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SERMONS IN SONG:
RICHARD SMALLWOOD, THE VAMP, AND THE GOSPEL IMAGINATION

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To my family (Dorothy, Jesse, Brianna, and Lula)
and in memory of Dr. Raymond Gavins

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Abstract

This dissertation develops an analytical paradigm for African American gospel music. By examining the music of Richard Smallwood in relation to the work of sixteen other gospel composers, this project reveals the complex of belief, performance, and reception that I term "the gospel imagination." This interdisciplinary study braids musical analysis—focused on issues of form, repetition, rhythm, meter, and groove—together with discourses from cognitive theory, anthropology, phenomenology, theology, and homiletics. Over the course of the dissertation's four chapters, I use gospel's relationship to black preaching and ecstatic movement to construct a formal theory of the gospel vamp. I argue that the vamp shares the formal logic of "tuning up" with musical styles of black preaching, and that the vamp functions as a sonic sacrament because of its persistent connection to holy dancing. The vamp's emergence through the admixture of repetition and intensification enables performers, musicians, and auditors to use this music to process into the presence of God. Gospel music's ritual power is realized in the vamp, for it is through the vamp that gospel compositions become sermons in song.

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Prologue

"Sermons in Songs: Richard Smallwood, the Vamp, and the Gospel Imagination" develops an analytical paradigm for African American gospel music. By placing Richard Smallwood's oeuvre in conversation with the work of sixteen other gospel composers, this project elucidates the complex of belief, performance, and reception that I term "the gospel imagination." Braiding music analysis together with resources from anthropology, cognitive theory, homiletics, phenomenology, and theology, this dissertation illustrates how the gospel imagination uses sound and movement to mediate the experience of divine presence. Nowhere is the divine more present than in the gospel vamp, the repetitive musical cycle that accrues sacred significance in this tradition. Over the course of four chapters, the dissertation constructs a formal theory of the gospel vamp.

Chapter 1 sets out a background for the dissertation by introducing the music it will study, surveying the relevant literature, and presenting a fuller account of the argument it will advance. The chapter begins with an analytical vignette from Richard Smallwood's "It's Working" that opens into an examination of the meanings produced through the performance of gospel vamps. Surveying literature drawn from studies of genre, sacred music, theology, and phenomenology, I will propose that the combination of sound and belief known as gospel music exceeds the limits of categories like genre, performance, and practice, revealing a system of belief, performance, and reception that I call the gospel imagination. Next, I will offer a historical and musical introduction to Richard Smallwood, using an account of his career and a close reading of "Anthem of Praise" to illustrate the relationship between vamps and the gospel imagination.

Chapter 2 proposes that both gospel music and musical forms of black preaching are shaped by the practice of "tuning up," which for adherents of many African American Christian

traditions refers to a preacher's shift from speech into song near the end of a sermon. However, I expand the commonsense conception of "tuning up" in two ways. First, I argue that "tuning up" is not simply a homiletical strategy but is instead the sonic manifestation of "the gospel imagination." Second, I propose that "tuning up" is also the formal logic for gospel performance, and thus provides an illuminating analytic for form in gospel music. After analyzing the live recording performance of Richard Smallwood's song "Healing," showing how this piece uses sound to impart belief, I engage scholarship drawn from homiletics, ritual theory, phenomenology, and musicology, using this literature to outline the shared context of gospel music and black sermons. I then analyze excerpts from four sermons that exemplify the practice of "tuning up." I show that this way of preaching acquires its power by facilitating a communal experience of transcendence, and that this experiential imperative is shared with gospel music. After suggesting how this analytic theorizes what we have already observed in Richard Smallwood's "Healing," I offer analytical vignettes from three other compositions, demonstrating how the performance of each achieves its effect by "tuning up."

Where chapter 2 engages the vamp through its relationship to musical modes of black preaching, chapter 3 examines the vamp through its bond to the ecstatic movements called "shouting." I will argue that the gospel vamp functions as a sonic sacrament, a medium through which believers experience the presence of God in their bodies. The chapter begins with an analytical essay that examines the interpenetration of collectivity and corporeality in the live recording of Richard Smallwood's "Same God." I then argue that in the gospel imagination, the movements known as "shouting" blend with musical materials giving rise to "shouting music." But I argue for an expansive notion of these practices, conceptualizing "shouting" as a category for any movement gospel music elicits, and characterizing the gospel vamp as a form of shouting

music. Analyses of Lashun Pace's "In Everything Give Thanks," Glenn Burleigh's "The Name," and an ethnographic sketch of a communion service at Chicago's Greater Harvest Missionary Baptist Church will show how the inextricable linkage of gospel vamps with "shouting" imbues the former with a kind of sacramentality. We will see that the gospel vamp materializes "the spiritual realm," facilitating a corporeal experience of the "presence of God."

The final chapter fashions from the preceding observations a phenomenological approach to the vamp's form, arguing that gospel vamps emerge as repetition and intensification are deployed as musical technologies of transcendence. The chapter begins with an analytical essay on the live recording performance of Richard Smallwood's "I Will Sing Praises," which shows how this piece's relentless pursuit of intensification parallels the procession through which worshippers gradually move into higher forms of spiritual ecstasy. I then offer analytical vignettes of nine gospel compositions that show how the combination of repetition, tonal modulation, "inversion," and textural accumulation—the techniques deployed in "I Will Sing Praises"—also animate vamps in other selections from the gospel repertory. This chapter's argument synthesizes the frequently opposed notions of repetition, groove, and teleology to theorize the vamp's affective trajectory, a phenomenological approach to musical form which argues that vamps come into being as gospel performers—musicians, singers, and congregants—use repeated materials and processes to "tune up."

Chapter 1: Imagining Gospel

1.1: "It's Working"

The performance of Richard Smallwood's "It's Working" at the 1994 concert of Metropolitan Baptist Church's Young Adult Ensemble brings into sharp relief the interrelation of sound and belief in gospel music. [1] The song's second section, realized in Figure 1.1, gives voice to a promise first written in St. Paul's epistle to the Romans: "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."[2]

Figure 1.1: "It's Working (Romans 8:28)," section *B*

[1] Richard Smallwood, "It's Working," https://www.dropbox.com/s/h1bdx8ylx2l9qw3/It%27s%20Working.mov?dl=0 (beginning at 1'57").

[2] Romans 8:28 (KJV)

Choir
called ac - cord - ing to His pur - pose, work - ing to - geth - er for them
Piano

Choir
that love the Lord. All things work to -
Piano

Like the song's *A* section, the *B* section's opening sonority is replete with potential energy. Instead of a pure tonic harmony, the phrase begins with V (4/2) of IV, initiating a progression that will soon lead to the tonic in root position. Thus, the lyrical progression from "all things" to "good" is depicted in the movement from instability to repose. In "It's Working," as words and music bolster each other, this song, like Paul's epistle, is used to build theology—to convince hearers that even the most intense present pain will, in the end, work for good. But this counterintuitive argument calls for persuasion. While the apostle could use linguistic methods from Classical rhetoric to move his readers, how might Smallwood convince his listeners?

