Musical Style and Experience in a Brooklyn Pentecostal Church: An "Insider's" Perspective[1]

By Melvin L. Butler

Introduction: "What Kind of Church is This?"

When my wife, Lori, speaks of her move from Charlotte, North Carolina, to attend college in Boston, Massachusetts, she inevitably highlights the "culture shock" she felt upon first arriving. "I don't like it. It's different," she tearfully tried to explain to her parents late one Sunday afternoon. Her voice had an air of despair that seemed to belie the faith-bred optimism she usually portrayed even when things didn't go her way. Lori was raised Pentecostal "from the womb," as the saying goes, and her church background is steeped in the African American Pentecostal tradition. A couple of hours before, she had returned from church, thrown herself on her dorm room bed, and burst into tears. This was not a matter of simply adjusting to the climatic or culinary foreignness of New England, nor was it a temporary bout of homesickness one might expect from a pastor's youngest daughter. Rather, what had made life in Boston suddenly seem so unbearable was the fact that, for her, West Indian-style musical worship had hindered the spiritual fulfillment she expected to receive in a Pentecostal setting. Church, she thought, was supposed to be something familiar—something enjoyable. Her parents had recommended that she attend this church; but perhaps even *they* were unaware it would be so "different." Weren't all black Pentecostal churches in the United States more or less the same?

Certainly, it is not only musical style, per se, that led to Lori's disappointment with the church service. Had the heavily accented sermon been more aurally comprehensible to her, she may have been able to endure West Indian styles of singing and clapping. In fact, many Pentecostals consider it tolerable, though highly undesirable, to have very little music in church, provided the biblical teaching is comprehensive and inspired by God. Nevertheless, no Pentecostal service is complete without music. Even "spoken" parts of the worship service, such as the sermon and saints' testimonies, are often surrounded by musical elements, if not themselves sung (Davis 1985). Music in the Pentecostal church is a vehicle for praising and worshiping God and in return receiving the spiritual strength to persevere through life's hardships. In the words of a well-known gospel chorus, "when praises go up, blessings come down." Thus, Lori's inability to "get into the service" and participate comfortably in congregational singing led

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to a painful shock that was more than merely "cultural" for her; it affected her spiritually.

In this essay, I examine musical styles and conceptions embraced by African Americans[2] and the West Indian transmigrants with whom they worship at Emmanuel Temple, an Apostolic Pentecostal church in Brooklyn, New York. My larger project is to critique essentialist notions of the "black church," which deny both intra-group and inter-group diversity that exists among "black" people in America. By "intra-group" diversity, I mean the multiple styles of musical worship employed by U.S.-born blacks. "Inter-group diversity" here refers to the multiple styles that are found among the various groups of black people who, although they see themselves as culturally distinct from each other, all self-identify as "black" in the context of a white American majority. This essay attempts to answer the following questions: How is it that African American and West Indian styles of musical worship are negotiated in Emmanuel Temple's worship services? How is coherence in the worship service maintained despite the presence of seemingly incompatible styles of singing and clapping? And finally, what is the most effective way for a so-called "insider" ethnomusicologist to tackle such questions?

Paying special attention to how my "insider" status impacts my research at Emmanuel Temple, I begin by examining the subject positions from which some writers discuss "black" church music. I use hermeneutic phenomenology as a means of incorporating a dialogic approach to ethnography, while highlighting the personal experiences of African Americans and West Indians in musical worship. Finally, I look historically at Emmanuel Temple's musical development, and call for a re-examination of transnational flows relating to the Caribbeanization of "black" churches in the United States.

Perspectives on the "Black" Church

African American church music has been the subject of a number of ethnomusicological studies since the 1970s.[3] Some scholars have referred to a kind of "black aesthetic" that undergirds the gospel tradition (Williams-Jones 1975; Burnim 1985). Melonee Burnim, who, in the late 1970s, conducted research in Pentecostal churches in Indiana, states that "a well-defined Black aesthetic frames the boundaries of gospel music performance" (Burnim 1985:159–60). She discusses several musical elements that characterize the "black gospel music aesthetic," including distinct vocal textures, body movements, clapping patterns, and rhythmic concepts. While the elements mentioned by Burnim do indeed characterize many black Pentecostal churches in the U.S., an examination of Emmanuel Temple reveals that the story is more complex than the positing of an overarching black aesthetic would seem to suggest. This is particularly the

case in cities like New York, Boston, and Miami, where the category "black" subsumes multiple nationalities, and where congregations exhibit wide-ranging styles of musical worship.[4]

Of the existing research on black church music in the United States, very little is written by scholars who claim membership in the religious community being studied. To my knowledge, William Dargan's dissertation (1983) represents the first musicological study of Pentecostal church music written by a Pentecostal. His goal is

> to illustrate the relative frequency of usage of certain musical forms in gospels [i.e. congregational songs], especially as they appear in connection with various categories of belief. . . . "Categories of belief" are inferred from the language of song texts, definitions and terminology used by informants, and from my own experience of Christian beliefs as I find them operative in . . . holiness churches. (1983:38)

Cheryl Sanders's book, *Saints in Exile,* though not focused on music, provides a thorough insider's perspective on the black Pentecostal church tradition in the United States, arguing convincingly that the Pentecostal experience is "based upon a dialectical, exilic identity of being 'in the world, but not of it.'" Pentecostals, she argues, "are fully aware of their marginalized status, based upon racial and religious differences, within the dominant culture; thus, exile has been offered as an appropriate paradigm for interpreting their experience" (Sanders 1996:123). I think Sanders's notion of "exile" might also be applied to African American churches containing West Indian minorities—not to mention West Indian churches in the U.S.—where it seems her notion of an "exilic existence" would be further enriched. That is, in addition to the racial and religious differences between saints[5] and the larger society, West Indian members of predominantly African American churches are, in a sense, "doubly-exiled" because they are further differentiated by their status as transnational migrants.

Some studies of black church music, while not written by "insiders," attempt to portray black Pentecostal churches in ways that are faithful to the beliefs of those being studied. Rather than treating belief as an analytically irrelevant aspect of the ethnographic context, or using belief solely to frame presentation, Glenn Hinson[6] highlights the importance of Pentecostal belief as a way of deriving meaning:

> Belief provides what church members term the "invisible manuscript," a guide for unfolding the mysteries of the world and unveiling the meaning of feeling. More than just lending coherence to expression and emotion, belief infuses them with a significance that

> transcends the quotidian; in so doing, it offers an alternate model for understanding communicative process and assessing performative responsibility. To step into this interpretive realm, the ethnographer must accept belief on its own terms, adopting a stance of radical objectivity while reframing analysis in the ontological terms of the faithful. (1989:12)

Ray Allen (1987, 1991) explores gospel performance as sacred ritual in his "experience-centered" (1987:240) ethnography of community-based and professional gospel groups. In his detailed study of an Apostolic Pentecostal church in Champaign-Urbana, Larry Ward examines the relationship between Pentecostal music and doctrine, seeking to describe both the congregation's musical activity and the saints' conceptions of musical worship (1997:3).[7]

