ministry, traveling the country to preach and sing at revival meetings.²⁵² According to his remarks on *POQ*, Simon was in Augusta that weekend to preach and sing at a revival service. Simon prayed during the show's weekly prayer segment and sang with Brown and Henry Howard at the end of the prayer. Brown sang a solo during the episode. Simon and Brown were interviewed by host Henry Howard during the episode.²⁵³

During James Brown's interview, he and Howard reminisced about attending Silas X. Floyd Elementary School, drinking three-cent beverages, and their impressions of teachers and mutual childhood friends.²⁵⁴ Brown recalled getting in trouble at school, performing in talent shows at the Lenox Theater and the Palace Theater, and playing sports (boxing and baseball).²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Aiken, South Carolina, is approximately twenty miles from Augusta. Martinez, Georgia, is approximately eight miles from Augusta. Regarding the specific names of the choirs, it is customary for Black churches to have multiple choral groups. These choirs might be organized by repertoire type, age, gender, or the service at which they typically perform. Sometimes the groups are named after the person who initially organized them. Although not confirmed in the *POQ* episode, this may be the case with the Ben Johnson Choir.

²⁵² Simon discussed his conversion experience and subsequent departure from secular music at some length on this episode of *POQ*. Further detail on Simon's secular music career can be found in Dahl's biographic sketch of him at <http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=11:fifexqr5ld0e>.

²⁵³ Other non-musical components of that day's episode included the Sunday School lesson taught by Rev. Washington of the Macedonia Baptist Church in Martinez, Georgia. As is typical for any group performing on *POQ*, all of the performers discussed upcoming concert appearances with host Karlton Howard. The lead singer of the Dixie Jubilaires also mentioned several sick viewers to whom he wished to dedicate that morning's performance.

²⁵⁴ Various *Augusta Chronicle* articles, interviews with Augustans, and *POQ* episodes confirm that Henry Howard and James Brown grew up together, attending the same elementary school, and remained on good terms until Howard's death in October 2005.

²⁵⁵ These were Black theaters. Brown discussed performing in the Harlem Talent Revue, which was mentioned to me by Augusta resident Dr. James Carter, III. Carter recalled that Steve Manderson hosted the Harlem Talent Revue (2008). Manderson and Brown may have known each other from this association.

He also stated that Augusta had much musical and artistic talent that ought to be exploited professionally. He named several local musicians he felt should advance professionally in the music industry. Brown attributed his own commercial success and his influence with Blacks in America to divine providence. Brown reiterated the need for Black economic, educational, and political ownership in order for African Americans in Augusta and across the country to progress socially.

Most striking about the interview is the detail with which Brown discusses his religious development. He mentions his 1979 awakening, which he described as a spiritual crisis that effected personal change:

God has blessed me to make it; as time went by, I just got closer and closer to God. I mean, I've always been close to God; but as long as I've been performing, I didn't really find the truth until I joined St. Peter's and became a minister about seventeen years ago, and I was baptized... Things started coming to me. When God, Christ, got in my life, it made a difference.²⁵⁶

His remarks here are an example of how he publicly aligned himself with Christian community through his *POQ* appearances. Henry Howard's descriptions of Brown during the episode affirm Brown's place in Christian community. Howard's comments simultaneously acknowledge the singer's public image as a secular performer with a troubled past. At one point Howard refers to Brown as "my brother in Christ—and you call him Mr. Soul, and he is the Godfather of Soul—Mr. James Brown." Later in the episode, Howard mentions hearing Brown perform a gospel song at a recent local event, and asks him to sing a gospel piece during the episode. In transitioning to Brown's gospel performance, Howard makes another statement that evokes Brown's controversial public profile:

²⁵⁶ Brown appears to have misremembered the date of his baptism at St. Peter's as occurring in 1976. According to the *Augusta News-Review* article quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the event occurred in 1979 (Millender 1979). After discussing Brown's remark with *POQ* producer Karlton Howard and *Augusta Chronicle* music journalist Don Rhodes, I am convinced that Brown did not mean he became a "minister" in the official or ordained sense, but that he became an ambassador for Christian living.

You know...regardless of what you've seen of a person down through the years,
God knows his heart...Today is going to prove to many of you out there,
regardless of what many of you out there feel, that he is a man, a man of wisdom
of faith, a man of love...Mr. Brown, do it the way you wanna do it.

Brown's musical performances on the program also affirm his knowledge of musical and rhetorical codes used by the Black religious community. By default, this knowledge publicly solidifies his place within the religious community. His first performance is a lazy, blues-inflected rendition of "That Lucky Old Sun." The composition is an interesting performance choice for *POQ*: it is a Tin Pan Alley song, not a gospel song.²⁵⁷ However, its text focuses on earthly hardship and future deliverance in vaguely religious language ("show me that river and take me across"). Brown's vocal timbre is lyrical, unstrained by years of screaming, as he expresses his envy of "that lucky old sun that has nothin' to do but roll around heaven all day." Combined with Brown's improvisational approach, the text successfully projects the ethos of a gospel song.

In his verbal interpolations to the text proper, Brown demonstrates his familiarity with gospel performance practice. This is seen in his use of repetition, his demonstration of hope within difficult conditions, and his inclusion of audience members as part of the communal experience. Near the end of the song, Brown begins to personalize the text heavily as he wails in broken phrases, none of which are part of the song's original lyrics:

When you can't breathe no more, you just wanna roll around heaven; when your
eyes begin to fail, aches and pains, but we got faith, because we're gonna roll
around heaven. I want you to pray for me, so one day I will be able, able, able to
roll around heaven all day.

Brown's fabled manipulation of verbal repetition is evident here in the parallel structure he creates by beginning two adjoining phrases with the word "when." Brown again uses repetition

²⁵⁷ The song, written by James Lamont "Haven" Gillespie and Beasley Smith (1949), has also been recorded by Frankie Lane, Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, K.D. Lang, Ray Charles, Bob Dylan, and Johnny Cash, among others (Trager 2004, 610 – 1). For Gillespie's original lyrics, see Appendix J.

when he reiterates “able” three times.²⁵⁸ As is often the case in gospel lyrics, Brown embeds his improvisational litany of difficulties within a framework of hope. In this performance, Brown shifts the narrative trajectory with the single syllable “but.” With this word, he interrupts his own despair and the despair of others with a glimmer of hope: “But we got faith, because we’re gonna roll around heaven.”

He also acknowledges his viewers as part of a religious community when he sings “I want you to pray for me.” Again, these lyrics were not included in the piece’s original text. In fact, the improvisatory section transcribed above is the only instance in the entire performance when the lyrics are directed to an audience. The song’s original lyrics simply describe the sun’s enviable position. During the bridge and final verse, the text vaguely directs a plea towards divine providence (see Appendix J for Gillespie’s lyrics to “Lucky Old Sun”). None of the song’s original lyrics address the audience in any way. However, Brown’s improvisatory interjection incorporates other members of the Christian community—with himself situated fully within that community—with the use of “we” and “I.”

Brown incorporated the viewing audience into his narrative of religious hope, even though the audience was not physically present to respond to him. His acknowledgement of the religious community reflects his understanding of the historical and cultural significance of group participation in Black religious expression. This understanding was articulated in his 1986 autobiography. The context of Brown’s remarks, quoted below, is his recollections of the Black church services he observed as a child:

I had been to a revival service and had seen a preacher who really had a lot of fire. He was just screaming and yelling and stomping his foot and then he dropped to his knees. The people got into it with him, answering him and shouting and

²⁵⁸ Brown built an entire genre, funk music, on the repetition of short verbal and musical cells. His mastery of verbal repetition and other techniques for building tension most likely stems from his early exposure to Black sacred music, in which repetition has been a common feature for centuries.

clapping time. After that...I watched the preachers real close. Then I'd go home and imitate them because *I* wanted to preach...Audience participation in church is something the darker race of people has going because of a lot of trials and tribulations, because of things we understand about human nature. It's something I can't explain, but I can bring it out of people. I'm not the only person who has the ability, but I *work* at it, and I'm sure a lot of my stage show came out of the church (Brown and Tucker 1986, 152).

A second musical performance in the same episode exemplifies Brown's public expressions of Christian belief, articulated within a communal framework involving other *POQ* participants. This performance was a group improvisation by James Brown, host Henry Howard, and program guest Joe Simon. The improvisation began during Simon's prayer, which was accompanied by a keyboard, and culminated in a song performed after the prayer.²⁵⁹ During the prayer Brown can be heard in the background punctuating Simon's phrases with pitched exclamations such as "well" and "oh Lord." After praying, Simon begins to sing the refrain of E.W. Blandy's hymn "Where He Leads Me (I Will Follow) (1890)."²⁶⁰ The original text of Blandy's refrain is

Where He leads me, I will follow.
Where He leads me, I will follow.
Where He leads me, I will follow.
I'll go with Him, with Him, all the way.

Towards the end of Simon's performance of this refrain, Henry Howard and James Brown begin an improvisatory dialogue. The dialogue confirms all of the participants' familiarity with the rhetorical and musical codes of gospel music. Below is a verbal transcription roughly indicating the timing and progression of their participatory dialogue:

²⁵⁹The verbal continuum of the weekly prayer segment on the *POQ* includes elements of song, speech, and the chanting technique common in the sermons and prayers of many Black sacred traditions. It is common in many Black churches and denominations for instrumentalists to accompany prayer by playing riffs and punctuating the ends of spoken or chanted phrases. The musical interactions between the individual praying, the congregation's interjections, and the instrumentalists create multiple layers of call-and-response. These same interactions often occur during the weekly prayer segment on *POQ*.

²⁶⁰ Although Simon heavily personalizes the tune with pauses, interjected phrases, melodic embellishments, and ametrical delivery of text, he is clearly singing the tune typically paired with Blandy's text in hymnals, composed by John Norris.

Simon [singing the refrain the first time]: “Where He leads me, I will follow. Where He leads me, I will follow. Where He leads me, I will follow. I’ll go with Him, with Him, all the way.”

Howard [hollering after Simon completes the refrain]: “Do it again!”

Simon [begins to repeat the refrain much more ametrically, varying the text of the first phrase; the accompanying instrumentalists follow his phrasing attentively]: “Where he guides me, I will follow--”

Brown [yelling]: “Sing your song!”

Howard [speaking to Simon]: “Tell ’em where you’ll go: will you go in the valley? Will you go in the valley with Him?”

Simon [singing]: “I’ll go in the valley. Surely I’ll go in the valley. I’m determined to go in the valley--”

Brown [yelling]: “Come on, son!”

Simon [singing]: “I made up my mind I’ll never turn back. I’ll go with Him!”

Brown: “Won’t turn back!”

Howard [calling out; by this time Brown and Howard have moved much closer to Simon and his microphone]: “Somebody wanna hear you do it again, just one more time!”

Simon: [begins to hum the song’s tune]

Howard: [speaks a few of the refrain’s lyrics while Simon is humming, encouraging Simon to resume singing the text instead of merely humming pitches]: “The devil can’t hear what you’re saying when you hum!”

Brown [yelling]: “Come on! Come on! Come on!”

[here Howard begins to sing the first few phrases of the refrain while Brown, also now singing, echoes Howard’s phrases for a few moments]

Howard [speaking again to Simon]: “How far are you going? Say it! How far?”

Soon after Howard’s question “How far?” the camera fades to black before Simon has a chance to answer Howard. The key to understanding how the three vocalists created and sustained dramatic energy is the final line of the refrain. The refrain’s final line was actually

never uttered during the collective improvisation. Although the hymn's final line of text might have been sung or spoken after the cameras faded, it was apparently not broadcast to audiences. The hymn's refrain ends with the text "I'll go with Him *all the way*" (author's emphasis). This climactic affirmation is the unspoken phrase guiding the entire improvisatory experience. Since the final line of the refrain was not captured on camera, only a viewer with prior knowledge of the entire hymn text would appreciate the dramatic trajectory of the improvisatory scene.

The communal improvisation above is structured by the strategy of delaying the arrival of the final superlative, "all the way." Howard in particular is playing on assumed knowledge of this last line with questions such as "How far are you going? Say it! How far?" Howard's queries interrupt the soloist's movement towards the theological, musical, and rhetorical goal of the refrain. Howard's interruptions create a heightened sense of anticipation as the knowledgeable viewer awaits the climactic answer: "all the way." Simon forestalls his final response and increases dramatic energy with improvisatory interpolations such as "I made up my mind I'll never turn back." Like Howard, Brown creates dramatic suspense as he affirms the others' expressions by echoing their words ("Won't turn back!"). He simultaneously expresses his desire to hear the singer's answer *and* ensures the delay of that catharsis through his repeated interjections of "Come on! Come on! Come on!".

These sophisticated rhetorical strategies facilitate communal and individual affirmation of religious beliefs. They are common in gospel music performances and church services in many Black religious traditions. Brown actively participates in this articulation of religious belief in the public space of a television studio. He does so, not as the primary soloist, but as simply a member of the religious community. In this case, the central Christian doctrine of the believer's faithfulness to God and His divine will is being reinforced by the communal improvisation. By

participating in this moment, James Brown demonstrates familiarity with the rhetorical and musical strategies common in Black sacred musical traditions. In this moment, he reaffirms one of the central doctrines of Christianity—total commitment to the divine purpose and calling.

On another Sunday morning in the early 1990s, Brown surprised the Brewsteraires by appearing at the WJBF studios and requesting to sing with them on that morning's *POQ*.²⁶¹

According to Joel Walker, lead singer of the Brewsteraires,

[One] Sunday morning when we went to the television station, [producer and host Henry] Howard met us at the door and he said 'Look...last Sunday James Brown was here...and he said he wouldn't come down here anymore unless y'all would be here—and sure enough, about two weeks later, we got a phone call and [Mr. Howard] said 'Look, make sure you be at the television station 'cause he's coming, and he wants y'all to be there.' So we got there a little early...and when we walked through the door, he just stopped [rehearsing] like we was—like it, like it was in reverse, like we was the celebrity. And he just sits down and kind of starts shaking your hand and stuff, and says he watches it every Sunday morning, which I didn't believe him. And, sure enough, in about ten, fifteen minutes it was time for this program to come on, so he asked me did I know a certain song, and I said 'Yeah, I've heard them songs,' and surprising to me, we went right on air with him without even practicing the song... I couldn't—I really couldn't believe that!... When we got back home that Sunday, people was, oh man, people was just amazed that we performed with him (2007).

During the episode, James Brown performed three songs with the Brewsteraires: “Old Ship of Zion,” “Do You Know Him,” and “When That Evening Sun Goes Down.” Brown's pre-performance remarks on the episode demonstrate how he referenced historical contexts and religious texts to publicly situate himself within the religious community and the gospel tradition.

Prior to performing with the Brewsteraires, Brown is interviewed by host Karlton Howard. During the interview, he recites a litany of well-known quartet singers' names, weaving

²⁶¹ Although it is difficult to determine precisely when this occurred, it obviously happened prior to February 1995, when the *POQ* transitioned from live to taped broadcasts. In 2007, Walker recalled the performance as occurring “about ten years ago.”

himself into the list as a historical presence. As soon as host Karlton Howard introduces him, Brown says,

Well, everything starts right here, I remember the [Swanee] Quintet, and go back many years to Julius Cheeks, go back to the Pilgrim Travelers—I can do all those songs... Oh, Archie Brownlee was my all-time. And then Clarence Fountain, and then Brother Joe Mays, and Reverend C.L. Franklin—so we go way back together.²⁶²

Moving on to discuss the group he was about to perform with, Brown compares the Brewsteraires' "spunk" to that of Ira Tucker and the Dixie Hummingbirds. The comment demonstrates familiarity with the musical style of the Hummingbirds, an iconic Black gospel quartet.²⁶³ Brown dedicates his upcoming performance of "Old Ship of Zion" to local people in the hospital at the time of the broadcast. He calls them by name, thus highlighting his intimate involvement with the local religious community.

Brown then prefaces his performance of the "Old Ship of Zion" with a miniature sermon that indicates his knowledge of orthodox Christian beliefs. Brown also uses the sermonette as a transition to the song's ship imagery by repeating the term "get on board." As the keyboardist begins to play using the Hammond organ setting, Brown introduces the song's theme of the Christian journey:

Speaking of getting on board [instrumental introduction begins]: God makes it easy for us all to get on board, and at some point in your life you should get on board. Right here I'd just like to say, for God's sake, and in the name of his son Jesus, that the greatest love song in the world is that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son; whosoever believeth in him shall not perish"—John 3:16. But John 3:17 says, "God sent not his son into the world to destroy the

²⁶² Julius Cheeks was the lead singer of the Sensational Nightingales; Archie Brownlee was the lead singer for the Blind Boys of Mississippi; and Clarence Fountain was the lead singer for the Blind Boys of Alabama. Along with the Swanee Quintet and the Pilgrim Travelers, all these quartets nationally-known during the genre's mid-century commercial peak. They were known for their raw, "hard gospel" singing style and charismatic stage presence. Brother Joe May and Reverend C.L. Franklin were solo gospel performers.

²⁶³ The Dixie Hummingbirds were one of the most charismatic and commercially-successful of all the Black gospel quartets active during the "Golden Age" of quartet singing. Begun in Greenville, South Carolina, in the 1930s, they later moved to Philadelphia. They still perform occasionally. For more detail on the group, see Zoltan's *Great God A'Mighty! The Dixie Hummingbirds: Celebrating the Rise of Soul Gospel Music* (2005).

world, but that the world through him might be saved.” And you can make that happen. Thank God, I’m a witness this morning. I just wanna say [begins singing]: *’Tis the old ship of Zion*.²⁶⁴

Quoting the relatively little-known John 3:17 indicates Brown’s grasp of the sacred texts and core beliefs of traditional, mainstream Christianity. Brown himself selected “Old Ship of Zion,” suggesting it to the Brewsteraires immediately before *POQ* went on-air that morning (Walker 2007). Brown’s selection of an old spiritual performed in the blues idiom seems to resonate with his own legacy as a musician with deep roots in traditional Black sacred and secular genres.

“Do You Know Him?”, performed in this episode by Brown, the Brewsteraires, and Percy Griffin of the Swanee Quintet, illustrates how Brown functioned musically within the gospel quartet context.²⁶⁵ The analysis focuses on the vamp section of the piece, a moment of intense musical, rhetorical, and religious expression in quartet performances. The communal significance of the vamp and the rhetorical strategies used in it must be grasped in order to appreciate Brown’s participation in this song’s vamp. Boyer describes the gospel vamp as

a short musical phrase of two, four, or eight measures that is repeated over and over [and] is the most important stylistic element in contemporary gospel. Purely African reiteration, it is a wonderful device and appears to contribute little to substance but a great deal to style (1992c, 285).

According to Boyer, the device became popular in gospel in the late 1940s and remained a prominent features of the genre thereafter (2000, 110).²⁶⁶ The following description of the vamp, which expands on Boyer’s definition, is drawn from my observations of live and recorded

²⁶⁴ As stated earlier in this chapter, Brown was impacted profoundly by Black preaching styles as a boy. In the 1979 interview he gave to the *Augusta News-Review* a week after his baptism, Brown was asked by the journalist if he thought he might preach someday. Brown replied “I don’t want to premeditate. I don’t know how far it’s gonna go. I’ll go where God sends me” (Millender 1979, 5).

²⁶⁵ “Do You Know Him” is a well-known gospel song that has been recorded by artists such as Mahalia Jackson. I have been unable to find information about the song’s origins or composer.

²⁶⁶ For a discussion of how vamps in jazz music are related to gospel vamps, see “Modernism, Race, and Aesthetics” in Monson’s *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (2007).

quartet performances. I have noted these characteristics in the performances of amateur, semi-professional, and nationally-known Black quartets from the 1940s to the present.

In gospel music, the vamp occurs after a piece's verses and refrains have been sung. It consists of a combination of harmonic stasis and short melodic, textual, and rhythmic units derived from previously-stated material in the song.²⁶⁷ In a quartet vamp, the antiphonal interactions of lead singer(s), backup singers, instrumentalists, and audience members reach their peak of intensity and density.²⁶⁸ The background singers typically sing an ostinato derived from a word or shortened phrase from the song's verses or refrains. The lead singer or singers guide the trajectory of the vamp through musical and textual improvisation. It is an opportunity for the lead singer(s) to imprint their personal performance style, vocal virtuosity, and religious testimony.²⁶⁹ Techniques used to improvise and personalize during the vamp include the exploration of contrasting vocal timbres, dynamic levels, and ranges; the creation and repetition of rhythmic and/or melodic cells and motifs; and the performance of elaborate, melismatic passages with blue notes, bent pitches, glissandi, and other effects. In some gospel compositions and performances, multiple vamp sections are introduced, called "chain vamps" (Kidula 1998, 309).

The lead singer is expected to skillfully manipulate text in the vamp. Quartet lead singers draw on a common bank of poetic and non-poetic texts during improvisatory moments. Poetic

²⁶⁷ The quartets that I have observed often vamp on a tonic with an added seventh. Passing motions to intermediate chords like the subdominant are also very common in vamps. The general impression of harmonic stasis is maintained since the intermediate chords are articulated on weak beats and are aurally perceived as occurring within the overall framework of the tonic.

²⁶⁸ In a live quartet performance, the audience sometimes becomes involved in the vamp by completing the second half of well-known stock phrases after the first half is sung by a lead singer. The interaction of the lead singer with the instrumentalists and background singers in a gospel ensemble during the vamp has been compared to "a West African drum ensemble, with the singer as the master drummer, improvising against the background" (Kidula 1998, 303).

²⁶⁹ Beginning in the 1940s or 1950s it became common in the quartet tradition for two lead singers within a single quartet to engage with one another and with the backup singers in call-and-response patterns during vamp sections.

texts used in vamps include “wandering couplets” which originated in the spirituals,²⁷⁰ and couplets, verses, or refrains drawn from Protestant hymns.²⁷¹ Non-poetic improvisatory texts include Biblical scenes and personalities, brief exclamations such as “Lord have mercy,” and biographical events centering on divine assistance. These religious testimonials center on the divine provision of daily necessities such as food, money, work, and physical healing. The texts and verbal devices described above comprise a rhetorical matrix with which gospel performers must be familiar in order to successfully engage with audience members and performers in an improvisatory dialogue.