The communicative strategy at work in this piece centers on the song's third formal unit. As Figure 1.2 shows, at the end of the *B* section's second iteration, two simultaneous musical

transformations occur. First, the choir abandons its previous recitation of Paul's extended phrase, and begins to iterate the song's title lyric, saying: "it's working! It's working! It's working for my good, I know!" At this same moment, the progression from V (4/2)/ IV to IV 6 used to begin both the song's *A* and *B* sections is modified by the substitution of the minor subdominant in place of the chord diatonic to D♭ major. Here, three statements of the title lyric on V (4/2), iv 6, and V/V are joined to "…for my good, I know" to complete the tonal progression. The listener soon discovers that these four measures constitute a musical idea, *c*, that, while first sounded at ca. 4' 25", will be subject to extensive repetition. Each time the idea is repeated it seems that a little more gets worked out.

While the composer (and soloist), offers vocal adlibs that inject aleatory elements to this performance, the pitch material present in the module itself is also intensified. At C^2 (m. 17) the choral parts are shifted upward using a technique that gospel practitioners call "inverting." In contrast to its meaning in common-practice tonal music, in Gospel parlance "inverting" refers to a gradual technique where, through successive iterations of the same material, the choral arrangement is heightened as the sopranos assume the previous tenor part in a higher octave, the altos assume the previous soprano part, and the tenors adopt the previous alto part. At C^3 (m. 21) the choir's parts are inverted again, and at C^4 (m. 25) a modified inversion is applied. During this module, only the first two measures are inverted, while the last two measures remain at the C^3 pitch level. This hybrid arrangement likely represents a practical musical decision: inverting the entire module at C^4 would raise it above the range that could be comfortably repeated for as long as the composer intends. Notwithstanding this fact, these iterations of this musical cell retain a distinction from the preceding levels of intensity.

Figure 1.2: "It's Working (Romans 8:28)," section *C* (vamp)

C1: module w/ original choral voicing

12

Choir

- that love __ the Lord. ___ It's wor - king. It's wor - king. It's wor - king.

Piano

V V/IV iv V V/V

4 6 5 6 4
2 3 5 2

C2: module w/ inverted choral voicing

16

Choir

for my __ good, I know! It's wor - king. It's wor - king. It's wor - king.

Piano

V I V/IV
6 4
2

C3: module w/ twice-inverted choral voicing

20

Choir

for my __ good, I know! It's wor - king. It's wor - king. It's wor - king.

Piano

C4: module w/ thrice-inverted choral voicing

24 Choir: for my___ good, I know! It's wor - king. It's wor - king.

Piano

pitch level from C3 retained here

27 Choir: It's wor - king. for my_____ good, I know!

Piano

While the call-and-response trope enacted in Smallwood's ad-libs index musical forms of black preaching throughout this song, he makes a more overt homiletical move in the moments after the song's first ending. At 8' 25" in the performance, Smallwood sounds praise, exclaiming "Hallelujah" six times, while departing from the song's D♭ major in favor a four-note pitch collection—1, ♭3, 4, and 5—that is characteristic of musical black preaching. Removed from the musical context of this song, Smallwood's vocalizations resemble what one might expect if he or another preacher were concluding a sermon on the same topic. And they generate a similar effect: as the video shows, many people are standing with their hands lifted, others are jumping in the air, and many other voices can be heard shrieking. Amid this panoply of visible affect, as the performers reprise the song's last section, three times, the composer asks: "Can't you feel it?" With this question, Smallwood invites his listeners to interpret the familiar experience of divine

presence facilitated by gospel music as a distinctive sign that the spirit was working all things together for their good at that very moment. The heightening musical repetitions have worked up a kind of affect that is then mapped onto the theological "working" the song portrays. What I want to stress is that the performance of this song, its "structure" and realization, creates what it describes. As such, it convinces its auditors to *feel* theology. While the author of Smallwood's intertext, St. Paul, wrote that "faith comes by hearing," this performance would seem to suggest that in gospel performance faith also comes by feeling.[3]

The third formal unit of Smallwood's "It's Working" is a paradigmatic example of the repetitive musical cycles that scholars and performers refer to as vamps. As the preceding discussion clarifies, while in other genres the term "vamp" may refer to musical phenomena designed to fill space or occupy time in preparation for a more consequential event, vamps in gospel, are the main musical event. What meanings obtain from this musical tendency? What is the special function of the Gospel vamp that makes it so central to performance? What is the relationship between the vamp's function and its form?

1.2: The Vamp and the Category of "Gospel"

Guthrie Ramsey describes the vamp in gospel music as a "troping cycle," a "musical and ideological remnant of the ring shout from the slave past."[4] Following the work of anthropologists Walter Pitts and Victor Turner, Ramsey proposes that these troping cycles "work as micro representations of the syntax of rituals present throughout the African Diaspora." In gospel songs, vamps are the place where the performance shifts into the second, ecstatic "frame of the

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[3] Romans 10:17 (KJV).

[4] Guthrie P Ramsey, *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip Hop* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 60.

[ritual's] metaphorical syntax."[5] David Brackett observes that "vamps at the end of gospel songs … allow for vocal and instrumental improvisations of increasing intensity causing a corresponding shift in the music to a higher energy level."[6] And Ray Allen, in his work on gospel quartet practices, notes that performers use musical sections such as these "self-consciously, work[ing] to diminish the distinctions between them and their listeners."[7] As vamps aggregate people in performance, they also participate in a broader kind of assemblage, the production of a musical collectivity.

One traditional way of categorizing the collection of music, performers, and audiences that are assembled by particular forms of music is through the notion of genre, but, as we will see, the concerns of gospel performance call for a different kind of classification. Fabian Holt defines genre as "a type of category that refers to a particular kind of music within a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation, and signification."[8] And, for Simon Frith, this category's organization of the sales process, the playing process, and the listening process constitutes a "genre world."[9] While the aforementioned ubiquity of vamps in gospel music could lead to a description of vamps as genre-defining musical features, this possibility is complicated by David Brackett's assertion that genre not be understood "as a bundle of style traits that are repeated."[10]

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[5] Ibid., 200.

[6] David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 118.

[7] Ray Allen, *Singing in the Spirit: African-American Sacred Quartets in New York City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 118.

[8] Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2.

[9] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 75–96.

[10] Brackett, *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 11.

If, as Brackett proposes, "genre is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results," how can we theorize gospel music as a mode of performance?[11]

Returning for a moment to Smallwood's "It's Working," let me first point out that Smallwood's incorporation of the vamp in this song, like his setting of a Pauline text, emphasizes that this performance did not occur in a vacuum: it was grounded in a place, Metropolitan Baptist Church, among people, African American Christians, and a broader tradition of musicking known as Gospel. While the relationship of this song to the broadest dimensions of its musical, cultural, and theological context exceed what genre alone can explain, this phenomenon can be helpfully elucidated through the concept of "citation," which, according to David Brackett:

> derives from how a text and its associated paratexts (which include stylistic traits, visual associations, and a wide range of discursive connections as well as sonic-stylistic features), in the course of participating in a genre, *cannot help but invoke the conventions of a genre in which they participate*. This relationship of a text to the conventions of a genre that it invokes leads us to consider how a text becomes associated with a genre label in the first place, and how a text achieves legibility, that is, how it becomes capable of being understood as participating in a genre at a given place and time.[12]

More than noting the inescapable invocation of vamps in gospel music, the pursuit of a category fit for gospel requires us to get at the theocultural force that feeds this propensity. As with Ramsey's notion of "troping cycles" and Samuel Floyd's Call–Response master trope, the category I pursue here bears a genealogical relation to the ring shout. While Richard Smallwood's body of work is placed in the late-20th and early-21st centuries, the centrality of the vamp to his oeuvre can be better understood when related to Horace Boyer's observation that the repeated musical figure of the vamp was the "most popular compositional device" for Rev.