The studies of Ward (1997) and Burnim (1980, 1985) merit comparison with the present work, not only because they are all ethnomusicological treatments of Pentecostal church music, but also because each of the authors stands in a distinct relation to his or her topic. Ward, a white nonbeliever, is seen as a cultural and religious outsider; Burnim, an African American Methodist, is viewed by her informants as a cultural "insider" and a religious outsider. By contrast, as both a black American[8] and a Pentecostal, I am accepted, despite my academic training, as a cultural *and* religious "insider." To Ward's credit, he devotes a full chapter to a discussion of the awkwardness and tension caused by his outsider status during fieldwork, even describing his own "ethnographic naivete" in presuming he could "quietly observe worship without being actively drawn into the event" (1997:375). While Ward's role as "the unsaved professor" amidst Pentecostal saints presented certain research limitations, the honesty and explicitness with which he makes his subjectivities known lend his ethnography a healthy transparency. This transparency, which I hope to achieve in the present essay, elucidates the complex relation between researcher and study object,[9] and is, I believe, facilitated by a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

Toward a Phenomenology of Pentecostal Church Music

Since the mid-1980s, particularly with the emergence of *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus and Fischer 1986), there has been a renewed interest in issues of representation in ethnographies. Rather than falling prey to strict Self/Other dichotomies, which often portrayed "natives" in an exoticized fashion, only to be distinguished from the rational-minded observer, writers in the late 1980s and 1990s began to rethink the ways in which ethnographies have

portrayed their "objects of study." Ethnomusicologists have also thought about fresh ways of studying, documenting, and representing the world's music-cultures. This "crisis in representation," the discussion of which continued in *After Writing Culture* (James, Hockey, and Dawson 1997), and in the works of writers such as Renato Rosaldo (1993) and Barbara Tedlock (1991), has greatly impacted the ways in which fieldwork is conducted and conceptualized. Tedlock (1991:78) embraces a shift, which actually began in the 1970s, away from "participant observation" toward the "observation of participation" in an effort to dispel the myth that the ethnographer must both become experientially involved in the activities of those being studied, and also keep his or her "cool" in order to remain dispassionately observant. What is more desirable, Tedlock asserts, is that "instead of a choice between writing an ethnographic memoir centering on the Self or a standard monograph centering on the Other, both the Self and Other are presented together within a single narrative ethnography, focused on the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue." Ethnographers, then, "both experience and observe their own and others' coparticipation within the ethnographic encounter" (1991:69).

Some ethnomusicologists (Rice 1994, 1997; Titon 1988, 1997; Friedson 1996)[10] have turned to the phenomenology of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty as a means of moving further away from the philosophical idealism of Alfred Schutz and Thomas Clifton[11] and toward the more concrete aspects of embodied social reality. The work of these ethnomusicologists tends to be more anthropological in methodology, and they seek both to experience and portray the musical and social realms in more holistic terms. "Being-in-the-world," as this compound term is used by Heidegger ([1926] 1962), describes the "equiprimordiality" of humans and the "world" in which we find ourselves. The ethnomusicological application of "being-in-the-world" thus mandates that musical sound be considered inextricably linked to the social and cultural milieu in which it is produced and consumed.

The value of hermeneutic phenomenology to ethnomusicology lies primarily in the former's ability to promote intercultural dialogue in lieu of the ethnocentrism of research that claims to speak authoritatively for some Other group of people.[12] Yet, while I am influenced theoretically by the authors I have cited above, I feel that my status as a cultural and religious "insider" necessitates significant, though perhaps subtle, differences between my use of phenomenology and theirs. Unlike the ethnomusicological studies by Titon, Friedson, and Rice, this essay describes a world of which I have been a part long before I decided to do formal academic research on it. Naturally, this means that the "intersubjective reality," or "interworld," that typically emerges between the emic and the etic, the

West and the non-West, or the religious and the non-religious, is of a different sort. Although "being-in-the-world" is often applied to a particular social or cultural context, the "world" I describe in this essay is, in some aspects, trans-social and transcultural. Because I share the religious beliefs of those whom I am studying, I must necessarily hold, for example, that the Holy Spirit is indeed real and is manifested through music. Furthermore, this manifestation is not subject to an individual's "belief" in it, nor is it limited to the "worldview" of a particular group of people (see Hinson 2000:327–34). In making this assertion, I hope to show that my use of phenomenology is theologically informed, and that my dialogic approach is, therefore, distinct from those which have preceded it.

In discussing her fieldwork in African American religious communities, Judi Moore Latta (2000) notes that one may experience oneself in complex ways. Likewise, my own sense of "being-in-the-world"—the way in which I understand the nature of my existence—is multifaceted. Despite my own church upbringing, Pentecostalism and the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit were largely unknown to me until 1991. It was through my wife Lori's witnessing that I gradually came to embrace the Pentecostal experience. More specifically, I experience myself both as an academic and a spiritual being. Yet since 1991, my "primary discourse"[13] has been that of a practicing Pentecostal. The discourse of academia too often employs what Hinson (1989, 2000) labels "strategies of disbelief,"[14] describing spirit-filled or "anointed" musical worship in Pentecostal churches as "trance" (Conway 1978; McIntyre 1976; Marks 1982; Rouget 1985), "magical possession" (Austin-Broos 1997), or even the result of "psychological frenzy"(Barrett 1997:117). Such facile "explanations" deny the specificity of the Pentecostal experience, substitute a kind of universal stigma, and fly in the face of experiences that I consider no less real than the paper on which this is printed. Many ethnographies resort to a kind of "ontological colonialism," whereby

> supernatural experience is . . . consigned to a reality apart, a realm where the "real" is defined only within the narrow parameters of belief. "That's what they believe," most ethnographers seem to say, "and thus it's real *for them.*" What remains unsaid—but certainly not misunderstood—is the concluding codicil "but not for us, for we can see *beyond* the boundaries of their belief." Thus slips away any guise of ethnographic objectivity, only to be replaced by implicit claims to a fuller knowledge and a more real reality. Accounts of supernatural experience, in turn, get treated as artifacts of belief, interesting for the light they shed on culture, but meaningless as testaments to authentic encounter. (Hinson 2000:330)

Emmanuel Temple (part of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc.) is a church in which creative musical dialogue regularly takes place between African Americans and West Indians. While I engage in a kind of productive distanciation in order to stand at some critical distance from the musical practices of my church, I feel this study is also best understood as a dialogue, not so much between a foreign Self and a native Other, but rather as one between an ethnomusicologist and the Pentecostal church of which he is a member. Yet instead of involving a compromise of my "primary discourse," such a dialectic disrupts the notion of fixed emic or etic perspectives as they relate to my research on Pentecostal musical worship. The hermeneutic phenomenological method is, in some respects, applicable to both "insider" and "outsider" ethnomusicologists. As Rice explains,

> Even so-called "insider" ethnomusicologists, those born into the cultures they study, undergo a productive distanciation necessary to the explanation and critical understanding of their own cultures. . . . [P]roductive distanciation is not only characteristic of outsiders and scholars; individuals operating within tradition continually appropriate their cultural practices, give them new meanings, and create their own sense of "being in the world." (1994:6)

I agree with Peter Reinholdsson, who employs an "interactionist approach to acquiring meaningful knowledge of the world of jazz performance." He cautions that

> Abiding by the insider-outsider dichotomy still present in the emics-etics debate would render an impervious split between subject and object that I cannot approve of in view of my theoretical perspective and epistemological point of departure. Rather, a dialectical and dialogical relationship between the emic and etic perspectives is striven for. . . . And I feel this is necessary in order to construct a meaningful whole in relation to the conceptual models and different parts of my fieldwork material. (1998:78)

My use of the term "insider" (placed in quotation marks) to describe my position vis-à-vis my object of study underscores the irony of doing phenomenological ethnomusicology from "within." Such a theoretical exercise creates a fascinating tension that I choose to exploit by making this study dialogical on several levels simultaneously: it represents a dialogue between me and my church, it re-*presents* the dialogue unfolding between African Americans and West Indians through musical worship, and in yet another sense, the dialogue occurs between me, as a Pentecostal, and the academic community of which I strangely find myself a member.

