

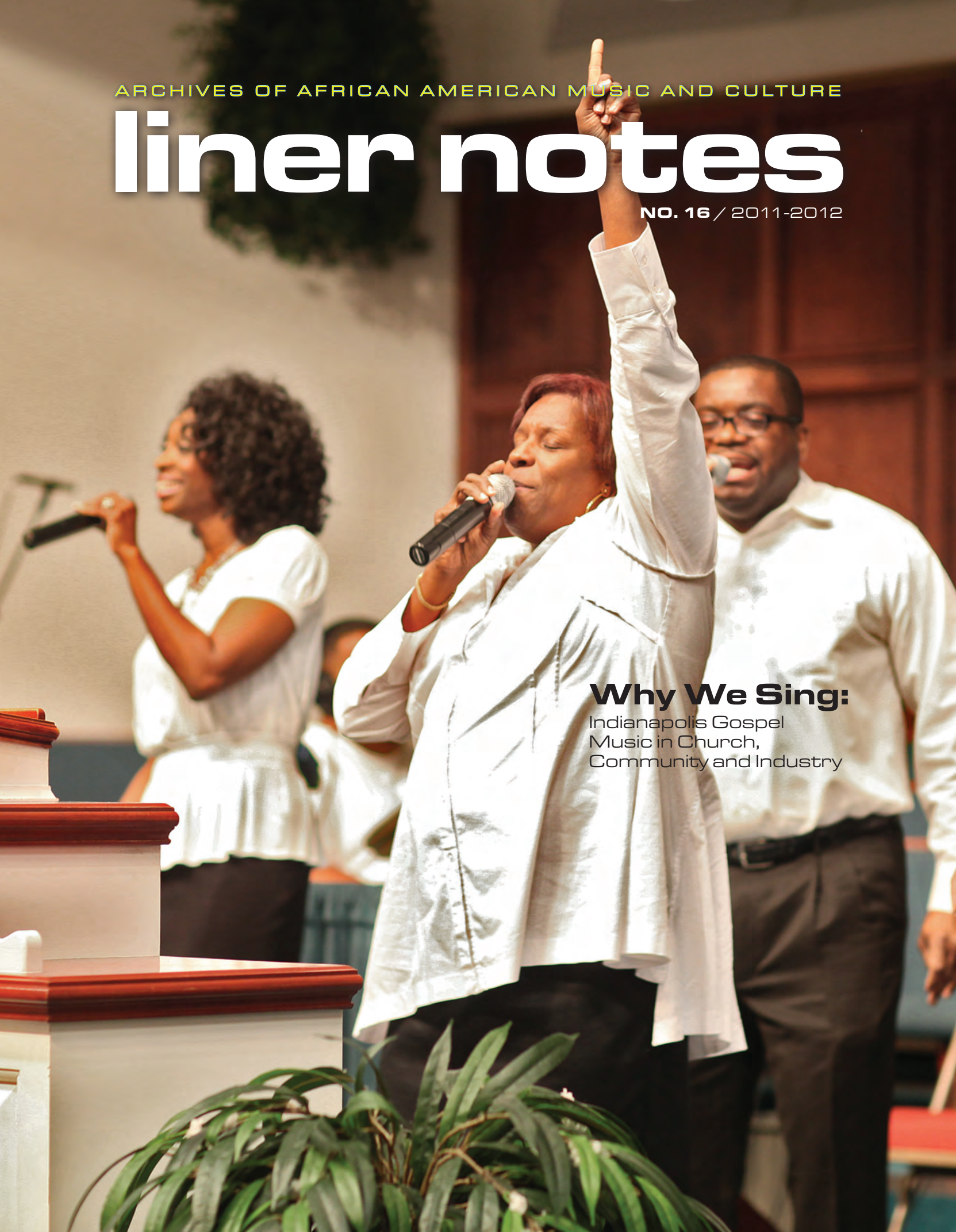
ARCHIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC AND CULTURE

liner notes

NO. 16 / 2011-2012

Why We Sing:

Indianapolis Gospel
Music in Church,
Community and Industry



aaamc mission

The AAAMC is devoted to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of materials for the purpose of research and study of African American music and culture.

www.indiana.edu/~aaamc

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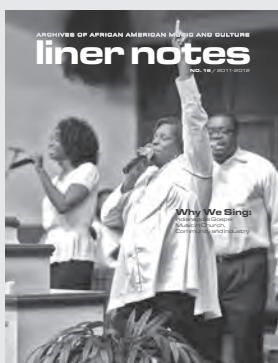
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Sherri Garrison leading the Eastern Star Praise Team.

Photo by Chris Jacobs, courtesy of IU Traditional Arts Indiana.

From the Desk of the Director

Since the publication of the last issue of *Liner Notes*, the AAAMC has been engaged in various documentary activities. We co-sponsored a one-day conference on Indianapolis gospel music, which continues our effort to document African American music in Indiana and the broader gospel music tradition. The conference featured musicians, radio announcers, record label owners, and entrepreneurs, and concluded with an electrifying performance (see inside story).

The AAAMC is also continuing a documentation initiative and oral history project that builds upon research I began in the 1970s on black popular music. The goal is to document the careers of pioneers and entrepreneurs in black music and their contributions to the growth of a multibillion dollar music industry. After meeting the legendary radio deejay “Jockey” Jack Gibson and attending his yearly Family Affair conference, I began to realize that a study on popular music required a study on the industry that produced it. Family Affair and other industry conferences, such as those sponsored by the Black Music Association and Black Radio Exclusive, included sessions led by industry executives. The topics covered a range of issues impacting African American artists, managers, promoters, distributors, retailers, label owners, radio deejays, etc. As I witnessed history being made, I knew that I needed to record and preserve it. One major development in the industry was the rise of independent labels specializing in black music. The success of Vee-Jay, Chess, Duke-Peacock, Atlantic, Motown, and Stax records in the 1950s and 1960s proved the viability and profitability of black popular music. In the 1970s and 1980s, this success inspired the establishment of “Special Markets” (i.e., black music) divisions by major record labels and the appointment of black executives, who were supported by a predominately black staff. In the 1980s I began interviewing the “movers” and “shakers” in the black music industry who were at the forefront of these

developments—a difficult task since most were busy making history. Three decades later I have returned to this project, which will be featured in the next issue of *Liner Notes*.

In 1983 I met Johnny Otis, a rhythm and blues pioneer and legend, who brought me into the center of his musical world. On January 17, 2012, Johnny Otis died, leaving behind a rich musical legacy as a bandleader, drummer, vibraphonist, songwriter, disc jockey, talent scout, and producer.

Otis was instrumental in shaping major developments in rhythm and blues that spread from the West Coast to the East Coast. Among his many contributions was the formation of his traveling revue in 1950, known as the Johnny Otis Rhythm & Blues Caravan, later renamed The Johnny Otis Show. This revue set the stage for “rock ‘n’ roll” touring shows in the 1950s and the Motown and Stax revues in the 1960s. Otis’s show featured Marie Adams and the Three Tons of Joy, Mel Williams, Little Esther, Big Mama Thornton, and the Robins (later renamed the Coasters). From 1948–1952 sixteen of Otis’s recordings landed in the top 10 on *Billboard*’s “Rhythm & Blues Chart,” with three climbing to the #1 position and two to the #2 position. Among Otis’s most memorable works are “Double Crossing Blues” featuring Little Esther and the Robins (1949), “Mistrustin’ Blues” (1949) and “Cupid Boogie” (1950) featuring Little Esther and Mel Williams, and “Willie and the Hand Jive” (1958). He also wrote “Wallflower” (1954, better known as “Dance With Me Henry” and “Roll with Me Henry”), which was first performed by Etta James, as well as “Every Beat of My Heart” (1960), which was the debut single for Gladys Knight and the Pips.

Otis used music as his tool in the struggle for racial equality and to bring recognition to the artistry of African Americans. During the era of segregation in 1955, he added color to television in Los Angeles by producing and hosting *The Johnny Otis Show*.



Johnny Otis, December 28, 1921–January 17, 2012 (AAAMC General Photograph Collection)

Broadcast on KTTV for seven years, this weekly program was the first live black television show in Los Angeles to showcase established and budding stars of the 1950s such as Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, Little Richard, Fats Domino, The Moonglows, and The Drifters. Between 1974 and 1975, *The Johnny Otis Show* briefly returned to television as a half-hour program featuring Otis's band, his backup singers "the Otisettes," and numerous guest artists. During this time Otis also hosted a live musical revue, *Johnny Otis's Oldies but Goodies*, featuring renowned rhythm and blues artists.

In 1982 on WKPS radio, Otis began hosting the *The Johnny Otis Show*, a weekly program featuring rhythm and blues, blues, and jazz interspersed with live "on air" interviews and performances by major figures of African American music as well as those influenced by this tradition. I regularly listened to the program while residing in Los Angeles from 1982 to 1983. After meeting Otis, he invited

me on his radio show. Joe Liggins ("The Honeydripper"-1945 and "Pink Champagne"-1950) was the featured guest. This was both an educational and exhilarating experience! When Otis moved to Sebastopol, CA in 1991, he took his show to KPFK's sister station, KPFA in Sonoma County, where he was on the air until 2002. During one of my visits to northern California in the mid-1990s, I attended my first live performance by The Johnny Otis Show. The band swung and rocked hard all night long. In 1998 I witnessed the final performance of Otis and his band outside of California. The Society for Ethnomusicology selected the Johnny Otis Show as the featured attraction and Otis as a lecturer for its 43rd annual conference hosted by Indiana University. His lecture before a packed room of scholars, students, and fans and the performance of the eleven-piece band were the highlights of the conference. The band rocked the jam-packed dance floor of the Monroe County Convention Center for nearly three hours.