[11] Ibid., 13.
[12] Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 12. Emphasis added.

William Herbert Brewster, a Memphis-based pastor and musician of the 1940s.[13] If we understand the relationship between Brewster's practice and vamps in contemporary gospel songs in terms of "citation or iteration," we can be both relieved of "the impossibility of finding the moment when a genre could be said to have definitively begun" and free to trace this animating thread all the way back to the invisible institution of the antebellum south.[14] In so doing, we will discover a cultural force that is inextricable from Gospel Music's sacred identity.

To think of sound as sacred means, according to Philip Bohlman and Jeffers Engelhardt, contemplating "its energetic nature, vitality, uncanniness, and invasiveness; its capacity to communicate divine presence and power; its primacy as a medium of revelation and transmission; its potential to be both esoteric and exoteric; and its efficacy in bringing individuals into community…"[15] But as Bohlman has noted elsewhere, "musical scholars, in contrast, have more often employed scholarly approaches that effectively separated religious music from religious experience, thereby secularizing sacred music and redeploying it in a secular rather than sectarian history."[16] And this methodology has ontological implications: "sacred music is rendered as mere music."[17] An instructive example of work that engages this kind of sacred music on it own terms is Timothy Rommen's studies on gospel performance in Trinidad.[18] Rommen begins his book by noting that his project is "about conviction…about believing and translating

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[13] Horace Boyer, *How Sweet the Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 142–43.

[14] Brackett, *Categorizing Sound,* 12.

[15] Philip V. Bohlman and Jeffers Engelhardt, "Resounding Transcendence—An Introduction" in *Resounding Transcendence: Transitions in Music, Religion, and Ritual*, eds. Jeffers Engelhardt and Philip V. Bohlman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3.

[16] Philip V. Bohlman, "Introduction: Music in American Religious Experience," in *Music in American Religious Experience*, eds. Philip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow (Oxford & New York, Oxford University Press, 2006), 10.

[17] Ibid., 11.

[18] Timothy Rommen, *"Mek Some Noise": Gospel Music and the Ethics of Style in Trinidad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

that belief into action…about the way that music participates in actualizing belief—but also about the ways that music convinces."[19] What Rommen calls "the ethics of style" "explores the way people live as and sound like Christians in Trinidad."[20] Sounding belief in these ways means expressing a musical theology, which Andrew Cashner defines as "a form of music that embodies the beliefs it proclaims."[21] If, as the theologian James Cone contends, "theology is not universal language about God," but is instead "human speech informed by historical and theological traditions," how does gospel music embody its constitutive beliefs and how might that help us categorize this frame of human experience?[22]

What I call the gospel imagination includes "musical invention, improvisation, generation, composition, arranging, performance, and listening."[23] Before moving deeper into the practices that constitute the gospel imagination, it is necessary to contextualize this phenomenon in other literature relating to the social functions of imagination. The anthropologist Arjun Appaduri proposes that in the context of contemporary globalization "the Imagination has broken out of the special expressive space of art, myth, and ritual and has now become a part of the quotidian mental work of ordinary people in many societies…ordinary people have begun to deploy their imaginations in the practice of their everyday lives."[24] Appaduri stresses that imagination is distinct from the notion of fantasy, which "carries with it

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[19] Ibid., 3.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Andrew Cashner, "Faith, Hearing, and the Power of Music in Hispanic Villancicos, 1600–1700" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2015), 41.

[22] James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), xv.

[23] David J. Hargreaves, Raymond MacDonald, and Dorothy Miell, "Explaining Musical Imaginations: Creativity, Performance, and Reception" in *Musical Imaginations: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Creativity, Performance, and Reception*, eds. David J. Hargreaves, Dorothy Miell, and Raymond MacDonald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

[24] Arjun Appaduri, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 5.

the inescapable connotation of thought divorced from projects and actions, and it also has a private, even individualistic sound about it." For Appaduri, the imagination "has a projective sense about it, the sense of being a prelude to some sort of expression, whether aesthetic or otherwise." While the individual's "fantasy can dissipate," the collective imagination "can become the fuel for action." These forms of imagination form "ideas of neighborhood and nationhood," becoming, then, a mode of aggregation.[25] Guthrie Ramsey follows Appaduri's approach to imagination in his conception of "community theaters," sites of collective memory like churches, nightclubs, and theaters where the practice of "everyday blackness" and musical meaning collide.[26] I am interested in the modes of thinking that are often performed in the "community theater" of the church—this is what I call the gospel imagination.

The function of the gospel imagination is also related to Charles Taylor's notion of "the social imaginary," namely, "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations."[27] As Taylor emphasizes, these cultural funds are "carried in images, stories, and legends," they constitute the "common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy." More proximate to the concerns of this project is what philosopher James A. K. Smith, following Taylor, terms "the Pentecostal social imaginary": "an embodied set of practices and disciplines that implicitly 'carry' a worldview or social imaginary."[28] While the gospel imagination may bear resemblance to many other Christian traditions, it is distinguished by its

[25] Ibid., 7.

[26] Guthrie Ramsey, *Race Music*, 76–95.

[27] Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Duke and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

[28] James A. K. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, Mi: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), xviii.

insistence on bodily experience of the presence of God. And while its affective dimensions may share a common lot with Pentecostals of other races, its interdenominational character and its connection to history—a history of oppression—demarcate it as a distinctive arrangement of sound and belief.

Akin to what Travis Jackson has called "the blues aesthetic," the gospel imagination includes "a set of normative and evaluative criteria" that "has its roots in African American culture and musics..."[29] But the gospel imagination adds to "the blues aesthetic" a theological supplement. While chapter 2 will explore the relationship between gospel vamps and what has been called "the musicality of black preaching," the present discussion of the gospel imagination requires some attention to what the homiletician Cleophus Larue produces, "the distinctive power of black preaching":

> As a result of their historical marginalization and struggle, what became most important to blacks in their encounters with Euro-American Christianity was not dogma or abstract theological reflection, but an intimate relationship with a powerful God who demonstrated throughout scripture a propensity to side with the downtrodden.[30]

What Larue proposes here is at the heart of the gospel imagination. For it is the belief in the presence of God that imbues both gospel music and black preaching. Music, in song and sermon, is the primary means through which the "intimate relationship" Larue describes is formed. The role of music here affirms Smith's contention that "there is a kind of sacramentality of Pentecostal worship that sees the material as a good and necessary mediator of the Spirit's work and presence."[31] I extend this observation from the Pentecostal contexts to those whose worship

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[29] Travis Jackson, *Blowin' The Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 109, 172.

[30] Cleophus Larue, The Heart of Black Preaching (Louisville & London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 2.

[31] James A.K. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 81–82

services are characterized by a preponderance of gospel music. While I do not propose that these liturgical choices necessarily reflect a Pentecostal identity, they do, I argue, evince "the gospel imagination." The commitment to forming an "intimate relationship with a powerful God" is the intention at the heart of this Gospel. In the gospel imagination, then, music is a resource, a technology for relating to God.