The vamp of “Do You Know Him” illustrates Brown’s knowledge of how these musical and rhetorical improvisatory techniques work within the quartet framework.²⁷² The vamp begins with the Brewsteraires’ backup singers sing a syncopated ostinato consisting of the phrase “Do, do, do do you know him?” The singers’ ostinato remains on the tonic, around which the instrumentalists create virtuosic, improvisatory riffs. Since Brown occupied the role of solo lead singer immediately preceding the vamp, he is the first soloist to extemporize during the vamp. Brown begins the vamp by mentioning Biblical scenes and stories. These include Ezekiel seeing the wheel, Jonah in the belly of the whale, blind Bartimaeus sitting on the side of the road, and Lazarus’s lengthy illness. Brown’s initial rhetorical approach demonstrates his familiarity with

²⁷⁰ Popular “wandering couplets” quoted during gospel vamps include: “I went in the valley; I didn’t go to stay; my soul got happy and I stayed all day” and “I went in the water one day; the water was chilly and cold; it chilled this natural body of mine, but it didn’t chill my soul.” These couplets can easily fit into different metrical, rhythmic, and melodic schemes. Unlike the hymn texts sometimes quoted in gospel composition and improvisation, these and similar couplets cannot be traced to specific authors. Many of these couplets first appeared in the texts of many different spirituals. Boyer discusses the role of wandering couplets in improvisation and personalization of spirituals and gospel songs (2000, 240 – 1). Spirituals containing wandering couplets can be found in Peters’ *Lyrics of the Afro-American Spiritual: A Documentary Collection* (1993).

²⁷¹ Hymns frequently quoted during gospel vamps include “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone” (text, George Allen), “God Moves in a Mysterious Way” (text, William Cowper), and “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” (text, Horatius Bonar). The significance of these eighteenth-century Protestant hymn texts in *POQ* performances will be discussed in great detail in Chapter Six.

²⁷² Since the analytical focus is on the dramatic and rhetorical action that occurs in the relatively self-contained vamp, the song’s complete text is not provided as part of the analysis.

Biblical texts and with the gospel tradition of alluding to Scriptural persons and events during improvisation.²⁷³

Following Brown's litany of Biblical allusions, host Henry Howard, standing at the edge of the set, passes his microphone to Percy Griffin in an apparently spontaneous gesture. Griffin positions himself next to Brown in front of the backup singers, a common stage arrangement for lead singers in gospel performances. Brown's eyes are closed as he continues his catalogue of Biblical tableaux, and Griffin sings two "whoa yeahs" to attract Brown's attention. Brown opens his eyes and acknowledges Griffin's presence. Brown immediately ceases his Biblical allusions and physically turns towards Griffin, inviting him to participate in the vamp by addressing the song's central question to him: "Do you know Him?" Their subsequent interaction creates a second layer of call-and-response as the background singers continue their incessant query of "do, do, do you know Him?"

The initial rhetorical exchange between Brown and Griffin, given below, is comprised of iterations of the song's question and its answer. These are sung on the flattened-seventh and tonic scale degrees. Note how Brown changes the trajectory of the exchange by *answering* the question, which prompts Griffin to do the same.

Brown: Do you know Him?

Griffin: Do you know Him?

Brown: Do you know Him?

Griffin: Do you know Him?

Brown: I know him!

Griffin: I know him, James!

Brown then restates the initial question:

²⁷³ These Biblical allusions do not necessarily clearly correspond to the central theme or narrative of the text proper. This apparent narrative disjunct is a fairly typical occurrence in gospel vamps. Gospel singers seem to use texts in their vamps for their familiarity rather than for any particular theological congruence with the text of the song's verses and refrain.

Brown: Do you know him?
Griffin: Do you know him?

Brown then proactively yields his position as leader, singing the command “Somebody praise Him” while motioning to Griffin to move to the center of the stage. Brown edges quickly to the left, Griffin moves into the center, and the two men continue the vamp in their new locations. According to Brown’s verbal exhortation and body language, Griffin now controls the improvisatory moment. Almost at once, Griffin stops relying on the verbal cell “Do you know Him?” Instead he sings the first half of a stock description of the Christ figure frequently heard in gospel improvisation.

Griffin: Do you know Him?
Brown: Say it!
Griffin: He’s the lily—
Brown: Come on!
Griffin: Of the valley—

In its entirety, the stock phrase is: “He’s the lily of the valley; the bright and morning star.”

Brown confirms his comfort and familiarity with gospel music’s rhetorical matrix by supplying the next part of the phrase, which Griffin then completes:

Brown: Bright and—
Griffin: He’s the bright and morning star.
Brown: Morning star!

From this point on, Griffin’s and Brown’s vocal timbres in the vamp become less lyrical and more percussive. They begin to employ small verbal cells comprised of monosyllabic words rather than using complete Biblical allusions or long stock phrases. Brown encourages this exchange of compact verbal statements when he shouts “do it!” to Griffin:

Griffin: I’m glad!
Brown: Do it!
Griffin: I know him!
Brown: Oh, Lord!
Griffin: He been good!

At this point in the vamp, Brown once again actively facilitates communal participation. While singing the command “Come on out and sing it together,” Brown seizes Brewsteraires’ lead singer Joel Walker by the arm. Brown propels Walker from his position with the backup singers to the front of the set, then moves backwards to occupy Walker’s microphone. This gesture leaves Griffin and Walker in the foreground as improvisatory partners. Brown begins to sing the background ostinato with the other three backup singers (“Do, do, do you know Him?”). Although he now occupies a different position within the musical community, and by extension the religious community, Brown’s enthusiastic clapping and broad smile convey hearty participation in the dialogue.

A few moments later, Brown moves to the front of the stage once again and leans over to share Griffin’s microphone. With Walker remaining in front, there are now three lead singers, an unusual situation in the quartet genre. The vamp becomes musically awkward. Walker seems uncertain of which musical role he should occupy, and fluctuates between improvising in the style of a lead singer and singing the background ostinato pattern. His uncertainty is compounded by the fact that he remains physically in the position of the lead singer, at the foreground of the set. The scenario is further complicated when Brown and Griffin start to create a closed musical dialogue between themselves. The two men begin by yelling “Ah!” back and forth percussively. At first their exchange is rhythmically hesitant and off-kilter, but after a few moments Griffin and Brown settle into a groove. Their interaction consists primarily of the word “Jesus” volleyed back and forth in rapid succession. This part of the vamp is transcribed in Figure 5.1.

Because Brown and Griffin share a microphone, they are positioned quite close to one another. During the “Jesus” part of the vamp, they rapidly move towards and away from the

microphone as they exchange the rhythmic cells transcribed in Figure 5.1. Interestingly, Griffin's musical role in this part of the vamp is mostly to repeat the word "Jesus." Brown too sings "Jesus," but he also incorporates more of the song's text into the vamp, singing "do you know Him?" and "Mary's Jesus." Figure 5.1 also demonstrates that Brown introduced the prevalent rhythmic motif in this section of the vamp when he sings "Do you know him" (measure one, Figure 5.1.). After Brown introduces the dotted-sixteenth rhythm, Griffin begins to sing it as well. The end of Figure 5.1 demonstrates that Brown was also the one responsible for breaking the vamp's cycle. In the fourth measure of 5.1, Brown stops the cycle by singing/shouting "Ahhhh!" Griffin repeats the word "Jesus" one more time, then both men spin dramatically away from the microphone. The song concludes soon afterwards.

Brown

Yeah! Do you know Him? Je - sus!

Griffin

Ah! Yeah! Yeah! Je - sus!

2

Je - sus! Come on! Je - sus! Je - sus!

Je - sus! Come on! Je - sus! Je - sus!

3

Je - sus! Ma - ry's Je - sus! Ah!

Je - sus! Je - sus! Je - sus! Je - sus! Je - sus! Je - sus!

Figure 5.1: "Do You Know Him?", Conclusion of Vamp (Brown and Griffin).

The analysis of “Do You Know Him” demonstrates that during this performance, James Brown was central in facilitating a communal, participatory music-making experience within the rhetorical framework of the quartet tradition. His leadership in the improvisatory moment was enabled by his knowledge of the rhetorical techniques of the gospel quartet tradition and of Black sacred song in general. Brown’s fluidity in singing lead and background parts in this performance reflects his performances with Flames in the 1950s, when he and other group members exchanged musical roles (Hay 2003).

Brown’s and Griffin’s common stylistic approach to improvisation during the vamp was reminiscent of the “hard” gospel quartet style that emerged in the mid-twentieth century, employing percussive vocal attacks, growls, and yells. It also clearly shows the stylistic influence of the ecstatic worship of the United House of Prayer, with which both men had been involved. Percy Griffin was raised in the denomination; his father was an elder, and Griffin himself has now achieved elder status (Griffin 2008). As a child, he recalled the flamboyant founder of the denomination, Bishop “Daddy” Grace, staying with him and his family on visits to Norfolk, Virginia (Ibid.). Griffin has attended the House of Prayer church on Wrightsboro Road since moving to Augusta in 1966, and speaks in glowing terms of its shout band tradition (Ibid.).

As a child, Brown was fascinated by the ecstatic, rhythmic worship of the very same United House of Prayer church that Griffin joined a decade later. According to Brown’s recollections in his autobiography,

One thing I never saw in the churches was drums until I went to Bishop Grace’s House of Prayer. Those folks were sanctified—they *had* the beat. See, you got sanctified and you got holy. Sanctified people got more fire; holy people are more secluded...I’m holy myself, but I have a lot of sanctified in me...[Bishop Grace would] get to preaching and the people would get in a ring and they’d go round and round and go right behind one another, just shouting. Sometimes they’d fall out right there in the sawdust (Brown and Tucker 1986, 152 – 3).

Brown's recollection of the ring shout evokes intense and nearly incessant repetition of brief physical gestures, words, musical cells, and even wordless shouts or cries. These elements characterized Griffin's and Brown's exchanges in the vamp of "Do You Know Him." In the vamp footage, both men's repetitive physical gestures and compact, echoing phrases give the impression of a vocal ring shout.²⁷⁴ When analyzed through the lens of the United House of Prayer's influence as well as the influence of gospel quartets, Brown's musical approach to the vamp represents his multilayered relationship with aspects of Black sacred song.

Brown's Social and Musical Relationship with the Swanee Quintet

James Brown and Percy Griffin shared a similar musical approach to improvisation in "Do You Know Him?" for another obvious reason. By the time this episode was recorded in the early 1990s, Brown had been socially and musically involved with Griffin and the Swanee Quintet for several decades. This section of the chapter describes Brown's personal relationship with the group and provides a close reading of two recordings from the 1960s. The reading demonstrates that Brown and the Quintet have a shared history of negotiating the porous boundaries between gospel music and secular song.

When Brown first met the Quintet in the late 1940s as a boy in Augusta, he does not seem to have been involved with them musically. He fell out of touch with the Quintet when he left Augusta in the 1950s, although informants report that the group's music was very influential on Brown and the Flames when he was in Toccoa (Hay 2003). Sometime around 1966, Brown re-established contact with the Quintet, and they began to tour with him (Sacré 2005, 386; Griffin 2008; swaneequintet.com/history/html). At that point Rev. Willingham, not Percy

²⁷⁴ For perspectives on the musicological, theological, and cultural significance of the antebellum ring shout in Black history, its relationship to African rituals, and its post-bellum influence on other Black musical idioms, see Stuckey (1987), Floyd (1995), and Epstein (2003).

Griffin, was the group's lead singer. The quintet opened Brown's shows by singing thirty minutes of gospel music. Afterwards, James Brown would sometimes also perform a gospel song as a transition into his secular repertoire (Griffin 2008; J. Carter 2008).²⁷⁵ Brown also produced an album, *Step by Step*, for the Quintet in 1966. As late as 1975, the Quintet was touring with James Brown to events such as a benefit for the National Youth Movement in Madison Square Garden (Brown 1984, 241 – 2).²⁷⁶

Even when the Swanee Quintet stopped touring with Brown, their relationship with the singer thrived in the context of Augusta's local gospel traditions and institutions until Brown's death in 2006. As Griffin stated emphatically and eloquently when I asked him about Brown's relationship to gospel music, "All you can say about James Brown is he loved the Quintet, and the Quintet loved him. He was good to us" (2008). From 1991 until his death, Brown sponsored a Turkey Giveaway on Thanksgiving Day to benefit Augusta's underprivileged citizens (McKevie 2004). The Swanee Quintet performed gospel music at each of these events, singing even on the rare occasions that Brown was unable to attend the event himself (Levitz 2004). At times Brown would pray publicly at the event (Ibid.), demonstrating his identity as part of the local religious community.

During late 2006, when Percy Griffin expressed his intention of retiring from the quintet, Brown attempted to change his mind, telling a local newspaper reporter that "we hope he changes his mind some day and comes back [to the quintet]" (Brown quoted in Norton 2006; Griffin 2008). Even in the weeks before his death, when Brown was in poor physical condition, he was still actively involved in the quintet's activities. In September of 2006, Brown described

²⁷⁵ There seems to be no audio or audio-visual documentation of Brown performing gospel music at his secular concerts in the 1960s. I was unaware that Brown performed gospel as a transition into his secular shows until I interviewed Percy Griffin and Dr. James Carter, III.

²⁷⁶ The event was coordinated by the Rev. Al Sharpton and included participants as diverse as Tito Puente, Tyrone Davis, and Charles Sherrell (Brown 1984, 242).

the Quintet's annual anniversary in Augusta to a local reporter as a time "when old acquaintances come together." He hoped "everybody [would come] out [to the group's anniversary], and...have a very good, good time and just enjoy it and rejoice in each other and rejoice in the Lord" (Brown quoted in Norton 2006). In November 2006, he mentioned to Griffin some ideas for repertoire for the group to record that would "put [the group] on top of the world" (2008). Less than a month after that conversation, Brown died. His relationship with the group continues to be memorialized at Augusta gospel events. At the Swanee Quintet's 2007 anniversary, nearly a year after his death, Brown was mentioned from the stage several times by local DJs and gospel musicians. Printed programs available at the celebration included pictures of the Swanee Quintet's performances at James Brown's funeral.²⁷⁷

The Swanee Quintet was the first group to perform at the 2008 Payback James Brown Festival in Augusta. Other musicians paying homage to the Godfather of Soul that day included the Modern Skirts, the Doobie Brothers, and Branford Marsalis (see festival program, Figure 5.2). The Swanee Quintet began the festival with an hour of gospel music, just as they did for Brown when they toured with him decades earlier. Forty-five sweaty minutes into the set, lead singer Percy Griffin wanted to know "if it's alright if we sing some of those old Swanee Quintet songs for y'all." He told those of us in the audience, "Y'all don't know how hard it was back then for James Brown and the Swanee Quintet, but God made a way for us." Following this verbal cue, the guitars and keyboard that usually accompany Griffin's stage patter ceased their restless strumming and tuning, and the bass drum began to beat a slow 4/4 dirge.

²⁷⁷ Observed at Swanee Quintet's sixty-eighth anniversary, October 3, 2007, Bell Auditorium, Augusta, Georgia.

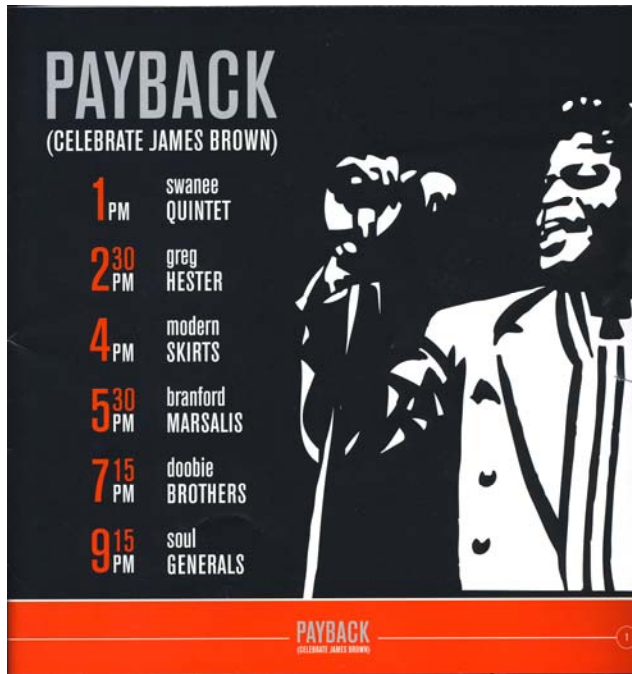


Figure 5.2: Program for Payback/Celebrate James Brown Festival, Augusta, May 2008.

For the only time during their performance, the quintet sang in a *cappella* four-part harmony over the drumbeat. The song they performed, “How I Got Over,” is a well-known piece in the gospel canon. The resonant declarations of its refrain are unparalleled even in a genre marked by triumphalism: “You know, my soul looks back and wonders how I got over.” The fact that the group chose this particular song to memorialize James Brown and their relationship serves as a graphic reminder of Brown’s complex interactions with gospel music and musicians and, by extension, with the Black religious community.²⁷⁸ At the Quintet’s sixty-ninth anniversary in October 2008, Griffin once again mentioned from the stage the debt his group

²⁷⁸ Observed May 3, 2008, at Payback, a “Celebrate James Brown” event held at the outdoor Augusta Commons in Augusta, Georgia. The Swanee Quintet performed gospel music from 1:00 to 2:00 pm. Coinciding with the opening of a three-year James Brown exhibit at the Augusta History Museum, the event was the town’s first civic concert in honor of Brown. The singer was honored in his hometown prior to his death with a bronze statue, the renaming of a street as the “James Brown Boulevard,” and the renaming of the Augusta Civic Center as the “James Brown Arena.”

owed to James Brown, then deceased for nearly two years. Griffin referred to him during the anniversary simply as “the Godfather.”

Musical evidence of the complex relationship between Brown, the Swanee Quintet, and gospel music is embedded in a pair of recordings from the 1960s. In May of 1966, Brown produced a gospel album for the Swanee Quintet entitled *Step by Step*; Brown’s horn section also performed on the album (Sacre 2005, 386). One of the more popular pieces on the album was “Try Me, Father” (www.swaneequintet.com/History.html). According to the quintet’s lead singer, Percy Griffin, James Brown wrote “Try Me, Father” for the group (Griffin 2008). The piece is a reworking of one of Brown’s R&B compositions, “Try Me,” which Brown wrote and recorded for the first time in 1959 (Ruhlmann 2003, 77).²⁷⁹ The following analysis examines musical and rhetorical intersections between Brown’s “Try Me” and the Swanee Quintet’s “Try Me Father.”

Brown’s arrangement of “Try Me” immediately reveals the influence that the quartet tradition had on his early R&B arrangements. In the version of “Try Me” on the album *Live at the Apollo* (1962), Brown is backed by the male Flames. They echo the first phrases in each verse (for example, after Brown sings “try me,” the Famous Flames echo “try me”). Brown did not write the lyrics, which were composed by an unnamed man in Florida (Hay 2003). However, the lyrics do demonstrate the thematic influence of gospel texts. The lyrics consist of a series of compact pleas from the singer to his lover to “try me,” “hold me,” “walk with me,” and “talk with me.” The same plea for close physical proximity and unbroken companionship is found throughout the gospel music repertory. In sacred music these requests are for divine fellowship.

²⁷⁹ Anne Danielsen describes Brown’s “Try Me” as a “pop-gospel ballad” (2006, 6). Brown initially released “Try Me” on the A side of Federal disc 12337 in October 1958 (George 2008, 303). It was his first single to reach the top of the R&B charts (Hay 2003, 130). He recorded the song many times throughout his career in studios and during concerts.

The thematic resemblance to gospel song may have caught Brown's attention enough to want to record the piece. In "Try Me," each verse concludes with the phrase "I need you," another expression of emotional reliance found commonly in the gospel canon. According to Fred Hay's interviews with the original Flames, they actually created this arrangement of "Try Me" after Brown learned the song from an unnamed Florida man (2003, 130).. The fact that a former gospel quartet created the piece's arrangement explains its adherence to structural hallmarks of the quartet genre such as echoing the lead singer's phrases.

The piece's syntax also evokes the gospel heritage in its pairing of the verbs "walk" and "talk." Gospel lyricists and gospel singers often use the phrase "He taught me to walk right; he taught me to talk right" in their composed texts and during improvisatory sections. Brown perhaps subconsciously gravitated towards a song that used gospel music's linguistic patterns to construct a secular love song of desire and yearning. The lyrics, transcribed from Brown's performance of the song on the 1962 album *Live at the Apollo*, are given below:

Verse 1

Try me; try me; darling. Tell me, "I need you."
Try me; try me; and your love will always be true.
Oh, I need you.

Verse 2

Hold me; hold me. I want you right here by my side.
Hold me; hold me; and your love we won't hide.
Oh, I need you.

Bridge

[Instrumental break substitutes for line one of text]
[Instrumental break substitutes for line two of text]
Oh—I need you. I need you.

Verse 3

Oh, oh—walk with me; talk with me. I want you to stop my heart from crying.
Walk with me, talk with me, and your love will stop my heart from dying.
Oh, I need you.

Converting the piece into a composition suitable for a gospel ensemble required little alteration. Several years after he recorded “Try Me,” Brown used the piece’s harmonic progression and central verbal conceit to construct the gospel song “Try Me, Father” for the Swanee Quintet. The lyrics of the piece are given below, transcribed from the Swanee Quintet’s 1966 album *Step by Step*:

Verse 1

Try me, Father; oh, try me, Lord.
Oh, the faith I have in You, the faith I have in You. I know there’s no other God.
Try me, Father, if You only will.
Oh, try me, Lord. Oh, when I’m down and out, and I can’t get up, I know, I know that You gonna bring me out. Oh Father; I want you to know that I’m needing You.

Verse 2

Try me Father; oh try me, Lord.
Oh, Father! Can I meet the test? ’Cause You know, I’ll do anything—I’ll do anything You ask—oh, oh; I wanna say it again.
Try me, Father; oh, try me, Lord. Oh, Lord, oh, I will go where You want me to go, Father. I will do what You want me to do, and after I done that, Father, I know, I know that You will see me through. I need You. Let me say it one more time.

Tag

Father, try me; if You only will, all I want You to do is try me, Lord.²⁸⁰

The Quintet’s recording departs from Brown’s 1962 version in several ways. Its instrumentation is far more lush than Brown’s sparse drums and saxophone. The gospel version includes a large string section that plays an ametrical introduction. The simple harmonic progression of both versions of “Try Me” is I-vi-IV-V, which underlay nearly all doo-wop pieces of the era. Although the tempos of the two recordings are nearly identical, the gospel version stretches and slows the harmonic motion by sustaining each chord for eight beats. Brown’s version sustained each harmony for only four beats.

²⁸⁰ This verbal transcription does not include some of Jones’ improvisatory interjections, nor does it include some of the backup singers’ echoed text. It is meant to indicate the general content and progression of the text.