"This World Is Not My Home"

In 1994, I joined Emmanuel Temple, an eighty-member Pentecostal church located in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, New York. Crown Heights, like Bedford Stuyvesant and East New York, contains a high concentration of West Indian nationalities (Conway and Bigby 1987:77). This cultural diversity is reflected at Emmanuel Temple, where about one-fourth of the active members have migrated from Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, or St. Lucia. Since 1997, Lori and I have worked together as ministers of music, overseeing the choirs and organizing the musical segments of the weekly worship services. In seriously considering whether to make Emmanuel Temple our church home, the style and quality of the music were important factors. Having experienced West Indian-flavored services while attending college in Boston, we were prepared for the possibility that Jamaican, Barbadian, or Trinidadian musical elements would be discernible at Emmanuel Temple. However, our unwavering mutual understanding was that in order for us to stay at Emmanuel Temple, the "downhome" quality of African American Pentecostal music could not be overly influenced by what we felt were the tempering effects of Caribbeanization. Our current position as musical directors grants us the ability to promote melodic and rhythmic conceptions that are ostensibly African American, in contradistinction to songs with a more West Indian flavor. But being ministers of music entails actively *engaging* competing styles of singing and clapping in an effort to create a harmonious and efficacious musical sound—one that works to produce a worship experience that is powerfully meaningful for *all* members of Emmanuel Temple. Both my experience as organist at Emmanuel Temple and the scarcity of research on Caribbean musical influences in black churches in the United States have stimulated my interest in understanding how seemingly incompatible styles of musical worship are negotiated and manage to co-exist within black churches whose congregations are often perceived by outsiders to be homogeneous.

There is a biblical notion stressed in Pentecostal churches that Christians are "travelers" in a strange land: "a peculiar people," "aliens," or "pilgrims" who are simply passing through this life en route to a heavenly home from which they are temporarily distanced.[15] From this perspective, the Church is a body of believers who, like the Israelites of the Old Testament, are striving to reach a Promised Land. The fact that worship services are increasingly being flavored by blacks migrating from diverse cultural and musical settings makes this metaphor even more vibrant for many members of black churches in New York City.

West Indians began migrating to New York City in particularly large numbers after 1965, with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Foner 1987; Bryce-Laporte 1987:104).[16] Anthropologists writing

about the Caribbeanization of New York City have pointed out that since the mid-1960s, political, economic, and cultural arenas have become increasingly influenced by Afro-Caribbean peoples. Constance Sutton writes that New York City is "a Caribbean cross-roads . . . that involves the transposition and production of cultural forms and ideology. In Brooklyn, West Indians take part in a continuous transnational flow of peoples, ideas, practices and ideologies between the Caribbean region and New York City." These transnational flows form what Sutton calls a "transmission belt that reworks and further creolizes Caribbean culture and identities, both in New York and the Caribbean" (1987:19). A similar view is expressed by Benedict Anderson, who suggests that colonists of the "New World" were able to feel connected to the "Old World" because of "their emerging capacity to imagine themselves as communities *parallel* and *comparable* to those in Europe" (Anderson 1991:192; italics in the original).

This notion of "imagined communities" points to a sense of parallelism or simultaneity that enables a group of people to reshape their lives and adapt to a new environment. Both Anderson's study of imagined communities and Sutton's discussion of transnational processes provide a useful theoretical framework for understanding how West Indian styles of singing are remembered and kept alive at Emmanuel Temple, despite the strong presence of competing styles of musical worship. West Indian members of Emmanuel Temple enjoy reminiscing about their families and churches "back home," and most of them make regular trips to the islands to visit loved ones. These trips, along with frequent telephone conversations with kinfolk living in the Caribbean, play a vital role in maintaining connections to communities in the West Indies. Furthermore, their membership in Brooklyn's larger West Indian community and fellowship with other West Indian Pentecostals help to reinforce musical practices that might otherwise be stifled beneath the voices of the African American majority at Emmanuel Temple.

"We Sing It This Way": Understanding Stylistic Differences

Because of the participatory nature of musical activity in Pentecostal churches, from the organ bench where I usually sit it is easy to observe the various ways African Americans and West Indians engage in musical worship. From 1996 to 1999, Emmanuel Temple was without drums, which had tended to stabilize and regulate the rhythmic aspect of songs that were sung.[17] Having no drums means that the rhythmic pulse, "groove," and intensity must be collectively generated by congregational singing, hand-clapping and tambourine playing. As a result, individual and group rhythmic conceptions are brought into stronger relief, as church members strive to "make a joyful noise" in such a way that the worship experience will be spiritually rewarding.

Some of the West Indians I interviewed indicate a preference for strophic hymns, and place comparatively high value on lyrical content. One Barbadian woman eloquently summed up her position: "I don't like the one-liners." Note the difference between the two song-texts provided below. Example 1a shows a "one-liner," wherein intensity is generated through repetitions of the text and through the use of a constant, driving rhythm. Example 1b, on the other hand, shows a more traditional versed hymn, wherein spiritual fulfillment derives mostly from meditating on the meaning of the lyrics. These versed hymns are often sung at a slower tempo and with more emphasis on "strong" beats one and three. Most West Indian members are quick to point out the waste of time and energy exerted by African Americans content on clapping on beats two and four for several minutes while incessantly repeating words that, from a West Indian perspective, appear to have very little actual substance. On the other hand, to many African American worshipers, Caribbean melodies seem rather "strict" or "old-fashioned," perhaps because they do not as easily lend themselves to the types of improvisatory embellishment that many African Americans have absorbed from sacred and secular contemporary sounds. What complicates this further is that there exists a generation gap between West Indian migrants and their U.S.-born children. West Indian youth at Emmanuel Temple are strongly influenced by contemporary R&B, soul music, and hip-hop and have developed musical tastes unlike those of their parents. Consequently, both the African American and West Indian youth of Emmanuel Temple share an attraction to African American musical forms. With the rise of hip-hop and the astounding success of gospel artists such as Kirk Franklin, Emmanuel Temple has experienced a slight pressure to "go contemporary," particularly in recent years as teens have become increasingly involved in the musical worship of the church.