1.3: Methodology

The analytical paradigm I propose in these pages is offered as a way to think about the aural experience of gospel music. The analyses that follow represent a particular way of hearing this music—a way of attending to gospel music that is shaped by my training in music analysis and in the academic study of religion, as well as by my experience as a musician in this expressive tradition. The model developed here engages theoretical discourses including Christopher Hasty's phenomenological approach to meter, Justin London's work on entrainment, Lawrence Zbikowski's and Robin Attas's approaches to groove, Janet Schmalfeldt's processual approach to form, James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's sonata theory, and Mark Butler's work on Electronic Dance Music.[32] Although these methodologies were developed for musical practices

[32] Christopher F. Hasty, *Meter as Rhythm* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Justin London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Lawrence M. Zbikowski, "Modelling the Groove: Conceptual Structure and Popular Music," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 129/2 (December 2004), 272–297. Robin Attas, "Form as Process: The Buildup Introduction in Popular Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 37/2 (Fall 2015): 275–296. Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Mark Butler, *Playing With Something That Runs: Technology, Improvisation, and Composition in DJ and Laptop Performance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Idem, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006). James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

that depart from gospel in terms of their secular orientation, their historical location, and their relationship to race, they have proven invaluable while writing this project. While I use these analytic technologies to construct the most detailed account of gospel's musical materials, I do not ascribe to these theories complete explanatory power. It is only after noticing a specific harmonic, rhythmic, or formal occurrence that the work of interpretation begins. And for this hermeneutic task I use resources from ritual theory, phenomenology, homiletics, and theology to relate the sonic particulars my analysis has revealed to the articulation of gospel's system of belief.

Although previous writers have engaged gospel from religious, historical, and ethnographic perspectives, these insights have yet to be enhanced by a systematic analysis of musical materials. I take this approach because I am persuaded that the most illuminating interpretations of music—including, but not limited to, gospel—relate sonic phenomena to social practice. As such, this dissertation contributes to the field of music theory analytical insights into a repertoire that, while heretofore given scant attention by theorists, has important implications for the study of many popular and non-canonical repertories. And by embedding formal musical analysis in gospel's theological, historical, and cultural surroundings, this project exemplifies the insights available through contextually grounded music analysis.

1.4: Richard Smallwood and the Gospel Imagination

Before an extended discussion of Smallwood's song "Anthem of Praise," it is necessary to contextualize the figure around which much of this project orbits. Richard Smallwood was born in 1948 in Atlanta, Georgia, into a family led by an itinerant pastor. Rev. C.L. Smallwood's occupation required that his family move frequently as he sought to plant churches throughout the country. Although they traveled frequently for the first years of Richard's life, the family would eventually settle in Washington, D.C. Smallwood, a child prodigy as a vocalist and pianist,

was an active part of his father's ministry, frequently playing and singing before his father's sermons. The young Smallwood began playing piano by ear at age five and began formal piano lessons at the age of seven. In addition to his service in his father's ministry, Smallwood's musical background was enhanced by his mother's varied musical tastes. Richard often notes that his mother, the late Mabel Smallwood, "introduced him to classical music" through an album of Rachmaninoff's First Piano Concerto.[33]

As an adolescent, Smallwood attended a performing arts high school in Washington, DC, where he studied with Roberta Flack. During this period, he also participated in a Howard University program for musically talented young people. This was his first interaction with Howard University's Department of Music, but certainly not his last, for many formative musical experiences took place during his undergraduate career at Howard. While there, he studied voice and piano with instructors including Anne Burwell and Thomas Kerr. In 1971, Smallwood graduated with Latin honors, while also having been a part of the university's emergent and activist gospel scene.

As an undergraduate, Smallwood and others like the late soul performer Donny Hathaway struggled against the faculty of Howard's Music Department, for, as the historian Bernice Johnson Reagon notes, "during this period at Howard you could be penalized if, as a music major, it was discovered that you were performing jazz or gospel music."[34] But this would soon change. As Reagon recalls:

> In 1968, Howard University, like many other campuses throughout the country, was challenged by radical students taking over and sometimes holding hostage administrations and boards of trustees, if they could get them. At the heart of this struggle by African American students was a challenge to the academy to correct

[33] Braxton Shelley, telephone interview with Richard Smallwood.

[34] Bernice Johnson Reagon, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me: The African American Sacred Song Tradition* (Lincoln & London: The University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 35.

> the absence of African American history and culture from the curriculum. There was also a boiling anger at the role of leading scholars who, while guarding the doors to the world of higher learning, had played a major role in the distortion of African American history and contributions in a way that directly aided the oppression of its people. At Howard University, gospel music was not included in the curriculum, and its validity as music worthy of study became one of the issues of the struggle.[35]

The students' resistance culminated in a takeover of the Music Department's building. The students staged a sit-in of sorts, during which Smallwood played the piano for various other students who sang gospel music. The sit-in lasted for nearly an entire day. Their ultimatum, in Smallwood's words, was "either you embrace [black musics] along with the other music art forms or we're gonna tear this school down!" The students succeeded in convincing the administration to change and helped increase the institution's musical diversity. The gospel choir formed during this period of activity was the first of its kind.[36]

After founding a group called *The Celestials* during his time at Howard, Smallwood's completed his first recording in 1974 with the Young Adult Choir of Union Temple Baptist Church, a church where he was also employed. Since the 1980s, he has been a member and artist-in-residence at Washington DC's Metropolitan Baptist Church. During his career, Smallwood has recorded sixteen albums with three different singing groups. *Look Up And Live* (1974) and *Give Us Peace* (1976) were recorded with the Young Adult Choir of Union Temple. After getting his first recording contracts, he recorded, *Richard Smallwood Singers* (Onyx/Benson Records, 1982); *Psalms* (Onyx/Benson Records, 1984); *Textures* (Word, 1987); *Vision* (Word, 1988); *Portrait* (Word, 1990); *Testimony* (Sparrow, 1992); and *Live at Howard University* (Sparrow, 1993) with the Richard Smallwood Singers. In the mid-1990s he formed a larger vocal group, a

[35] Ibid., 36
[36] Braxton Shelley, telephone interview with Richard Smallwood.

twenty-voice choir named *Vision*. From 1996 to the present he has recorded seven albums with Vision.[37]

Virtually every popular and journalistic discussion of Richard Smallwood's music invokes the composer's relation to "classical music." *The Washington Post Magazine* writer, Keith L. Alexander asserts, "after 40 years in the industry, Smallwood has done what no other gospel artist arguably has done as successfully: blend gospel with classical music."[38] Similarly, the biography developed for a Smallwood performance at the Kennedy Center proposes that this musician "can impeccably blend classical movements with traditional gospel, and arrive at a mix that is invariably Smallwood's alone."[39] And in his *Gospel Music Encyclopedia,* the music journalist Bill Carpenter calls Smallwood "gospel's finest high-art composer since Thomas Dorsey," one who "has built a career and a solid audience by ingeniously fusing the strings and hauteur of classical music with the vocal stylings and piano chords of the traditional black church."[40]

While this discourse doubtless reflects decades of marketing on behalf of Smallwood, its pervasiveness also insinuates that there is something in these sounds that affords such hearings. Likewise, the aforementioned commentary vents both a sense that there is a kind of prestige that inheres to "classical" music, and that sonic patterns that sound "classical" are marked when

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[37] Since starting this group, they have recorded *Adoration: Live in Atlanta* (Verity, 1996); *Rejoice* (Verity, 1997); *Healing: Live in Detroit* (Verity, 1999); *Persuaded: Live in D.C.* (Verity, 2001); *Journey: Live in New York* (Verity, 2006), *Promises* (Verity, 2011); and *Anthology Live* (RCA Inspirational, 2015).

[38] Keith L. Alexander, "Millions of gospel fans know Richard Smallwood's music. But not his struggles," *The Washington Post Magazine,* July 23, 2015, accessed January 6, 2017, *https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/the-richard-smallwood-you-know-4-doves-10-stellars-8-grammy-noms/2015/07/22/553d5cfc-0a28-11e5-9e39-0db921c47b93_story.html?utm_term=.93c52d153265*.