Otis lived a full and rich life. His legacy as well as the history of the rhythm and blues tradition (1940-1960s) is preserved in the Johnny Otis Collection at the AAAMC, which includes his radio (1982-2002) and television shows (1974-1975), photographs, posters, programs, and memorabilia. Although Otis has moved on to his final resting place, his music continues to be heard among the repertoire of 1950s cover bands, television programs, and commercials. His most famous composition, "Willie and the Hand Jive," remains a favorite.



Patricia K. Mantzberg

Featured Collection:

What Must Be Done: A Historic Civil Rights Era Radio Series

In the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, *Newsweek* departed from its long tradition of neutrality and produced a special issue in 1963 on “The Negro in America.” Initiated by legendary editor Osborn Elliott as part of his campaign for advocacy journalism, this groundbreaking study was followed four years later by “The Negro in America: What Must Be Done” (*Newsweek*, November 20, 1967). The 23-page “program for action” analyzed the racial crisis in America, including the underlying causes of the recent riots, the hostile reactions of whites, and the failure of Americans to make a total commitment to social justice. Steps toward implementation were outlined in a 12-point plan “based on the premise that American priorities should be shifted to give the war on poverty and discrimination the same urgency as the war in Vietnam.” Recommendations were aimed at accelerating the passage of Black Americans into all aspects of society and included job training initiatives, integrated education, enforcement of civil rights laws, dispersal of ghettos, and improved healthcare.

Newsweek had tapped into a national sense of urgency that “something must be done—and done quickly—to make equality real for blacks.” To capitalize on the momentum, Elliott collaborated with Sam Chase, a Peabody Award-winning broadcasting executive, on a series of public service broadcasts based on the 12-point plan. At the time Chase was program director for WLIB, the “leading voice of New York’s black residents,” and was highly regarded for developing *Community Opinion*, a show which gave listeners a chance to talk live with public officials. Drawing upon connections created through this program, Chase produced the thirteen-part series *What Must Be Done*, featuring panel discussions with Elliott and New York’s most distinguished black leaders. The programs aired weekly on WLIB beginning July 1, 1968, just three months after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Each 30-minute program offered an “examination of the conditions faced by African Americans,” moderated by pioneering civil rights attorney, business leader and politician Percy E. Sutton. Among the many panelists were Lisle C. Carter, Jr. (Urban Coalition); James L. Farmer, Jr. (co-founder, CORE); Major Robert Owens (politician); Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint (author, *Why Blacks Kill Blacks*); Dr. Nathan Wright, Jr. (author, *Black Power and Urban Unrest; Ready to Riot*); and Whitney M. Young, Jr. (author, *To Be Equal; Beyond Racism*).



One of the thirteen original tapes held by the AAAMC.

A 1995 interview with Percy Sutton, included in AAAMC collection SC 39: “Black Radio: Telling It Like It Was,” further illuminates his role in radio. He went on to co-found the Inner City Broadcasting Corporation, which purchased WLIB and turned it into New York’s first African-American-owned radio station. One of Sutton’s goals was to continue WLIB’s tradition of producing programs relevant to the community: “People [listened] to black radio because it dealt with a problem in Black America and a solution . . . not in a peripheral, roundabout way, but right to the heart of it.” And that really sums up the historical significance of *What Must Be Done*—during an era of turmoil the radio series offered concrete solutions to problems, many of which still exist forty-five years later. Maybe it’s time for these programs to be heard once again.

Sam Chase’s original audiotapes of *What Must Be Done* were recently donated to the AAAMC and CD reference copies are now available for research and educational purposes. Also included in the collection is a copy of the original *Newsweek* article, biographies of the panelists, and program indexes.

-- Brenda Nelson-Strauss

In the Vault: Recent Donations

Angela Brown Collection:

Additional programs, press clippings, photographs, and recordings

Logan Westbrooks Collection:

Additional personal papers and black music industry files

Portia Maultsby Collection:

Additional interviews with black music industry executives and related documentation

Sam Chase Collection:

Reel-to-reel tapes of the 1968 radio series *What Must Be Done* (see feature article)

Rochelle Tinsley Collection:

Gospel sheet music, songbooks, song texts, programs and photograph documenting performance practices at the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Richmond, IN and by a gospel choir comprised of seasonal domestics in Petosky, MI in the 1950s

Why We Sing:

Videos, photographs, interviews, programs, and publicity materials documenting the conference (see feature article)

CD/DVD/Book/Music Donors:

ACM 360 Artists	Dumhi	Jah Works	Secret Stash
Allegro Music Group	Dupetit, Guillaume	!K7 Records	Secretly Canadian
Alligator	Dust-to-Digital	Lafiya Music	Sewald, Ronda
AMT PR	Eagle Rock Entertainment	Legacy	Shanachie
Archeophone	eByrd Communications	Lewis, Ron	Shore Fire
Arhoolie	EMI Gospel	Light Records	Shrapnel Records
ArtSoul	Entertainment One	LN&W	SLG
Ballin' Entertainment	Epitaph	M.C. Records	Smithsonian Folkways
Bear Family	Fat Possum	Mack Avenue	Soulganic
Bellamy Group	Flipswitch	Malaco	Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop
Black Film Center/Archives	Flutronix	Maultsby, Carl	Taseis Media Group
Biz3	Forced Exposure	Maultsby, Portia	Telarc
Blake Zidell & Associates	Foreign Exchange	Merlis for Hire	The Master Plan
Blind Raccoon	Four Quarters	Monkey Media Inc.	Trilateral LLC
Burke, Brandon	GIA	MVD	Tum
Capital Entertainment	GodChaserz	Nacional	Tyscot
Center for Black Music Research	Gold Dust	Nashville Publicity Group	University of Illinois Press
Cherry Red	Gold Village Entertainment	Nonesuch	Universal Music Group
Community Music, Inc.	Grit	Oklahoma Historical Society	W&W
Concord Music Group	Heads Up	PFA	Warp
DaCapo	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	Plug Research	Wax Poetics
Deacon	Idelsohn Society	Press Here	Wise, Raymond
Delmark	iHipHop Distribution	Reel Music	Woods, Michael
Delta Groove	Infinity	Rhymesayers	Verity
Dept. 56	Institute of Sacred Music, Yale Univ.	Rock, Paper, Scissors	Yonas Media
DL Media	Integrity	Rojas, Juan Sebastián	
Document Records	Island Def Jam	Rounder	
Domino	J. Hofrichter	Sacks and Co.	
		Saunders, Jesse	

The AAAMC welcomes donations of photographs, film and video, sound recordings, music, and research materials on all aspects of African American music.

Interview with Dr. Leonard Scott: Founder and Owner of Tyscot Records



Photo by Milton Hinnant.

On July 25th, 2011, AAAMC Graduate Assistant Raynetta Wiggins (RW) and Dr. Mellonee Burnim (MB) from the IU Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology drove up to Indianapolis to interview AAAMC National Advisory Board member Dr. Leonard Scott (LS). In addition to running a thriving dental practice and serving as the Bishop at Rock Community Church, Scott is the owner and founder of Tyscot Records, the oldest African American-owned gospel music record label.

After discussing Scott's early musical activities with various R&B and rock bands during his college years and his return to the church in 1972, the interview focused on Tyscot's activities. We pick up the interview with Scott telling the story of the events leading up to the company's founding in 1976.

LS: In 1975 things were really going well. I was at Christ Temple [in Indianapolis]. Souls were being saved, the church was growing, and the Devil didn't like that. The pastor started spending money; he started remodeling the building. I think the congregation didn't like him spending the money. There was a lot of tradition there. You see, he hadn't come up in the tradition of the Mother Church. He came from Ohio. A lot of [congregation members] felt that the bricks were anointed, and so he kind of stirred some stuff up. And so that's how Christ Church Apostolic got started.

MB: So Christ Church Apostolic is an outgrowth of Christ Temple?

LS: Well, almost every Apostolic church in Indianapolis is an outgrowth of Christ Temple. The church split. I went with the pastor to Christ Church. During this time though, about 1975, the Lord laid on my heart to go on a shut-in. I went to a hotel room and shut-in for three days and three nights in a hotel room. I had my Bible, I think I had my notebook, and I had a little tape recorder. I just fasted and prayed.

At the end of those three days, it was almost time for me to leave and out of nowhere the Lord just started giving me songs—the words and music. I hadn't really been a songwriter before, and they just started coming one after another, I guess maybe eight or ten of them. I just started singing them into this little tape recorder I had. Now imagine being shut up in a room for three days and three nights not seeing anybody. I walk outside and there had been an ice storm. If you've ever seen an ice storm, everything looks like glass. I hadn't eaten for three days and three nights, hadn't seen anybody for three days and three nights, and this is what I walked into. I'm thinking, "Am I in Heaven or what?"

I brought the tape recorder to our organist, and I turned it on and [played] all of these songs. I didn't know what

to do with them. He said, “I think we ought to do a recording.” That was Craig Tyson. He was the organist at the time, and he was Bishop Tyson’s son. We just started working on songs, and we finally did a recording called “Feel Good.” It’s amazing. There are YouTube videos of people in Japan singing that song. So that was our first recording, and we did it with the Christ Church Choir. It’s called, *Feel Good*.

MB: What year?