To African Americans at Emmanuel Temple, West Indian-style church singing is often perceived as boring and unsatisfying, not so much because of the preponderance of the lyrics that are sung, but because the accompanying rhythmic "groove" is less driving, and consequently, does not seem to support the kinds of "shouting" (i.e., "holy dancing") through which many African American members derive an emotional and spiritual release. Thus, the question of how much emphasis to place on the words of a song vis-à-vis its rhythmic pulse is a very real one at Emmanuel Temple. It would seem that the answer to this question depends, to a considerable extent, on one's musical and cultural background.

One of the most discernible differences between African American and West Indian musical styles at Emmanuel Temple concerns the relation between vocal style and rhythmic conception. For example, Emmanuel Temple's African American worshipers express a preference for songs

Example 1a: A "one-liner."

Leader: *What's the matter with Jesus?*
Congregation: *He's all right!*
Leader: *What's the matter with Jesus?*
Congregation: *He's all right!*
Leader: *He's all right!*
Congregation: *He's all right!*
Leader: *He's all right!*
Congregation: *He's all right!*
. . . etc., etc. . . .

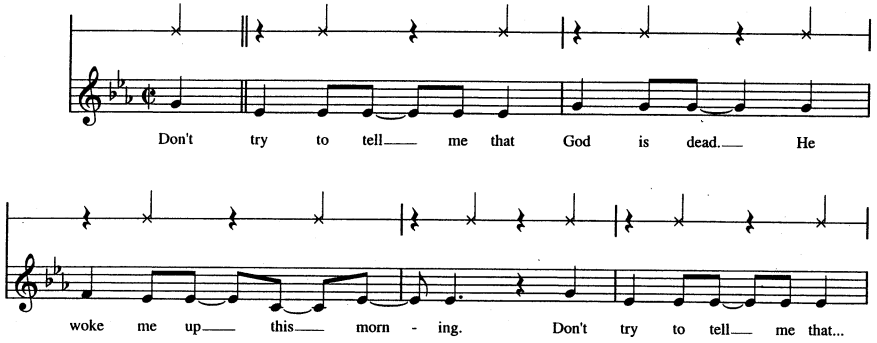
Example 1b: A versed hymn.

Verse:
I heard an old, old story
'Bout a Savior came from glory.
How He gave His life on Calvary
To save a wretch like me.
I heard about His groaning,
Of His precious blood's atoning.
Then I repented of my sins
And won the victory.

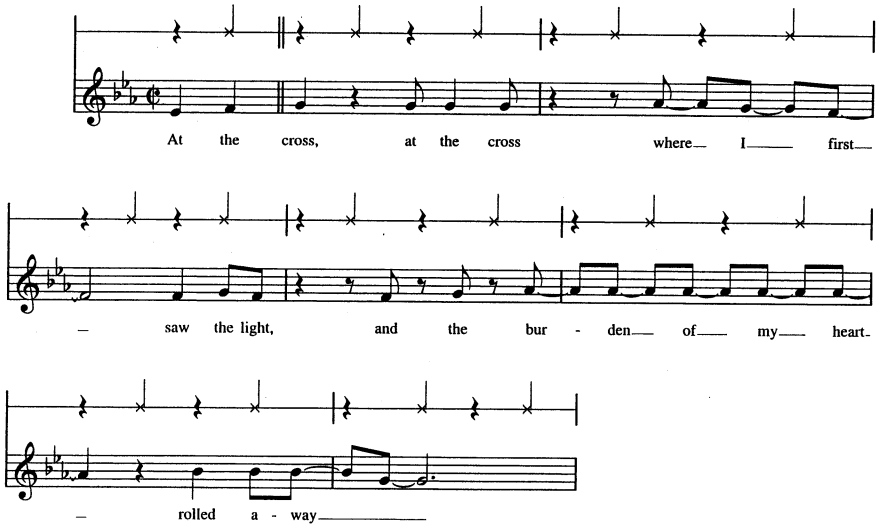
Chorus:
Victory in Jesus, my savior forever
He bought me and He sought me
With His redeeming blood.
He loved me 'ere I knew Him
And all my love is due Him.
He plunged me to victory
Beneath the cleansing flood.

with a more syncopated melodic line. These songs include not only "one-liners" but also "gospelized hymns," such as "At the Cross," which lend themselves well to the type of two-and-four hand clapping pattern to which African Americans gravitate more strongly than West Indians. It is somewhat remarkable that the two-and-four clapping is also done by West Indian singers; yet it appears to have a different musical function. In a rendition of "Don't Try to Tell Me that God is Dead" by a Jamaican woman, "Ruby," the hand-clapping has an anchoring effect; it operates against a vocal rhythm that is similar to the five-note rhythm common in many parts of the Caribbean (♩ ♪ ♩ ♪ ♩). The accented lyrics of the melody line ("don't," "try," and "that") correspond to what Hopkin refers to as one of the "un-American rhythms [that] come about most often when three syllables occur in the space of two counts and are realized as | ♩. ♪ ♩ ♩ | instead of the more European | ♩ ♩ ♩ | or | ♩ ♩ ♩ |" (1978:36). By contrast, in "At the Cross," the hand-clapping seems to move the pulse forward, working against a syncopated melody line with which it rarely coincides (exx. 2 and 3).

Example 2: "Don't Try to Tell Me that God is Dead"
(x = hand claps)



Example 3: "At the Cross"
(x = hand claps)



Jazz and other African American musical forms may certainly have played a more prominent role in shaping the rhythmic conceptions of African American worshipers at Emmanuel Temple. In "Don't Try to Tell Me that God is Dead," I believe Ruby, who has lived in the United States for twenty-four years, may have blended African American and West

Indian musical conceptions by unknowingly superimposing what she refers to as a "West Indian song" over the two-and-four clapping pattern, which serves as a kind of rhythmic template for most of the musical activity at Emmanuel Temple.[18] Although in an interview Ruby described herself as "not a typical Jamaican," during a Sunday afternoon testimony service on that same day, she proceeded to lead "Don't Try to Tell Me that God is Dead," a song she later told me she learned as a child from her grandmother who "used to sing it back in Jamaica." On the one hand, one would expect her to be "Americanized," having lived in the United States for over two decades; on the other hand, her choice of song might be seen as an expression of Jamaican cultural identity.

Experienced African American singers would likely view the two-and-four clapping pattern as rhythmically dissonant with Ruby's West Indian vocal melody, because, in Hopkin's view, this melody is based on a rhythmic pattern "quite foreign to any songwriter in the American-European tradition" (1978:36). Although Hopkin sets out to contrast West Indian and white American styles of Pentecostal music, similar differences in melodic rhythm also exist between West Indians and African Americans at Emmanuel Temple. When I asked Elder Ray Johnson, one of the African American ministers at Emmanuel Temple, about the nature of these stylistic differences, he observed that "their worship—it's, I guess, it's . . . similar but different. It's similar in the way that the Spirit moves, but different in that the songs that they sing are different. The accent and the way they sing them, and the tone or whatever, it's different." Elder Johnson, who had recently visited his in-laws in Barbados, described West Indian rhythm as "some kind of islander beat—like everything they do is that kind of calypso beat" (Johnson 1999). While Johnson saw West Indian-style musical worship as "different," particularly from the musical style he heard growing up in South Carolina, he also noted an important similarity in that the "move of the Spirit" had still taken place. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that, strictly speaking, Pentecostal doctrine does not place stylistic restrictions on music in the worship service, because musical style varies according to cultural background. Nonetheless, it is also true, as Lori's experience in Boston reveals, that the cultural and spiritual realms may sometimes intersect, particularly in an individual's worship experience. This is so because, as corporeal human beings, our emotions and dispositions become intimately involved in the physical act of charismatic worship, even as we strive to transcend the earthly realm in order to experience the joy and power of the Holy Spirit.