A pronounced similarity between the recordings is their almost-identical deployment of background singers. Although the precise pitches of the background singers vary between the two recordings, their musical roles are identical. In both recordings, the backup singers echo the first two words that the lead singer sings at the beginning of each verse (“try me”). The vocal approaches of the lead singers differ between the recordings. Johnny Jones’ rendition of the piece is more ornate than Brown’s, with many more verbal interpolations and melismatic ornamentations.²⁸¹ Strikingly, the central lyrical premise remains consistent between the sacred and secular versions of the piece. An identical declaration sounds at the end of each version’s verses: “I need you.”

The analysis demonstrates that Brown’s links to gospel music are subtly evident in the linguistic, syntactic, structural elements of the secular version of “Try Me.” The ease with which the secular “Try Me” became the sacred “Try Me, Father” highlights the porous commercial and aesthetic boundaries between gospel and popular music. These boundaries have been consciously or unconsciously negotiated in varying ways by individual performers, including quartet singers. In the instance of “Try Me”/ “Try Me, Father,” Brown used secular song as the grounds for a possibly subconscious dialectic with the musical and rhetorical codes of gospel music. Brown sometimes used the opposite compositional technique of altering a gospel song to create a secular song. According to Hay, Brown’s 1964 “Maybe the Last Time” was a reworking of “This May Be the Last Time,” recorded in 1957 by one of Brown’s favorite gospel quartets, the Blind Boys of Alabama (Hay 2003, 112). His 1964 recording of “Oh Baby Don’t You Weep” was a reworking of the religious song “Oh Mary Don’t You Weep,” originally a spiritual and recorded by many gospel quartets (Ibid., 112). These examples offer more evidence for the assertion that

²⁸¹ The fact that Jones had an intermittent career as a secular recording artist, leaving the Swanee Quintet occasionally to pursue popular music, further highlights Brown’s and the Quintet’s complex dialectic with popular and gospel music. For very brief information on this career, see Carpenter (2005) and Sacré (2005).

Brown engaged in a complex dialectic with secular and sacred song throughout his career. The fact that these examples date from the 1960s indicates that Brown's complex relationship with religious community and with Black sacred song was ongoing before his 1979 religious crisis.

Augusta's Tradition of Musical Crossover

The analyses above demonstrate that Brown's relationship to Augusta's gospel music tradition and to local religious community was negotiated at various points of his life through televised gospel performances, interpersonal relationships with gospel musicians, and his compositional style in secular pieces. The following section situates these musical and social interactions within the sacred-to-secular "crossover" gestures of three longtime Augusta gospel artists. Notably, the Swanee Quintet, Flo Carter, and Leon Austin all have had a lengthy presence on *POQ*, implying that the program has partially facilitated this negotiation of porous cultural boundaries. Additionally, all three artists were close personal friends of Brown.

As previously discussed, Swanee Quintet has a history of performing sacred music within predominantly secular frameworks. When I asked about the incongruity of a gospel group touring with Brown, a secular artist, Quintet lead singer Griffin shrugged and said "He sang R&B, we sang gospel" (2008). His remark implied an accepted compartmentalization by performers and audiences of distinct musical styles and genres. Griffin also added that in the 1960s, Brown would not let the Swanee Quintet perform in venues which sold alcohol. This suggests that both Brown and the Quintet were knowledgeable enough to successfully negotiate the boundaries between the expectations of the commercial music industry and of their more pious audience members (Ibid.). In his autobiography, Brown described the Swanees' role in his 1966 Apollo shows thus:

Besides [Bobby] Byrd and Vicki [Anderson], I had the gospel group the Swanee Quintet on the show. I did a lot of split shows with gospel acts during that time. People always said you couldn't bring together church people and people who dug music like mine, but I thought you could. I used to have the Swanees, the Mighty Clouds of Joy, the Angelic Gospel Singers, Clara Ward, all of them. I had the gospel people on the first part of my show, then an intermission, and then my show. Singing is all about spirit anyway—doesn't make any kind of difference what spirit (1986, 164).

For Brown, the quality and vivacity of the music seems to have superseded concerns about textual content or genre and categorization. Brown, a keen businessman, seemed convinced that a large portion of Black audiences would agree with this assessment and not blink at religious and secular groups performing in the same venues. It is notable that throughout its career, the Quintet has sung only gospel music.

Flo Carter, a longtime resident of Augusta, southern gospel singer, and friend of James Brown, has also navigated the boundaries between secular contexts and sacred expressions. Unlike the Quintet, Carter has often performed secular music during her long musical career. Carter has a long history of performing gospel music in secular spaces: during the late 1950s, she hosted her own daily variety program on Augusta's WJBF-TV, and on Fridays she would perform a gospel song even though that was

something people weren't doing then; people didn't like to hear religious or gospel music on any kind of variety program...Unless it was a religious program, they really didn't want you singing religious songs. I didn't care, I did it anyway. And you know, it was accepted then just like things are accepted now. Sometimes you push the buttons. I didn't care; I was a Christian, I was teaching Sunday School, I was the Sunday School superintendent for 22 years...and everybody knew I was a Christian. They knew it; they know by your actions. We just had a fun show—it was a variety show and it was a fun show (2007a).

From 1956 to 1958, Flo and her husband Don, a drummer, had a band that frequently performed “pop songs and rock and roll” at Augusta's Bon Air Hotel (Ibid.). Carter also recorded a pop album during this time. None of her commercial activities as a secular artist, nor her performances of gospel in secular venues, seem to have affected local audiences' perception of

her as a professional gospel singer. Much of her visibility as a gospel singer is due to the fact that for more than twenty-five years, she and her family have performed on the *POQ* on the first Sunday of each month (Rhodes 2007h). Like the Swanee Quintet, Carter and her family group have in recent decades performed gospel music at many non-religious local events such as outdoor arts festivals and libraries (Ibid.). The Carters maintain their religious support base by also performing in many churches, white and Black (F. Carter 2007b). Carter is open about her love for secular music, naming the blues specifically as an influence (Ibid.)

Leon Austin, a local Black bandleader, pianist, and childhood friend of James Brown, has also performed both gospel and secular music comfortably. Austin's and Brown's musical bonds were deep. In childhood, Austin helped Brown "form chords with his right hand" instead of relying only on his left hand at the piano (*POQ* May 26 1992; Cox 2006). Austin's early years were saturated in gospel music. He started a gospel group which he named the Swanee Juniors, in homage to the Swanee Quintet. Austin eventually toured as a gospel musician with notable gospel artists such as James Cleveland and The Caravans (Rhodes 2008). Austin was apparently responsible for suggesting that the Swanee Quintet add a bass guitar to their instrumental forces (Ibid.).

In the 1960s, Austin opened shows for James Brown as the bandleader for R&B groups such as Leon and the Buicks. He also owned Leon's DeSoto Club, a nightclub near downtown Augusta (Cooper 2007). Austin's recordings as a soloist as part of the James Brown Enterprises included the secular compositions "I'm a Man," "Real Woman," and "Georgia Peach" (Rhodes 2008). Two decades later, Austin was consistently performing gospel music on *POQ* as an organist for approximately eight years in the early and mid-1980s (K. Howard 2007c). Even more strikingly than Flo Carter, Austin seems to have been able to publicly maintain dual

performing identities as a local gospel musician. He managed to achieve some level of non-local success in gospel and secular song.

An anecdote from my fieldwork confirms that Augusta's gospel musicians have publicly inhabited both secular and sacred performance spaces. Hal Marnette, a white parking attendant at the 2008 Payback James Brown Festival, recounted to me his memories of hiring Black musicians to play for college parties on Saturday nights.²⁸² Marnette and his friends from Augusta College would pay the Black musicians in "corn liquor" which would be consumed by the end of the night. The next morning, Marnette would see the same musicians performing gospel music on *POQ*, wearing the same clothes from the previous night's party (Marnette 2008).

It seems from the evidence outlined above that Augusta's gospel audiences tolerate musical and cultural duality, allowing local musicians to sing sacred and secular music with some success.²⁸³ From Brown's relationships with the musicians cited above, he seems to have been accepted by them as simultaneously sincere in his religious convictions and capable of singing popular music. Brown's public appearances at gospel events that were located within Black churches seem to argue for the broader Black religious community's tolerance of his multiple performing personas. For example, in the 1990s, Karlton and Henry Howard were honored for their work in local gospel music with an appreciation ceremony at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church. Brown surprised them by appearing unannounced with a five-hundred-dollar engraved watch for each (K. Howard 2008).

²⁸² This is not the informant's real name. The conversation was brief, and although the man understood that I was researching *POQ* as a graduate student, I did not have the chance to have him sign a research release form.

²⁸³ The sacred/secular construct in the lives and careers of gospel performers has been discussed by a number of scholars. See Harris (1994) regarding Thomas Dorsey's career and compositional style, Kidula (1998) regarding Andraé Crouch's compositional influences, and Jerma Jackson (2004) regarding Rosetta Tharpe's public image and recordings.

Brown's involvement with Augusta's gospel tradition was openly rewarded in 1999. That year, the Northeast Augusta chapter of the Gospel Music Association of America, Inc., sponsored a beautification project of Brown's old neighborhood. The predominantly-Black group claimed that "the reason we chose [James Brown Boulevard]...is that a lot of things James Brown has done have gone unnoticed. Not by the Lord, and not by us" (Norton 1999). More evidence of the significance of his religious views to the local Black community is that the Black newspaper the *Augusta News-Review* included Brown's 1979 baptism in their "Remember When" section on their final day of publication (Millender 1985, 2).²⁸⁴

At the same time, tolerance or acceptance of Brown's ambiguous musical and personal legacy was not practiced by all members of the local Black religious community. Brown's friend and longtime Augusta musician Flo Carter stated that he was "underappreciated" by the local Black community. She theorized that this might have been because of his "public troubles" (2007b). Members of the broader local Christian community appear to have had difficulty reconciling Brown's public persona and Christian profession. When I mentioned to a white pastor in Augusta Brown's involvement with gospel music, he snorted derisively and expressed his skepticism of the sincerity of Brown's Christian commitment.²⁸⁵ Karlton Howard has expressed the opinion that Brown's professional involvement with gospel music was motivated by commercial considerations: "He knew gospel would sell" (2007c).

Brown's local performances of gospel music in the past few decades occurred within an Augustan tradition of gospel performers singing sacred music in secular contexts and at times

²⁸⁴Millender's editorial included a photograph of Brown receiving communion at his home immediately prior to his 1979 interview with the *Augusta News-Review*. According to the photograph's caption, communion was administered to Brown by Rev. Al Sharpton and another minister, Rev. Aaron Bush, Jr. The event was listed in the "Remember When" editorial as "Remember when James Brown was converted?" (Millender 1985, 2).

²⁸⁵ Our interaction was fleeting and unexpected; therefore I was unable to give him a research release form and do not feel that I can give his name or the name of his church in this context.

performing secular repertoire. This localized acceptance of crossover may explain why Brown felt comfortable articulating a public religious identity when other aspects of his media image deeply conflicted with his profession of Christian doctrine. Even at his funeral, Brown's complex relationship to the church and to sacred music continued to be negotiated by those who survived him. Religious music performed at his Augusta funeral on December 31, 2006, included Derrick Monk singing "God Has Smiled On Me" and the Swanee Quintet performing "Doctor Jesus" in tribute to their friend. Brown's own compositions, including "It's a Man's Man's Man's World," "I Got You (I Feel Good)," and "Get Up (I Feel Like Being a Sex Machine)" were also performed at the funeral (Craig, Edwards, and Bostick 2006).

Conclusion

The evidence presented above suggests that at least since his baptism in 1979, James Brown participated in local religious activities and in gospel music as both a consumer and a performer. The evidence also indicates that prior to 1979, Brown engaged in a less-public and perhaps more subconscious dialogue with Black sacred music during his secular music career. Brown's religious convictions and participation in gospel music were an integral part of his public persona and musical trajectory. Why have these aspects of his musical identity been overlooked by scholarship? Three factors seem to have converged to contribute to the academic marginalization of Brown's ongoing dialogue with gospel and his return to the genre later in life.

First, Brown's extremely public legal and personal troubles might deter serious inquiry into his religious beliefs and the expression of those beliefs in sacred song. Brown himself seemed to acknowledge the tension between his religious profession and his impious behavior during a *POQ* performance. While performing "Old Ship of Zion" with the Brewsteraires,

Brown seems to obliquely allude to his complex public persona. After performing the first verse of the song, Brown sings the improvisatory phrase “Don’t do as I do; do as I say do” to Joel Walker as he passes the microphone to the younger man. Brown seems to be subconsciously admonishing Walker (and perhaps the viewer) not to imitate his *behavior*, but to listen instead to the *words* of his Christian profession. Brown appears to be using the improvisational framework of gospel performance practice to publicly acknowledge the dissonance between orthodoxy and orthopraxy in his own life.

A second reason for the lack of awareness of Brown’s later participation in gospel music is the paucity of academic research conducted into most aspects of Black life and history in Augusta. First, no ethnographic work has been conducted on Augusta’s Black gospel music tradition. Local ethnography and research into local journalistic records were crucial for the research presented in this chapter; only interviews with local gospel musicians made me aware of Brown’s importance to them in the past few decades. Second, no research in any discipline seems to have used local Black newspapers, which provide an important and alternative record of the Black experience in Augusta. The 1979 interview with James Brown is the only journalistic record I have found that discussed Brown’s baptism and religious crisis in detail. The interview was conducted by a local Black journalist for the *Augusta News Review*, a Black newspaper. The content of the article has never been replicated in other journalism, as far as I am aware. Third, although the mainstream *Augusta Chronicle* has documented Brown’s religious profession and participation in gospel music, even this source has been neglected by scholars of popular music. Notably, George Nelson’s and Alan Leed’s 2008 compendium of journalism about Brown, *A James Brown Reader*, does not include a single article from any Augusta newspaper. The evidence presented in this chapter illustrates powerfully the ability of local

ethnography and documentary research to interrogate and reshape popular narratives of internationally-known musicians.

Another and related reason for the neglect of Brown's return to gospel music is that until recently, footage of Brown singing gospel music was apparently unavailable. The few pieces of footage contained in the *POQ* collection in the University of Georgia Media Archive appear to be the only extant footage of Brown performing gospel music. Previously, music scholars have been able to conduct analysis only on his secular recordings. The donation of the footage was an outworking of my ethnographic research in Augusta. It again highlights the need to conduct local fieldwork in order to more fully understand the rich and complex musical trajectory of seminal cultural figures such as Brown. The data and analyses presented in the chapter also argue for the multifaceted historical, cultural, religious, and musical role *POQ* has played in Augusta's Black community.

As demonstrated above, *POQ* has served as a space for the intersection of multiple, overlapping segments of the local musical community. The show has featured performances of sacred repertoire by gospel musicians such as Flo Carter and the Swanee Quintet. It has featured sacred performances by secular musicians such as James Brown. It has also included performances by musicians such as Leon Austin who manage to maintain dual performing identities. The program's multifaceted identity lies in its roots in the 1950s. Although the program's format and content has inclined more towards a religious product in recent years, *POQ* was originally more concerned with targeting Black advertising dollars than with projecting a deeply religious ethos. In the show's evolution, entertainment and sacred expression have fuse into a multilayered reflection of the local Black community's religious and cultural developments.

CHAPTER 6

“NO OTHER HELP I KNOW”: THE LITURGICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF “DR. WATTS HYMNS” ON *PARADE OF QUARTETS*

Introduction

Previous chapters contained case studies of how three quartets and one soloist have engaged with themes of continuity and community through their involvement with *POQ*. This chapter examines a composite “voice” arising from a cross-section of artists whose *POQ* performances engage with the same two themes. This “voice” is comprised of *POQ* performances that quote the eighteenth-century “Dr. Watts” hymn texts.²⁸⁶ While screening eighty *POQ* tapes from the 1980s to 2006, I noticed approximately twenty instances of performers using two or more lines of texts from hymns in the “Dr. Watts” tradition. While the examples came primarily from local performers, some also occurred in commercially-produced music videos that *POQ* occasionally broadcasts. The use of these eighteenth-century British Anglican hymn texts on a twentieth-century Black American gospel show has multiple implications for theological, religious, and musical continuity on *POQ*. *POQ* performances that include Dr. Watts texts are also significant for understanding how local Black religious community is perpetuated and affirmed on the show.

The chapter will 1) define the term “Dr. Watts hymn” and discuss the need for studying this tradition on *POQ*; 2) provide historical background of the Dr. Watts hymns in Black

²⁸⁶ As is understood in hymnography, the term “hymn” will hereafter refer in this chapter to text alone. The present study uses Temperley’s definition of a hymn as a “‘sacred lyric of original content for use in worship,’ as distinct from a metrical translation or paraphrase of a psalm or of some other portion of scripture or liturgy” (2001, 28). The more narrow term “Dr. Watts hymn” is defined and historically contextualized as a repertory and a performance practice later in the chapter.

Christianity to contextualize the chapter's musical analyses; 3) analyze uses of Dr. Watts hymns in multiple musical contexts on *POQ*; 4) locate these analyses within the context of the Black Baptist presence in Augusta; 5) discuss the denominational implications of these texts on *POQ*; and 6) briefly engage with multiple sites of cultural collision represented by Dr. Watts hymns on *POQ*.

The term "Dr. Watts hymn" is specific to the history of Black sacred song, denoting a repertory and a performance practice. Therefore its definition must be understood in order to grasp how this chapter supplements existing literature on the Dr. Watts hymn tradition.²⁸⁷

The term refers to a body of Protestant hymns named in Black religious circles after the eighteenth-century Dissenting Anglican minister and hymnodist, Isaac Watts (1674-1748). The repertory derives its name from Watts because his texts had particular emotional resonance for the Black religious community beginning in antebellum years. Boyer states,

[Antebellum] African American Christians...sang the hymns of Charles Wesley and John Newton, but it was the lyrics of Isaac Watts that resonated so deeply within the collective psyche of the congregation that even today, in some communities that still practice the lining-out tradition, all lining hymns are called "Dr. Watts" (1992b, 142).

"Dr. Watts hymns" also include hymns composed by other British Anglican hymnists and poets of the eighteenth century. These include the Charles Wesley, John Wesley, John Newton, Philip Doddridge, William Cowper, Samuel Stennett, and the Scottish minister Horatius Bonar (Westermeyer 1998, 280; Dargan 2006, 1, 117).

The term "Dr. Watts hymn" also connotes the distinctive lining-out practice that initially marked and sometimes still marks the singing of these texts in Black churches. The Dr. Watts texts and the lining tradition entered the antebellum worship of Black Christians via white

²⁸⁷ Other terms synonymous with "Dr. Watts" or "Dr. Watts hymn" in the Black church include "meter music" or "meter hymns" (Westermeyer 1998, 208), "Baptist lining hymns," (Boyer 2000, 8), "surge singing" (Crookshank 2004, 34), and "long meter hymns" (Dargan 2006, 2),.

colonists. The term “lining out” describes the process by which a leader and a congregation performs a sacred song. In its most basic form, a leader sings a phrase, and the congregation repeats the phrase. The entire song is therefore performed phrase-by-phrase. In antebellum years, the texts and the lining-out practice were adapted in particular by Black Baptist churches (Boyer 2000). Boyer describes the music that resulted when slaves applied Black musical idiomatic practices to the white lining tradition:

Instead of singing the lines of the hymns as they were written or reciting them in an oratorical manner, the leader would chant the lines, often chanting two lines at a time to a tune unrelated to the tune the congregation would sing. The congregation then sang the lines, decorating them with bends, slurs, slides, and held tones. The congregation would match or surpass the leader in ornamentation, although such songs were sung in a harmony composed of parallel intervals (Ibid., 7 – 8).

Musical characteristics such as heterophony, an extremely slow (sometimes ametrical) tempo, and a highly ornate, embellished melodic line marked the Black performances of Dr. Watts hymns. The most common meters of tunes and texts used by Black antebellum worshipers were long-meter and common-meter (Southern 1971, 159). Boyer’s description still accurately characterizes current Black lining performance practice.

Although the term “Dr. Watts hymn” typically evokes both the body of eighteenth-century texts and the lining-out practice, Black Christians have sung these texts in many other musical styles. For example, the texts often appear in the contemporary hymnals of Black denominations notated in a “standard” hymn or chorale form. Sometimes they are performed in multiple musical styles during the same church service.²⁸⁸ Many Black gospel artists have recorded these eighteenth-century texts since the 1930s without using the lining-out technique.

²⁸⁸ For example, Rev. Otis Moss, Jr., pastor of a large Black Baptist church in Cleveland, Ohio, describes a service in which the church’s choir sang “three arrangements of the same hymn, “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah”—the congregational hymn, the anthem, and the common meter hymn” (2001, n.p.). The third category Moss gives is the one associated with the lining tradition, but all three performances used the same Dr. Watts hymn, “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah” (Ibid.).

The performance of the Dr. Watts hymns in non-lined musical contexts is an important precedent for the analyses presented in this chapter. Dr. Watts hymns on *POQ* are *not* lined out.

The analyses and conclusions presented in this chapter substantially augment the literature on the Dr. Watts hymn tradition as well as gospel scholarship. The Dr. Watts hymn tradition is typically studied in the context of lining out in Black Baptist church services across the southeast. The most recent and comprehensive study of the lining out of Dr. Watts hymns is William Dargan's book *Lining Out the Word: Dr. Watts Hymn Singing in the Music of Black Americans* (2006). Dargan studied Black Baptist lining traditions across the South, drawing the majority of his musical data from church services in South Carolina.²⁸⁹ The interpretive focus of Dargan's work was the historical significance of the Dr. Watts hymns in the history of African-American religious, linguistic, and musical acculturation.

Prior to Dargan's book in 2006, only a few brief musicological studies of the Dr. Watts hymn tradition existed. Earlier studies of the Dr. Watts hymns also focused primarily on southeastern Black Baptist churches. Most recently prior to Dargan, Bernice Reagon Johnson studied a Black Baptist leader of hymn-lining who was raised in South Carolina (2001).²⁹⁰ Religion scholar Walter Pitts conducted ethnography on the Dr. Watts/lining tradition in the context of studying the "devotion" ritual of Black Baptist churches in Texas (1988; 1991; 1993). Ben Bailey's brief ethnography on the lined-hymn tradition in Black Mississippi churches appeared in *The Black Perspective in Music* in 1978. Alfred Adolphus Pinkston's dissertation, "Lined Hymns, Spirituals, and the Associated Lifestyle of Rural Black People in the United

²⁸⁹ Dargan's study also examined data from the lining tradition in other southern states including Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Kentucky, North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee. A small amount of his data was also drawn from Black Baptist churches in northern cities such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, Detroit, Hartford, New York, Chicago, and Kansas City (2006).

²⁹⁰ Reagon Johnson observed and interviewed Deacon Reardon, who migrated to Washington, D.C. from South Carolina and continued the Dr. Watts tradition in his new home along with other South Carolina migrants (Ibid.).