LS: That was probably ’78 or ’79. We formed the company in ’76. That’s when we started working. [We told] my attorney, “We want to do a record.” He said, “Well, what you need to do is you need to incorporate.” He said, “You have these other assets. If somebody says you stole their song and they sue you, they can take everything that you have, but if it’s incorporated into another entity, they won’t be able to touch the other things that you own.” He asked me, “What do you want to call it?” I said, “I don’t know,” because I wasn’t planning on calling it anything. I wasn’t planning on having a company, you know? And he said, “Well, what’s your partner’s name?” I said, “Craig Tyson.” He said, “Well, why don’t you call it Tyscot?” I said, “Okay,” and so that’s how Tyscot got started.

I just thought it was going to be for our church choir, but then that’s when Truth & Devotion from out of Anderson came and said, “Can we get on your label?” What label, you know? And so we recorded them, and then it just seemed like God had plans for this to be more than just something for our church choir. And he did. I can remember an old bishop telling me one time, “Your record company is not like any other.” He said, “Yours is a platform for God.” And I said, “Yes, Sir.” And I kind of believe that he was in the Spirit when he said that because I’ve seen a lot of companies come and go, and some things have even happened to us that should have taken us out, but God’s hand is on you, you know? Back in the early nineties we had the number one song in the nation, the number one album in the nation. It was John P. Kee’s *We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight*.



Photo by Milton Hinnant.

MB: Yes!

LS: I remember people calling me telling me, “Congratulations!” And in the middle of all of that, the owner of the company that distributed our records called. It was on a Friday evening, I never will forget. In fact, I was in my basement working on some music for one of the artists. He said, “Doctor Scott? Got some bad news for you.” He said, “We’re going out of business.” I said, “Oh, okay.” He said, “No, you don’t understand. We’re going *totally* out of business. We’re



Several of the many albums released by Tyscot Records from the AAAMC’s collections.



Dr. Leonard Scott and wife Christine leading worship during the *Why We Sing* evening concert at Fairview United Methodist Church. Photo by Milton Hinnant.

not reorganizing or something where you might get a dime or a dollar. We're going totally out of business as of Monday." He said, "Your company is doing well, but the other ones we're distributing, they're not doing well at all." And then he told me, "I'm sorry."

MB: So what did that mean? You wouldn't get any money? What was your loss?

LS: He owed about \$300,000.

MB: The album was out when this happened?

LS: It was number one all over the nation, and he actually owed us off of those sales on the number one record in the nation. And of course all of that wasn't my money because I needed to pay people. I needed to pay the manufacturer. I needed to pay the artists. I needed to pay the songwriters, etc. But your distributor is the one who collects the money from the stores and gives it to you. Well, he wasn't going to give it to me. There wasn't going to be any money to give to me. And I don't know why, but I just started praising the Lord over the phone. I said, "Hallelujah! Thank you, Lord." I never will forget. [The distributor] said to me, "Uh, are you okay? Did you hear what I said?" And I tell you, God worked it out.

We called all of our artists. Of course John was the number one artist. The rest of them weren't doing that much. We told every one of them, "You're out of contract, and we can't pay you," and every one of them said, "We stand with you." Then we called the

manufacturers and they said, "Well, we understand what's going on. We can't give you credit, you know, but even though you owe us all of this money, we'll continue manufacturing for you on a pay-as-you-go basis." It was like, "Wow!" And then the kicker was that every company in the nation wanted John Kee. At that point he was on the top of the game.

MB: But he started out with you. He wasn't big when he started here?

LS: No, but at the time that we couldn't pay him, everybody wanted him. Other companies were courting him. Well, they do that for any artist who's big, you know? That's what companies do. They court. "You need to be over here with us." A lot of times it's the smaller companies that build artists, and then the big companies who have the money come and say, "Here, I'll give you a hundred thousand dollar signing bonus." The small companies can't do that, and so then they woo them away. But I never will forget, [Kee] said, "You know what? I'm going to stay with you all." At that point he signed a long-term agreement with us, and that really allowed us to stay in business.

MB: So when you went into recording, you started out with just the church choir, but then you eventually developed a roster of how many artists?

LS: Oh wow! Lots! Of course we started and we had that quartet from Anderson, the Pentecostal Ambassadors, and Robert Turner and the Silver Hearts. There was a

choir from out of Cleveland, Bill Sawyer and Christian Tabernacle, and that's really where we got a break. I never will forget. I was at a Gospel Music Workshop of America. It was in Chicago that year, and I was a new label. The lifeline of a gospel record company is radio airplay, and so they have all these radio announcers that come meet every year, and they would give the record companies an opportunity to tell them what they had and why they needed to play it. And I was literally begging them, "Will you please play this? This is good, you know?"

Evidently I wasn't doing too well. There was this minister, and he was actually the chaplain for the announcers. He came up to me, put his arm around me, and said, "Dr. Scott, I'm going to help you." He said, "I've got this record that's doing really well. In fact, people all over the nation want it." He said, "I'm not a record label, I'm a church. I'm going to turn it over to you and let you run with it." And he had a song on that record that everybody wanted. He had a lady that was about ninety years old. She had been a bar singer when she was young, and she was singing this song, "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross," and killing it, you know? I used to have to call stations, "Will you play my record? Please play my record, please." I'd call stores, "Will you take my record?" But as soon as I took that one, it kind of flipped. They started calling me. "You got that Bill Sawyer, 'Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross?'" And so it was a little lightweight hit. That really kind of put us on the map. You really don't get any love until you have something that they want.

After discussing a number of topics, the interview concludes with Scott's thoughts on Tyscot's future:

MB: What do you see as the future of Tyscot?

LS: We've definitely evolved from a recording company into more of a Christian entertainment company.

MB: With the expansion to film?

LS: Right—things are just changing so quickly. You know the story of the trains? The trains felt like they had this thing wrapped up, and when the Wright Brothers had this airplane thing, they said, "Who could carry anything on an airplane?" They felt like they were in the train business instead of in the transportation business. If you're in the transportation business, you don't care how you're going to get it there—you're going to get it there—but if you're in the train business, it's all about trains, you know? We're not in the recording business; we're in the Christian entertainment business, *however* something comes along. You just get it on your iPad or whatever.

MB: Right, because now people are not buying CDs like they were before. Now you've got the internet.

LS: Yes, they're downloading. There is no physical thing anymore. In the recording industry, you always have something in your hand, but now there is no product in your hand. It just goes from here to here to your ear, you know? You pay your ninety-nine cents, pick your song, and it gets downloaded to whatever you want to download it to.

MB: Has that hurt sales for Tyscot?

LS: I think it has. It's made the whole industry rethink music. The love for music has not decreased, and the want for music has not decreased, it's just how they're getting it now. And it's a lot easier to get it free. We thank God that there's still some honest people that will pay the ninety-nine cents, because you can just about get anything you want for free now—music, movies, whatever—if you know where to get it. But there are still some honest people that say, "Well, no, I'm not going to steal."

A full recording of this interview is available as part of the AAAMC's "Why We Sing Gospel Conference Collection" (SC 79). Contact the AAAMC staff at aaamc@indiana.edu for more details.

-- Transcribed and edited by Ronda L. Sewald



Music albums and DVDs released by Tyscot Records held by the AAAMC.



“As long as there’s a church door open, somebody’s going to sing a gospel song. So I don’t care what they tell me about the changes in the industry side of this, the way music is received and the way it’s now coming forth. I honestly believe that gospel music is alive and well in the hearts and minds of people and believers and nonbelievers alike across this nation and across this world.”

– Al “The Bishop” Hobbs

Since gospel music’s rise to popularity in the 1930s, African Americans in Indianapolis have played a significant role in its creation and dissemination. While academic engagement with gospel music has significantly increased over the past few decades, there remains a lacuna in resources and research specifically addressing Indianapolis’s invaluable contributions. To address this issue, on November 12, 2011, the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology hosted a one-day conference on gospel music titled *Why We Sing: Indianapolis Gospel Music in Church, Community and Industry*. Held in the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center Grand Hall on IU’s Bloomington campus, the conference featured eight prominent gospel artists and industry specialists as panelists.

Conference organizers Dr. Mellonee Burnim, graduate student Raynetta Wiggins, and doctoral candidate Tyrone Cooper worked with Dr. Portia Maultsby and the AAAMC staff to develop the conference. The goal of *Why We Sing* was to explore the impact and significance of Indianapolis in the development and dissemination of gospel music regionally, nationally and internationally. The conference also served to spur further collection development through



L to R: Tracy Williamson, Liz Dixon, Lamar Campbell, and Dr. Sylvester Johnson.

the acquisition of materials as well as the documentation of the conference and one-on-one interviews with the panelists.

Why We Sing featured three sessions during which panelists responded to questions from moderators about their involvement in gospel music. Each panel also included an IU faculty member (Drs. Valerie Grim, Portia Maultsby, and Sylvester Johnson) who played the role of respondent and provided contextual closing remarks. The conference culminated with an evening concert featuring performances by several of the panelists at Fairview United Methodist Church. The AAAMC also organized an exhibit mounted in the Bridgwaters Lounge that included information on the participants, Indianapolis-based gospel music record labels Aleho International Music and Tyscot Records, as well as historically significant gospel groups like Beatrice Brown’s Inspirational Singers.



L to R: Conference organizers Dr. Mellonee Burnim, Tyron Cooper, and Raynetta Wiggins.

Burnim opened the conference by discussing its importance to archival endeavors and scholarship on African American sacred music. Burnim also moderated the first panel titled “Gospel Music in Church and Community,” which featured Rodnie Bryant (recording artist and organizer of the Christian Community Mass Choir), Sherri Garrison (Director of Worship at the 10,000 member Eastern Star Church), and Pastor A. Thomas Hill (recording artist, producer, and songwriter for the annual African American passion play *Upon This Rock*). Each of these participants possesses over two decades of experience working in gospel music. Topics included the definition of gospel music, the importance of musical training, and the significance of music within the church. Panelists also specifically addressed the process of balancing spiritual considerations with economic needs. While discussing the subject, Garrison stated:

The motivation is a calling on your life. It doesn't matter how great your skill level is...you can have the greatest voice and be able to sing, but if the anointing of God is not on your life and you don't have a calling, then you will not do what we do. It's not about the money that you make because you're not going to make it [money] in gospel music.