Songs like "Don't Try to Tell Me that God is Dead" serve as vehicles for "coming in one's own way" to lead testimony service. When a congregant at Emmanuel Temple is asked by another to "come in her own way," this

generally means that she is free to sing or testify in whatever manner she feels led by God. While certain norms and traditions mark the boundaries of what is considered musically appropriate for testimony service, these boundaries have a fluid quality that promotes expressive diversity and allows musical creativity to flourish. For Ruby, "Don't Try to Tell Me that God is Dead" was a personal expression about the reality of God in her life. Thus, for Pentecostal worshipers who "come in their own way," the freedom to put a personal stamp on musical worship during testimony service, while operating within the bounds of what might be called "testimony service etiquette," is crucial to a successful worship experience—one that maintains the "spontaneity of the Spirit."[19]

Musical worship, then, for both West Indians and African Americans, becomes the means through which each cultural group chooses to distinguish itself from the other in some contexts, while still maintaining common status as members of Emmanuel Temple and the larger black community in America. In discussing the complex identity constructions of transmigrants, one church member at Emmanuel Temple insists, "I still hold on to my Barbadian identity . . . I make an effort to always be Barbadian. What I do, I take the best of both worlds. I take the best of what New York has to offer—to make me a better person" (interview, April 4, 1999). Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow argue that West Indians immigrating to New York bring with them

> a notion not of likeness to Americans, Black or White, but of their distinctness—as Barbadians, Jamaicans, Grenadians. . . . They arrive with some foreknowledge of White attitudes of racial superiority and with experiences with problems of racial inequality. Both the problems and the achievements of West Indians are viewed by the dominant White majority, and come to be viewed by West Indians themselves in the context of Black America. (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1987:103)

What the authors describe as a "West Indian racial consciousness" emerges largely as a result of shared experiences with other non-White immigrants, and in response to being lumped together into the same category as African Americans. This West Indian racial consciousness not only thrives in the macrocosm of New York City, but it is also manifested in the microcosm of Emmanuel Temple, where West Indian ethnic identities are often asserted through musical worship.

Emmanuel Temple: A History of Negotiating Styles of Musical Worship

In order to appreciate more fully how Emmanuel Temple has been able to absorb West Indian musical styles, it may be helpful to locate the church within the broader history of gospel music in America. According to Michael Harris (1992), the emergence of the style now known as traditional "gospel" stems from events related to the Great Migration of blacks from the rural South to the urban North, which began after World War I. When Thomas Dorsey, a blues pianist from Georgia, settled in Chicago around 1918, he brought with him his distinct style of gospel blues, which began to transform the nature of musical worship in northern and midwestern churches. By 1945, the seeds planted by Dorsey and watered by the increasing number of Pentecostal churches in cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, and Cincinnati began to yield fruit farther east as blacks migrated to New York City, bringing with them their style of gospel music (Boyer and Yearwood 1995:57, 152). The birth of Emmanuel Temple, founded in the late 1940s by a woman from Ohio (Seals 1999), came about as a result of these migratory trends.

Through the 1950s, Dorsey's blues-influenced gospel music and other secular genres continued to influence Pentecostal musical worship in New York City, even as migrants poured in from the South. One such migrant was T. L. Seals, the current pastor of Emmanuel Temple. He first came to the church as a piano player in 1957 and recalls that the music sounded "more gospel," as opposed to the stricter, less improvisational style of his hometown church in Mount Bayou, Mississippi. Rather than relying on a hymnal, Seals recalls, "I had to get used to playing by ear, in whatever key they started singing in." By adapting his technique of playing to fit the Emmanuel Temple style of the late 1950s, Seals began developing the self-described "old school" style of playing he still employs. At age 72, Pastor Seals still frequently plays piano during Sunday services. This allows for an intriguing blend of musical styles: his more "traditional" gospel piano style with my own more jazz-influenced organ playing. It is nearly impossible to overemphasize the crucial role Pastor Seals has played over the past forty years in shaping the musical worship at Emmanuel Temple. Much of my own training has involved adapting to the tempos and tonalities he establishes during services. Although over the years Pastor Seals has partially adjusted to musical elements brought in by the influx of younger, more contemporary-minded congregants, he maintains a great respect for tradition and seeks to instill this respect in members of Emmanuel Temple. In so doing, I believe he creates a musical atmosphere that welcomes West Indian members. Pastor Seals strives to temper the "one-liners," which are especially appreciated by the African American youth, with a healthy dose of versed hymns, which the West Indians tend to favor.[20] Pastor Seals also encourages praise-and-worship leaders to use the hymnal, a practice that is becoming less popular among younger Pentecostal saints, but is still widely embraced by West Indian members of the church. In this way, the distinctions between African American and West Indian styles of musical

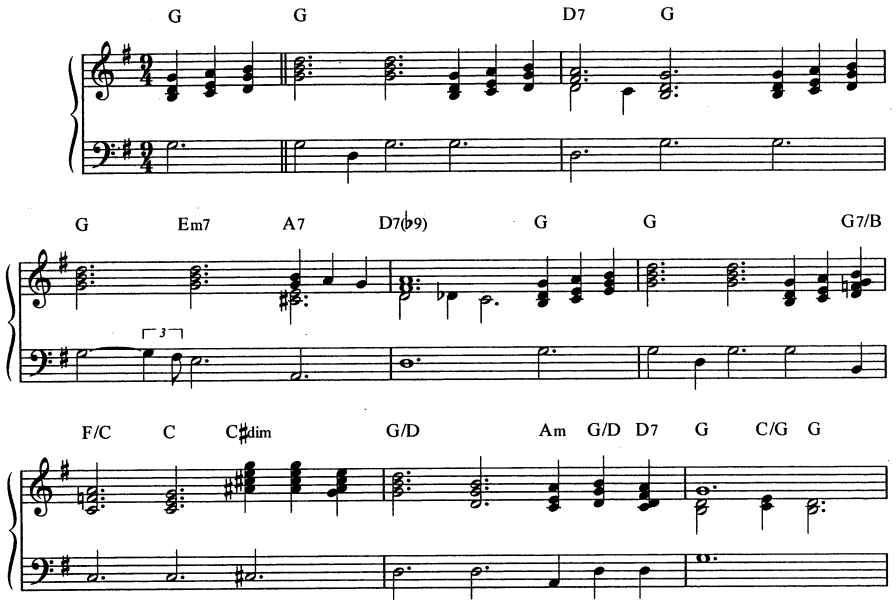
worship intersect with the generational differences between younger and older saints at Emmanuel Temple. What this also means is that African Americans and West Indians are able to voice their stylistic preferences in terms of how relatively older styles of gospel differ from newer ones. As the influence of newer styles is tempered by a healthy respect for what is perceived to be more traditional, a creative space emerges wherein African American and West Indian musical differences are negotiated and coherence in the worship service is maintained. In Dargan's study of music in the New Born Churches of God and True Holiness, Inc., he notes only a small amount of interaction between West Indians and African Americans.