States,” included ethnography on the Baptist “devotion” ritual in southeastern churches (1975). A geographical exception, Horace Boyer’s dissertation examined the lining of Dr. Watts hymns in Black Baptist and Methodist churches in Rochester, New York (1973).²⁹¹ No scholarship discusses the Dr. Watts tradition in Georgia. As will be demonstrated later in the chapter, evidence indicates that since the colonial era, the Dr. Watts hymns have had a strong presence among Black Baptists in Georgia. Although the current chapter focuses on the hymns in a non-liturgical, non-lined context, it obliquely supplies data on the Dr. Watts tradition in Georgia by analyzing *POQ* performances of Dr. Watts texts by many Georgia gospel musicians.

Scholars acknowledge that gospel music has always incorporated textual and musical elements of older Protestant hymnody. However, there is no detailed, systematic discussion of the cultural significance of the Dr. Watts texts in gospel music.²⁹² William Talmadge was the first scholar to discuss the musical influence of the Baptist lining tradition on gospel performers in a brief article in *Ethnomusicology* (1961).²⁹³ Ten years later, in the first book-length study of gospel music, Anthony Heilbut briefly mentioned the Dr. Watts hymns’ cultural significance to gospel music and its performers (1971).²⁹⁴ More recently, Boyer historicized the link between the antebellum Dr. Watts lining tradition and twentieth-century gospel music in *The Golden Age of Gospel* (2000). Like Talmadge and Heilbut, Boyer focuses on *musical* retentions of the Dr. Watts lining tradition in gospel music. He does not discuss the cultural and theological

²⁹¹ Boyer and Bailey appear to be the only scholars to have studied the Dr. Watts/lining tradition in Black Methodist as well as Black Baptist churches (1973; 1978).

²⁹² For discussions on how gospel music and gospel composers interacted with older hymnody at various historical stages, see the biographical sketches in *We’ll Understand It Better By and By, Pioneering African American Gospel Composers* (Reagon 1992).

²⁹³ Talmadge discusses the tradition’s artistic influence on Mahalia Jackson, focusing on how the lining-out practice musically influenced Jackson’s vocal style in her gospel recordings. He does not focus on the cultural meaning or significance of the Dr. Watts *texts* that Jackson sang (1961).

²⁹⁴ Heilbut’s comments, although insightful, are not anchored in systematic observations. They stem mostly from fleeting anecdotal evidence drawn from undated interviews with gospel musicians (1971, 20 – 23, 64, 78, 91, 105, 138, 251). What is clear from Heilbut’s book is that the Dr. Watts hymns carried deep spiritual, theological, and cultural meaning for the gospel musicians he interviewed.

significance of the Dr. Watts texts in gospel music.²⁹⁵ Other scholars of gospel music do not mention the Dr. Watts hymns as a textual or musical source for the genre.²⁹⁶ This chapter supplements existing gospel scholarship by historicizing and analyzing the cultural and theological significance of Dr. Watts texts in gospel performances more than two centuries after the texts were initially introduced to Black Christians.

Origins and Development of Dr. Watts Hymns in Black Christianity

This section of the chapter traces origins, evolution, and retention of these texts in Black Christianity. The journey of these texts through Black Christianity must be understood in order to appreciate the multilayered cultural resonance of the Dr. Watts hymns on *POQ*. The Dr. Watts hymn tradition of Black American Christianity has its roots in liturgical and theological innovations in early eighteenth-century British Anglicanism. These were largely sparked by the hymn-writing of Anglican minister and poet Isaac Watts. By writing congregational hymns, Watts decisively broke with the continental and British Protestant liturgical tradition of singing only metrical psalms during worship (Crookshank 2004, 18). Watts' *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, in Three Books*, published in 1707, contained newly-composed non-Scriptural texts. His *Psalms of David Imitated*, published in 1719, contained psalm paraphrases. Prior to Watts' publications, the tradition of singing only psalms during worship services had been firmly ingrained in many Calvinist Protestant groups in England as well as on the continent. Therefore, Watts' innovations in hymnody caused cultural and theological controversies in European Protestantism.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ He describes colonial Dr. Watts hymn singing among Black Christians as the foundation of all later Black sacred song, including spirituals and gospel music (2001, 6 – 8; 49). He later states of certain gospel singers that “[their]...style of gospel singing leaned heavily on the nineteenth-century Baptist lining hymn tradition of singing songs in a slow tempo and elaborating each syllable with three to five embellishment tones” (Ibid., 42).

²⁹⁶ See Johnson Reagon (1992), Young (1997), and Burnim (2006).

²⁹⁷ It is important to note that Watts was not the first Protestant poet in the Calvinist tradition to write hymns intended for corporate worship. However, the volume and popularity of his texts catapulted hymns into a central

Although trained in Classical languages, rhetoric, and poetic methods, Watts specifically used contemporary vernacular English in his hymns. In doing so, he “resolved to adapt his language, when writing poems for congregational use, to the understanding of the common Christian” (Ibid., 21).

Watts wrote all of his hymns in three popular poetic meters (Temperley 2001). His texts were meant to be matched with tunes already in circulation in the European psalm-tune repertory. Many of the tunes had been printed in multiple British and continental tunebooks for several centuries. The melodies were already well-known to many eighteenth-century Protestants, making the singing of newfangled hymn texts more accessible to congregations (Ibid.). Watts wrote his hymns to be performed using the lining-out technique, in which a leader reads or sings a line of text, and the congregation echoes the leader phrase-by-phrase until the entire psalm or hymn has been performed. Lining out had become the standard British performance practice for psalm-singing long before Watts’ textual innovations. The method originated as a scheme for assisting illiterate worshippers to participate in the liturgy (Westermeyer 1998; Crookshank 2004).

Watts’ hymns were published in the American colonies shortly after their appearance in Britain. His *Psalms of David Imitated* was published in Philadelphia in 1729, and his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* in Boston in 1739 (Southern 1971). Previously, the Congregationalist churches of New England, the dominant religious group in colonial America, sang only metrical psalms during worship. They used the psalm tunes and lining-out method learned in Europe (Westermeyer 1998, 246 – 55). Watts’ innovations initially caused liturgical and theological upheaval in the colonies. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, his corpus of hymns

position in many Protestant liturgies in Europe and in the New World in the eighteenth century. For more detail regarding Watts’ part in this liturgical, cultural, musical, linguistic, and theological revolution, see Temperley (2001), Dargan (2006, 90 – 102), Crookshank (2004), Westermeyer (1998, 201 – 21), and Escott (1962).

had effectively replaced the older psalm repertory as the core of liturgical song in most colonial Protestant churches (Ibid., 251 – 3).

In the 1730s, John and Charles Wesley “began a new era in the history of the English hymn, in which words and tune were alike aimed to arouse the emotions of a religiously awakened congregation” (Temperley 2001, 29). Both brothers’ early hymns, penned in the 1730s, were heavily indebted to Watts’ influence (Ibid.). When the Wesleys came from England to the colonies in 1735 as Anglican missionaries, they brought with them their impulse for a passionate and relevant hymnody. The brothers were further influenced in their liturgical convictions by the pious, fervent hymn-singing of their Moravian shipmates on the voyage from Europe to the New World (Southern 1971, 41 – 42). In 1737, the Wesleys and fellow Anglican missionary George Whitefield published *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns* in Charleston, South Carolina. The collection was compiled by John Wesley. Half of its seventy hymns were texts by Watts, and the remainder were by the Wesleys and other contributors from Oxford University in England.²⁹⁸ The success of Watts’ hymns in the colonies and the colonial religious revivals in the 1730s and 1740s helped the Wesleys’ hymns to attain popularity in America. The hymns of Watts and the Wesleys began to be absorbed not only by white colonists, but also by the antebellum Black church.²⁹⁹

Dargan notes three phases of adaptation of the Dr. Watts hymns in Black Christianity. In the first period, from 1750 to 1800, “the lining-out practice grew among enslaved blacks as an ‘aural primer,’ a means of facilitating individual literacy and corporate worship” (2006, 108). In the northern colonies, groups such as the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in

²⁹⁸ For a discussion of the Wesleys’ impact on religious developments in America and examples of their spiritual writings, including hymns, see *John and Charles Wesley, Selected Writings and Hymns* (1981).

²⁹⁹ Although other eighteenth-century hymnists contributed texts to the “Dr. Watts” corpus, this chapter provides biographical detail only on Isaac Watts, John Wesley, and Charles Wesley, since a large number of their hymns found early and lasting favor with African-American Christians.

Foreign Parts and the Moravians “were all involved in religious instruction and the establishment of schools where blacks [sic] were taught academics as well as how to sing psalms and hymns correctly” (DjeDje 1998, 119). The hymns were acquired by freed and enslaved Blacks in missionary schools, and took hold in Black worship. Southern states that Watts’ 1707 *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* “became immensely popular in the colonies [after its initial American publication in 1739], especially among black folk” (1971, 40). Colonial missionaries wrote to London with orders for Bibles and Watts’ hymnals to distribute to Black converts. Rev. Samuel Davies wrote to church members in London in 1755 about slaves singing in Virginia:

The books were all very acceptable, but none more so than the Psalms and Hymns, which enable them [the slaves] to gratify their peculiar taste for psalmody. Sundry of them have lodged all night in my kitchen, and sometimes when I have awaked about two or three o’clock in the morning, a torrent of sacred harmony has poured into my chamber and carried my mind away to heaven (cited in Boyer 2000, 7).

Another colonial missionary wrote in 1758,

this is accompanied with the warmest gratitude for the late parcel of Books received from the Society, to distribute among the poor with us...I was extremely glad of the Books for their sakes, especially the Bibles [and] Dr. Watt’s [sic] Psalms and Hymns (cited in Southern 1971, 59).

According to Southern, in the formal slave worship services, regardless of the presence of white observers, these Protestant British hymns and psalms were voluntarily sung and perhaps even preferred (1971, 160).³⁰⁰ In 1801, Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination, compiled the first hymnal by and for African Americans. He used mostly the texts of Isaac Watts and John and Charles Wesley, followed to a lesser extent by “other hymn writers favored by the Methodists of that period...[and] hymns popular with the Baptists” (Southern

³⁰⁰ Southern points out that Watts’ hymns were so popular among slave worshippers that at times they formed the textual and thematic basis for spirituals. For example, Watts’ “When I Can Read My Title Clear” influenced the spiritual “Good Lord, In the Mansions Above” (Southern 1971, 216 – 7). For more discussion of the textual and theological dialectic between slave spirituals and the Dr. Watts hymn repertory, see Southern (1971, 216 – 23), Hamm (1983, 132) and Crookshank (2004, 36 – 7).

1971, 86).³⁰¹ Most likely, Allen drew his hymn texts from songs in the oral circulation of Black Baptist and Methodist worship in the Philadelphia area (Ibid., 87).

During this first phase of adaptation of the Dr. Watts hymns, the Black church absorbed and transformed the European Protestant practice of lining out. The musical practices applied by Black slaves to the Protestant hymn repertory included those outlined by Boyer (2000). An additional element of the lining practice in Black worship of this era was the establishment of certain congregation members as qualified song-leaders. According to Boyer,

The hymn would be raised by a minister ('exhorter' in the slave language) or a devout male member of the community (who would later be called a deacon in the Baptist church or a steward in the Methodist church) (2001, 7).

A post-bellum recollection of a former slave who had been a hymn-leader during private slave worship services described his liturgical role thus: "I was the singing man. I led the hymns. I learned them all by heart, and lined them off for people to follow" (Southern 1971, 159). The development of qualified hymn-leaders highlights the importance of the individual and the group in antebellum Black worship.

Dargan states that in the second period of adaptation, 1800 to 1865, "Slaves' continuing practice of lining out was first minimized by the enthusiastic furor of camp-meeting revivals, then reemphasized as a strategic component of organized [white] Baptist missions to the slaves" (2006, 109). Dargan's assessment is supported by documentary evidence such as Charles Colcock Jones' statements in his 1842 treatise *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States*. Jones, a white minister in Savannah, Georgia, recommended that specific hymns by Watts should form a central part of the religious education of African Americans (Southern 1971, 146). The Wesley's popular hymnal had been published in South Carolina in 1737, a

³⁰¹ Allen's compilation contained only texts, as was the custom of contemporary hymnals. *A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors by Richard Allen, African Minister*, was printed in Philadelphia by John Ormond (Southern 1971, 86).

century before Charles Colcock Jones was disseminating Watts' texts among Blacks in Savannah. This means that South Carolina and eastern Georgia was exposed to early and prolonged contact with the Anglican hymn tradition through missionary efforts. The impact of British Protestant hymnody on antebellum Black Georgians was confirmed by the reports of a Swedish traveler to nineteenth-century Georgia: "When [she] asked some slaves in Georgia to sing their own folksongs [spirituals] for her, was informed that they 'dwelt with the Lord and sang only hymns'" (cited in Southern 1971, 147).³⁰²

Dargan's designates 1865 to 1900, the third period of Black Christianity's adaptation of Dr. Watts hymns, as an era marked by intertwining cultural factors. These included Black migration, the emerging power of the Black Baptist denomination, and budding Pentecostalism. According to Dargan, this era "saw the consolidation of the Missionary Baptists as the largest independent black denomination and the ready inclusion of the old-time hymn singing in the worship repertoire of black folk" (Dargan 2006, 109). By the late 1860s, there were independent Black Baptists conventions in every southern state (Corrigan and Hudson 2004, 243). Dargan identifies an important element of transition in lining out during this era, caused by the confluence of several historical factors:

Black Baptists either brought the lining-out practice [and, hence, the associated repertory of texts] from rural to urban churches with them, or they transformed the sound textures and modalities of lining out (and also blues) to forge the classic gospel style. Or else they found ways to continue the old and include the new by retaining lining-out hymns in devotions [pre-service rituals of prayer and hymn singing] and incorporating gospel performances in the service frame of the worship (2006, 109).

Boyer confirms that Black Baptist congregations were responsible for keeping the Dr. Watts lining tradition alive in the early twentieth century, stating that

³⁰² It is unknown in which part of Georgia this occurred.

The African American Methodist church replaced [Dr. Watts lining] hymns with standard Protestant hymns. However, raising [i.e., lining] hymns continued in the African American Baptist church, and the song type and genre are known today as Baptist lining hymns (2001, 8).

It is notable that in the early twentieth century, the repertory and its associated performance practice were already functioning as a marker of Black Baptist cultural memory. This assessment is supported by the contents, titles, and prefaces of the first hymnals printed by the [Black] National Baptist Convention. The first edition of *The National Baptist Hymnal* was published in 1903. The vast majority of the hymnal was comprised of one hundred and forty-six hymns by Watts and thirty-eight by Charles Wesley (Spencer 1992, 76). Other lyricists in this important hymnal included others whose texts had been part of the Dr. Watts tradition since antebellum days, although in much lesser numbers than Watts and Charles Wesley. These were Horatius Bonar, William Cowper, Philip Doddridge, John Newton, and Samuel Stennett (Ibid.).³⁰³

The hymnal's first edition was followed in 1905 by a compilation of a slightly different title, *The National Baptist Hymn Book*. The hymnal's preface stated that instead of including new songs, this compilation contained "the *old ones* dear to people's [sic] heart" (cited in Spencer 1992, 80; emphasis mine). Advance publicity for the collection referenced the Dr. Watts tradition as a marker of cultural memory, stating that "this book will contain between 800 and 1,000 of the *old, endeared familiar songs* with meter tunes" (Ibid.; emphasis mine). The next installment of the *National Baptist Hymn Book* (1906) was subtitled "A Collection of *Old Meter Songs*" (Dargan 2006, 115; emphasis mine). The collection's preface stated that its contents "were

³⁰³ Spencer theorizes that this hymnal was modeled on the 1883 white hymnal, *The Baptist Hymnal*, published in Philadelphia by the American Baptist Publication Society. He states that "it is not unusual that the inaugural hymnal produced by black Baptist was closely modeled after one compiled and published by their white denominational counterparts, for, as we have seen, the same pattern typified the nascent hymnals of the black Methodist denominations. What was distinctive about *The National Baptist Hymnal*, however, was that it was published in its entirety within the National Baptists' own publishing facility" (1992, 76 – 77). Spencer's remarks highlight the close textual relationship between some Black and white liturgical traditions and hymnody.

selected from among the many thousand hymns that have been sung in churches *by our parents and grandparents for centuries back*” (Ibid., 115; emphasis mine). Dargan states that subsequent editions of the *National Baptist Hymn Book* throughout the twentieth century, which continued to contain the old hymns,

indicates the strength of Dr. Watts in black Missionary Baptist churches. Its greatest popularity is concentrated in the Gulf states of the Deep South between Texas and Florida. In 1998, for example, almost three thousand copies [of the hymnal] ...were sold...seven states—Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Tennessee—accounted for more than 80 percent of the sales (2006, 115).

At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, scholars agree that the *lining* of Dr. Watts hymns survive mostly in rural, traditional Black Baptist churches in the south.³⁰⁴ In these churches, the lining of the Dr. Watts hymns is perpetuated in a pre-service ritual called “devotion,” defined and described later in this chapter. Although the performance practice of lining the Dr. Watts hymns may be fading from Black liturgical use, the texts themselves remain a vibrant part of Black sacred song. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, these eighteenth-century hymns are now used in multiple musical contexts of Black sacred song, including gospel music performances such as those on *POQ*.

Dr. Watts Hymns on *POQ*

All the performances of Dr. Watts hymns on *POQ* that I have screened fall into one of three categories: 1) Dr. Watts hymns used as interpolations in songs that consist primarily of newly-composed texts; 2) Dr. Watts hymns as the primary text of a song; and 3) Dr. Watts

³⁰⁴ One should be cautious about assuming that the lining practice survives only in small rural churches with older populations. For example, Rev. E. Dewey Smith, a Black Baptist minister of a sizable church near Atlanta, frequently lines Dr. Watts hymns during worship services at Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church, a sizable urban Black church. Video footage of his church services indicates that congregation members of many ages are able to sing the Dr. Watts hymns along with him (www.greatertravelersrest.com).

hymns performed in the ritual context of the weekly devotion segment on *POQ*. The analyses below are organized into these three categories. To illustrate that the texts have appeared in many musical contexts on *POQ* episodes in recent years, the analyses include examples of quartets, local soloists, mixed-gender ensembles, and choirs. The analyses examine textual, theological, rhetorical, historical, and cultural elements and implications of six *POQ* performances that use Dr. Watts texts. The performances are selected for analysis for the completeness and quality of the footage, diversity of types of performing ensembles, prominence of the performers in the *POQ* tradition, and amount of Dr. Watts text sung. Although the musical settings are not of primary interest in these analyses, they will be described briefly to demonstrate that Dr. Watts texts have been sung on *POQ* using diverse musical styles.

The first analytical category examines the interpolation of fragments of Dr. Watts texts alongside newer lyrics. The first analysis is of a performance by a young local quartet, the Apostolic Sons of God, on the April 30, 1995 episode of *POQ* (Appendix C, #13). The group performed a song entitled “If You Put Your Trust in Jesus (He Will See You Through).” The song was notable for its incorporation of texts from two Dr. Watts hymns: the first verse of Thomas Shepherd’s “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?”, written in 1693, and the first verse of John Newton’s “Amazing Grace,” written in 1779. The following lyrical transcription indicates the placement of the Dr. Watts texts relative to verses containing newer text:

Refrain (Newer text, origin unknown; sung twice)

If you put your trust in Jesus, He will see you through.
If you put your trust in the Lord, He will see you through.
If you put your trust in Jesus, He will see you through.
All you have to do is trust in Him.

Verse 1 (Newton, 1779)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

Refrain

Verse 2 (Shepherd, 1693)

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me.

Refrain

Vamp (Repeated multiple times)

He'll see you through.

Several linguistic and hermeneutic issues arise from the juxtaposition of the two older texts with the newer text of the refrain. First, the historical distance between the Dr. Watts texts and the refrain is immediately obvious. The refrain employs the contemporary colloquial expression “He will see you through,” while the older texts contain language anachronistic in the 1990s. Examples include the noun “wretch” and the verb “to bear.” Another apparent linguistic disjunct caused by the juxtaposition of old and next texts is the fact that the refrain addresses the listener directly. The listener is urged that “if *you* put your trust in the Lord, He will see *you* through” (emphasis mine). Both of the interpolated Dr. Watts hymns, on the other hand, describe the singer’s personal experience in first-person pronouns and do not directly address the audience.

Second, the Newton text, Shepherd text, and text of the refrain do not have obvious thematic correspondence. Shepherd’s “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone” has a loose thematic relationship to the refrain. Shepherd’s text implies that since Christ suffered, he is able to “see you through” (i.e., help you endure) personal suffering, as the refrain states. The Newton text, on the other hand, does not mention Christ at all, although it does reference salvation. The vamp,

which consists of the background singers performing the repeated text “He will see you through,” obviously derives from the first verse. The background singers’ texted ostinato contains no clear thematic references to either of the Dr. Watts hymns. During his improvisation in the vamp, however, the quartet’s lead singer makes multiple references to “Dr. Jesus.” This description of Christ is used frequently by performers on *POQ* and by Black gospel performers in general. The “Dr. Jesus” trope, referencing the power of Christ in a Christian’s life, links the vamp more clearly to the first verse, but not to the two Dr. Watts texts.

The texts by Newton and Shepherd are historically central to Black sacred song in several ways. Bailey states that Newton’s “Amazing Grace” was “by far” one of the two most popular hymns in the lining repertory of Black churches in Mississippi in the late 1970s (1978, 5). Dargan transcribed a version of “Amazing Grace” from a 1992 field recording in the north-central Piedmont region of South Carolina. His transcription indicates that the hymn was part of the Baptist lining tradition in the region as recently as the early 1990s (2006, 68).³⁰⁵ The *African American Heritage Hymnal* acknowledges the centrality of “Amazing Grace” in different modes of Black worship by including two notated versions of the hymn.³⁰⁶ The first version sets the text to the melody *New Britain*, the tune familiar to most Americans as “belonging” to Newton’s text (Batastini 2001, 271). This version is notated in a four-part homophonic, homorhythmic texture with a functional bassline and chorale-style voice-leading and harmonization (see Figure 6.2 later in this chapter).

The hymnal’s second version of “Amazing Grace” is a monophonic notated arrangement of “Amazing Grace,” designated a “meter hymn” by the hymnal editors, pictured below in Figure

³⁰⁵ The Piedmont sweeps from Virginia down through Georgia; the area of South Carolina considered to be in the Piedmont includes the northern half of Georgia’s eastern state line, which of course is a shared boundary with South Carolina. Most maps show the Piedmont to encompass the Augusta area.

³⁰⁶ The hymnal is an ecumenical liturgical resource compiled by representatives of multiple Black denominations and churches.