In response to Burnim’s suggestion that nonparticipants have often questioned the viability of gospel as worship music because of the loud volume, clapping, and body movement, the participants spoke at length about concepts of authenticity in gospel music performance. Pastor Hill explained that while God is the ultimate inspiration for worship, cultural background also influences the manner in which a person or group worships. He stated:



L to R: Dr. Leonard Scott, Dr. Portia Maulsby, and Al “The Bishop” Hobbs.



L to R: Sherri Garrison, Rodnie Bryant, and Dr. Valerie Grim.



Sherri Garrison at the microphone.



Al "The Bishop" Hobbs with AAAMC Director Dr. Portia Maulsby.



Conference participants react to panelists.



L to R: Tracy Williamson, Liz Dixson, and Lamar Campbell.

We express [worship] in different ways, and certainly ethnicity has a lot to do with it as well. We are very expressive as African Americans, so you might see us stretch out stiff on the floor, you may see us run up and down the aisle because that's the way we express ourselves with this good news that we keep receiving and hearing through the gospel music.

Garrison elaborated on this idea by suggesting that expressiveness is important not only because God appreciates sincerity articulated through the body, but also because other worshippers are made aware of one another's relationship with God through body language and facial expressions. Conversely, Bryant approached the subject from the perspective of the audience member. He suggested that the expansion of gospel music into new audiovisual spaces has complicated the question of authenticity in worship music:

I understand how people can seemingly become confused as to what is a show and what is authentic because we've had the opportunity now to see different things. We see what's on television, we see what's on the videos, and so we're trying to figure out in church now what is real and what is authentic. And so I think that's a matter of interpretation and where you are within yourself. If you come in with pre-ideas, then that's what you take. If you come into the service with an open mind and an open heart, and you're ready to receive something from the Lord, even if the people aren't authentic, you'll still receive something...and that takes us from what we think is a show to something that is authentic. It's what's on the inside.

The second panel, "The Indianapolis Gospel Music Industry," featured gospel music icons Dr. Leonard Scott (co-founder and recording artist of Tyscot Records) and Al "The Bishop" Hobbs (founder of Aleho International Records, former General Manager of WTLC, and past chairman of the Gospel Music Workshop of America). While both Scott and Hobbs acknowledged that they had worked in secular music in their youth, they ventured into the gospel record business for decidedly different reasons. Scott's label was created in 1976 for the purpose of releasing *Feel Good*, an album recorded by Christ Church Apostolic, which was his church at the time. To date, the label has garnered national success and launched the careers of internationally recognized gospel artists such as John P. Kee and Deitrick Haddon. Hobbs, on the other hand, was highly involved in gospel music in the early 1970s as the co-founder and chairperson for the Gospel Announcers Guild, an affiliate organization of the GMWA. It was not until the early 1990s that he created Aleho International Music. His record label was responsible for releasing the single "Order My Steps," which is now a gospel standard.



Rodnie Bryant and his group performing during the *Why We Sing* evening concert at Fairview United Methodist Church.

Scott and Hobbs offered an excellent historical perspective on gospel music in Indianapolis while also sharing contemporary insights. During this session, they spoke candidly about the day-to-day workings of the gospel music industry as well as its convergences and divergences from the “secular” music industry. Scott suggested that two major factors influencing the way each sector operates are the amount of money involved and the intra-industry relationships. He stated:

In gospel, if you sell 100,000 records, CDs, you are a major artist. In secular, if you sell 100,000, you probably won't do a next record. . . . The reason is that more people buy secular music than buy gospel music. . . . You can name the artists in gospel that sell a million copies on one hand. In R&B, if you're not selling a million copies, you're not a good artist.

Scott went on to explain that the secular music industry has different machinery and resources for producing and marketing projects that sell millions of albums. Similarly, the relationships with radio personalities and industry specialists that are important in promoting a secular album are not necessarily the same relationships that are important for the promotion of a gospel album. The gospel and secular music industries still share commonalities, however. For example, Hobbs highlighted how the internet

has changed the face of the music industry as a whole. The previous business model that focused on CD sales is now ineffective. Similarly, both gospel and secular radio stations only have space to showcase a limited amount of music. In this environment, effective marketing and building purposeful relationships are essential to success. Scott explained:

Regardless of what genre you're in, there are only so many hours in a day for radio to play certain records. The major artists are going to get played. The station might have one slot and fifty new artist CDs that are sitting on its desk and it's got to decide, "Which one of these are we going to do?" If you've got somebody calling you that you've got a relationship with saying, "Man I really need you to play my new [record]," then you're probably going to slip theirs in. If there's no relationship, then it probably [will] never get heard.

The third panel, “New Directions in Gospel Music,” featured Lamar Campbell (national award-winning recording artist), Tracy Williamson (former Label Manager for Tyscot Records and founder of the marketing and promotions company TRE7, Inc.), and Liz “Faith” Dixon (producer and radio personality on AM 1310). While each of these panelists have decidedly different occupations,

their lives often intersect as they all play different roles in creating and disseminating music in the twenty-first century. They addressed contemporary issues including gender in the industry, gospel music in film, and gospel music competitions.

Although gospel singing competitions are not a new phenomenon, nationally televised events such as the Black Entertainment Television's (BET) solo vocal competition, *Sunday Best*, have become the source of some debate within the past five years. The panelists largely agreed that while such competitions support artist exposure, they are still problematic. For instance, Lamar Campbell said:

It's kind of controversial for me as an artist because basically in a competition like that, we're only judging the performance. We say we're trying to judge past that, but we're only judging the performance of a particular song. In order to be an artist, there are so many other elements that have to come into play. As we're watching some of the people that have made it to the top of the charts and to the top of the industry, we don't really know if they have made commitments to the gospel or to the ministry.

Williamson shared similar concerns and worried that singing competitions like *Sunday Best* provide singers with the opportunity to record albums without training them to be well-rounded artists. She believes that these contestants would fare better if they were awarded money and then took the time to develop their careers and promote their music. Dixon also had reservations about singing competitions. Although she recognized that these events provide an arena for artists to be critiqued by professionals, she also believes that competitions have the potential to create divisions among Christian believers and thereby compromise authentic worship.

In addition to the future directions and potential of gospel music, the third panel also addressed the issue of declining revenues. Like the secular side of the industry, gospel music has been affected by the decline of CD sales and the rise of internet-based music dissemination. Williamson highlighted the frustration experienced by many industry specialists by suggesting that consumers' seemingly boundless access to music is ultimately hurting the industry. Similarly, Dixon explained that fewer consumers are listening to the radio because they have other avenues through which they can acquire music and information. Despite these seemingly pessimistic comments, Campbell noted that from an artist's perspective the increasing number of ways in which a consumer can access music is highly beneficial. Musical dissemination tools such as iTunes and social media platforms like Facebook and

Twitter provide audiences with increased access to their favorite artists. In this regard, the internet is ripe with opportunity for both seasoned and up-and-coming artists to cultivate and maintain a substantial listenership.

Following the conference, Bloomington's Fairview United Methodist Church hosted a gospel music concert. Emceed by Hobbs, the concert provided an opportunity for several of the panelists to showcase their talents and bring the music that was the subject of the panel discussions to life. The concert drew upon themes from the conference and presented music representative of three facets of contemporary gospel: the church, the community, and the gospel music industry. It opened with a selection by Pastor Hill and congregational songs performed by Dr. Scott and his wife, Christine. The communal experience of gospel music was captured by the performance of a fifty-member, volunteer-based choir comprising members of the Indiana University and Bloomington communities. This energetic group was led by consummate choral director Sherri Garrison. Two nationally recognized recording artists rounded off the concert with highly energetic and inspiring performances. Rodnie Bryant and his small group performed two of his most celebrated selections, "He's a Keepa" and "We Offer Praise." Lamar Campbell closed the concert with a collection of songs that was well received by the audience. During his performance he rendered well-known pieces like "More than Anything" and "It's All About the Love" while also showcasing songs slated to be released on his upcoming album.

While the day's events explored different facets of gospel music, they echoed similar ideas about the changes that have taken place as well as the potential future directions of the genre. Panelists expressed the versatile yet enduring quality of gospel music that has led to its increasing national and international exposure while allowing it to remain the favored form of worship music in African American churches. Through *Why We Sing* the AAAMC has documented the threads of consistency and change in gospel music locally and beyond. With over thirty hours of video footage as well as a growing collection of record albums, photos, and artifacts, the AAAMC is working to preserve the amazing legacy of gospel music.

Why We Sing was sponsored by the College Arts and Humanities Institute, Institute for Advanced Study, Office of the Vice President for Equity, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, Jacobs School of Music, Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, Traditional Arts Indiana, Archives of African American Music and Culture, Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies, African American Arts Institute, and Fairview United Methodist Church.

-- Raynetta Wiggins, AAAMC Graduate Assistant
Photos by Milton Hinnant



Volunteer-based community choir led by Sherri Garrison.



Audience reactions to the evening concert.



Pastor A. Thomas Hill.



Dr. Mellonee Burnim.



Audience reactions to the evening concert.