> Although Jamaican choruses are warmly appreciated when they are sung at New Born, they are only performed infrequently. Musicians who are accustomed to accompanying gospels in the styles familiar to Black Americans have adapted well to the rhythmic and melodic nuances of these songs. However, since Jamaicans constitute a small and recent element in the congregation, no real dynamics of borrowing or cross-influence have been observed between the two styles. (1983:66)

At Emmanuel Temple, however, West Indian styles of music worship are felt in influential ways. Both West Indian and African American styles of singing and clapping continue to be heard, and surface as a valued component of the church's overall musical style.

One of the challenges of serving as minister of music at Emmanuel Temple has been to learn to shift between older and newer styles of playing hymns. This ability to shift between styles proves most helpful in accompanying West Indian singers who will often feel more "at home" musically if I maintain a fairly strict allegiance to the straightforward rhythmic and harmonic scheme provided in the hymnal. Some degree of improvisation and variation is always present (even Pastor Seals does not play hymns exactly as they are notated), but depending on who is singing a song, the piano or organ accompaniment may vary greatly. The transcriptions below (exx. 4 and 5) illustrate notably different harmonic conceptions of the hymn "I Must Tell Jesus," both of which I employ at Emmanuel Temple. Example 4 depicts a fairly predictable harmonic scheme that is not far removed from the traditional version found in many church hymnals. It also approximates the style Pastor Seals would likely employ, while being amenable to the straightforward melodic delivery of West Indians at Emmanuel Temple. Hopkin comments on accompaniment style in West Indian Pentecostal churches, stating that "the accompaniments are very

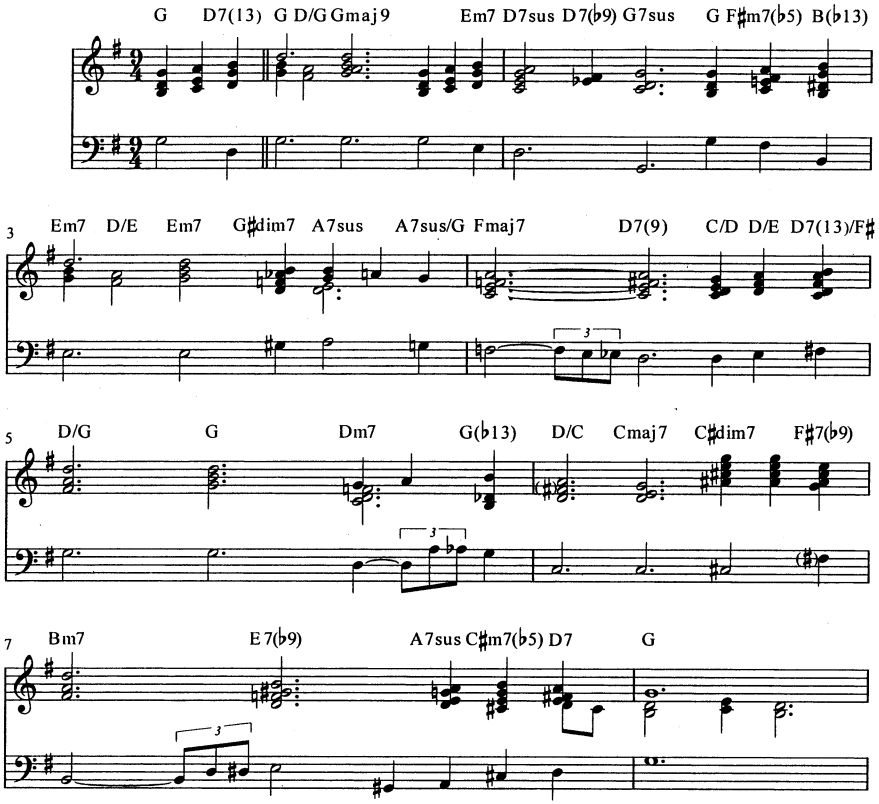
Example 4: "I Must Tell Jesus"



similar for all songs, since they rarely do more than reinforce the basic chords and rhythm of the hymn . . . Bass players stick, with only occasional variation, to triadic patterns or alterations [sic] between the root and fifth of the chord in quarter notes" (1978:38).

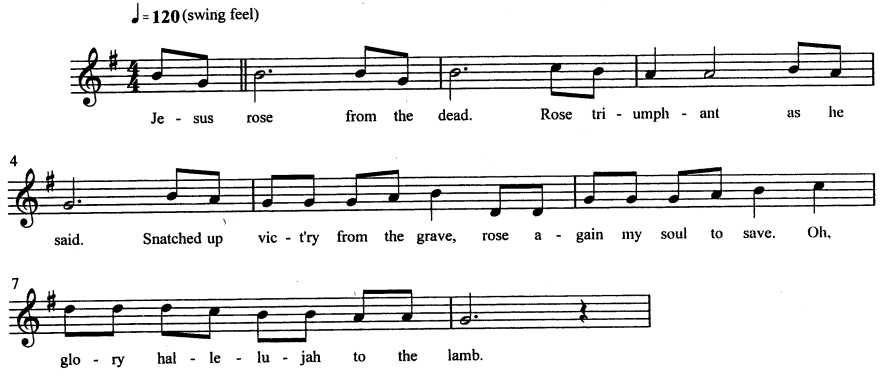
The melodic embellishments of African Americans at Emmanuel Temple sometimes give room for a more harmonically adventurous accompaniment. Example 5, for example, shows the denser harmonic progression I tend to use most often when accompanying African American singers whom I trust are comfortable with more contemporary-sounding gospel harmonies. The minor "ii–V–i" progression ($F\sharp^{\varnothing}$ to $B\flat^{13}$) in m. 2, resolving to the E-minor chord in m. 3, is a very common substitution and lends a modern jazz flavor to traditional hymns. Likewise, in m. 4, I resolve deceptively to an F-major chord before playing the normal V^7 on beat 4. Such harmonic choices represent my way of exercising creativity in the context of musical worship, while drawing on my jazz background to add color to a traditional hymn. The differences between examples 4 and 5 are thus emblematic of the ways in which the musical preferences of African Americans and West Indians become manifest even in the style of organ (or keyboard) accompaniment.