6.1.³⁰⁷ The “meter hymn” version, arranged in the hymnal by Evelyn Simpson-Currenton rather than transcribed from a congregational performance, uses an untitled melody pitched in the D-dorian mode (Ibid., 272). The arrangement attempts to visually convey elements of the Black lining practice by using fermatas, very long note values, text setting that stretches syllables across melismas, grace notes for embellishments, and the indication of which parts the leader and congregation should sing (Ibid.).


HIS GRACE, LOVE AND MERCY

JESUS CHRIST


AMAZING GRACE 272

*Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.
Ephesians 6:23-24*


Leader:




1. A - maz - ing grace! How sweet the sound, A -
2. I once was lost, but now am found, I
3. (hum throughout)




maz once - ing was grace! lost,



How but sweet now the am sound, found. That Twas



saved a wretch like me! That Twas saved blind, but now I see.



a but wretch now like me! see.

Figure 6.1: Meter Hymn Version of “Amazing Grace,” *African American Heritage Hymnal*.

³⁰⁷ Excerpts from the *African American Heritage Hymnal* are provided for musical and historical context on the Dr. Watts tradition in African-American Christianity and should not be reproduced for performance purposes.

The two versions of “Amazing Grace” provided in the *African American Heritage* hymnal indicate the centrality of this text in various performative and liturgical contexts for Black sacred song.

Among the eight Dr. Watts hymns that Bailey identified as being in use in the lining tradition of Black Mississippi churches was Shepherd’s “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone” (1978, 16). Shepherd’s text was also included in Dargan’s compilation of twenty-six frequently performed hymns tabulated from his research into the Black Baptist lining tradition in the southeast (2006, 117 – 8). In addition to being part of the lining repertory, “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone” also occupies a special position in the compositional and cultural history of gospel music. The melody of Thomas Dorsey’s 1932 gospel song “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” is a version of *Maitland*, the tune that had long been associated with Shepherd’s text “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone.”³⁰⁸ Dorsey’s use of *Maitland* established gospel music’s habit of borrowing from the texts, themes, images, and even melodic fragments of European Protestant hymnody. Dorsey’s compositional borrowing also continued the habit of Black worshippers’ appropriating elements of European religion and adapting them to their individual, corporate, and liturgical needs. The use of the Shepherd and Newton texts by the Apostolic Sons of God obliquely and explicitly reference multiple layers of European and Black sacred song traditions and compositional approaches.

The musical setting in which these two Dr. Watts texts are embedded on *POQ* is unremarkable. Its harmonic palette is very simple, consisting of only the tonic and subdominant during the refrain. One or two dominants and applied dominants are added during the verses and vamp. There is a synthesizer, which employs a quiet horn setting, drums, and a lead guitar. The

³⁰⁸ *Maitland* was composed sometime in the nineteenth century by George N. Allen, long after Shepherd’s text had been written (Batastini 2001, 554).

guitarist is active throughout the texture of the vocalist's phrases. Sometimes at the ends of phrases he also fills in the "space" with quick blues-based riffs. The riffs flit up and down the blues scale without stopping to bend or embellish pitches. The background singers function much as they do within the typical older quartet tradition by singing the last half of the phrases with the soloist. For example, during the refrain the lead singer sings, "If you put your trust in the Lord" and the background singers join him in singing the remainder of the line, "He will see you through." Combined with the uptempo shuffle rhythm, the use of horns (albeit synthesized), the percussion, the blues-influenced guitar, and the limited harmonic palette, the style evoked is 1940s jump (or "jump blues") music.³⁰⁹

Joseph Scriven's "What a Friend We Have in Jesus", written in 1855, was incorporated into a *POQ* performance on March 17, 1996, by Mamma and the Weaver Brothers (Appendix C, #47). The group is a mixed-gender family quartet from Johnston, South Carolina. It includes a female lead singer and male instrumentalists who sing background as well as play lead guitar, drums, and keyboard. The female lead singer, whose first name is not given in the episode, is married to the lead guitarist/background singer Hayward Weaver. Other members of Mamma and the Weaver Brothers included the couple's sons, according to an interview on that day's *POQ* episode.³¹⁰

Mamma and the Weaver Brothers use portions of the Dr. Watts hymn text "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" to comprise the second verse of a song entitled "He Is the Same."

Below is a textual transcription of their performance:

³⁰⁹ "Jump," a form of jazz related to swing, was best exemplified in the 1940s in the music of Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five. Rye and Kernfield list the characteristics of the style as including "saxophone solos in a relaxed, tuneful swing style; simple swing riffs (played by individual melody instruments); blues and newly composed popular-song structures; and clever lyrics about African-American life" (n.d.).

³¹⁰ The group was celebrating its fourth anniversary the day that the episode was broadcast. The Brewsteraires and Apostolic Sons of God were performing at the anniversary program, which was held in Johnston, South Carolina.

Verse 1 (Newer text, origin unknown; sung twice)

Sometimes I stand and wonder what tomorrow is gonna bring.
Will it bring sunshine, will it bring rain, will it bring heartaches or will it bring pain?
Of this one thing I can be sure, that my God will never change.
He is the same today, yesterday, and forevermore.

Refrain

He is the same today, yesterday, and forevermore.
He is the same today, yesterday, and forevermore.

Verse 2 (compiled from Scriven, 1855)

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear.
What a privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer.
Have we trials and temptations, is there trouble anywhere?
Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer

Refrain/Repeat Verse 1/Refrain

Vamp (repeated multiple times)

He won't ever change.

This group's treatment of the older hymn text differs slightly from the treatment of the older texts in the first piece analyzed, but overall the same principle is used. In both examples, an old hymn text is interpolated into a composition that includes newer text, all of which is placed in a relatively contemporary musical setting. Scriven's first two verses are given in their entirety below to demonstrate how Mamma and the Weaver Brothers freely selected lines from them. A comparison of the song's lyrics and Scriven's verses shows that the performers used the first two lines of Scriven's first verse and the first and last lines of his second verse.

What a Friend We Have in Jesus, Scriven (1855), Verses 1 and 2

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear.
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.
O what peace we often forfeit; o, what needless pain we bear!
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer.

The narrative strategy employed in this song differs from the one used by the Apostolic Sons of God. In this piece, the group uses the more modern text of the first verse to “set up” a problem. In this case, the dilemma is spoken from the first-person perspective as the singer wonders anxiously what troubles the future will hold. The refrain, composed of newer text, and the second verse, drawn from Scriven’s text, resolve the dilemma. In the refrain and in Scriven’s text, the singer reminds the entire community of listeners that “we” have a “friend” who knows “our” weaknesses. The traditional, reassuring language of a Dr. Watts hymn, probably familiar to many listeners in the Augusta area, acts as an effective resolution to the problem presented in the first verse of “He Is the Same.”

A further layer of interpretive resonance is added when considering the thematic relationship of the refrain to Scriven’s text about the faithful friend. The refrain evokes past experiences, present, and future encounters with the divine (“He is the same today, yesterday, and forevermore”). Similarly, Scriven’s text, because of its place in the Dr. Watts canon, acts as an aural reference to explicitly Black communal encounters with the divine by calling Jesus a “friend” that “we have.” “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” was part of the Black Baptist lining tradition in the Southeast, particularly the Carolinas, late into the twentieth century. A version of it was recorded at a Black church service in the Sea Islands of South Carolina in 1964 by Guy Carawan, and was later transcribed by Dargan (2006, 62).³¹¹ An even more recent version of

³¹¹ Dargan does not mention this fact in his transcription, but it appears that the skeletal outline of the melody lined in the Sea Island recording of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” is the old American tune *Restoration*. *Restoration* appears in many nineteenth-century shape-note collections, such as the *Southern Harmony*, and in some modern denominational hymnals. Typically in shape-note hymnals and modern denominational hymnals, *Restoration* is paired with either the text “Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Wretched” or “I Will Arise and Go to Jesus.”

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus” was recorded by Joyce Cauthen in 1997 at a Baptist church in North Carolina, also transcribed by Dargan (Ibid., 83).³¹²

The musical setting is reminiscent of a late Motown style (albeit without the rhythmically-active bassline). Its quick tempo, expanded and jazz-influenced harmonies, vocal background harmonies sung in parallel chord inversions, a high male falsetto, and use of a very active keyboard in the texture all resemble late Motown recordings. The quartet structure is apparent in the vamp, which reduces the text to the central thematic seed (“He is the same”) and reduces the harmonic motion to the tonic and subdominant. The background singers join the female lead vocalist only during the two-line refrain and the repeated text of the vamp. Mrs. Weaver performs the verses alone, with the exception of a few falsetto interjections by one of the very young male members of the ensemble.³¹³

These two analyses are examples of local groups that incorporate texts from the Dr. Watts tradition into songs with newer lyrics and stylistically-diverse musical settings. I will also briefly note other instances of Dr. Watts texts on *POQ* that fall into the category. In an undated episode from the mid or early 1990s, *POQ* broadcast commercially-produced footage of North Carolina gospel artists F.C. Barnes and Janice Brown (Appendix C, #22).³¹⁴ The performance was a traditional gospel song entitled “I Have a Friend.” During the song, Barnes quoted one verse of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” the same 1855 Scriven text that Mama and the Weaver Brothers interpolated into their performance. Barnes, a nationally-known gospel musician, was raised as a pianist in the Baptist church in Rocky Mount, North Carolina

³¹² Again, although Dargan does not state this, the skeletal outline of the tune *Restoration* can also be discerned in the 1997 North Carolina version of “What A Friend We Have in Jesus.” The embellishments and key area used in the North Carolina version are very different than those of the South Carolina version.

³¹³ The woman’s name is not given in the episode.

³¹⁴ The concert video was produced by Atlanta International Records, with whom Barnes and Brown recorded at that time.

(www.malaco.com). Rocky Mount is in a geographical region known for the endurance of the Dr. Watts tradition in Black Baptist churches (Dargan 2006). This may have accounted for Barnes' quotation of a Dr. Watts text in a gospel composition. Although Barnes' performance did not occur in the *POQ* studio, it represents the artistic and/or religious standards of the *POQ* managerial and production team since it was selected to air on the program.

The Swanee Quintet's "Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee" from their album *Still Holding On* (2005) also fits into this category of interpolating a Dr. Watts text alongside newer texts in a gospel song. In this piece, which was analyzed in more detail in Chapter Three, the Quintet used Charles Wesley's eighteenth-century text as a refrain sandwiched between newer verses. As discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, Wesley's "Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee" is still frequently performed in the Black Baptist lining tradition across the southeast. There is no extant footage of the Quintet performing the piece on *POQ*, although they may have. However, their relationship to *POQ* and to the local gospel infrastructure justifies including their recording of "Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee" as an example of local gospel groups using a Dr. Watts text in their performances.

The second analytical category of Dr. Watts texts performed on *POQ* is the conceptual opposite of the first category. It consists of *POQ* performances whose lyrics are drawn solely from Dr. Watts hymns, with limited or no interpolations of newer text. Given the prominence of older texts in these pieces, different linguistic, cultural, and textual issues are germane to these analyses. The first analysis is of a performance by the Swanee Quintet at a concert in Augusta's Bell Auditorium (Appendix C, #65). The concert, promoted and produced by the Howard family, probably occurred sometime in the early or mid-1980s. The concert footage was most likely shown on *POQ*, although it is unknown on which episode(s) it may have appeared. During the

performance, the Quintet sang a song entitled “A Charge to Keep I Have.” The lyrics of their performance are transcribed below:

Refrain (sung twice)

A charge to keep I have;
A charge to keep I have;
A charge to keep I have—
A God to glorify.

Verse 1

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
Who gave His son my soul to save,
[audio indistinct on tape].

Refrain

Verse 2

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master’s will.

Refrain

The text is drawn almost entirely from the first two verses of Charles Wesley’s 1762 hymn, “A Charge to Keep I Have.” Wesley’s original first two verses are given below.

Verse 1

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

Verse 2

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master’s will.

A comparison of the Quintet’s song with Wesley’s original text demonstrates how the group manipulated Wesley’s strophic hymn into the refrain-verse structure so common to gospel music.

In order to create the four-line refrain with the text structure (aaab), the group repeated Wesley's first line three times in their refrain, then concluded the refrain with Wesley's second line. For their first verse, the Quintet used Wesley's first strophe with a slight textual alteration: "a never-dying soul to save" becomes "who gave His son my soul to save." The alteration preserves the rhyme scheme and the soteriological emphasis of Wesley's original text, with a slightly different inflection regarding which soul is being saved. The Quintet's second verse is taken verbatim from Wesley's second strophe.

The Quintet also arranged the text to maximize the musical potential of the quartet. Each repeated line of the refrain is divided into a call-and-response motif, allowing for a leader-group dynamic to emerge. Lead singer Percy Griffin sings "A charge" and the group responds with the remainder of the phrase, "to keep I have." The musical setting is a simple up-tempo, major-mode arrangement with no vamp section, using only the tonic, dominant, and subdominant. Although other instruments on the video footage are not clearly audible during the song, the Quintet's guitarist Johnny Mims performs in an audibly rural, country-and-western style.

Wesley's 1762 text, like the other Dr. Watts texts discussed in these analyses, has been used frequently in the southern lining traditions of Black Baptist churches (Bailey 1978, 5; Dargan 2006, 76 – 77). The text was a central part of the Black Baptist lining tradition in nearby South Carolina through at least the early 1980s (Dargan 2006, 66).³¹⁵ Its centrality to the lining tradition is recognized in the *African American Heritage Hymnal*, which includes a "meter hymn" version of the piece. The "meter hymn" setting of the song is notated as a monophonic line with grace notes, fermatas, and long note values. A second notated version of the song is a

³¹⁵ Dargan provides three transcriptions of "A Charge to Keep," from Black Baptist churches in Mississippi, Florida, and South Carolina. Although he does not state this, the transcriptions from the Mississippi and Florida churches appear to be ornamented versions of the American tune *Idumea*. The tune appears in nineteenth-century shapenote hymnals, including multiple editions of the *Sacred Harp*. None of Dargan's transcriptions are related musically to the Quintet's setting of Wesley's text.

standard chorale setting using the Lowell Mason tune *Boylston* (Batastini 2001, 467 – 8).³¹⁶ The hymnal's inclusion of two notated arrangements of Wesley's texts demonstrates its centrality in multiple modes and styles of Black sacred song.

The denominational roots of some of the Quintet's personnel may account for the use of Wesley's 1762 text in this early 1980s concert footage. Members of the Quintet featured in the performance of "A Charge to Keep" included Percy Griffin, Johnny Jones, James Anderson, Johnny Bynes, and Eddie Mims. Of those performers, Anderson and Mims were longtime members of Baptist churches, while Jones was a member of a Methodist church. Both denominations, particularly the Baptist, have a history of using Dr. Watts hymns.³¹⁷ The Quintet apparently never recorded the song on an album. In the absence of liner notes, it is difficult to establish which group member, if any, arranged the piece.

The second example of a Dr. Watts text forming the main lyric of a gospel performance on *POQ* is from the Brewsteraires' DVD *The Brewsteraires: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* (2006). In some of the 1990s footage from the DVD, the Brewsteraires perform the first verse of John Newton's "Amazing Grace," written in 1779.³¹⁸ The text used in this performance is identical to Newton's first verse of text:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

³¹⁶ The meter hymn tune given in the *African American Heritage Hymnal* for "A Charge to Keep I Have" appears to be a less-ornamented version of the Mississippi and Florida recordings transcribed by Dargan and theorized in the previous footnote to be a variant of the tune *Idumea*. The editors of the *African American Heritage Hymnal* do not provide a tune-name for the meter hymn version of "A Charge to Keep I Have," calling it a "Negro spiritual" (Batastini 2001, 467). Of course the origins of *Idumea* may lie in Black worship, and this note is not meant to imply otherwise.

³¹⁷ As demonstrated by Bailey's ethnographic work in Mississippi, the Dr. Watts texts are sometimes used in Holiness/Pentecostal denominations as well, even being lined out in those contexts at times (1978).

³¹⁸ The group may have performed additional verses, but the video footage ended abruptly after they sang the first verse twice.

As stated in the first analysis in this chapter, Newton's "Amazing Grace" is central in the Baptist lining tradition and is a popular text in other styles of Black sacred song. Unlike other performances analyzed in this chapter, the Brewsteraires' version of "Amazing Grace" is sung to a very old melody. The Brewsteraires perform the text using the tune *New Britain*, the melody that the average listener associates with the text of "Amazing Grace."³¹⁹ A four-part harmonization of *New Britain* set with "Amazing Grace" in the *African-American Heritage Hymnal* is reprinted in Figure 6.2 (Batastini 2001, 271). Although the Brewsteraires did not use the precise harmonization indicated in Figure 6.2 they closely approximated it.

JESUS CHRIST HIS GRACE, LOVE AND MERCY

271 AMAZING GRACE

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.
Ephesians 2:8

Text: St. 1-3, John Newton, 1725-1807, st. 4, attr. to John Ross, fl. 1859
Tune: NEW BRITAIN, CM, Virginia Harmony, 1831; arr. by Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, b. 1953, © 2000, GIA Publications, Inc.

Figure 6.2: Four-part Harmonization of *New Britain*, *African American Heritage Hymnal*.

³¹⁹ *New Britain*, a tune of unknown origin, first appeared in print in the United States in the *Virginia Harmony* tunebook in 1831 (*The Hymnal According to the Use of the Episcopal Church* 1982, 671).

Although the tune and text date from previous centuries, the Brewsteraires' performance of the tune demonstrates a distinctly twentieth-century gospel approach. This is most clearly heard in the prominence of a virtuosic vocal soloist, the instrumentation, and the 12/8 meter. Although the Brewsteraires are a quartet, during "Amazing Grace" the background singers contribute little to the arrangement. The musical focus is on the ornamented melody that the soloist, the group's unnamed young tenor singer, performs. The tenor personalizes the text by adding verbal interpolations such as "oh yeah" and "yes, Lord." He further personalizes the song through musical improvisation, exploiting the extremes of his range with melismas that extend far beyond the ambitus of *New Britain*.

These melismatic ornamentations provide an audible link to the lining tradition, in which hymn melodies are intricately embellished. However, available recordings and transcriptions of the Baptist lining tradition indicate that the singers typically ornament the melody using modal, pentatonic and heptatonic gapped scales, or blues-based pitch collections.³²⁰ The Brewsteraires' tenor singer, on the other hand, tends to use pitches from the diatonic major collection. The effect of these diatonic melismas is similar to vocal devices used by many rhythm-and-blues singers of the 1990s. This performance of "Amazing Grace" signifies on several layers of broadly American and distinctly Black musical and religious elements. These layers include text written by a white eighteenth-century British Anglican, a nineteenth-century American tune of unknown origin, and the re-interpretation of these two elements by a young Black male in a distinctly gospel style.

This analytical category of Dr. Watts texts on *POQ* currently contains only the two examples described above. Other Dr. Watts hymns that are used as the central lyrics of *POQ*

³²⁰ See transcriptions in Dargan (2006) and notated arrangements of meter hymns in the *African American Heritage Hymnal* (2001). Numerous recordings of Dr. Watts hymns made by professional musicians and amateurs throughout the twentieth century, as well as field recordings of congregational performances, currently exist.

performances occur during the program's weekly devotion/prayer segment, and they constitute the third analytical category. Prior to analyzing performances in this third category, the "devotion" ritual of the Black Baptist church and its relationship to *POQ*'s weekly devotion/prayer segment must be described.

The ritual called "devotion" occurs fifteen or twenty minutes before church services in many Black Baptist churches across America. The ritual has occurred since at least the early twentieth century (Dargan 2008). It begins as soon as a deacon notes that several congregation members have arrived.³²¹ Devotion consists of alternations of prayers and several old lined hymns "raised" by a congregation member or deacon. The ritual is considered a "warm-up" to the service proper (Pinkston 1975; Pitts 1993; J. Carter 2008; Billingsley 2009). The hymns lined out in devotion usually come from a small group of Dr. Watts texts set to a similarly-small group of tunes. At times transcriptions and recordings indicate that the same tune is used in several regions in conjunction with the same text. Sometimes, however, the pairing of tunes with text varies by region. Regardless, the same central repertory of Dr. Watts texts is used during devotion in different regions of the country. During devotion, the hymns are usually lined *a cappella* in a heterophonic, slow, melismatic and highly embellished fashion. According to Pinkston, "while lining out, the leader might interpolate testimonies or a story supporting the thought of the hymn stanza" (cited in Crookshank 2004, 35). Lined hymns are concluded with a "humming chorus," in which congregation members and leader hum the melody of the hymn to complete the rendition (Talmadge 1961, 98; Pinkston 1975; Boyer 1993).

The language of the prayers in devotion is formalized and ritualistic, a mixture of "standard twentieth-century English and Jacobean English" (Pitts 1993, 8). Sources of the

³²¹ Pitts makes clear that devotions frequently precede many types of services in Black Baptist churches in addition to Sunday morning services. These include pastoral and church anniversaries, Men's Day services, Women's Day services, homecomings, and musicals (1993, 25).

language of the prayers include “often-heard verses from Old One Hundred [Dr. Watts] hymns, gospel songs, Scripture, and lines from the prayers of other speakers” (Ibid., 15). Given this archaic language, the very slow tempi of the hymns and the wailing, chanting embellishment of their melodies, Pitts describes devotion as possessing “a relatively somber mood” (1993, 24). According to several scholars, the practice is fading even among Baptists, a fact lamented by older Black Baptist congregation members (Pitts 1993; Dargan 2006). This concern over the potential disappearance of the devotion ritual is foregrounded later in the chapter in Karlton Howard’s remarks regarding why *POQ* includes a devotion segment.

Scholars have observed that a small core group of Dr. Watts hymns were most frequently sung from the 1970s to 1990s in Southeastern Black Baptist devotions. These include “I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry” (Isaac Watts); “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” (Charles Wesley); “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone”; (Thomas Shepherd), “A Charge to Keep I Have” (Charles Wesley); “Amazing Grace” (John Newton), “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (Joseph Scriven); and “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” (Horatius Bonar) (Bailey 1978; Pitts 1991, 1993; Johnson 2001; Dargan 2006).³²² Aside from Shepherd’s “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone” (1693) and Scriven’s “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (1855), the texts date from the early or mid-eighteenth century. Four of these six popular Dr. Watts hymns have already been analyzed in this chapter. The remaining two will be analyzed in the context of their performance during the weekly devotion on *POQ*.³²³

³²² Pitts concludes, through comparing Henry Faulk’s 1940 sound recordings of Black Baptist Devotions near Austin, Texas, with his own data gathered in the same region in the 1980s, that the hymn repertory of Devotion is actually not static, but incorporates whatever sacred song is deemed older or traditional by current standards. Pitts found that eleven of the twenty Devotion hymns that Faulk recorded in 1940 had disappeared from the Devotion ritual of the late 1980s (1991).