In the months leading up to Why We Sing, Dr. Mellonee Burnim and AAAMC graduate assistant, Raynetta Wiggins, performed a series of interviews with each of the panelists. What follows are excerpts from their interviews with Lamar Campbell, Liz Dixson, and Sherri Garrison.

For those interested in hearing more from these and other panelists, videos of the interviews and select transcripts are available at the AAAMC. Please contact our staff for more details.



Lamar Campbell albums held by the AAAMC.

Lamar Campbell

Originally from Indianapolis, Lamar Campbell is an accomplished choir director, minister of music, church musician, and recording artist. His albums include When I Think About You (2003) and I Need Your Spirit (1999). He has been nominated for Stellar Awards, and along with his group Spirit of Praise is the winner of a Gospel Music Excellence Award from the Gospel Music Workshop of America.

The following interview between Wiggins (RW), Burnim (MB), and Campbell (LC) took place on July 30, 2011.

- RW:** You spent some time in Texas at Windsor Village United Methodist Church and now you're back in Indianapolis, so where do you see yourself in gospel music regionally, nationally, and internationally?
- LC:** Well, right now is an interesting period. I'm in the studio working on a project. Actually, it's the first time I've done a project like this. Being signed to a label, you have a certain number of projects to put out during the lifespan of a contract. So when I was signed to EMI, in addition to making records I had to promote them, and some of them were coming out one on top of the other. The creative process gets to be a little bit different in a situation like that because you don't have as much time to get a project completed. Right now I'm doing the project exactly the way I want to do it. I'm going through the writing process; we're sitting in a writers' room in the studio, and we're coming up with good hooks and good ideas, and we're doing collaborations with some other people that I feel really comfortable working with. And after that process, we've kind of been putting the songs together, started recording them, and then I'm doing some songs in small locations. I'm just trying to get a feel for what



Lamar Campbell & Spirit of Praise performing during the *Why We Sing* evening concert at Fairview United Methodist Church. Photo by Milton Hinnant.

the songs really are about. So I would say right now my songwriting process has probably been the most enjoyable of all of them. And I'm doing it that way because I really feel that God has called me to a more "world" type of sound.

I've always felt that what I was doing was multicultural, but we're trying to do music that a lot of people would love in a lot of different places in the world. Sometimes I've had an opportunity to travel and go out of the country and all over the United States, but when we think of our music reaching the four corners of the earth, we forget that the four corners of the earth are represented right in our own backyard in Indianapolis. So there's a Latino community that I have not touched that lives here. There's an African-based community that I'm not really aware of, strong Jamaican and Oriental influences, too. So as a result of coming back home and really being an Indianapolis homeboy, I want to touch those influences of the world that are right in my own backyard. So that's kind of where I'm at right now with the music, and I'm really taking the time to broaden what we're doing even though it's still Lamar. You're still going to hear that thread of praise and worship, you're still going to hear those love songs, because I believe that I'm called to write music that puts people in a relationship with Jesus. You'll still feel all of that, but you'll also sense that I'm trying to reach a broader base of people.

After talking about his use of local musicians on the new album, Campbell discusses how he got into gospel music.

MB: So why gospel music? Did you see this as your way to make big bucks in life?

LC: When I grew up, I always felt that I was going to

make a major contribution to the world. As far back as I can remember I always thought that, but whether it would be in music or whatever, I had no idea. As far back as I can remember I've always had some musicality about me, so I didn't think it was a big deal. I always looked at it as a hobby. When I graduated high school and started pursuing college, music was not on the horizon at all. I could go down the list of things. When I came out I was going to be a mechanical draftsman, then I was going to be an accountant, then I was going to do something with computers, and then I was back to accounting. Then I said, "You keep running away from the music thing." So the Lord really put it in my heart. And it was gospel music, but it was music, and you still had to study. You still had to get a skill. So I had taken formal lessons, piano lessons and stuff like that, and then I enrolled at Butler University.

I was going after a degree in music education, but while I was there God opened the doors for my recording. And at that point I just felt that I had to go through those doors. So during the process I said, "I promised the Lord that if he opened the doors and allowed me to do gospel music and provide for myself, that's what I would stay true to." And He has done that, and I have done that. God has been faithful to me to the point of being able to work at Tyscot Records for a while. I went from shipping all the way through doing promotions for the label, radio promotions, even doing some of the print. Taking on this music thing has not just been writing songs and sitting up in somebody's church. I really had an opportunity to go through all of the behind-the-scenes things that a lot of artists don't get a chance to do, so I really feel blessed to have a keen sense about the business side and how that parlays into the artistry. I understand what a record company needs me to be and to do to produce money for the label.

After more discussion about his work at Tyscot, Campbell discusses his first recording project.

MB: So did you initially sign with Tyscot and, if so, what year was that?

LC: Well, I released my first project on Tyscot Records in 1989, so I've been doing this for a few decades.

MB: Did Tyscot find you or did you find Tyscot?

LC: Actually, Sherri Garrison worked at Tyscot Records, and she was a good friend of mine. I was doing music at that time, and she was singing with the Eternal Light Singers. I had a smaller group called Lamar Campbell & Praise, so Sherri said it would be a cool thing, my working there at Tyscot. So I really went to learn about the business of music, but I guess the underlying thing was "I'm going to get on [the label]."

MB: Okay.

LC: Yeah! Because I'm trying to get on! I've got to get on! When I look back and I think about that time period and how I had to have believed in myself to be able to do the things that I was doing and take the risks that I was taking, then I go back with the ears that I have now and listen to what I was doing.... You know, I always felt that I was doing "a cut above" stuff, but

it wasn't as "cut above" as I thought it was! But I'm telling you, you were not going to tell me that I was not going to be the next Walter Hawkins. I believed that with everything in me, and so when that album came out on Tyscot Records and it didn't sell thousands and thousands of copies, I said "Okay, if I can't do that, then I'm not doing this anymore!" So that was it for me and recording.

MB: For real!?

LC: I said, "I'm going to find me a good church. I'm going to be the best little church boy musician, minister of music, all that kind of stuff," and that's what I did.

After discussing his role in the Gospel Music Workshop of America, his work at Windsor United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas, and some of the logistical difficulties involved when touring with a musical group, Campbell discusses how Spirit of Praise initially formed.

RW: So how did you go about developing the choir?

LC: The choir actually was—and this is where I have to give them a lot of credit—they were my friends.

MB: They were?

LC: Yeah. I just asked people that were my friends. Some of them could sing pretty well, but what I told the Spirit



Sherri Garrison

Sherri Garrison is currently Director of Worship at Eastern Star Church and the music director of the Indy Mass Choir for the Indianapolis chapter of the Gospel Music Workshop of America. She has shared the stage with such gospel greats as Tramaine Hawkins, Kirk Franklin, Byron Cage and Kurt Carr.

The following interview between Wiggins (RW), Burnim (MB), and Garrison (SG) took place on July 5, 2011.

MB: Sister Garrison, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us today. I've been looking forward to this because I'm a fan of yours.

SG: Oh, praise the Lord!

MB: I've been bringing my classes here to Eastern Star Church for years. The experience has always been great, but now we have the opportunity to fill in the background information. How did you become this incredible musician that you are? I

of Praise was, “If you all let me come in here and talk to y’all the way I need to talk to you, you will not regret it.” So they did. They let me talk to them like a dog, but it paid off! And they went places that they never imagined they would go.

MB: Like where? Tell me some of the places you’ve been.

LC: I mean the television exposure that we had! We have done the Stellar Awards. I’ve had opportunities to go to Denmark and Poland. Actually, I haven’t taken the whole choir, but I take seniors and musicians. We traveled all over the United States. We did New York with Aaron Neville. We did the Apollo. We did the *Today Show*. We did *Good Morning America*. I mean just a lot of stuff.

MB: So were these people that you went to high school with or were they mainly Seventh Day Adventist? Who were these folks in the choir?

LC: Well, there were some people I went to school with. There were people that I played for, musical people that I met along the way, just stuff like that, and a lot of people from Eastern Star Church, because at Eastern Star Church during the ’90s we went hard with the young adults. We had a really good group of young adults that hung out every weekend just about. Plus we had a really strong youth and young adult choir, so

it was just a bond where we not only went to church together, we ate together, we hung out, you know? So I have a group of people that are really committed to ministry. I know that they didn’t get into this for what we got. I know that’s not why they were doing what they were doing. I know that’s not why they were sitting there and being faithful to rehearsals and being committed to consecration and all that kind of stuff. We were doing that because we believe in ministry. I have always believed that kind of made us stand apart even though we’ve been acknowledged by the industry. My interest is not in what the other artist is doing or what I have to compete with. Even though I am abreast of what’s going on, I just want to produce the diamond that I’m supposed to produce. I’m very humbled to say this, and I don’t say it a lot, but I know of some artists that will only dream of doing some of the things that I’ve done already. Even with all the accomplishments that God has allowed, there still is some more. The best is yet to come.

MB: He’s not finished with you.

LC: I still have better days ahead. I still have greater things that I’m going to accomplish. I’m excited about it.

MB: And we are too.

-- Transcribed by Dave Lewis, AAAMC Graduate Assistant
Edited by Ronda L. Sewald

know that you’re the Minister of Music here, but I also know that you have been actively involved with GMWA. How did you arrive at this place?

SG: Well, first of all, by understanding the call that God had on my life, I knew from a young age that He had gifted me. I directed my first song when I was ten. I taught my first song vocally with three or four parts at eleven. I’m now fifty, will be fifty-one, so I’ve been doing it for forty years. God just gave me a special gift, but I didn’t just rely on the gift that he gave me. When I realized what he gave me, I wanted to learn more about the gift, and I wanted to be able to put it into better practice for the ministry. So when I became older, I wanted to find some mentors. Al Hobbs is actually one of my mentors. At about seventeen I joined the Gospel Music Workshop, the Indianapolis Chapter, and from there I started going to conventions, watching other people direct, listening to how they taught, and looking and taking the good, looking at the bad and saying, “This is what I will not do” or “I think God is leading me this way.” Over the years I’ve just

allowed God to speak, and then as he speaks I try to interpret what I think God is saying through the music with how I direct.