[39] "Richard Smallwood," *The Kennedy Center*, accessed January 6, 2017, http://www.kennedy-center.org/artist/A21490.

[40] Bill Carpenter, *Uncloudy Days: The Gospel Music Encyclopedia* (San Francisco, CA: Backbeat Books, 2005), 377.

heard in gospel. I should want to note that classical training, frequently represented by an undergraduate degree in music, is not uncommon among leading gospel musicians: Donald Lawrence studied at University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Kurt Carr's music degree is from the University of Connecticut, Anthony Brown was trained at Morgan State University, and the late Lecresia Campbell held a degree in vocal performance from Tougaloo College. My interest here is not in using the critical discussion of Smallwood's relationship to Western classical music as an analytic for his idiom, but to suggest that the centrality of genre to perceptions of Smallwood's music makes his oeuvre an especially valuable place to ground this study of the gospel imagination. I also want to stress that Smallwood's muse is of a piece with the eclectic blend of musical styles that has shaped gospel since the beginning of the twentieth century, for as Guthrie Ramsey notes, "Thomas Dorsey's mix of blues and gospel in the 1920s and 1930s; Rosetta Tharpe's blend of jazz and gospel during the 1940s; Edwin Hawkins's and Andre Crouch's pop-gospel of the late 1960s; the Winanses' smooth-soul gospel of the 1980s; and Kirk Franklin's urban gospel of the 1990s" all exemplify the heterogeneity that has long characterized gospel music.[41] While each of Ramsey's formulations leaves intact some implicit notion of "gospel," this project seeks to make that common ground explicit. I ask: what makes Smallwood's music or any other music *gospel*? And I propose that, more than a specific harmonic lexicon, vocal registration, or instrumentation, what makes music gospel is an intention to use sound as a way of relating to God. This intention defines what I have called the gospel imagination, and it shapes the musical element that virtually all gospel performances share: the vamp.

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[41] Guthrie P. Ramsey, *Race Music: Black Music Cultures for Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 190.

Gospel's way of technologizing music links the commonsense usage of the term "intention" to its more specialized, phenomenological connotation. I propose that we can understand the gospel imagination as a particular form of what Harris Berger calls "stance." Pursuant to this, we can understand the gospel imagination as a particular way of "grappl[ing] with a text, performance, practice, or item of expressive culture to bring it into experience…"[42] In gospel, composers, performers, and listeners all actively grapple "with [a sonic] entity that is independent from her and bringing that entity into experience."[43] More than just a cognitive phenomenon, gospel's characteristic mode of "grappling is social and bodily…"[44] What indexes the gospel imagination, then, is "not form, but form as it is taken up by producers or receivers of expressive culture"[45] Although it may seem than the vamp produces "agreed upon effects of aesthetics or meaning" for gospel listeners, "the connection between technique and effect is never a mechanical and causal one." This link derives from the social and agentive relationships subjects have "with items of expressive culture and their techniques, devices, and features…"[46] It is through this "stance" that gospel's constitutive "interpretive move," uses sound to materialize the invisible subject of one's belief.[47] In order to add texture to this emerging sense of the gospel imagination, the rest of this chapter is devoted to a close reading of Smallwood's "Anthem of Praise." This discussion will ground the foregoing discussion of Smallwood's idiom in one of his best-known compositions, while illustrating the theocultural work of the gospel vamp.

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[42] Harris Berger, *Stance: Ideas About Emotion, Style, And Meaning For The Study Of Expressive Culture* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010), 21.

[43] Ibid., 15.

[44] Ibid., 16.

[45] Ibid., 3.

[46] Ibid., 4.

[47] Steven Feld, "Communication, Music and Speech about Music" in *Music Grooves, eds.* Charles Kiel and Steven Feld (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

1.5: "Anthem of Praise"

For the capacity crowd assembled in Washington, DC megachurch, Jericho City of Praise, awaiting the start of *Persuaded*, the 2001 live recording of Richard Smallwood and Vision, the entrance of Smallwood protégé and orchestral conductor Darin Atwater into the sanctuary was a sign that the main event was about to begin. As Atwater lifted his baton to conduct the orchestral prelude, "Procession of the Levites," liturgical dancers came onto the stage, there to translate music into movement. When the conductor turned to cue the later entrance of the band and brass section, it became clear that another shift was underway. Just as these musicians entered, *Vision*, Smallwood's twenty-voice choir, came onto the stage, followed by their leader, Richard Smallwood, himself. Once on the stage he bowed in recognition of the audience's raucous applause. He then turned away from the audience, facing the choir, preparing to perform "Anthem of Praise."[48]

In "Anthem of Praise," Smallwood weaves excerpts from Psalm 150, Psalm 134, and the hymn "Lift Him Up," into one song lyric. By comparing the lyrics for the song's *A* section to the text of Psalm 150 (shared text is presented in boldface), one can get a sense of the way the composer engages the aforementioned textual traditions.

"Anthem of Praise," section *A*
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance,
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet,
Praise Him with the psaltery and harp;
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

Psalm 150 (KJV)
[1]Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.
[2]Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

[48] Richard Smallwood, "Anthem of Praise," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7Yo2HDxbJo

[3]Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.
[4]Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
[5]Praise him upon the loud cymbals: **praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.**
[6]Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

The song consists of five formal units, and its overall form can be characterized as *ABABCDE*. Compared to the other pieces that will be analyzed in this dissertation, "Anthem of Praise" is characterized by a relatively unhurried harmonic rhythm; the occasional departures from this rule serve to articulate formal transitions. Most of the drama of its first four formal units derives from textural transformations; in the vamp, tonal modulation becomes the central syntactical procedure. Taken together, these musical devices mark "Anthem of Praise" with a relentless pursuit of intensification.

The *A* section is built on a four-bar harmonic progression. While the beginning motion from the B♭-minor tonic to i (4/2) might lead the ear to expect a scalar descent to the dominant—as can be found in canonical gospel pieces like Glenn Burleigh's "Order My Steps" and V. Michael McKay's "Redeemed Praise"—the sounding of the raised $\hat{6}$ in the bass, and the harmony it supports, overturns this expectation. Rather than continuing a step-wise descent to the dominant, vii7/VII shifts the tonal landscape to an inverted subtonic seventh that initiates a scalar ascent from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{5}$ in the bass. Above this harmonic activity, the tenors sing offer an entirely syllabic and conjunct presentation of the psalmist's words.

Figure 1.3: "Anthem of Praise," section *A*

A1

1 *tenors*

Praise Him with the tim-brel and dance. Praise Him with the sound of the trum-pet.

Piano

i | i 4 2

Praise Him with the psal-try and harp. Let ev-ery-thing that hath breath praise the

Piano

vii/VII 7 | VII 6 5 | III | iv | vii/V 7 | V

A2

altos

Praise Him with tim-brel and dance. Praise Him on the high sound-ing cym-bals.

tenors

Lord. Praise him with tim-brel and dance. Praise Him on the high sound-ing cym-bals.

Piano

7

Praise Him with stringed in - stru - ments.

Praise Him with stringed in - stru - ments. Let ev - ery - thing that hath breath praise the

Piano

VII III iv V/V

6 7 6

5

After this first four bars, at *A*², the altos enter adding a homophonic upper voice to the tenors' refrain. At the end of the second four-measure unit, V6/V is substituted for the dominant, preparing the way to the dominant arrival on the first downbeat of the *B* section. This dominant will prove to be all-consuming, as the entire *B* section becomes an extended dominant pedal.