³²³ It is important to note that although scholars seem to associate Dr. Watts hymns predominantly with devotions, they are sometimes sung in other contexts of Black corporate worship. Black Baptist minister J. Alfred Smith states, “The preacher even to this day keeps the tradition alive by leading a metrical hymn or spiritual before preaching. Sometimes the preacher in any of the seven black church denominations [African Methodist Episcopal, African

POQ devotion segments (also sometimes called the “weekly prayer” by program personnel) from the early 1980s until 2006 usually last between two and five minutes. The segment typically follows a tripartite scheme: 1) a verse or two of a Dr. Watts hymn (not lined out) or a gospel song; 2) a formal prayer, often accompanied by instruments; 3) a refrain or verse from the song preceding the prayer, or a segment of a different song. Sometimes host Karlton Howard, a Baptist minister, prays during the segment. He often remarks prior to his prayers that the moment “feels right” to do the weekly segment. This indicates that in many instances, the prayer segment is not pre-planned on *POQ*. Sometimes the weekly prayer is offered by another local minister or by a *POQ* performer.³²⁴ Men typically conduct the weekly prayer segment.

The prayers I have observed during studio tapings and in program footage almost always occur within the musical framework of a performance that is already in progress. The minister moves to the center of the studio set with a microphone, and the performers lower their dynamic level. Frequently during the prayer, the vocalists will begin to hum, vocalize on a vowel, or stop singing entirely. The minister typically begins to pray in a normal speech timbre; often the prayer will increase in intensity until the minister is chanting on a reciting tone. At this point, the vocalists often drop out so that the instrumentalists are free to punctuate the minister’s prayers much as they would in a church setting. In these cases, the instruments—typically the keyboards, percussion, and sometimes guitar—cease playing metrically and begin to hover on the tonic. They “respond” ametrically to the preacher’s spoken or chanted phrases with riffs on the blues scale that punctuate his speech. When the preacher leaves his reciting tone and concludes his prayer in more normal speech timbre, it cues the instrumentalists and vocalists to resume singing the song

Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, National Baptist Convention, National Baptist Convention of America, Progressive National Baptist Convention, and Church of God in Christ] will lead a metrical hymn, spiritual, or gospel during the sermon or at its conclusion” (2001, n.p.)

³²⁴Many of the men and women who perform gospel music on *POQ* are also ministers, although many of them do not seem to be affiliated with a church full-time.

they were performing before the prayer or to begin a new one. The alternation of song and prayer in the *POQ* weekly devotion aligns with the alternation of elements in Black Baptist church devotions. Another similarity between the two rituals is the archaic, formulaic prayer language that follows the same general rhetorical template on *POQ* and in church devotions. As will be demonstrated below, a third similarity between the *POQ* segment and the church devotion is the use of Dr. Watts hymns, although they are not lined out on *POQ*.

According to episode footage and program credits from the mid-1990s, the Howard family placed Rev. Jerome Herrington in charge of coordinating and sometimes executing the weekly prayer/devotion segment. According to remarks made on various *POQ* episodes, Herrington pastored several rural Baptist churches in Burke County during this time.³²⁵ While he was devotion coordinator, Herrington recruited another local minister (usually Baptist) to offer the prayer, or he himself would pray. When Herrington prayed, he sometimes accompanied himself at the keyboard. At other times he prayed during the musical performances of others. Out of the prayer/devotion segments that I have screened, Herrington's prayers seem most closely related to the Black Baptist devotion tradition. Two of these segments from the mid-1990s are analyzed below; both are marked prominently by the use of Dr. Watts hymns.³²⁶

The first example of a Dr. Watts text sung during devotions on *POQ* is the performance of "I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry" by the Tabernacle Baptist Church Praise Team on December 6, 1998 (Appendix C, #70). The Augusta church's praise team consisted of six female vocalists and three instrumentalists: a female keyboardist, a male drummer, and a male soprano saxophonist. The piece was a setting of Watts' text "I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry" (first published in *Psalms of David*, 1719). The musical setting was written by gospel composer

³²⁵ Burke County is immediately south of Richmond County, in which Augusta is located.

³²⁶ According to my observations of tapings in 2007 and 2008, the prayer segment seems to have now become less similar to the Baptist devotion tradition.

Richard Smallwood in 1990. On the episode, Smallwood's setting is performed by the group almost exactly as it is notated in a standard arrangement that appears in the *African American Heritage Hymnal* (Batestini 2001, 395). Smallwood's piece is pictured in Figure 6.3.

LIFE IN CHRIST COMMITMENT AND CONSECRATION

395 I LOVE THE LORD, HE HEARD MY CRY

Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth I call to You...
Psalm 61:1-2

I love the Lord, He heard my
cry; And pit-ied ev - 'ry groan. Long as I
live, while troub-les rise, I'll has-ten to
His throne. I love the

Figure 6.3: "I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry," Watts/Smallwood, *African American Heritage Hymnal*.³²⁷

Neither Smallwood's official website nor the *African American Heritage Hymnal* attributes the text to Watts. Smallwood's website describes it as "his song," and the *Hymnal* actually credits the text to Smallwood (www.myspace.com/richardsmallwood; Batestini 2001, 395). The lack of text attribution to Watts is perhaps a mark of how deeply Black Christianity has absorbed Watts' texts into its liturgical corpus.

³²⁷ Unlike other hymnal excerpts included in this chapter, Figure 6.3 is almost an exact notated representation of what the performers on *POQ* actually sang, textually and musically.

The Watts text that Smallwood set is printed below. Smallwood used only Watts' first verse and added no new text of his own:

I love the Lord, He heard my cry,
And pitied every groan.
Long as I live while troubles rise
I'll hasten to His throne.

Smallwood's arrangement of the piece is yet another example of the range of musical styles in which Dr. Watts texts have been performed on *POQ*. Unlike many groups which perform on the show, this women's group sings in a homophonic, homorhythmic chorale texture. None of the six women interpolates extra text such as "oh yeah" or "yes, Lord." The lack of verbal interpolation and individual vocal personalization is unusual on *POQ*. The group's body language is equally restrained. They use hand gestures, little movement from side to side, and wear relatively fixed, calm facial expressions. The absence of physical gesture is also unusual in *POQ* performances. Smallwood's arrangement lacks a refrain or a vamp section. Since the group did not add a vamp or refrain to the arrangement, the structural opportunities for extensive personalization that are built into many gospel performances are absent here. The group's tone and diction is influenced more by formal, classical musical training than that of many performers on *POQ*. It demonstrates historical continuity with the jubilee choir tradition.

The instrumental roles in this performance are also different from many *POQ* performances. Instead of improvising freely, the soprano saxophone performs the melody with no embellishment, playing in strict rhythm with the women's voices. The piano behaves similarly, moving homorhythmically and homophonically with the voices. The lack of improvised polyphony among the instruments and voices is striking compared to typical instrumental behavior in a *POQ* gospel performance. The harmonic language of Smallwood's

arrangement is more chromatic than many other gospel performances on *POQ*, particularly in the introductory measures and the measures between verses (see Figure 6.3). Also notable in Smallwood's score, and in the womens' performance of it, is the absence of call-and-response motifs at any structural level. Overall, the performance lacks some of the major marks of idiomatic Black performance practice typically heard on *POQ*.

After the women's group sings the Watts/Smallwood verse twice, Herrington walks to the middle of the television studio to begin the weekly prayer. As is typical of Baptist ministers on *POQ*, Herrington's language displays the same formal scheme, linguistic elements, and rhetorical devices that Pitts identified in prayers in Black Baptist devotion services.³²⁸ When Herrington begins to pray, the instruments continue to play the melody and harmonic progression of the piece, while the women "ooh" their harmonic lines softly. Their "oohing" might be similar to the "humming chorus" identified by scholars who have observed the lining tradition (Boyer 1973; Bailey 1978; Dargan 2006). Herrington's prayer draws to a close with formulaic remarks easily recognizable as conclusive by anyone who has listened to Black Baptist ministers (Pitts 1993). The vocalists and instrumentalists seem to recognize his subtle cue, too, for they return to their text and to their full volume just as Herrington is delivering the last lines of his prayer. Interestingly, the instruments never entered the ametrical, call-and-response interaction with Herrington that often occurs during the show's weekly prayer.

Watts' hymn "I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry" has a venerable place in the Black sacred song tradition. Smallwood did not pluck it from obscurity for his arrangement; the text

³²⁸ Some of these characteristics were formal, archaic language (Pitts identifies it as "Jacobean" or eighteenth-century language); the reliance on stock phrase formulations borrowed from other prayers, sermons, Scripture, and religious songs; and a rhetorical structure that moves from acknowledging God's sovereign power to petitioning Him for specific requests (1993). Herrington himself, I have noted, uses identical phrases in his prayers on *POQ*, even over a span of several years. Repeated phrases of Herrington's include "from the cradle to the grave," and "it is to Thee we come on this, another Lord's Day."

was already one of the most central in the repertoire of the Baptist lining tradition. The *African American Heritage Hymnal* includes a “meter hymn” version of the hymn, pictured in Figure 6.4.

394 I LOVE THE LORD, HE HEARD MY CRY
Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth I call to You...
Psalm 61:1-2

Slow, very free (ad lib.)
Leader:

1. I love the Lord, He heard my cry!
live a - when uh-troub -
I love the
le rise, I'll has - ten to His throne,
Lord a - He a - heard
I a - has
my cry! And pit - ied ev - 'ry groan,
ten to His, His throne.
an and pit
ied ev - 'ry groan.
2. As long as I live when troub - le rise,
Long as I

Text: African-American traditional
Tune: Meter hymn, anonymous; lined out by M. Adams and Louis Sykes, © 2000, GIA Publications, Inc.

Figure 6.4: Meter Hymn Version of “I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry,” *African American Heritage Hymnal*.

The meter version of the hymn is placed immediately before the page containing Smallwood’s gospel setting in the hymnal; the two versions attest to the text’s multiple incarnations in Black sacred song (Batastini 2001, 394 – 5). Bailey identified the text as one of eight devotion hymns most frequently performed in Black Mississippi churches in the late 1970s (1978). Dargan states that it is an often-lined hymn in southeastern Black Baptist devotions, and he includes several transcriptions of it (2006, 118 – 9). As is the case in most of the other Dr. Watts texts analyzed in

this chapter, the central theme of the lyric is an individual's plea to God for assistance and attention. The plea is followed by an affirmation that the prayer was heard. Watts describes the act of prayer graphically in this hymn, using the terms "cries" and "groan." The compact verse declares that past divine responses ("He heard my cry") provide the foundation for future faith ("Long as I live, until I die, I'll hasten to His throne").

A second example of a Dr. Watts text sung during the *POQ* devotion segment is Charles Wesley's "Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee." Along with "Amazing Grace" and "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say," Wesley's text is thought to be the most popular Dr. Watts hymn to have endured in the Black church devotion tradition (Bailey 1978; Dargan 2006). Charles Wesley's text first appeared in John Wesley's 1741 *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns*. Most of the Dr. Watts hymns are pleas for divine help. However, Wesley's terse first verse is perhaps the most linguistically effective and explosive in the Dr. Watts canon.

Father, I stretch my hands to Thee.
No other help I know.
If Thou withdraw Thyself from me,
O, whither shall I go?

Like many of the eighteenth-century texts popular in the history of Black sacred song, Wesley wrote the hymn in first-person perspective. It communicates the performer's complete dependence on a divine being that may help the suppliant or may decide to "withdraw." Although the writer appears to be on the verge of despair, he also obliquely declares his hope by referring to the divine as "Father." Like Watts' use of "cry" and "groan," Wesley's text employs graphic, embodied verbs. Physical gestures by the human and the divine form the core of the narrative: the singer's hands are "stretched" out; the hearer might "withdraw." If this happens, the singer will have no other place to "go."

Like other Dr. Watts texts discussed in this chapter, “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” appears in the *African American Heritage Hymnal* as a four-part chorale-style arrangement and as a meter hymn as pictured in Figures 6.5 and 6.6 (2003, 127 – 8).

GOD OUR FATHER HIS GUIDANCE AND CARE

127 FATHER, I STRETCH MY HANDS TO THEE

I stretch out my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a parched land.
Psalm 143:6-7

1. Fa - ther, I stretch my hands to Thee;
2. What did Thine on - ly Son en - dure,
3. Sure - ly Thou canst not let me die;
4. Au - thor of faith! to Thee I lift

No oth - er help I know.
Be - fore I drew my breath!
O speak and I shall live;
My wea - ry, long - ing eyes;

If Thou with - draw Thy - self from me,
What pain, what la - bor to se - cure
And here I will un - wea - ried lie,
O let me now re - ceive that gift!

O! whith - er shall I go?
My soul from end - less death!
Till Thou Thy Spir - it give.
My soul with - out it dies.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788
Tune: MARTYRDOM, CM; Hugh Wilson, 1766-1824; arr. by Nolan Williams, Jr., b.1969, © 2000, GIA Publications, Inc.

Figure 6.5: Four-Part Harmonization of “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee,” *African American Heritage Hymnal*.

FATHER, I STRETCH MY HANDS TO THEE 128

Hear the voice of my supplication, as I cry to You for help, as I lift up my hands toward Your most holy sanctuary.
Psalm 28:2

Leader: 

All: 

1. Fa - ther, I stretch my hands to Thee, Fa - ther,
2. If Thou with-draw Thy - self from me. If Thou



I with - stretch draw my Thy -



hands to Thee, No oth - er help I
self from me, Oh, whith - er shall I

Leader: 



All: know, No oth - er help
go, Oh, whith - er shall



I I know.
I go.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

Tune: Meter hymn, lined out and arr. by Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, b.1953, © 2000, GIA Publications, Inc.

Figure 6.6: Meter Hymn Version of “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee,” *African American Heritage Hymnal*.

Wesley’s stark first verse was sung by Jerome Herrington and Kenny Turk during the devotion segment on March 17, 1996 (Appendix C, #47). Turk, a Baptist minister, guitarist and falsettist in the Apostolic Sons of God quartet, had performed earlier on that episode with his group. The tripartite structure of this segment, discussed earlier in the chapter, unfolds thus: 1) Turk and Herrington together sing the first verse of “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee”; 2) Turk prays; 3) The men conclude by singing a different song entitled “I Got Just What I Wanted from the Lord.” This particular devotion segment juxtaposes texts and thematic ideas, musical

styles, liturgical practices, and cultural and historical layers. This juxtaposition highlights the vitality and multiple meanings the Dr. Watts hymns exhibit when they are embedded within such contexts. The language of the first two sections of the devotion (“Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” and Turk’s prayer) are similar to one another in their archaic language. Their linguistic similarity is marked especially by their mutual use of “Thee” and “Thou.” The third part of the devotion exhibits a linguistic and rhetorical shift to contemporary vernacular American English as the men conclude by singing “I got just what I wanted from the Lord.”

Despite moments of linguistic disjunction, thematic and theological unity stretch across all three parts of the devotional. The maintenance of theological unity across the ritual creates what I designate a “conflict-resolution” model. In the Wesley text, a problem or conflict is announced: “Father, I stretch my hands to Thee; no other help I know.” The urgency of the need is reiterated in the Wesley text: “If Thou withdraw Thyself from me, oh, whither shall I go?” Turk’s prayer also communicates helplessness and utter dependence on the divine presence for physical and spiritual well-being. The final song declares in jubilant vernacular language that a resolution has been achieved: “I got just what I wanted from the Lord.” Further linguistic continuity is created across all three sections by the consistent use of the first-person pronouns.

The music in this devotion segment constitutes a site of historical disjuncture, as multiple sacred song styles mingle in a single performative and ritual moment. First, Herrington sings an ametrical version of “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” in a style that derives from the lining tradition. Figure 6.7, a transcription of the first phrase of Herrington’s performance, shows Herrington’s slow, ametrical, melismatic ornamentation of the hymn’s first phrase.³²⁹ The tune Herrington sings is an ornamented version of the eighteenth-century hymn tune *Martyrdom*. See

³²⁹ Pitch duration in Figure 6.7 is relative. It is impossible to notate with precision the duration of Herrington’s pitches. Additionally, Herrington’s multiple subtle slides, scoops, glissandi, tremolos, and timbral shifts are impossible to capture in a transcription.

Figure 6.8 for an approximate transcription of Herrington’s performance of the first phrase of *Martyrdom*.³³⁰

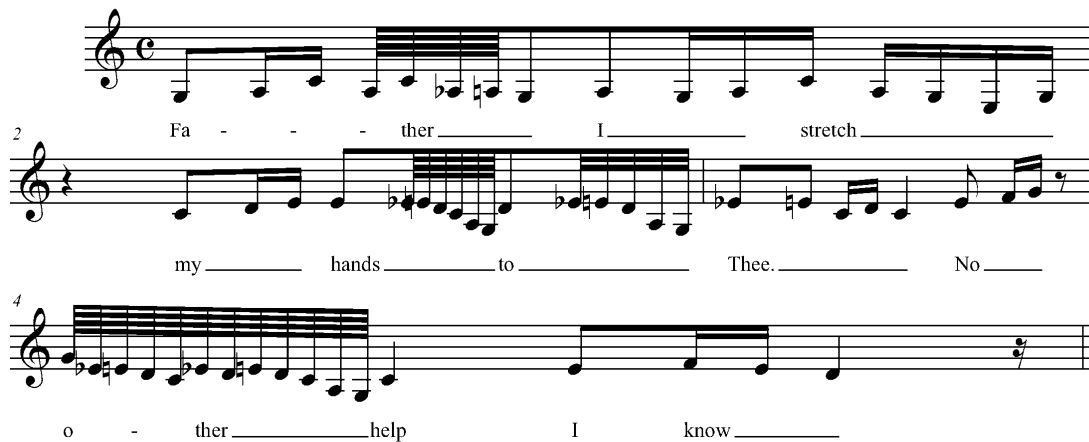


Figure 6.7: “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee,” First Phrase, Jerome Herrington.



Figure 6.8: *Martyrdom* (Hugh Wilson, 1764-1824), First Phrase, with Charles Wesley’s “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee.”

Through comparing Figures 6.7 and 6.8, it can be seen that the triple-meter hymn tune *Martyrdom* forms the melodic outline of Herrington’s embellished performance. Turk

³³⁰ *Martyrdom* was written sometime in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century by Hugh Wilson (1764-1824) (*The Hymnal According to the Use of the Episcopal Church* 1982, 658). Video footage of another Black Baptist minister in Atlanta in 2007 and in Macon in 1988 confirm that *Martyrdom* is used as the melody to “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” in other parts of Georgia besides Augusta (www.greatertravelersrest.org). Additionally, as demonstrated in Appendix I, *Martyrdom* is paired with Charles Wesley’s “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” in the chorale version of the hymn in the *African American Heritage Hymnal* (2003, 127).

occasionally harmonizes with Herrington's florid, slow, embellished vocal lines, creating moments of heterophony (Turk's part not shown in Figure 6.8). When Turk begins to pray, Herrington continues humming an embellished version of *Martyrdom*. This musical gesture probably derives from the "humming chorus" observed at the end of lined hymns in Baptist devotions. In contrast to this much older vocal style is the song performed after the prayer. "I Got Just What I Wanted from the Lord" is an uptempo jump blues piece accompanied by the instrumentalists of the Apostolic Sons of God quartet.

These two weekly devotion segments analyzed above adhere to the characteristics of the Baptist church devotion identified by scholars. They contain an alternation of songs and prayer; the prayers are built of formulaic, archaic expressions; the participants are Baptist ministers from rural churches; and, most significantly, Dr. Watts hymns are sung, the second one in a style deriving from the lining tradition. Obviously the televised ritual is truncated, compared to the length and perhaps the intensity of a pre-service devotion in a church. However, the Black Baptist devotion tradition is clearly being paraphrased in these examples on *POQ*.

The Black Baptist Presence in Augusta

Referred to in various episodes by *POQ* host Karlton Howard as "devotions," "weekly prayers," or "devotion service," this segment has a relatively brief history on the program. Henry Howard instituted the segment in the early 1980s when he assumed leadership of the program after Steve Manderson's retirement (<http://www.paradeofquartets.com/history.html>). The segment was part of the Howards' effort to incorporate religious practice and instruction into the program. Karlton Howard's remarks on *POQ* in the mid-1990s confirm that *POQ* was consciously preserving and perpetuating the church devotion ritual in their weekly prayer

segment. His comments indicate that he viewed devotion as an “endangered” ritual that was fading from local liturgical practice. During the April 30, 1995, episode (Appendix C, #13), Howard stated immediately prior to the devotion segment:

This is the hour we always set aside for our prayer moments and our moments of devotion. As we always tell you, we wouldn’t trade this for anything, because there are some churches who have gone into the business of cutting out devotion services, cutting out hymns and the singing and the praying before the morning services, but we wouldn’t trade this for anything.

During the May 7, 1995, episode (Appendix C, #7), Howard again linked *POQ*’s devotion segment to the Black Baptist church ritual. His statement referenced the traditionally mournful and dirge-like quality of the church devotions:

This is the part of the service that we always like to take part in....During our devotion services...it’s a joyous time. A lot of times people make devotion services a sad time and a time when you just have to moan and cry and groan, but it can be a joyous time.

The devotion segment is part of the Baptist ethos projected by the program in recent decades. Since the early 1980s, *POQ* has been under local Black Baptist leadership. Karlton Howard has been the pastor of Noah’s Ark Missionary Baptist Church in Keysville, Georgia, since 1997 (<http://www.paradeofquartets.com/bios.html>). Henry Howard was a member and deacon at Green Grove Baptist Church for over five decades. Current *POQ* co-host Flash Gordon is a member of Tabernacle Baptist Church (Ibid.; *POQ* episodes). Evidence from remarks made on many episodes confirms that many viewers in the Black Baptist community interpret *POQ* as almost a substitute for a church service. This is largely because of the weekly prayer/devotion segment and the Sunday School lesson. This perception of the show is especially pronounced for prisoners, the terminally ill, those in nursing homes, and those that are otherwise shut-in and cannot attend church. Rev. James Abraham, a local Baptist minister, lead singer of the Dynamic Abraham Brothers, and longtime *POQ* performer, stated that for people in those categories,

“that’s all the church they get—it’s got the Sunday School lesson, the weekly prayer, the songs” (2007). The “weekly prayer” is another term for the devotion segment on *POQ*.