Example 5: "I Must Tell Jesus"

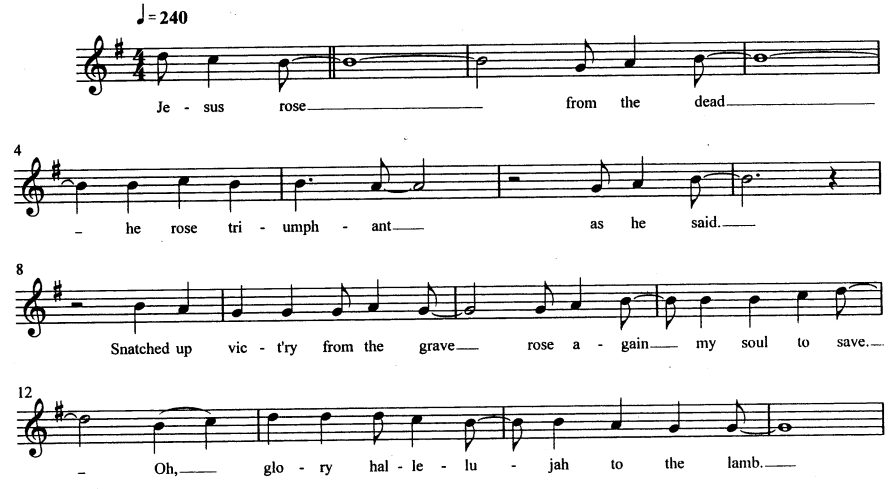


Examples 2 and 3 have already provided a glimpse of how West Indian and African American rhythmic conceptions differ at Emmanuel Temple. But West Indian songs such as "Don't Try to Tell Me that God is Dead," which imply the five-note Caribbean *cinquillo* rhythm, are not frequently rendered at Emmanuel Temple. Rather, the different rhythmic conceptions of Emmanuel Temple's worshipers most often surface during the singing of songs more closely identified as part of the United States gospel church heritage. By examining two renditions of the same hymn, it may be easier to see how these different rhythmic conceptions are made explicit on a regular basis. Examples 6a and 6b depict the chorus of "Death Has No Terror" as sung by a West Indian woman (age 50) and by an African American woman (age 30), respectively. In example 6a, the eighth

Example 6a: "Death Hath No Terror"



Example 6b: "Death Hath No Terror"



notes are "swung" slightly and the downbeat of each measure is often emphasized. In contrast, example 6b features several anticipations of beat 1, with only three notes falling directly on the downbeat (mm. 5, 9, and 13). Such anticipations are easily supported by a walking bass line, which I typically play on the organ, and exemplify what the African American singer referred to as "that Michigan vibe"; when the hymn was sung in this manner,

it was highly reminiscent of the style she had heard growing up in Flint, Michigan, during the 1970s and '80s. Such geographical associations are intriguing and, perhaps, not at all surprising, considering the ways in which gospel music styles often emanated historically from midwestern cities such as Detroit and Chicago.

The West Indian singer of example 6a, likewise, noted that "Death Has No Terror" was a song she had grown up singing in church since childhood. In April 1999, during an Easter Sunday morning service, she sang the hymn accompanied by me on piano. Playing in the older style I learned from Pastor Seals, I resisted the urge to add substitute dominant-seventh chords, and instead, utilized mostly triadic voicings with limited bass line movement. Rhythmically, beats one and three were emphasized over beats two and four. By purposely playing piano in this manner, I created a rhythmic and harmonic backdrop that was compatible with the West Indian singing style with which she was most comfortable.

Conclusion

I contend that the cultural diversity of Emmanuel Temple necessitates a more comprehensive ethnomusicological inquiry into how distinct styles of musical worship are negotiated in black churches too often assumed to be homogeneous. A great deal of past research (e.g., Frazier 1964; Lincoln 1974; Burnim 1985) has set out to emphasize that the music of the black church is guided by a complex, internally coherent system of organizational principles. While these conscientious scholars have provided a necessary counteraction to studies that disparage black church music,[21] it appears that Caribbean influences on black churches in the United States have yet to be seriously studied. I suggest that the time has come for more proactive ethnomusicological research that addresses the impact of transnationalism on black Pentecostal churches in the United States. By examining the overlapping communities and identities produced by complex transnational networks of people and expressive cultures, the richness and vitality of black Pentecostal music may be more fully realized.

As more "insider" ethnomusicologists begin to write about their own musical traditions, it is clear that much existing research will be reexamined, called into question, and improved upon. My hope is that this study provides a fresh look at black Pentecostal church music and more clearly situates previous ethnomusicologists (including myself) in relation to their objects of study. I have, by no means, completely rejected traditional methods of ethnomusicology. Transcriptions, for example, serve to highlight the stylistic differences between African Americans and West Indians at Emmanuel Temple, and show how these differences articulate along both cultural and generational lines. More importantly, however, I want to

stress that while musical worship in Pentecostal churches often involves a transformation of musical sound into a divinely-inspired tool for empowerment, it is yet at the mundane level of musical sound that the key to a meaningful worship experience is *initially* grasped. If the unfamiliar style of a song moves one too far from "home"—in an aural sense—one's emotional and spiritual involvement in a worship service may be hindered. It is more than a matter of satisfying aesthetic desires, because in order to be fulfilled spiritually, musical foreignness must sometimes be overcome. The success of a Pentecostal church can be said to hinge on its ability to get "on one accord" and create an atmosphere conducive to the felt presence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this is precisely what is at stake in efforts to achieve musical coherence and to negotiate seemingly incompatible styles of musical worship.

Notes

1. I wish to thank a number of professors who have given unselfishly of their time and energy in helping me to develop my thought. This study began during a research seminar led by Professor Adelaida Reyes, whose graduate seminar "Music and Migration" at New York University in spring 1999 was particularly illuminating and beneficial to me at the time I began this study. Gage Averill and Mercedes Dujunco, my ethnomusicology professors in the NYU Department of Music, have offered insightful commentary as this project and many others have developed. The Biblical teachings of Suffragan Bishop Edward C. Roberts have profoundly shaped my understanding of Pentecostalism and strengthened my grasp of the Apostolic doctrine. I wish also to thank Kyra Gaunt, Andrew Weintraub, Judi Moore Latta, Connie Sutton, and Mellonee Burnim for supporting my work and providing invaluable suggestions as to how to improve upon it.

2. In this essay, the term "African American" means of or relating to black people born in the United States of America.

3. See, for example, Boyer (1973), Lincoln (1974), Williams (1974), Dargan (1983), Burnim (1980, 1985), Stone (1985), Titon (1988), Harris (1992), Ward (1997), and Hinson (2000).

4. Melonee Burnim (1980) conducted fieldwork at Mercy Mission Apostolic Church in Bloomington, Indiana, and Grace Apostolic Church in Indianapolis from 1976 to 1979. Perhaps because of the geographical locale in which she did her research, West Indian influences were not as discernible as they would have been in New York City.

5. In Apostolic Pentecostal churches like Emmanuel Temple, the term "saint" (which means "holy") is used to denote church members who are "set apart," by virtue of having repented from sin, being baptized in the name of Jesus, and being filled with the Holy Spirit. The infilling of the Holy Spirit is evidenced by speaking in other tongues, as occurred on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, King James Version Bible).

6. Glenn Hinson focuses not on "gospel music, per se, but rather the ideational and performative contexts in which such music occurs" (1989:6).

7. See Ward (1997:13–21) for an extensive review of research conducted within the past thirty years on African American religious music.

8. I have chosen the term "black American," rather than "African American," as a means of including both U.S. and West Indian-born blacks at Emmanuel Temple. As an "African American," my status as a cultural "insider" at Emmanuel Temple is problematic, but both African Americans and West Indians self-identify as "black" in relation to the larger society. Moreover, many of the West Indians have lived in the U.S. for twenty years or more. While in many cases West Indian saints have held on to the styles of musical worship they learned during childhood, some West Indians have also stated that they are, for the most part, "Americanized."