Figure 1.4: "Anthem of Praise," section *B*

B1 ***altos & sopranos***

10

Oh, mag - ni - fy the Lord; mag - ni - fy the Lord

tenors

Lord. Oh, mag - ni - fy the Lord; mag - ni - fy the Lord

10

Piano

V *dominant pedal*

with me. Mag - ni - fy the Lord; Oh, mag - ni - fy the Lord

with me. Mag - ni - fy the Lord; Oh, mag - ni - fy the Lord

Piano

B2: inverted choral arrangement

13

with me. Mag - ni - fy the Lord; mag - ni - fy the Lord

with me. Mag - ni - fy the Lord; mag - ni - fy the Lord

13

Piano

16 *altos*

with me. Mag - ni - fy the Lord. Let us ex - alt His name to - geth - er.

tenors

with me. Mag - ni - fy the Lord. Let us ex - alt His name to - geth - er.

16

Piano

At B^1, while the dominant is incessantly iterated in the bass, the altos mirror the bass's insistence on the dominant. In contrast, the tenors and altos move in parallel sixths elevating both scale degree $\hat{6}$ and $\hat{7}$. In so doing, they obey Psalm 134's exhortation to "magnify the Lord." At B^2, the choral arrangement is inverted, the tenors assume the alto's pedal, and the previous parallel sixths become parallel thirds shared by the sopranos and altos. The tension between the inflexible instrumental and vocal pedals and the other voices parallel motion drive this section to its end, and the rondo-like recapitulation of the *A* section.

But the return of *A* brings with it something new. After the tenor's solitary presentation of the first four measures, at A^3, the altos assert themselves with the sopranos, turning this segment of the song into an antiphonal variation of the *A*. The tenors make space for them by attenuating their lyrics as the Figure 1.5 depicts.

Figure 1.5: "Anthem of Praise," section *A* modified

19
Praise Him with the psal - try and harp. Let ev - ery - thing that hath breath praise the
19
Piano

A3: antiphonal variation

altos & sopranos
22
Praise Him! Praise Him Oh,
Lord. with tim - brel and dance. on the high sound - ing cym - bals.
22
Piano

praise Him!
with stringed in - stru - ments. Let ev - ery - thing that hath breath praise the
Piano

These measures lead to an exact repetition of section *B*, after which comes new material, realized in figure 1.6.

Figure 1.6: "Anthem of Praise," sections *C* and *D*

C1

34

At C7: sopranos

(hands.) Ye peo - ple, all ye

2nd time only

34

At C5: altos

(hands.) Oh, be joy - ful all ye

2nd time only

At C3: 1st tenors

(hands.) Oh, be joy - ful all ye peo - ple.

2nd time only

2nd tenors

Oh, be joy-ful all ye peo-ple. Oh, be joy-ful and clapyour hands. Oh, be joy - ful all ye peo - ple

34

Piano

i VI i ii V

13 6 6 7

4

37

peo - ple and clap your hands. Ye peo - ple, all ye

37

peo - ple and clap your hands. Oh, be joy - ful all ye

Oh, be joy - ful and clap your hands. Oh, be joy - ful all ye peo - ple.

Oh, be joy - ful and clap your hands. Oh, be joy - ful all ye peo - ple

37

Piano

D1

peo - ple, and clap your

sopranos

peo - ple and clap your hands.

altos

Oh, be joy - ful and clap your hands.

tenors

Oh, be joy - ful and clap your hands. Oh,

Piano

V *dominant pedal*

40

At D5: sopranos

Oh, praise Him!

At D3: altos

Oh, praise Him!

praise Him! Oh, praise Him!

40

Piano

Both the *C* and *D* sections are shaped by process that I call *textural accumulation:* the gradual building-up of a polyphonic texture. In the *C* section, the 2nd tenors' statement "Oh, be joyful, all ye people, and clap your hands!" appears alone twice, but at C^3, they are joined by the 1st tenors who amplify the lyrics through their homophonic statement a third above the 2nd tenors. At C^5 and C^7, the altos and sopranos, respectively, complete this section's texture. Likewise, the tenors' melismatic "oh, praise him," first presented at D_1, is joined by the altos at D_3 and the sopranos at D_5, continuing the song's pursuit of intensification. The effect these textural procedures achieve is analogous to what Mark Butler calls "the buildup" in Electronic Dance Music: the space where "various instruments are added to the texture, usually one at a time…increas[ing] intensity—not only by thickening the texture but also by filling in various rhythmic positions within the measure."[49] In "Anthem of Praise," vocal lines take the place of EDM's recorded instrumental

[49] Mark Butler, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 224.

loops. Taken together, this song's *C* and *D* sections accrue energy that becomes the condition of possibility for the shift into the song's vamp.

At D^7–D^8, the section's tightly regulated material becomes loses its predictability (see the beginning of Figure 1.7). First, the accompaniment for the statement of the unchanged choral material abandons the dominant pedal, yielding the progression: V (4/2) – iv – V6/V – V – VII. Then, the choir and band suddenly transport the hearers from V (4/2) of iv to iv 6 and from V/V to an altered dominant, before arriving on the tonic of the newly achieved B♭-major tonality. At this moment, as the modulation to B♭ major marks the beginning of the vamp, Smallwood reverses his earlier turn towards the choir, rotating to face the audience. In so doing, he uses his body's position to reinforce the formal shift occurring at this instant. Soon, he picks up the microphone to directly engage the congregation, exhorting them to repeat phrases like "Hallelujah!" and "Lord, you're worthy!" These transformations of key, stance, and audience engagement are further amplified by the striking move away from a polyphonic choral textural to consistent homophony, and from extended scriptural quotations, to a three-word refrain: "lift him up!" Figure 1.7 represents the transition into the vamp, and the course that the vamp's performance takes.

Figure 1.7: "Anthem of Praise," transition to E and E

D7-D8: transition to vamp

43

Oh, praise Him! Oh,

Oh, praise Him! Oh,

Oh, praise Him! Oh,

Piano

V 4 2 | i 6 | V/V 6 | V VII | V 4 2 | ii 9 8 6

E1: vamp at original pitch level

E: Vamp

46

sopranos *2nd time only*

High-er and high - er!

praise His name!

choir

Lift him up!

Piano

V/V 9 8 | V b13 | *tonic pedal* I | (IV I)

E: Vamp

E1: vamp at original pitch level

sopranos *2nd time only*

46

High-er and high - er!

46

praise His name!

choir

Lift him up!

46

Piano

V/V V *tonic pedal* I (IV I)

9 8 b13

49

Lift him up! Lift him up! Lift him up!

49

Piano

I (bVII I) I (IV I) I (bVII I)

E2: vamp elevated by semitone

sopranos *2nd time only*

52

High-er and high - er!

choir

Lift him up! Lift him up! Lift him up!

52

Piano

E3: vamp elevated by two semitones

sopranos *2nd time only*

55

High-er and high - er!

choir

Lift him up! Lift him up! Lift him up!

55

Piano

E4: vamp elevated by three semitones

58

sopranos *2nd time only*

High-er and high - er!

Lift him up! Lift him up! Lift him up!