Letters written by local Black Baptist ministers in support of *POQ*’s nomination for a Peabody Award for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism (1994) provide evidence for the program’s reception among local Black Baptists as an authentic religious product:

Many of my members that are elderly or sick or shut-in have told me that they looked forward to the *Parade of Quartets* and the Sunday Morning Prayer services [i.e., the devotion segment]. This is the only spiritual nurturing for them on Sundays. The *Parade of Quartets* has enriched so many lives through your program, I often hear from Antioch’s members that they were reared watching the program (Rev. Kenneth B. Martin, pastor of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, Augusta, 1994).

There are members within our congregation who have said to me on many times... “Once I get that inspiration [from viewing *POQ*] I feel better in Sunday School and during morning worship.” I have talked with hospital patients, nursing home tenants, prisoners and shift workers who informed me that they depend on the *Parade of Quartets* for their spiritual uplifting on Sundays (Rev. Andrew Johnson, pastor of First Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Augusta, 1994).

The Sunday School that is provided on Sunday morning serves a valuable purpose for those parishioners who are unable to attend church... We do not want those people who cannot attend church to be denied the opportunity to hear (Rev. Bobby Hankerson, pastor of Hammond Grove Baptist Church, Augusta, 1994).

A central part of the spiritual nourishment for Baptist *POQ* viewers in the mid-1990s probably derived from the devotion ritual on the show.

Although the chapter’s analyses focus on Dr. Watts hymns on *POQ* in recent decades, anecdotal evidence suggests that Dr. Watts hymns may also have been performed on *POQ* in its very early years. Dr. James E. Carter, III, is a Black Augustan with a deep knowledge of the area’s African-American religious and musical history. As a child in the 1950s, Carter sat with Steve Manderson in the studio while he broadcast the *BeBop Hour*, heard the Swanee Quintet practice in his neighborhood, and sometimes attended Sunday morning *POQ* broadcasts in the WJBF studios. Carter stated the following about music performed on *POQ* in its early years:

Tastes changed... They used to sing those slow meter songs. (Allen: Slow meter?) The Black church has what they call slow meter songs... I can't do it because I never learned how. (Allen: You remember any of those titles?) They could take any number and turn it into that. But, ah, you oughtta go to a Black church, and go to the devotion service. (Allen: That's when they sing the old stuff?) Right. If a church starts at eleven, go at a quarter 'til. Just about all Baptist churches [do it]... It's led by deacons. (Allen: Not the pastor? And it's just sorta like a long prelude to the regular service?) Yeah, it's supposed to be a warmup, to get you ready for the service. (Allen: You grew up Baptist?) Yes... my dad was Baptist. I grew up in Thankful Baptist [he continues to discuss his eventual move to the Presbyterian church and his family members' attendance at various local Baptist churches] (2008).³³¹

Joyce Billingsley, another viewer who grew up near Augusta and watched *POQ* during the 1960s and 1970s, emphasized that *POQ* in those decades broadcast a much earlier style of Black sacred song. She stated,

Most of their, their gospel songs was like the old gospel, you know, back when my grandmamma and dad, my grandmamma and granddaddy going to church, that type of gospel... Older. Tradition. That's the word I want to use. Yeah. (2008).

Although she does not use the term "meter hymns," it seems possible that like Carter, Billingsley also may have been referring to the some elements of the Dr. Watts tradition on *POQ*. The longtime use of Dr. Watts texts on *POQ* is likely given the prominence and strength of Black Baptist churches in the Augusta region for several centuries.

The Black Baptist presence in Augusta dates to the late eighteenth century. Augusta's Springfield Baptist Church, one of the United States' oldest independent Black congregations, was founded either in 1787 or in 1793 (Wagner 1980, 25).³³² Springfield Baptist Church has

³³¹ Unlike most other transcriptions of interviews in the dissertation, I transcribed my own remarks in this section because I asked Carter an unusual number of questions for clarification.

³³² The official history on the Springfield Baptist Church's website advertises itself as "the oldest African-American Baptist Church in America" (<http://www.historicspringfieldda.org/>). The First African Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia, is one of two churches typically cited by scholars as the first independent Black congregation in the United States. The date of its founding is given either as 1788 (Wagner 1980, 6; Mathews 1977, 198; DjeDje 1998, 120) or 1790 (Raboteau 2001, 22). The other church cited as potentially the oldest Black congregation in the United States is the Silver Bluff Baptist Church in South Carolina, begun ca. 1773 (Lincoln and Mamiya 2005, 133) or 1774 (Pitts 1993, 46). Since Springfield Baptist Church claims that it was an offshoot of the Silver Bluff

been central to the political and educational history of Black Georgians. Morehouse College was founded there. Initially called Augusta Baptist College, the college later changed names and moved to Atlanta. The Georgia Republican Party was also founded at Springfield (Walker 1980, 27; www.historicspringfieldaugusta.org/).

Twenty-five years before emancipation, “there grew a need for another Black Baptist church in the southeastern section of the city [because] slave-owners of the section were displeased about the distance their slaves had to travel to church. Out of this need the Independent Baptist Church [now the Thankful Baptist Church] was organized [in] 1840 (Ibid., 26).³³³

Both the Springfield and Thankful Baptist Churches persist today as vibrant congregations that play a key role in community events for Augusta’s African-American population. A number of other longstanding Black Baptist congregations in Augusta date from the mid- and late nineteenth century.

There is evidence that the Dr. Watts hymns were regularly lined out at Augusta’s Springfield Baptist Church into the early twentieth century. Scholar Bernice Reagon Johnson interviewed and observed Deacon William Reardon, Sr., a well-known Baptist hymn “raiser” in Washington, D.C., in the 1990s. She spoke with him about how he and other natives of South Carolina had transplanted their regional Dr. Watts tradition to Washington, D.C. Reardon was born in Edgefield, South Carolina, in 1912 but moved to Augusta shortly thereafter and was baptized in the Springfield Baptist Church. He attended Springfield and, apparently, other Baptist churches in the area until he relocated to Washington, D.C., in 1933. His earliest recollections of raising hymns date from the late teens and early 1920s. Reardon recounts the

congregation across the river in South Carolina, the church’s official history obliquely is claiming 1773 as its founding date (www.historicspringfieldaugusta.com; Wagner 1980, 25). Wagner, however, states that “most credible historians of the Black Baptist Church give 1793 as the year [Springfield] was organized” (Wagner 1980, 25). The Regardless of the precise date of Springfield’s founding, there was obviously an independent Black Baptist presence in Augusta at some point in the late eighteenth century—far earlier than in many southeastern regions.³³³ Throughout the nineteenth century, Georgia and the Carolinas were also “centers of [white] Baptist strength” (Corrigan and Hudson 2004, 140).

lyrics of various Dr. Watts hymns that he had heard during that time in church at Springfield Baptist Church and other churches. He also refers to his uncle, who was known as a hymn raiser in the community (presumably his uncle was Baptist as well) (Johnson 2001). Reardon's recollections verify that Black Baptists in Augusta have used Dr. Watts hymns in their worship for at least a century.

Conclusion

The musical/textual analyses in this chapter are situated in a historical and geographical nexus of multiple factors. These factors explain why local gospel performers on *POQ* used Dr. Watts texts in their performances as recently as the late 1990s. First, Augusta is part of a geographical region in which Blacks had early, frequent exposure to the hymns of Watts and the Wesleys. This exposure began in the eighteenth century, as demonstrated by the historical background outlined in the first section of the chapter. Second, Black Christianity in Augusta has been marked by Baptists since the eighteenth century. At least some of these Black Baptist churches have sung the Dr. Watts hymns for at least a century, and probably more. Third, the Howard family and other Black *POQ* leadership has been affiliated with Black Baptist churches for many years. Fourth, many of the performers highlighted in the above analyses are affiliated with local or regional Baptist churches.

The retention and transformation of Dr. Watts hymns on *POQ* raises several significant issues worthy of further reflection. First, to viewers aware of the Dr. Watts tradition and of the devotion ritual, *POQ* projects a distinctly Black Baptist set of liturgical, textual, and theological values. At the same time, the program can be interpreted by other viewers as an ecumenical

religious product, or even as simply a musical product. For example, white *Augusta Chronicle* music journalist Don Rhodes stated that

I think its longevity lies in its folksiness. It doesn't come on preaching. It's just good gospel music with some prayers every now and then...I love blues and black gospel music and fell into the spell of watching the show when I first moved here [over two decades ago] (2007c).

POQ functions as a site of overlapping religious and perhaps even non-religious communities. It simultaneously encompasses the rites and traditions of a particular Black denomination, while also appealing to viewers outside of that tradition.

Related to its dual projection of a denominational and ecumenical presence is a second issue. In striking this middle ground, *POQ* echoes the historical role of the Black Baptist denomination in its cautious adaptation of gospel music into church services. In the early twentieth century, Black Holiness and Pentecostal churches facilitated and embraced the emerging genre of gospel music in church services. Black Baptists and Methodists, on the other hand, were drawn to gospel music as a commercial genre, but did not always consider the genre appropriate for church services. Broadly speaking, they disliked what they perceived as the emotional excesses of Pentecostal/Holiness ritual. Baptists and Methodists attempted to wed elements of the emerging gospel genre with older, more liturgically-established texts and music. Boyer states that Protestant hymns were always more popular with Black Baptist quartets early in the twentieth century, in contrast with the short, repetitive songs sung by Pentecostal/Holiness singers (2000, 30). This Baptist predilection for older Protestant hymnody, even incorporated into updated musical contexts such as gospel, is demonstrated by the Dr. Watts texts on *POQ*.

Third, the presence of the Dr. Watts hymns on a television program in the 1990s highlights binary cultural collisions that have informed the historical development of Black sacred music. The first is the relationship between orally-transmitted text/music and notated or printed text/music. By default, this relationship between oral and printed products is rooted in the

antebellum relationship between Black and white ways of experiencing the world. As Dargan discusses in great detail, the initial complex encounter between Black Americans and Dr. Watts hymns in the eighteenth century encompassed multiple domains. These included language and culture acquisition, religious didactic, and musical adaptation/acculturation (2006). In this encounter, largely-illiterate slaves orally absorbed and then musically transformed the language and religious rites of their oppressors (Ibid.). The depth and intensity with which this encounter informed Black sacred song is still visible on *POQ* several centuries after the initial cultural collision. Watts' texts, written in the vernacular of eighteenth-century England, function on *POQ* as a religious "vernacular." Despite their archaic words and syntax, the texts have been appropriated by gospel singers on *POQ* as their *own* words. Watts' "old" language is renewed each time it is quoted in gospel performance, demonstrating his texts' power to express contemporary singers' thoughts, hopes, fears, and desires.

The songs of the oppressive culture became the songs of the oppressed culture. This strange historical circumstance is a testimony to the resourcefulness of the African-American population in reinterpreting cultural materials. Litany 80 in the *African American Hymnal*, entitled "Black Sacred Music," celebrates the special position of the Dr. Watts hymns in Black religious music. The litany is a list of sacred genres and styles that are historically important in Black sacred song. The litany states, "our people have long been sustained by Negro spirituals, Watts and Tindley hymns, gospel songs of Dorsey and Cleveland and contemporary sounds by Hawkins and Smallwood" (Batastini 2001, 80). The "Watts hymns" are the only white-composed textual sources listed in the litany.

The presence of these hymns on a Black gospel music television show in the late twentieth century is another stage in the winding journey of these old texts through the history of

the African-American church. They also provide graphic evidence that *POQ* is grounded in local, distinctively Black religious practices. The program is a product of the ethnic, religious, cultural, musical, and linguistic soil of Augusta's African-American community. In front of its camera, multiple elements of this community intersect to create musical, theological, and textual mosaics of cultural meaning and significance.

CHAPTER 7

“HOW I GOT OVER”: CONCLUSION

Summary and Findings

POQ is a multi-textured musical, religious, and political media product that has evolved through nearly six decades to achieve many layers of cultural resonance for its participants and viewers. Its roots as an entertainment-oriented radio program in the late 1940s were informed by the mid-century commercial popularity of Black gospel quartets, the racial segregation that structured Augusta, the white ownership of mass media, and the emerging power of mass media to transgress the boundaries of segregation. Twenty-five years after its first broadcast in 1955, *POQ*'s format and content was for the first time shaped by African Americans. From 1980 to the present, the Howard family has added religious and political dimensions to the musical core of *POQ*, expanding it to become a media voice for, and by African Americans in Augusta.

The case studies in this dissertation foreground the interwoven characteristics of *longevity* and *community* in the careers and *POQ* performances of Augusta gospel musicians. In terms of longevity, the musical styles, performance practices, and lyrics on *POQ* maintain great continuity with historic Black musical idioms, sacred and secular. Each artist or group studied engages in its own distinctive dialogue with these Black performative legacies. All of them are deeply-rooted in Black sacred song and religious ritual. At the same time, each artist or group evolves beyond these roots to remain relevant to viewers of *POQ* and local or national consumers of gospel. Each case study examines local artists that have been involved in this complex process of cultural reaffirmation and reinvention since at least the middle of the

twentieth century. The artists' longevity as performers, in some cases due largely to *POQ* appearances, constitutes a vital thread of historical continuity on the program. *POQ*'s endurance as a media product is inseparable from the endurance of some of its performers, many of whom have sung gospel music in the area for decades.

In terms of community, local performers use *POQ* to enact and solidify Black religious communal bonds. These bonds are created and reaffirmed on *POQ* as artists publicly negotiate their own relationship to the Black sacred musical past and to local contemporary Black religious community. After almost six decades, *POQ* reflects and actively shapes the local Black religious, political, musical, and cultural community. It reflects and shapes this community at the denominational level and at a more broadly ecumenical level.

These intertwining values of longevity and community are negotiated differently by each group studied. Community and longevity are affirmed when the Swanee Quintet performs self-referential songs celebrating their career and when they maintain continuity with their musical style from the 1950s. Community and longevity are affirmed when the original Abraham Brothers recreate their 1950s theme song with younger members of their family six decades later. Community and longevity are affirmed when the Brewsteraires recast an antebellum spiritual as a blues and perform it James Brown who, after revolutionizing global popular music, returned to Black sacred song. Community and longevity are affirmed when James Brown reaches back to his roots in mid-century gospel quartet singing to perform convincingly with his old friend Percy Griffin and a local quartet in the late 1990s. Community and longevity are affirmed when local gospel artists sing Dr. Watts texts to the accompaniment of synthesizers and saxophones. Each of these instances includes younger participants and/or new modes of music-

making. Each instance therefore constitutes a moment of rebirth in the midst of reaffirming Black musical and cultural roots.

The dissertation's findings also highlight the intersection of local and national musical, political, religious, and cultural narratives in the evolution of *POQ*. The program's development was linked to the particular historical circumstances of a single community. However, its development can also be interpreted as a microcosm of larger evolutions in the fabric of American life. The rise and fall of the Black gospel quartet as a nationally-popular music can be discerned in the program's roots and evolution. The show that began with nationally-known groups now almost exclusively features local performers. The journey for Black Americans from radical political and economic oppression into increased ownership and opportunity is illustrated by the program's trajectory. From its roots in the economic goals of a white advertising executive, *POQ* has been transformed by Black managerial ownership to become an organ of Black political and cultural empowerment in Augusta.

Future of *POQ* as Media Product and Cultural Legacy

Like many of its performers, after nearly six decades, the *Parade of Quartets* continues to evolve, remaining musically and culturally relevant. A striking example of the program's self-reinvention is the Howard family's recent decision to stream its weekly broadcasts on the internet. As of summer 2008, the Howards were searching for a local business to sponsor the cost of maintaining the streaming site. The site would be updated on a weekly basis, making the *Parade of Quartets* available to a global audience. This increase of a local program's viewing demographic to, literally, the whole world would have deep implications for *POQ*'s identity as a local religious, political, and musical product produced by and for the Augusta community. If

available on the web, it would shape new musical and cultural environments, and would possibly be shaped by them if non-local viewers interacted with the program's managers.

While seeking to expand in new directions, *POQ* also maintains a strong sense of self-awareness about its status as a media product of historical significance. This self-awareness recently resulted in the Howard family's decision in 2007 to donate extant *POQ* footage to the University of Georgia Media Archives. The realization that the university found the footage historically-valuable and worthy of preservation has, according to Wayne and Karlton Howard, encouraged them to search for additional extant footage of the program. As of February 2009, additional tapes were found in the home of Henry Howard, and the family intends to add those to the University of Georgia *POQ* collection. In 2009, it appears that the *Parade of Quartets* continues to thrive and grow through the same balance of roots-and-reinvention that has characterized the careers and performances of its musicians since the program was first broadcast on April 17, 1955.

Recommendations for Further Study

The program's history and continued presence affords many opportunities for further study by scholars of music, history, religion, politics, gender, race, and media. First, although this dissertation focuses primarily on gospel quartets, many other musical ensembles and gospel sub-genres have performed on the program in recent years. Research on the gospel rappers, mimes, praise dancers, instrumentalists, and vocal soloists on *POQ* might yield an entirely different set of insights into the program's evolution and cultural significance. Second, the dissertation focuses on Black participants, but at least two white performers have been involved at length on *POQ*. A study of Flo Carter's and the Lewis Family's musical and social presence

on *POQ* would engage with and possibly reveal different cultural dynamics than those examined in this dissertation. Third, the current research dealt with the musical and managerial contributions of men on *POQ*. However, female gospel groups had a minor presence on the program in its early years and have increasingly performed on the show in recent decades. In recent years they have also appeared on the show as co-hosts, politicians, community leaders, and clergy members. A study focusing on the role of women on *POQ* would substantially enrich our understanding of the program's historical narrative and of Black women's social history in Augusta. Fourth, substantial research into the viewing demographics of the program was beyond the scope of this research. However, a focus on the "mediated" quality of *POQ* and how it is interpreted by viewers would supplement our understanding of *POQ* as a Black religious and political voice in Augusta.

More broadly, the dissertation raises issues of gospel music and mass media that need to be addressed in scholarly literature. Aside from this dissertation, no scholarly work examines in detail the entrance of gospel music into television, despite the existence of popular and long-running gospel programs such as *The Bobby Jones Gospel Hour* on BET (Black Entertainment Television). BET also recently featured a gospel music competition, *Sunday's Best*, and frequently broadcasts tribute programs on the history and legacy of gospel music. Additionally, no scholarship currently focuses on the gospel industry's use of the internet to publicize events, maintain social networks, promote artists, and disseminate music. The industry's presence on the internet is extensive, spanning a range of websites from professionally-crafted online gospel magazines to fan-based publications and social networking sites. The genre's performers, promoters, and fans also increasingly use social networks such as MySpace and Facebook to promote their products and performances and discuss issues of interest. Issues such as the

commodification of Black sacred song, gospel music's evolution as a commercial music into new media spaces, gospel artists' public images and representations of themselves in commercial spaces, and the role of digital media in facilitating religious community could be addressed by scholarship on gospel in mass media.

Epilogue

The preacher leaned over the pulpit and peered at the congregation intently. Jumping backwards suddenly, he shouted "Somebody out there oughta get up and turn around!" He spun around to face the wall behind him. There were hesitant murmurs and intermittent claps of approval, but the congregation was still waiting for the other rhetorical shoe to fall.

The preacher whirled back around, grinned, lowered his voice, and said softly, "And when they ask you why you turned around, you tell them"—he paused—"you tell them, 'I turned around to see where I came from. *Because He brought me...*'" He stopped, looking at the congregation with expectant eyebrows raised. This time they knew exactly what to do. Rising to their feet, hands held high, they shouted in reply: "*From a mighty long way!*"³³⁴

³³⁴Observed during televised sermon by Rev. André Landers of Higher Living Christian Church, Hampton, Georgia, December 2008. Broadcast on WATC, Atlanta-57.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH SUB-QUESTIONS FROM PROSPECTUS

Evolution of Musical Style

- What types of groups have performed on the program; when; how frequently; how did they come to be associated with the show?
- What repertoire has been performed, and how it has been arranged and selected?
- What types of instruments have been used on the show? Has the show ever used the same instrumentalists week-to-week as a sort of “studio band”? What other types of music are local gospel instrumentalists involved with?
- Is there a specific “sound” associated with Augusta gospel groups? Has it changed over time? What seems to be the markers of this regional aesthetic?

Recording/Broadcast Technology

- How do cameras, time constraints, and taping and/or live production impact musical performance? Is instrumentation, volume, tone, or repertoire affected by television production issues?
- How have developments in technology changed or shaped the musical behavior of groups on the *POQ* set?
- How might these groups demonstrate differing musical and/or expressive behavior, gestures, sounds, or techniques when singing in front of a live congregation/audience?
- How has the presence or absence of an audience seemed to shape performers’ behavior on the television set?

Impact of Managerial/Production Personnel and Decisions

- Who has worked for the program, when, and how they were selected? What their were their contributions to the program?
- How else is the host/producer/other personnel involved in the local gospel music scene?
- What sponsors have advertised on the program? What products have they sold? How were they marketed? Who is perceived (by the station, by advertisers, by performers, by producers) to be the target audience? Do these perceptions differ?

Assessing Socio-Cultural Impact

- Which political figures have been interviewed on the program? Why? What topics have they discussed? Do the information, perspectives, or values put forth by the political/community figures seem to impact the viewing audience?
- What is the content of the religious instruction delivered on the program? Who is involved with this aspect? How do viewers respond to this aspect of *POQ*?
- How have African Americans responded in different eras to seeing Black performers featured on television, particularly in the program’s early years when few, if any, Black Americans were permitted the opportunity for sustained television presence?

- Have the images, performances, and information disseminated on *POQ* played any role in shaping local race relations?
- Has *POQ* helped shape a local sense of Black identity?
- Has the program inspired, or even facilitated, the further involvement in the television industry of its participants or viewers?