MB: When did you come to Eastern Star?

SG: I’ve actually been here twenty-three years now.

MB: How did they find you?

SG: I met Pastor Jeffery A. Johnson [when] he was a youth pastor at Oasis of Hope and I was at Mount Olive Baptist Church here in the city at that time. Lamar Campbell used to be over at Oasis, so every once in awhile when he would have a concert, he’d invite me over and I would direct for him. But I was also doing things with GMWA here. And probably about a month after [Pastor Johnson] came [to Eastern Star], he called me and asked if I would I be interested [in directing the choir]. I came to two rehearsals, and I saw where they were musically. I prayed, and it was like God told me, “Sherri, you know this is the place for you. I believe that I can



Gospel Meets Symphony—featuring Garrison, Lamar Campbell, Aretta Bush, and Janice Lumpkin Mason (mid-1980s).

use you here in this ministry.” And I’ve been here ever since June of 1998.

MB: So you are the Minister of Music at Eastern Star?

SG: Yes, we actually changed the title a few years ago to “Director of Worship,” only because the music ministry has outgrown the title of Minister of Music. I have three dance ministries now. I have an adult dance that I oversee, a youth dance, and then we just started a mime dance group. In the future I want to add a drama team, and I’m looking at trying to start a hip hop group. This year we’re also going to start a youth orchestra. So you can’t just say “Minister of Music” because it’s more than morning worship. We have six choirs, a praise team, and I have about nineteen musicians on staff, so it’s scheduling, it’s doing concerts. It entails a whole lot more than being Minister of Music. You kind of have to have a global look at what it all entails.

After discussing Sherri’s typical Sunday morning and weekly rehearsal schedules—a rigorous routine including a youth choir, young adult choir, mass choir, two dance groups, and a mime dance group, as well as a men’s choir and children’s choir led by Dr. Robert Townsend—Sherri talks briefly about the church musicians before moving on to the topic of how she selects the songs for Sunday morning worship.

MB: If you have all of these choirs, how are you selecting the repertoire?

SG: I love all genres of gospel. I’m very open, so when I knew that I had to deal with seven different groups, I just would always say, “Lord, I want every last one to have its own identity and to have its own feel and flavor.” A lot of times ministers of music only deal with what they like and they miss the needs of the congregation. And music is too well-rounded and too broad, so when all you deal with is trying to teach the things that you like, then guess what? Sometimes your congregations suffer. So in trying to meet the needs of everybody, I just tried to make sure that I kept an open mind. Plus I look at the message. The message has got to be the Word, you know? Even if it’s talking about how your tests and your trials will be over, it’s telling you how and what God is going to do to help you make it through what you’re going through. A lot of times people will sing the top twenty songs, but that is not what’s ministering to the people. You have to know your congregation, but you have to be able to meet the needs of everybody. If all you do is meet the needs of the young people, then the older people are not going to want to come to worship, so you have to have an open mind. You have to hear from God. I mean I’ve literally taught songs where I’d be like, “Why do You keep telling me to teach this song? I don’t



Sherrri Garrison leading worship with the Eastern Star Church Praise Team. Photo by Chris Jacobs, courtesy IU Traditional Arts Indiana.

feel anything, but I'm going to teach it anyway." And the very moment I would get that song completed, somebody would worship with it, and I'd be like, "That's the reason why."

I learned this at a young age. I would say, "Show me what it is we need, show me what the congregation needs, or show me where this music ministry needs to go so that we can bless the people," because if Pastor's preaching a word that's teaching about healing, I can't get up on a Sunday morning and sing a song that's not connected with that. And the thing is, I don't necessarily know [what we're going to sing] because I don't know what Pastor's preaching on Sunday.

MB: He doesn't tell you beforehand?

SG: I've always tried to pay attention to what he's saying and listen to the Word. When it comes to music, a lot of people have gotten so involved in what they do that they don't really pay attention to the needs of the ministry. I'm not perfect, but I strive to make sure that the music ministry here meets the needs of everybody that comes in on Sunday morning. So you might get a hymn at altar prayer, but then you might get a worship song because it just depends on the prayer and what was said during the prayer. I don't pick my songs based on how rehearsal went. In all the years that I've done

music ministry, I've never practiced what I'm going to sing on Sunday morning. Never, ever. My choir members never know. I don't know. Our praise team doesn't know. My band doesn't know.

MB: Are you serious? So when do you call the songs?

SG: When He [The Spirit] tells me to.

MB: And they're just following you?

SG: Yes, but that's why I tell them they have to know the music. And I teach for us to minister, not to be prepared for this Sunday. We will worship, we will praise, we will shout, we will give Him glory in rehearsal, but if He doesn't tell me to do it that Sunday, it still might not be done.

MB: So when they come down that aisle on Sunday morning, they don't know what songs you're going to have them to sing?

SG: Because I don't know and our praise team doesn't know. That's why I get to church early, you know? As I'm sitting there, I try to feel the atmosphere. There have been times even with praise and worship where I've said, "Okay, this is how I feel God is moving," and then I've gotten up and we've sung something.

I don't even turn around and tell them. I just start talking because He's told me to shift. Then God will tell me what to say. And they might be starting to play something else, and I'll just keep on talking, and then the musicians will shift to the next song and they know. And when they're right, I'll just keep talking and maybe nod my head, you know?

MB: So they're in tune to you?

SG: They have to learn to listen. It's not that I'm trying to throw them off, but I'm trying to be in tune with how I feel God is speaking to the people. Yeah, I might have wanted to do "Majesty," but somebody might have really needed to know about the love of Jesus today.

Later in the interview:

MB: You were the director of a choir for GMWA Women of Worship when they did "Order My Steps."

SG: Yes.

MB: That was a big recording, so tell me about your involvement with GMWA.

SG: When I was around seventeen I had heard about the local chapter here, so I decided, "Let me go check them out. I think I might want to go and join." So I went to a couple of rehearsals, liked what I saw, became a part of the chapter, and went to several conventions. I actually went to go and learn, but eventually I began to direct with Al Hobbs because Al was over the local chapter here. So after me being there maybe two or three years, he began to utilize me to direct, and we did several recordings locally with our chapter that I directed on.

I grew from there, and even then I was still directing every Sunday at Mount Olive, teaching and ministering. James Clardy was minister of music there, so I learned a lot under him. And then when they got ready to do the recording for the women there, they brought on a guy named Sanchez Harley as a producer. He's a wonderful producer, and he used to live in Nashville. He had gotten Derrick Lee, who played for Bobby Jones, to do some musical arrangements. He called Pam Davis, who was from Indianapolis and she plays. All of a sudden she calls me and says, "I need you to come to a rehearsal. They're going to do a recording, and they said they need some directors, and I threw your name out there." So I went. I think I directed one or two songs on that recording, and then the next year they decided to do another recording, and from there I directed. Pam and I were always the main two that were with the Women of Worship, and I think we did ten recordings with GMWA.

After providing some basic information on how their 1999 gospel recording, Lord I Worship, resulted in an invitation for Sherri

and the Eastern Star Church Choir to perform a 7-day tour in London and Paris in October 2000, Sherri talks about later tours and workshops in Greece and Japan.

SG: About five years ago we sang at the US Embassy in Greece.

MB: How did they know about you?

SG: Actually, one of the girls in choir was a lawyer. She had done something for somebody who knew somebody there in Greece, and she just sent them a copy of the CD. They were having a Black History Month, and she contacted me, and we actually went to Greece. We sang in a church and sang in a hall and then we sang for the US Embassy. We were there for seven days. And then I did a women's conference in Japan because I had connected with some women through GMWA in Japan. I took about fifteen women from my church with me, and I taught in the day and then we sang with them at night. God has opened up some awesome doors through ministry. A lot of times people look for that fame and fortune, but when you're faithful to the church and to the body of Christ, that's when God can do some awesome things with you in your life.

MB: So what was your experience of the European and the Asian audiences? Was it different? Was it better?

SG: Actually, you would be surprised. Even though there is a language barrier, when you say, "Jesus," there's no language barrier.

MB: So they received it?

SG: They received it. When we were in Greece, we didn't even understand some of the things that they were saying, but they had translators. And every time we got through singing, there would be people standing around crying. At the embassy they introduced me to one of their nation's writers. He had written anthems for their country, and he was known as a prolific writer and musician. When we got through, he was just tearing. He was talking in their native language, and I didn't know what he was saying, so somebody came over and said, "He said, 'Even though I don't understand everything that you're saying, I felt the love of God.'" I said, "Then we've done what we came to do."

MB: It came through.

SG: So the one thing that I know is that it doesn't matter where you're from and what you speak as your native language, when God and Jesus are in the midst and they feel you are sincere about what you're singing, God's anointing translates everything.

-- Transcribed and edited by Ronda L. Sewald



Liz Dixon

Liz “Faith” Dixon (LD) is the host of Kingdom Takeover and producer for Afternoons with Amos on Indianapolis radio station, 1310-AM The Light. In the following excerpts from this July 27th interview, Burnim (MB) and Wiggins (RW) explore Dixon’s journey from secular Top 40 radio to the gospel format as well as the evolution of gospel music as artists have attempted to improve the music ministry’s effectiveness in reaching Indianapolis communities outside of the church.