58

Piano

The vamp is particularly illustrative of the centrality of repetition to gospel vamps; the tonic ostinato which gives consistent drive to the vamp, and the plagal and double plagal harmonies which prolong this tonic make the vamp's recursion especially overt. Additionally, in this performance, the entire vamp was repeated because the audience refused the choir's first attempt at ending.[50] On one level, it would be accurate to say that this first vamp consists of thirty-two isorhythmic statements of the lyrics "lift him up." But under closer analysis, we see how these iterations of repeated materials are shaped into syntax through the interaction of repetition and other musical processes. The harmonic and pitch content segment the thirty-two iterations into sixteen large groupings because they reveal the differences between each pair of statements. Further, the presence of the phrase "higher and higher" after every fourth "lift him up," articulates a further segmentation of this vamp into eight larger segments. Most importantly, the three upward modulations by semitone, result in four key centers, a division that is reinforced by the band's forceful accent of the first down beat in each new key, and by the four different

[50] Since both of these vamps are nearly identical, I will focus on the first.

lead vocalists, each of whom provides vocal improvisations in only one key area. All of this highlights modulation as the central process of intensification at work in this vamp. The modulations and the parameters that reinforce them group the numerous iterations of repeated material into segments with internal coherence—same tonal center—and external distinction—different tonal center—all tracking toward a higher level of intensity.

The textual interpolations performed by the soloists are particularly helpful for thinking about this process of segmentation. Horace Boyer argued that the process of adding of extra words to the original text is "perhaps the most unusual characteristic of gospel singing."[51] In this vamp, each of the soloists— Richard Smallwood, Renee Adams, Darlene Simmons, and Charisse Nelson-McIntosh—reference related but distinct textual traditions. The performances of the first and the last soloists, Smallwood and Nelson-McIntosh, respectively, are especially illustrative because the singers reference distinct biblical traditions, whose discursive unfolding relates the components of their section to each other, while distinguishing the from the material which is overlain with the melismatic presentation of the other passage. Smallwood references the biblical tradition where Jesus is reported to have said "if I be lifted up from the earth, I'll draw all men unto," while Nelson-Mcintosh paraphrases Psalm 34 saying, among other things, "Oh magnify the Lord with me! Let us exalt his name together!"

Combining these treasured texts with an unyielding quest for intensification, "Anthem of Praise" illuminates the central aspects of gospel music. The integration of escalation in terms of texture, pitch, and key center maps directly onto the incessantly iterated lyrics: "Lift him up…higher and higher." But more than a madrigalistic device, this unity of words and music points to another issue: while the choir and those in the congregation are singing "lift him

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[51] Horace Boyer, "Contemporary Gospel Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 7/1 (1979): 5–58, 27.

up…higher and higher," they are not *just* singing. They are engaged in a performative spiritual labor: as they sing these words they are *doing* the lifting of which they speak. Indeed, when Smallwood, choir, and band prepared to launch into the reprise of this song's vamp, the composer said: "we want to lift Him a little bit higher!" These words evince an audacious belief that the actions of the people gathered in that room are of cosmic significance—that this collection of individuals possess access to the divine and the capacity to effect change in an unseen realm by what they do, say, and sing in the material world.

As we have seen in this chapter, the articulation of sound and conviction through what is known as gospel music exceeds the limits of traditional categories like genre, performance, and practice, revealing instead a complex of belief, performance, and reception that I call the gospel imagination. This way of using music to relate to God turns the repetitive musical cycle known as the vamp into a technology of transcendence. Put to this use, the gospel vamp creates a sonic space in which congregants can feel what they believe. In the coming chapters, we will see how the form of the gospel vamp is shaped by its relationship to black preaching and ecstatic movement.

Chapter 2: Sounding Belief: "Tuning Up" and "the Gospel Imagination"

Introduction

In this chapter, I propose that gospel music and musical forms of black preaching are both expressions of "the gospel imagination," a system of belief, performance, and reception coextensive with "African American Christianity."[1] The chapter begins with an analytical essay on the live recording performance of Richard Smallwood's song "Healing," which shows how this piece uses sound to impart belief. My proposal is that the plainly homiletic urge in view in "Healing" offers an example of the practice of "tuning up," which for adherents of many African American Christian traditions refers to a preacher's shift from speech into song near the end of a sermon. I will, however, want to expand the commonsense conception of "tuning up" in two ways. First, I will argue that "tuning up" is not simply a homiletical strategy but is instead the sonic manifestation of "the gospel imagination." Second, I will argue that "tuning up" is also the formal logic for gospel performance, and thus provides an illuminating analytic for form in gospel music. In making this argument, I will engage scholarship drawn from homiletics, ritual theory, phenomenology, and musicology, using this literature to outline the shared context of gospel music and black sermons. I will then analyze excerpts from four sermons that exemplify the practice of "tuning up" Bishop James Morton's "The Lazarus Conspiracy"; Rev. Dr. Gina Stewart's "Am I My Brother and My Sister's Keeper"; Rev. Dr. E. Dewey Smith's "A Seminary from A Cemetery"; and Rev. Dr. William C. Turner's "Terri Waller: A Maker Of Joyful Noise." I will show that this way of preaching acquires its power by facilitating a communal experience of

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[1] A trenchant discussion of African American Christianity is provided in C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990).

transcendence, and that this experiential imperative is shared with gospel music. After suggesting how this analytic theorizes what we have already observed in Richard Smallwood's "Healing," I will offer analytical vignettes from three other compositions—Myrna Summer's "Oh How Precious," Brenda Moore's "Perfect Praise," and Bishop Walter Hawkins' "Marvelous"—showing how the performance of each achieves its effect by "tuning up."

2.1: Music as Preaching in Richard Smallwood's "Healing"

Although "Healing" was the title track of Richard Smallwood's 1998 live recording, it was not the first song performed that night. That prized position was occupied by "Faith," a song whose content is summarized by its refrain: "If you have the faith, you can move mountains. Nothing is impossible. You shall overcome. Just believe and it shall be done." This song's pulsating groove coursed through the thousands of bodies that filled Detroit's Straight Gate International Church, facilitating a form of musical coordination important at the outset of a gospel concert. The song's aforementioned lyrics also facilitated a kind of mental coordination, preaching the power of faith, setting the stage for the recording's title track and spiritual theme, "Healing." In what follows I analyze "Healing" for insight into both the forms of belief that nourish gospel music and the means through which gospel performance reproduces the belief upon which it depends.

"Healing" consists of 3 basic modules, which I refer to as the *A*, *B*, and *C* sections, respectively.[2] The performance begins with an extended introduction in which Smallwood recounts the inspiration for the song: a friend who had experienced the death of both parents

[2] Richard Smallwood, "Healing," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEadw8gm9RY.
Introduction: 0'03"
A: 2'12"
B: 3'46"
C: 8'19"

within a short temporal span was hurting and he wanted to know whether Smallwood had a song that dealt with healing. Shortly after this conversation, he said, the Lord gave him the song in a dream. This kind of spoken introduction is a canonical practice for live recordings, as it positions the music within the theological context of the genre, identifying it as a song from the Lord—a sermon in song.

Figure 2.1: "Healing," accompaniment for spoken introduction

Figure 2.1 provides a transcription of the accompaniment for Smallwood's spoken introduction. The material repeated here foreshadows the harmonic and rhythmic content of the song's coda, in so doing becomes a kind of bookend for the rest of the song's material.