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

- Arthur Abraham, Jr., background singer for the Dynamic Abraham Brothers
- James Abraham, lead singer and songwriter for Dynamic Abraham Brothers; Baptist minister
- Joyce Billingsley, grew up watching *POQ* in 1960s and 1970s; wife of Baptist minister in Walton County
- Flo Carter, white gospel performer featured on *POQ* first Sunday of every month with her family group, the Sounds of Joy
- Dr. James Carter, III, Augusta native knowledgeable about *POQ* history and history of race relations in the city; son of local Civil Rights activist
- Percy Griffin, lead singer for Swanee Quintet
- Karlton Howard, current host/producer of *POQ* and Baptist minister; son of previous host and Georgia State Representative and *POQ* host/producer Henry Howard
- Wayne Howard, co-producer of *POQ* and Representative to Georgia House of Representatives (District 121); son of Henry Howard
- Mildred Manderson, widow of Steve Manderson, advertising account executive who started and hosted *POQ* for three decades
- Don Rhodes, music journalist for *Augusta Chronicle* and local music historian
- Corey Rogers, historian for Augusta Museum of History
- Joel Walker, lead singer for the Brewsteraires
- Bob Young, former mayor of Augusta; was WJBF anchorman in 1980s; grew up watching *POQ* and helped submit *POQ* nominations for Peabody Awards
- Hal Marnette, parking attendant at James Brown Festival

APPENDIX C

POQ EPISODES VIEWED³³⁵

ARCHIVE TAPE #	DATE
1	2005-05-08 and 2005-04-24
2	1990s [contains three episodes; month/day unknown]
3	July 1999 [day unknown]
4	August 2004 [day unknown]
5	1992-08-30, 1992-09-20, and 1992-09-27
6	1995-08-27
7	1995-05-07
8	2005-05-01
9	1995 [month/day unknown]
10	1980s [contains episode of <i>Gospel Museum</i> ; month/day unknown]
11	1995-04-16
12	2005-10-07; undated episode [contains footage of Henry Howard's funeral and undated <i>POQ</i> episode fragments]
13	1995-04-30
14	February 1996 [day unknown]
15	August 1996 [day unknown]
16	1995-10-01
17	Undated episode

³³⁵ All items listed in Appendix C are located in the University of Georgia Media Archives in Athens, Georgia. The appendix uses the numbers assigned to the footage by the Media Archives.

18	1995-09-17
19	1985 [month/day unknown; contains footage of Williams Brothers concert at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi, and undated <i>POQ</i> episode fragments]
20	1984-05-13
21	1996 [contains Bobbie and Willie Nelson press kit]
22	1994-08-24 [contains footage of F.C. Barnes and Janice Brown concert at unknown location]
23	1995-07-09
24	2002-07-19; 2003-03-12; and 2004-10-14
25	2004 [month/day unknown]
26	2004-02-08; 2004-02-23
27	Undated episode
28	2005-01-10
29	2004-11-07
30	1985-02-10; undated [contains footage of <i>Bobby Jones Gospel Hour</i> and <i>POQ</i> footage]
31	1997-06-22; June 1997 [day unknown]
32	2004-01-20; undated episode
33	2004 [month/day unknown]; undated episode
34	2004-10-04
35	2005-10-09
36	2006-08-27
37	January 2004 [day unknown]
38	Fragments of various undated episodes

39	Undated episode
40	Undated episode
41	Undated episode
42	1999-12-20
43	2005-01-02
44	1995-08-01
45	1995-08-01
46	1995-08-01
47	1996-03-17
48	1995-09-10
49	2004 [month/day unknown]
50	1999-07-04; June 1999 [day unknown]
51	1995-06-11
52	1996-04-28
53	1995-07-02
54	1993-05-16
55	1995-06-25
56	1995-05-21
57	2004-12-19; 2004-12-05
58	2005-04-24; undated episode
59	2005-04-03; 2005-04-10; undated episode
60	July 2006 [day unknown]; February 2006 [day unknown]; undated episode
61	2005 [month/day unknown]; 2006 [month/day unknown]

62	1980s [month/day unknown; contains episode of <i>Gospel Museum</i>]
63	1995-04-23
64	1995-03-12
65	Undated episode
66	1992-05-26
67	Undated episode
68	1995-07-16
69	2000s [year/month/day unknown]
70	1998-12-06; undated episode

<u>PEABODY ENTRY #</u>	<u>EPISODE DATE</u>
95041 PST Tape 1	1995-03-19
95041 PST Tape 2	1995-04-16
94015 PST Tapes 3-4	1989-02-02
94015 PST Tape 5	1994-12-04
94015 PST Tape 6	1994-12-11
94015 PST Tapes 1-2	1993-01-03
93048 PST	1993-05-16

APPENDIX D

NEWSPAPERS CONSULTED

Augusta Chronicle, 1930s-2008, various items.

- Hard copy
- Digital archives at www.augustaarchive.com (requires paid user account to access)
- Current newspaper website at <http://chronicle.augusta.com>

Augusta Herald, 1950s, various items.

- Available on microfilm at the University of Georgia Library

Augusta News-Review, 1972-1985, items.

- Available on microfilm at the University of Georgia Library

APPENDIX E

EVENTS OBSERVED

Attendance at Swanee Quintet's Sixty-Eighth Anniversary Concert. Bell Auditorium, Augusta, October 7, 2007.

Attendance at Payback James Brown Festival, including Swanee Quintet performance. Augusta Commons, May 3, 2008.

Visit to Pyramid Records. Augusta, May 3, 2008.

Pre-Mother's Day Program and Alice Williams' Third Anniversary Celebration. Gospel concert including Swanee Quintet performance. Diamond Lake Community Center, Augusta, May 4, 2008.

Observation of *POQ* taping/appearance on episode to discuss research. WJBF Studios, Augusta, May 5, 2008.

Visit to Augusta History Museum to view James Brown exhibit and other exhibits related to local Black history. August 23, 2008.

Observation of *POQ* taping. WJBF Studios, August 25, 2008.

Attendance at Swanee Quintet's Sixty-Eighth Anniversary Concert. Bell Auditorium, Augusta, October 5, 2008.

Visit to Pyramid Records. Augusta, October 6, 2008.

Observation of *POQ* taping. WJBF Studios, Augusta, October 6, 2008.

APPENDIX F

GOSPEL MEDIA WEBSITES

<http://abrahambrothers.com/>

(Abraham Brothers)

<http://www.myspace.com/thedynamicabrahambrothers>

(Abraham Brothers)

www.paradeofquartets.com

(*Parade of Quartets*)

<http://scgospelquartet.com/Brewsteraires.html>

(Brewsteraires)

<http://www.swaneequintet.com/>

(Swanee Quintet)

<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=145167004>

(Swanee Quintet)

APPENDIX G

“OLD SHIP OF ZION” (VARIANT OF SPIRITUAL)

Lyrical transcription of performance by James Brown and Brewsteraires, *POQ* [1990s?]

Refrain

‘Tis the old ship of Zion;
‘Tis the old ship of Zion
Step on board if you wanna see Jesus and follow me.

Verse

It has landed many a thousand
It has landed many a thousand
It has landed many a thousand,
And I’m askin you to step on board if you wanna see Jesus, and follow me.

Refrain

Talkin’ about the old ship of Zion;
Talkin’ about the old ship of Zion.
Step on board if you wanna see Jesus and follow me.

Refrain

It is the old ship of Zion
It is the old ship of Zion
Step on board if you wanna see Jesus and follow me.

Verse

Ship has landed many a thousand,
Ship has landed many a thousand.
Step on board if you wanna see Jesus
Step on board if you wanna see Jesus [trails off]

APPENDIX H

“OLD SHIP OF ZION” (COMPOSER UNKNOWN)

Lyrical transcription of performance by Brewsteraires, *POQ*, January 10, 2005

Verse 1

Heard some people talking, just the other day,
About leaving, going to a place far away.
Some said, “I believe I’ll go on an airplane.”
Some said, “I believe I’ll go by train.”

Refrain

But when I leave, I’m leaving on that old ship of Zion.
I am leaving on that old ship of Zion.

Verse 2

Jordan River one day I’m bound to face;
I got to cross over to the other side.
Mother may be waiting; ain’t nothing she can do.
Gonna need Jesus to carry me through,

Refrain /Verse 2 /Refrain

Verse 3

You can’t get to heaven by riding on an airplane;
You can’t get to heaven by riding on a train.
In order to see this, lemme tell you what you got to do.

Bridge (or first part of vamp)

You got to be saved, sanctified, filled with the Holy Ghost.
You got to be saved, sanctified, filled with the Holy Ghost.
You got to be saved, sanctified, filled with the Holy Ghost.

Vamp

I’m leaving, leaving, leaving (etc.).
I’m leaving, leaving, leaving (etc.).
I am leaving on that old ship of Zion.

APPENDIX I

“MEDLEY” (ABRAHAM BROTHERS)

Lyrical transcription, Dynamic and Original Abraham Brothers, *Family Reunion* (2007)

So Glad

Mother looked down and she saw the train a-coming, she was so glad (2x).
She looked down the road, she saw the train coming.
She stepped on board, you know the train kept running; she was so glad.

(*Spoken by Dock over background singers’ ostinato on the syllable “doo”*: Now wait a minute, I got something else to tell you. Before she stepped on board, she said something like this.)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound—so glad (2x).
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.
I once was lost, but now I’m found, and I’m so glad.

(*Spoken by Dock over background singers’ ostinato on the syllable “doo”*: Now wait a minute, I believe somebody here got a father gone. I know I got a father gone, but one thing I wanna tell you.)

Father looked down and he saw the train a-coming, he was so glad (2x).
He looked down the road, he saw the train coming.
He stepped on board, you know the train kept running; he was so glad.

I once was blind, but now I see—so glad (2x).
I once was blind, but now I see.
The gospel train is coming after me, and I’m so glad.

Jesus, He’s Real

Real, real; Jesus is real to me (3x).
So many people doubting; so many people doubting; so many people doubting;
I can’t live without Him; I can’t live without Him.
That is why I love Him so, because Jesus is real to me.

Real, real; Jesus is real to me (3x).
So many people doubting; so many people doubting; so many people doubting;
I can’t live without Him; I can’t live without Him.
That is why I love Him so, because Jesus is real to me.

Rock My Soul

Rock my soul in the bosom of Abraham (3x).

Lord, rock my soul.

Rock my soul in the bosom of Abraham (3x).

Lord, rock my soul.

(James) Well, the poor man Lazarus, was lying there (?).

But when he died, he had a home on high (rock).

Rock my soul in the bosom of Abraham (3x).

Lord, rock my soul.

(James) Well, the rich man lived; he lived so well.

But when he died, he had a home in hell (rock).

Rock my soul in the bosom of Abraham (3x).

Lord, rock my soul.

APPENDIX J

“THAT LUCKY OLD SUN” (GILLESPIE)

Text, James Lamont “Haven” Gillespie (1949)

Verse 1

Up in the morning, out on the job,
Work like the devil for my pay:
But that lucky old sun got nothing to do
But roll around heaven all day.

Verse 2

Fuss with my woman, toil for my kids,
Sweat till I'm wrinkled and gray:
While that lucky old sun got nothing to do
But roll around heaven all day.

Bridge

Good Lord above, can't you know I'm pining, tears all in my eyes?
Send down that cloud with a silver lining, lift me to Paradise.

Verse 3

Show me that river, take me across,
And wash all my troubles away--
Like that lucky old sun, give me nothing to do
But roll around heaven all day.

APPENDIX K

SWANEE QUINTET SIXTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY FLYER



The flyer is a yellowed, vintage-style poster for the Swanee Quintet's 69th anniversary. At the top left is a black and white photo of the Swanee Quintet. To its right is a speech bubble saying "It's Anniversary Time Again" and the text "The 69th Anniversary Of". Below this is the title "The Swanee Qt." in a large, bold, serif font. The main event information is in the center: "Bell Audit. Sunday 5 2008" and "October 5 2008" in large, bold, sans-serif fonts. Below this is "AUGUSTA, GA" and "Doors Open 4:00 PM - Program 5:00 PM". Ticket information follows: "Early Bird Tickets \$20 (Limited Tickets On The Early Bird) All Other Tickets \$25 - Child (6 to 12) \$8 At Door". A line of text says "Tickets On Sale: CIVIC CENTER - PERCY or Any Member Of The Swanee Qt. - At All Usual Places". A horizontal line with the word "FEATURING" in the center separates the ticket info from the featured acts. The first act is "Lee Williams & The Spiritual QC's" with a photo of the group and the text "OF TUPELO, MS • 'Coolin Water'". The second act is "HARVEY WATKINS & The Canton Spirituals" with a photo of the group and the text "OF CANTON, MS • 'I Come From A Poor Family'". The third act is "Doc McKenzie & The Hi-Lites" with a photo of the group and the text "OF LAKE CITY, SC • 'Man In The Middle'". The fourth act is "Darrell McFadden & His Disciples" with a photo of the group and the text "OF BROOKLYN, NY • 'Shackles'". The fifth act is "Sensational Nightingales" with a photo of the group and the text "OF DURHAM, NC • 'It's Gonna Rain'". At the bottom is a black bar with the text "Emcees: All Radio Announcers" in white. A small line of text at the very bottom reads "Banner Card Co. Banner, N.C. 27804 • (770) 884-0001 www.bannercard.com".

It's Anniversary Time Again

The 69th Anniversary Of

The Swanee Qt.

Bell Audit. Sunday 5 2008
October 5 2008

AUGUSTA, GA | **Doors Open 4:00 PM - Program 5:00 PM**

Early Bird Tickets \$20 (Limited Tickets On The Early Bird) All Other Tickets \$25 - Child (6 to 12) \$8 At Door

Tickets On Sale: CIVIC CENTER - PERCY or Any Member Of The Swanee Qt. - At All Usual Places

FEATURING

Lee Williams & The Spiritual QC's
OF TUPELO, MS • "Coolin Water"

HARVEY WATKINS & The Canton Spirituals
OF CANTON, MS • "I Come From A Poor Family"

Doc McKenzie & The Hi-Lites
OF LAKE CITY, SC • "Man In The Middle"

Darrell McFadden & His Disciples
OF BROOKLYN, NY • "Shackles"

Sensational Nightingales
OF DURHAM, NC • "It's Gonna Rain"

Emcees: All Radio Announcers

Banner Card Co. Banner, N.C. 27804 • (770) 884-0001 www.bannercard.com

APPENDIX L

SENSATIONAL NIGHTINGALES SIXTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY CONCERT FLYER



"Praise The Lord Jesus"

Sensational Nightingales

61st Anniversary Appreciation Celebration Of
"Durham's Gentlemen of Songs"

Durham High School AUDITORIUM

Morgan & Duke Sts., Downtown Durham, NC

Sunday November 4 2007

Doors Open 1:00 PM - Service Starts 2:00 PM

Advance Tickets \$18 - At Door \$22 - Children (Under 12) \$8

Tickets On Sale: Durham BOB'S SERVICE CENTER (Across from Bob's Gulf Station) S. Alston Avenue - PEOPLE'S CLOTHING STORE, 204 W. Main St. - UNIVERSITY DR. GULF STA., 1101 University Drive - BELL'S AMOCO, 220 Lakewood Ave. 682-6998 - Raleigh: GOSPEL KING RECORD, New Bern Ave. - Chapel Hill: JOANN ATWATER 929-5596 - Maryland: ROSETTA THOMPSON 301-459-7372 - For More Info. 919-682-1295

FEATURING

3-TIME GRAMMY AWARD WINNERS

MIGHTY CLOUDS OF JOY

OF LOS ANGELES, CA

Emcees: Rev. Jimmie Byrd & Sis. Dorothy Jackson



Swanee Qt.
OF AUGUSTA, GA

Devotion By:
Rev. David Bell
OF BELL YEAGER BAPT.

Don't Miss This Big
Gospel Program



Capital City 5



The Bradleys



Gospel Pioneers
The Sensational Nightingales



Rufus Poole & The Stars of Faith



The Mighty Harmonizers
OF HENDERSON, NC



MONEY TREES TO LUCKY TICKET HOLDER

Durham Gospel Choir, Durham, NC 27604 • (919) 684-2001 • www.durhamgospelchoir.com

The partners of the flyer

APPENDIX M

SPRING 2008 CONCERT FLYER FOR SWANEE QUINTET

JOIN US FOR QUARTET, PRAISE & WORSHIP, and TRADITIONAL GOSPEL MUSIC AT ITS BEST!!!

R. T. PRODUCTIONS PROUDLY PRESENTS:

JOHNNY PEOPLES & THE GOSPEL CROWNS ANNIVERSARY
SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 2008 ~ 4PM (DOORS OPEN AT 3PM)
MT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH * 5120 WHITFIELD CHAPEL RD ~ LANHAM, MD * 301-577-4883



With SPECIAL GUEST:
LEE WILLIAMS & THE SPIRITUAL QC'S

SPECIAL GUEST:
DOC MCKENZIE & THE HI-LITES

THE SWANEE QUINTET

THE SENSATIONAL NIGHTINGALES

THE SINGING DISCIPLES

Also featuring: **LARRY GOODWIN & THE DIVINE SHEPHERDS, THE SPIRITUAL VOICES of Washington, DC & more!!!**

\$30.00 Advance Donation ~ \$35.00 At The Door ~ \$50.00 V. I. P.
 Purchase Tickets at all the Usual Locations! For tickets, please call 301-459-7372, 301-341-1481, 301-336-1114, 202-269-6642, 202-563-5270. Buses, Vans, and Vendors are welcome!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 30, 2008 ~ 4PM (DOORS OPEN AT 3PM)
THE MIGHTY CLOUDS OF JOY 48TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY
MT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH
5120 WHITFIELD CHAPEL RD ~ LANHAM, MD * 301-577-4883



With SPECIAL GUEST:
THE CANTON SPIRITUALS

THE SWANEE QUINTET

THE SENSATIONAL NIGHTINGALES

THE WINDY CITY SPIRITUALIRES

*REV. CHARLES MCCLAIN
 formerly of the Gospel Keynotes

*LARRY GOODWIN & THE DIVINE SHEPHERDS
 of Annapolis, MD

*JOE WHITE & COMPANY
 of Baltimore, MD

*THE QUEENS OF FAITH
 of Washington, DC

\$30.00 Advance Donation ~ \$35.00 At The Door ~ \$50.00 V. I. P.
 Purchase Tickets at all the Usual Locations! For tickets, please call 301-459-7372, 301-341-1481, 301-336-1114, 202-269-6642, 202-563-5270. Buses, Vans, and Vendors are welcome!

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2008 ~ 4PM (DOORS OPEN AT 3PM)
LARRY GOODWIN & THE DIVINE SHEPHERDS ANNIVERSARY
MARY HARRISON CULTURAL ARTS CENTER ~ 2950 CHANEYVILLE RD ~ OWINGS, MD 20736



With SPECIAL GUEST:
LEE WILLIAMS & THE SPIRITUAL QC'S

TEDDY CROSS & THE NEW GOSPEL KEYNOTES

THE SENSATIONAL NIGHTINGALES

ALSO APPEARING:
 *THE MIGHTY SPIRITUALIRES of Philadelphia, PA
 THE SILVERTONES of Annapolis, MD
 *THE SOUTHERN GOSPEL SINGERS of Washington, DC

\$23.00 Advance Donation
\$25.00 At The Door
\$35.00 V. I. P.

Purchase Tickets at all the Usual Locations! For tickets, please call 301-459-7372, 301-341-1481, 301-336-1114, 202-269-6642, or 202-563-5270. Buses, Vans, and Vendors are welcome!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2008 ~ 4PM ~ MT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH ~ 5120 WHITFIELD CHAPEL RD ~ LANHAM, MD
R.T. PRODUCTIONS SILVER ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION FEATURING THE CANTON SPIRITUALS, LEE WILLIAMS & THE SPIRITUAL QC'S, JAY CALDWELL & THE GOSPEL AMBASSADORS, SPENCER TAYLOR & THE HIGHWAY QC'S, & MORE!

For Concert Information on all events, don't forget to listen to Quartet Jubilee on WYCB-1340 AM at 4:15 P.M. on Sundays with Sister Rosetta Thompson.
 Join the mailing list or if you have moved... send your stamped & self addressed envelope to:
 R. T. Productions, 10206 Forest Grove Lane, Mitchellville, MD 20716 or call 301-459-7372. WEB SITE: www.rtproduction.com ~ E-MAIL: rtproductions@hotmail.com

Printed In The House Printing - P. O. Box 368914 - Chicago, IL 60636-8914 - Phone: (773) 363-6311 ~ (773) 783-0788 - PrintedInTheHouse@chicagohotmail.net ~ www.PrintedInTheHouse.org

APPENDIX N

SWANEE QUINTET DISCOGRAPHY, 1970 TO 2005

1970 [?]. *Borrowed Time*. Creed. LP.

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1970. *Sing Out*. Creed. LP.

1972. *Poor Man*. Creed. LP.

1972. *Try Jesus*. Creed. LP.

1974. *The Many Spiritual Moods of the Swanee Quintet*. Creed. LP.

1976. *If You Don't Know Him By Now*. Creed. LP.

1977. *Starting All Over Again*. Creed. LP.

1978 or 1979. *Dr. Jesus*. Creed. LP.

1979. *21 Greatest Hits*. Nashboro. LP.

1970_. *From Augusta with Love*. Creed. LP.

197_. *The Swanee Quintet*. Creed. LP.

197_. *Ups and Downs*. Creed. LP.

1980. *Changed Man*. Creed. LP.

1981 [?]. *Higher Power*. Creed. LP.

³³⁶ Compiled from fan/record collector sites, record label sites, and online music vendors including www.amazon.com, www.malaco.com, www.rhapsody.com, www.musicstack.com, www.ebay.com, <http://www.justmovingon.info/LABELS/CreedLP.html>, <http://www.bsnpubs.com/christian/nashboro.html>, <http://www.kevinkiley.com/records/black-gospel-lps.html>, <http://www.blackandwhite.fi/newshop/musiikki.php?sid=06163599&lang=fi&group=7&kuvaus=K%E4ytetyt+Blues+%2F+Soul+-+LP%3At&alkukirjain=S>, and http://www.sirshambling.com/articles/gospel_soul.htm. When different websites offered conflicting dates for a recording, the discography indicates this with a [?] after the date. For recordings where dates were not given on any website, a probable decade for the recording is indicated by a _ after the first three digits of the date.

1981. *Swanee Quintet Live*. AVI Records. LP.
1982. *Lord I Thank You*. Creed. LP.
1983. *In the Upper Room*. Nashboro. LP.
1986. *The Lord Will Make a Way*. Heat Records. LP.
1990. *Dying Bed*. Atlanta International Records. Audio cassette. Discontinued.
1991. *God Will Provide*. Nashboro. Audio cassette. Discontinued.
1992. *Eternal Life*. Atlanta International Records. Audio cassette, compact disc.
1995. *The Best of the Swanee Quintet*. Nashboro Records. Audio cassette, compact disc. Discontinued. Consists of earlier material, but orig. release dates unknown.
1995. *Just One Rose Will Do*. Atlanta International Records. Audio cassette, compact disc, MP3.
1998. *So Glad*. Atlanta International Records. Audio cassette, compact disc, MP3.
1998. *Take the Lord with You*. MCA Special Products Reissue. Audio cassette, compact disc, MP3. Consists of earlier material, but orig. release dates unknown.
2000. *The New Walk*. Gospel Jubilee. VHS. Compiled from earlier footage dating from the 1970s.
2002. *What About Me?: Anniversary Album*. Ace Records UK. Appears to be compiled from earlier LPs from 1950s and 1960s since some tracks include Rev. Ruben Willingham.
2005. *Still Holding On*. Onyx Entertainment. Compact disc.