9. One of the most salient issues in the history of ethnomusicology has been defining the discipline's proper object of study. To what extent is musical sound the object of analysis? Does it suffice to say that ethnomusicology is the study of musical sound in relation to its cultural context (Nettl 1983:131–43)? Or perhaps the object of study should be musical experience—the *processes* of music participation. Some scholars have found temporary relief from this dilemma by producing what Harris Berger labels "text-context" sandwiches (1999:4). Such approaches include both ethnographic description of a music-culture and musical transcription and analysis, but fail to illuminate adequately the dynamic relation between musical sound and the experience of individual participants. Others have called for a much-needed recognition of the neglected participatory, performative, and processual aspects of musical sound production (Keil and Feld 1994). Nevertheless, the question of what properly defines the ethnomusicological object of study is far from resolved.

10. Rice (1994), Friedson (1996), and Titon (1988, 1997) adopt phenomenological methodologies as a means of getting to the heart of Bulgarian music performance, Timbuku musical healing in Malawi, and Appalachian Baptist church services, respectively. For these writers, doing phenomenology is not simply a matter of describing how people experience musical sound or even writing reflexive ethnography. They do accomplish this, but they also deploy the phenomenological method as a means of uncovering a "world" (in the Heideggerian sense) in which musical sound is existentially constitutive of a larger network of social relations that fundamentally shapes those who actively partake in it.

11. The musicological studies of Alfred Schutz (1964) and Thomas Clifton (1983), which were largely indebted to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, helped represent a turn away from the printed score to a focus on the ways in which music is structured in consciousness when people make music together. Alfred Schutz speaks of "making music together" via a "mutual tuning-in relationship," but neglects the impact of cultural context on the ways in which music is performed, perceived, and composed. He thus ascribes a universal quality to music-making processes that are merely specific to his own (Western) culture.

12. For phenomenologically-minded ethnomusicologists, "being-in-the-world" involves an interactive fieldwork methodology whereby the researcher becomes immersed in the "world" (sociocultural context) of a group of people. Through subjective experience of how musical activity relates to this particular cultural

world, the researcher strives not so much to present a completely objective, unbiased, and therefore authoritative account of, say, "Bulgarian" musical experience (Rice 1994), as though this were possible. Rather, what gets described amounts to the "intersubjective reality" that emerges dialogically between the ethnomusicologist and the study object. In some ways, Rice's phenomenological method resembles my own when he states that

> Certainly personal experience is central to this book's narrative, not simply to establish the "I was there" of traditional ethnography, but as the place where understanding begins and in some sense remains located. However, I am not . . . content with a complete personalization of research, but seek understanding "in hermeneutic terms as a dialectic of experience and interpretation" (Clifford 1988:34). In this dialectic, Clifford's "unruly experience" is transformed into a "text" through a process by which "unwritten behavior, speech, beliefs, oral tradition, and ritual come to be marked as a corpus, a potentially meaningful ensemble separated out from an immediate discursive or performative situation." . . . The tactic of locating interpretation in the interaction between researcher and his "text" authorizes statements of meaning that are not limited to those given by so-called informants and yet have a provisional, nonexclusive claim to truth. (1994:11–12)

13. In his discussion of "primary" and "secondary" discourses, Stephen Barrett (1997) draws on the work of James Paul Gee (1990). Religious students, Barrett claims, are often presented with "a seeming either-or-edness," when "discourses are construed or construe themselves as mutually exclusive" (Barrett 1997:26). While Barrett strives to emphasize the existing continuities between academic and religious discourses, he notes that

> An individual's primary discourse communities—for instance, those of home, neighborhood, and, for some, church, mosque or temple—may be at odds with her or his secondary discourse communities, those of school, workplace, loan office, local government, among innumerable others. And it's not as if these discourse communities stand on equal footing. (24)

14. Hufford (1982a, 1982b, 1983), whom Hinson cites (2000:374), provides an in-depth discussion of strategies of disbelief.

15. See, for example, Exodus 3:7–18, I Peter 2:9–11, Psalms 39:12, Hebrews 11:8–16, and Jeremiah 29:1–10, King James Version Bible.

16. Foner (1987) provides a comprehensive historical account of West Indian migration to the United States:

> West Indians are not newcomers to American shores. About 2 percent (or one million) of the aliens who entered the United States between 1830 and 1970 were West Indian (Bryce-Laporte, R. S., "Black Immigrants: The Experience of Invisibility and Inequality," *Journal of Black Studies,* (1)3:29–56. Sept. (1972).) A substantial part of this immigration occurred early in this century so that by the 1920s approximately one-fourth of the Black population of Harlem was West Indian (Sowell, T. *Essays and Data on American Ethnic Groups.* The Urban Institute: Washington, D.C. (1978)). The 1924 Immigration Act limited West Indian immigration, however, and even more serious cutbacks were effected by the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act. Nevertheless, mass emigration to the

United States was again possible after the passage of the 1965 immigration legislation, and the number of West Indian immigrants more than tripled from fiscal year 1966 to 1967 (Dominguez, V. *From Neighbor to Stranger: The Dilemma of Caribbean Peoples in the United States.* New Haven: Yale University, Antilles Research Program, Occasional Papers No. 5 (1975).) Between 1967 and 1971 about 127,000 West Indian immigrants legally emigrated to the United States (Palmer, R. W., "A Decade of West Indian Migration to the United States, 1962–1972: An Economic Analysis," *Social and Economic Studies,* 23:571–588. (1974). It is impossible to say how many West Indians are United States residents today because so many are not legally registered. Nor are published figures available on the presumably rather sizeable number of second generation West Indians.

17. In September 1999, the church purchased a drum kit and an electronic keyboard, both of which have added a more contemporary sound to Emmanuel Temple's musical activity.

18. I have yet to find a recording of the song "Don't Try to Tell Me that God is Dead" or hear the song performed in a Jamaican church in order to hear how clapping is done (if at all). However, recently, after a Sunday evening service, a group of three West Indian members of Emmanuel Temple (two Jamaicans and one St. Lucian) sang the song for me. They did not clap while doing so, but their body movements suggested rhythmic stresses coinciding not with beats two and four, but with the accents of the melody.

19. The phrase "spontaneity of the Spirit" is taken from Mother Betty J. Roberts of Calvary Christian Church of the Apostolic Faith, Charlotte, North Carolina. This term succinctly describes the spiritual atmosphere sought by most Pentecostals in worship, as well as the necessary attitude of submission to the will of the Holy Spirit, which is crucial to the success of any worship experience.

20. Even at Emmanuel Temple, it would be a gross oversimplication and exaggeration to say that African Americans prefer "one-liners" and West Indians prefer versed hymns. Depending on the precise moment within the worship service, the prevailing spiritual atmosphere, and one's personal disposition during worship, a member of either song type may be desired. Because one-liners and versed hymns may be sung in different ways, it is probably safer to say that musical style, rather than genre, can be associated with African American or West Indian status.

21. Burnim's defense of gospel music is worth noting. She asserts that "gospel music springs from a concrete conceptual base. It is not, as many in the past have contended, the mere feeble attempt by the "untrained" and "unlearned" to express themselves by whatever haphazard means possible. The principles at the foundation of gospel music form the cornerstone of all aspects of Black culture" (1985:160).

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