RW: How did you get into gospel music and the gospel industry?

LD: Well, I would say God ordained where I am now because I had no idea that this was the direction my life would take. I was born and raised in church, so I’m very deeply rooted into my faith.

MB: Now what kind of church was it?

LD: It was a Baptist church. I am a Christian, but I’m not

denominationally driven. I am Christian valued and based. We were born into gospel, I would say. My grandparents listened to Albertina Walker. They listened to all types of music with us, so it just was infused in me at birth. My father’s a pastor and my grandfather was a deacon, so I really had deep roots in the church. I didn’t have deep roots in the music of the church, in gospel music, but I had deep roots in the church.

I was going to Purdue for chemical engineering, and I was in the minority engineering program through high school. I was an honor student, I was in band, I sang in choir, and I played instruments by ear growing up as a child. Due to the economy, my family wasn’t able to nurture those gifts, so they kind of came around full circle in my adult years.... Engineering was not my passion, but I did it because I felt like this was the direction to help me get more money. God ordained it where I cancelled my chemical engineering curriculum, and I went into electrical engineering and technology. I love solving problems. I got into audio engineering, which I hadn’t realized existed, to be able to run the boards and to make music.

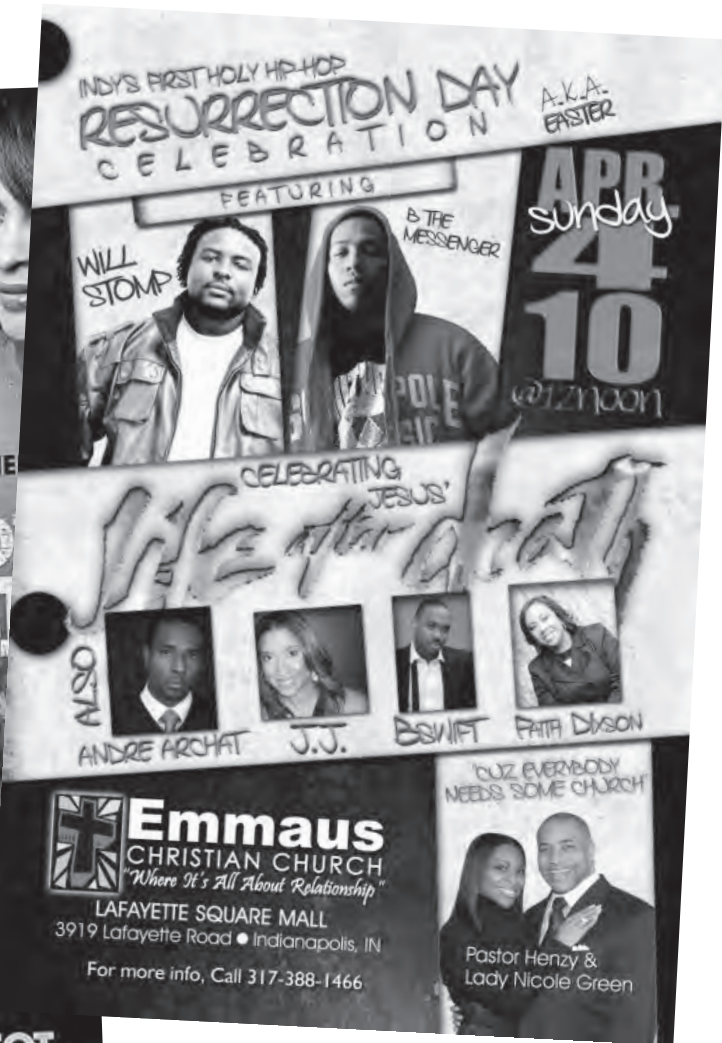
I needed an internship for my audio engineering curriculum, so I went to a radio station in Chicago, which was WGCI. At the time they were not taking any more interns and there was a bad snow storm. I said, “You know what? Wherever there’s a will, there’s a way, and I’m going.” And I drove through the snow storm from West Lafayette, Indiana, all the way to Chicago, and the chief engineer said, “If you are determined to go and risk your life, you have this internship.”

MB: Was this a black station?

LD: 107.5 was basically the black station in Chicago that had it going on. It was number one in everything. It had Tom Joyner, Doug Banks, and icons that are still doing radio to this day. So I went there, I started interning in the engineering department, and I was able to float and intern in promotions, programming in the studio, and sales, and just to learn the entire gamut of radio.

MB: What year was this?

LD: This was in ’96. I was a sponge. I just soaked up everything. My mentors really taught me to be a chameleon. Basically, if you want to last in this business, especially as a female, you’re going need to learn as many things as you can so that you are not expendable. I never thought I’d be on the air, so it was never something I went to school for saying, “Hey, I want to be on the air. I want to be a radio



Flyers for recent events featuring Emmaus Christian Church's Holy Hip Hop (H3) ministry.

personality,” anything like that, but God was setting up the tone. So I leave WGCI thinking I’m on my way to do a startup station in Atlanta with some of my peers, and I came back through Indianapolis.

MB: You’re from Indianapolis?

LD: Yeah, our roots are here and in the Chicago area. I came here, started working for Hoosier Hot 96, which was under the umbrella of Bill Shirk and Bill Mays, and I started doing promotions. I said, “I’m just going to do something to kill the time. I’m on my way to Atlanta, but I still want to do radio, and I’ll do it until it’s time for me to leave.” Well, I got bit by the bug. I ended up [staying] here, my whole plan got diverted, and the rest was history.

Dixon goes on to talk about getting her start as an on-air personality for Top 40 radio, which led to a stint as music director for Hot 96.3 and local producer for the Tom Joyner

Morning Show, followed by a job as a midday host and music director for Radio One. She then began having second thoughts about secular radio.

LD: In 2002 God called me. You know I just really had a burden, and I was like, “Man, I’m doing all these different secular events. I’m born and raised in church, I’m going to church every Sunday, but I’m leading these people to Hell. I’m influencing them to go drink. The music I’m playing is influencing them to have sex and to have kids out of wedlock. This is conflicting who I am.” So God spoke to me very audibly. I’ll never forget it. God was like, “I want you to leave.” I’m like, “Leave? Are you serious? You want me to leave radio? You’ve opened up every door, you’ve helped me break down every barrier, and you want me to leave now? I’m at the top of my game. Why would you have me leave?” I’m sitting there in my living room, and He’s like, “Because the next time people hear your voice, you’re going to be

using it for me.” I didn’t want to leave radio because I loved it, but I didn’t love what I was doing, going out to the clubs. I had a son. During that timeframe I think God put me through boot camp, and I became a minister of the Gospel in 2003. My husband and I were married, and he’s a minister as well. We both answered our callings at that time, and we just really focused in on ministry.

After discussing gospel music programming at WTLC, Dixon discusses her and her husband’s music ministry.

MB: Now what is your and your husband’s church?

LD: We’re members of the Emmaus Christian Church. We’re ministers under the direction of Pastor Henzy Green and Lady Nicole Green. We deal with a very progressive ministry called H3, which is Holy Hip Hop. Gospel music is evolving and there are different art forms. You have gospel neo-soul, you have gospel hip hop, and you have gospel country. There’s not a genre of music that gospel cannot touch. And to think gospel music is only choir music, for the twenty-first century that is not it. We’re seeing young women and men [ministering to] juveniles through what they call “holy hip hop.” It’s like when you go to a restaurant. What are you going to eat? You’re going to eat what you like. What I love about what Pastor Henzy and Lady Nicole have done is that they have really tried to say, “Okay, you know what? We’re going to represent God, the same God that we serve, in a format that people who may not go to church or may not ever step into a church will be able to digest.” And it’s not watered down. It’s not a gimmick. It’s basically gospel hip hop or R&B. You know you have singers that just sing about love and inspiration and sing about God in a different way. I’m seeing that evolving on the Billboard charts. You have three gospel rap artists in the top ten of the gospel album charts this week. You have Lecrae, you have Tedashii, and even The Ambassador just hit the charts at number six. You can’t put God in a box.

Dixon discusses the target audience for her gospel program and the reception of contemporary gospel music by listeners.

MB: You said you target a thirty-five plus audience. Do you program contemporary gospel?

LD: Well, we play contemporary music like Kirk Franklin and Mary Mary. Then we’ll also play Dr. Charles Hayes and The Warriors with “Jesus Can Work It Out.” I play “Going Up Yonder” by Walter Hawkins. You might hear Canton Jones, who’s a new artist inside the *Kingdom Takeover*, and you might hear Richard Smallwood, who was an icon in the music industry. So we’re true to the tradition’s roots. We play the Mississippi Mass Choir,

and we play the Chicago Mass Choir, but a lot of our programming is contemporary songs. You’ll hear Wess Morgan, who is a brand new artist who is actually a Caucasian gentleman that just busted through the gospel music scene. That’s why I said nothing is the same. What you had to go through to get into this business is not the same as it is now. You’ve got artists popping up, going to number one on the charts. James Fortune, Earnest Pugh, these are new artists.

Mary Mary is definitely the contemporary group. I mean they’ve crossed over into the mainstream. You can listen to WTLC-FM and hear as many gospel songs as you can on the AM, and God is saying something with that, you know? We can’t put God in a box because we’re living in the end times, so he’s got to get his message out to his people by any way and any means necessary. I feel like some of the choirs are not going to respect a Mary Mary because they’re feeling like that music is too secular; it’s too mainstream. They’re not saying “God” in every song, and they’re not saying “Jesus,” and it’s too watered down. And then you’ve got people who are like, “I can’t get with these old choirs.” This is what I hear. Gospel is fusing over to Christian and Christian is fusing over to gospel. I believe that in ten years you’re going to see those taglines go away. I believe that they’re going to be merged to some degree because we have so many African American artists, like Marvin Sapp, going over to the Christian charts. I believe that they’re going to be one. It’s going to be one chart, one voice. I mean I could be wrong, you know?

You’re seeing Christian rock artists that are fusing with the Kirk Franklins, like TobyMac and Kirk Franklin doing music together. You’re seeing hip hop artists doing music with inspirational groups. I’m seeing the Dove Awards change. Back in the day you would never see African Americans on that same platform with Sandi Patty and Chris Tomlin and people like that. And I think that because the cultures have evolved, you’ve got more people who listen to a mixture of music. And so a lot of people that we talk to now, unless they’re seniors, they’re listening to a variety, not just gospel. They’re not just listening to traditional gospel. They’re not just listening to contemporary gospel. They’re listening to Christian gospel. They’re listening to worship music. I mean everything has a category. You know Martha Munizzi is crossing over. She is definitely a worship leader. You’ve got Vicki Yohe. These are people that do Christian worship music, but who are embraced by both the black gospel community and the Christian community. God did not intend for us to be separated. Gospel music will never lose its essence if we educate.

-- Transcribed by Ronda L. Sewald
Edited by Brenda Nelson-Strauss

From Jim Crow to Jay-Z: Race, Rap and the Performance of Masculinity by Miles White

From Jim Crow to Jay-Z: Race, Rap and the Performance of Masculinity (2011) by Miles White is the latest publication in the *African American Music in Global Perspective* book series published by University of Illinois Press and edited by Portia K. Maultsby and Mellonee V. Burnim.

While conducting research for his MA and PhD at the University of Washington, Miles White made numerous video and audio recordings of hip hop performances in the Pacific Northwest ranging from live recordings of popular independent artists, such as Atmosphere and Immortal Technique, to lesser known local acts. White's collection, which was recently donated to the AAAMC, provides insight into both of these often underrepresented musical communities, and sheds light on hip hop as a global performance art. Hip hop artists from as far away as the Czech Republic and Thailand are also represented.

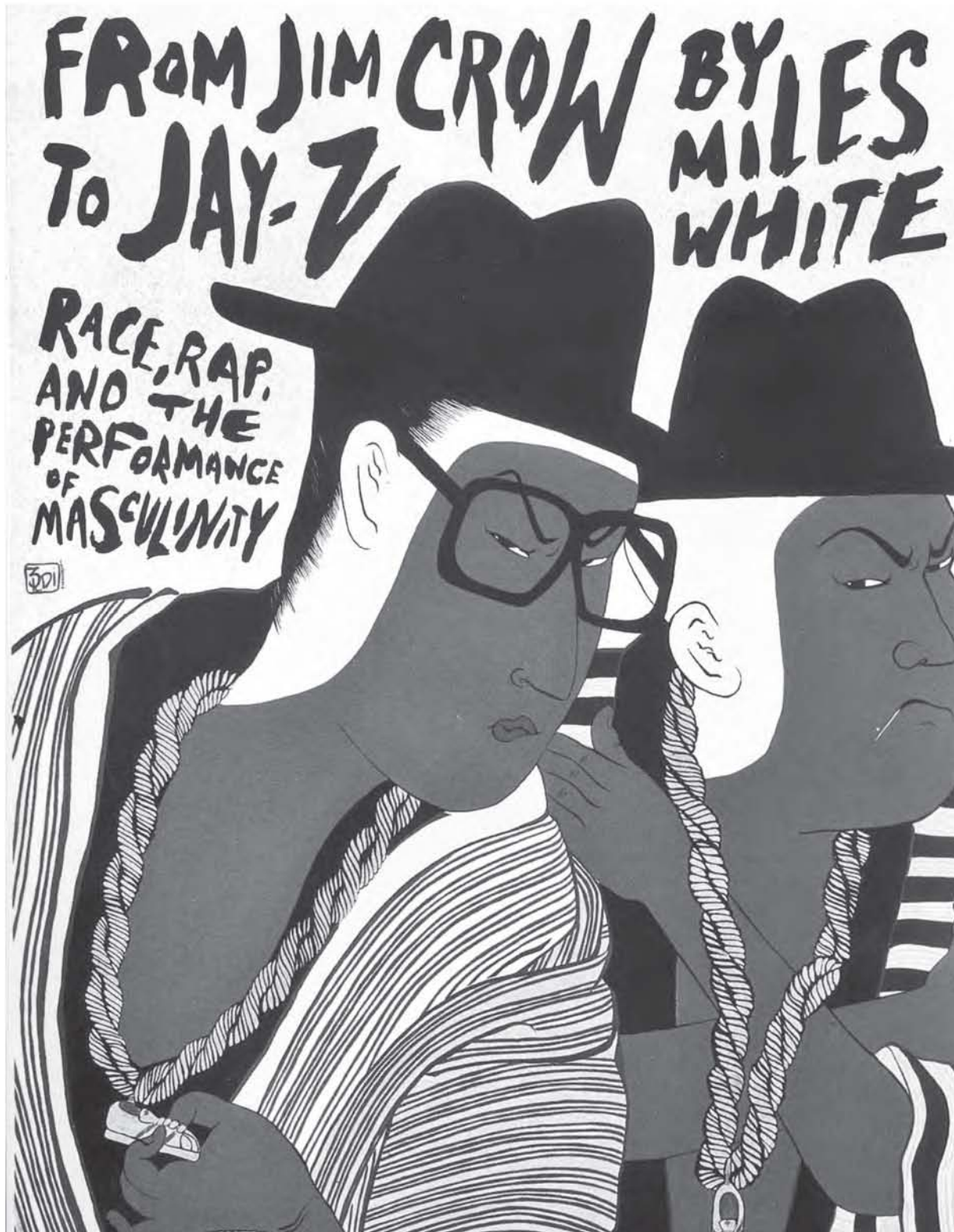
For years White worked as a jazz musician and entertainment journalist and he approached these live performances with a journalistic dedication to documentation that is reflected in his academic work on the genre. While entertainment journalists have often written about hip hop, their tendency has been to chronologize the music without deep analysis. White's dissertation, "We Some Killaz: Affect, Representation and the Performance of Black Masculinity in Hip-Hop Music" (2005), and later publications reflect his respect for this incredibly influential music. By examining the genre with the same reverence and attention to detail that jazz and the blues have received, White gives voice to the value of hip hop in the minds of youth around the world and in the boardrooms of various commercial industries where the black male rapper's body is often used to commodify "cool" and sell more product.

Miles White expands on his dissertation research in his new monograph, *From Jim Crow to Jay-Z*, by examining both hip hop music and Black masculinity—topics that have long been relegated to the sphere of popular criticism. White challenges the assumption that these topics are not substantial enough for true scholarly discourse by pulling from a variety of fields including ethnomusicology, popular music studies, performance studies, African diaspora studies, and literary theory. The amalgamation of interdisciplinary ideas that White pulls together is dense and complex, but entirely necessary to give hip hop its due as a transnational, transracial, poetic, and musical genre that originated with African Americans and has become the expressive apparatus for youth around the globe.

White takes a unique approach in analyzing the globalization of hip hop by not simply exploring international iterations of the genre, but instead by tracing how the commoditization of the black male body, beginning with chattel slavery, has shaped the consumption of entertainment forms centering around that body. The black body is viewed as an expressive tool in and of itself. Included in White's examination are forms of adornment, such as oversized clothing and ostentatious jewelry, and conscious affectations of posturing including "mean-mugging" (the rejection of smiling as a sign of femininity and weakness), imposing stances designed to project a sense of "hardness," and patterns of movement representing a world-weary, street-smart attitude that White identifies as "street swagger." He interprets these as more than just signs that conventional masculinity is desired in the mainstream hardcore hip hop community. White explains and examines these masculine trappings and goes even further to explore how this image of the aggressive black male body is used as a static signifier to sell everything from MP3s to new sneakers.

From Jim Crow to Jay-Z decodes the use of the body in hip hop by using historical and theoretical findings to show how ritualized gestures, like the ever present crotch grab, are decontextualized when viewed only as obscene gestures designed to shock viewers. White traces the hypermasculinity and hypersexuality of such gestures to the emasculation of the black male body necessitated by the paternalistic racism of blackface minstrelsy and the Jim Crow South.

Although it is a thin tome, White makes great use of the space by demonstrating that the facial expressions, bodily postures, urban clothing brands, and hard-hitting beats that establish hardcore hip hop as an intimidating and dangerously attractive genre to outsiders are deeply connected to the concept of authenticity and "realness" in the hip hop community and, to a certain extent, the African American community as a whole. White globalizes the concept of "realness" by bringing it out of the African American context and showing how that focus on authenticity, aligned with a sense of hardness and "ghetto" street-cred, provide youth outside of the black community with an alluring alternative to the mainstream. Disassociation from their parents, their school, the current political climate, or any number of issues can cause young people to search for a world without phonies. The presentation and sounds of hardcore hip hop offer these young people the promise of a scene that is defined by its authenticity. White travels from the genre as it exists amongst its participants in the African American



community, to its adoption by sincerity-seeking youth outside of the community, to corporate conglomerates who seek to use the allure of authenticity to validate whatever it is they're attempting to sell. This book and the corresponding Miles White Collection at the AAAMC can only serve as an introduction to these topics, which are clearly rich for future

study. White provides a clear example of how interdisciplinary approaches to African American music and culture can provide future scholars with the tools to examine the ever changing and diverse identities within the community.

-- Dorothy Berry, AAAMC Graduate Assistant

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