Figure 2.2: "Healing," *A* section

The first measures of Figure 2.2 show the shift from the introduction into the A section via the shift from A♭ major tonic to G dominant-seventh and then C dominant-seventh harmonies en route to the f minor sonority—the section's off-tonic opening. The tonal movement from A♭ to F minor via the aforementioned harmonies models the descent into a pit of despair. As it pulls the listener down, it paves the way for the healing the song seeks to provide. As this figure also shows, in this strophic section, the first two phrases end on the dominant, and subdominant respectively, while the last phrase ends on the tonic, forming a relatively weak cadence which, in its first iteration gives way immediately to the dominant-seventh chords that call forth the *A* section's second iteration.

Figure 2.3: "Healing," *B* section

Figure 2.3 shows the musical transformation that announces the shift into the *B* section. Subsequent to the second ending of the *A* section the closing tonic is transformed into a third

inversion dominant-seventh of the subdominant, marking the beginning of the *B* section. The descent by whole step in the bass is followed by a chromatic descent in the bass to the dominant. Although this suggests that a cadence is imminent that expectation is not borne out, as the dominant ascends by step past the tonic to the supertonic, preparing the way for the first cadence of the *B* section, the half cadence at m. 9. The dominant goal of this half cadence becomes a third-inversion dominant seventh chord, echoing the bass motion that transformed the *A* section's closing tonic into the inverted dominant seventh that opens the *B* section. While we get a version of the anticipated tonic sonority, it does not appear in the expected first inversion. Instead, it appears in root position, troubling the expectation created by the bass, undercutting the stability its root position might imply.

As Figure 2.4 illustrates, the relative instability of this tonic becomes apparent as it soon gives way to chromatic preparation for a diatonic version of the supertonic harmony, which is then transformed from a B♭ minor sonority into a half-diminished B♭ seventh chord. This leads to the first statement of the lyrics "Balm in Gilead," which are cast harmonically as a cadential six-four chord. The song exploits the appearance of these lyrics at a moment replete with musical tension: the cadence we have been led to expect is evaded twice: instead of resolving to a dominant sonority, the cadential six-four is driven to a third-inversion dominant seventh of the subdominant. This harmony leads to an inverted subdominant, which is replaced by a half-diminished supertonic seventh, which prepares the way for each subsequent approach to the cadential six-four. In the first iteration of the *B* section, the third approach to the six-four is fruitful: it leads to a cadence. By deferring the cadence we have been led to expect this dominant prolongation effects a significant build-up of tension which is then released, suggesting sonically how healing might feel somatically.

Figure 2.4: "Healing," *B* section mm. 19–33

B1: motion to hook

19

Choir

Lord, send the heal - ing, for this we know: there is a

Piano

I V/ii ii iiø 7 bVII 7

23

hook

Choir

balm in Gi - le - ad. For there's a

Piano

V 6 4 V/IV 4 2 IV 6 iiø 7 6 5

27

hook

Choir

balm in Gi - le - ad. There is a

Piano

V 6 4 V/IV 4 2 IV 6 iiø 7 bVII 7

31 **hook**
Choir
balm in Gi - le - ad. to heal___ the soul.___
31
Piano
V I
6 7
4

As Figure 2.5 demonstrates, at the end of the *B* section's second iteration, the recursive evasion of the cadential six-four and the concomitant restatement of the lyrics "balm in Gilead" becomes the center of musical activity. In the first iteration of the song, this eight-bar section is repeated a half-dozen times. These restatements expand the *B* section, creating, within this section, a moment that occupies a significant portion of the song's temporal span; as it is repeated, this material becomes the song's vamp.

Figure 2.5: "Healing," vamp

This harmonic phenomenon is analogous to what Janet Schmalfeldt has called the "'One More Time' technique."[3] In her discussion of evaded cadences in Chopin and Debussy's works she observes that, "disruptive repetitions [like these] perform the larger-scale roles of *extending the cadential function* and *expanding the form.*" She later notes that "in post-eighteenth-century music, the evaded-cadence technique frequently motivates large-scale repetitions; in other words, the technique often plays a substantial role in the expansion of the formal design."[4] But gospel's vamp suggests another use for this compositional technique: in gospel, evaded cadences such as these are motivated by the generic imperative for repetition. In addition to forming the song's

[3] Janet Schmalfeldt, "Cadential Processes: The Evaded Cadence and the 'One More Time' Technique," *Journal of Musicological Research*, 12, no. 1–2 (1992): 1–52

[4] Ibid., 6.

vamp, this recursive activity identifies the words and music combined in the choir's statement of "balm in Gilead" as the song's hook, what Gary Burns defines as either "that part of a song, sometimes the title or key lyric line, that keeps recurring," "a lyric that furthers the dramatic action," or "a musical or lyrical phrase that stands out and is easily remembered."[5]

In the performance, the end of the vamp does not disclose an end to the piece's recursive activity. Instead the coda, shown in Figure 2.6, is a reappearance of the music underneath Smallwood's introduction; its repeated completion of the PD–D–T progression compensates for the frustration woven into the vamp through the numerous cadential evasions.

Figure 2.6: "Healing," coda

Choir
Heal - ing for the soul. Heal - ing for the soul.
Piano
IV V------ I IV V------ I
7 7

This troubles David Brackett's observation that "vamps at the end of gospel songs…allow for vocal and instrumental improvisations of increasing intensity causing a corresponding shift in the music to a higher energy level," for in this song's coda, repetition serves the opposite rhetorical purpose: the coda's recursion serves to progressively release the energy accrued during the vamp.[6] Thus, although repetition is the key musical procedure of vamps and, by extension, of

[5] Gary Burns, "A Typology of 'hooks' in Popular Records," *Popular Music* 6/1 (Jan 1987): 1.

[6] David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 118.

contemporary gospel music these performances reveal that being a repetitive cycle is a necessary, but not sufficient, criterion for vamps. Rather, as Richard Middleton argues, "the significance of repetition [its role in constructing musical meaning] is closely bound up with its role in the total syntactic structure, that is, first, with the nature of what is repeated, and second, with the relationship of the repetition to the other processes and techniques which operate in a musical section."[7] Thus, rather than building intensity, this repetitive coda provides the song's promised balm.

The performance of the vamp occasions two further observations. First, we should note that during the course of the vamp the choir that is reiterating the song's hook grows, quickly aggregating the entire congregation into a singing public. This effect not only marks a successful performance, but it also contributes to the kind of immersive experience required for the affective responses expected in these worship rituals. This aspect of the gospel imagination shows how the practice calls into question Thomas Turino's distinction between presentational and participatory music.[8] In gospel, there are elements of both at work in each performance. Depending upon the congregation's familiarity with the music there is a shift from presentation to participation as the performance unfolds. And more than any other section, the vamp's "emphasis on the heightened repetition of musical material" solidifies the shift into a participatory mode of performance.[9]

Second, we might also see in the two-measure long rests present after each statement of "Balm in Gilead" a prescription for the soloist to offer textual interpolations. Indeed, Horace

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[7] Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), 269.

[8] Thomas Turnio, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[9] Ibid., 38.

Boyer's definition of this practice includes the observation that "these [textual] additions, which may complement the text or may be completely unrelated, generally are used by the singer to fill in spaces which are occupied by rests in the melody."[10] Although textual interpolation—the adding of extra words to the original text, usually through the improvisations of a soloist, a practice which Horace Boyer argues is perhaps the most unusual characteristic of gospel singing—would seem to be difficult to systematize, it is nonetheless key in the construction of meaning in gospel, and in differentiating each performance of a particular song.[11] Smallwood's interpolations serve to position the song in the broader intertextual web of belief underlying these ritual practices, and thus have a semantic function. The scriptural quotations use the fact that Smallwood's is not the first song about healing to draw individuals into the performances by engaging communal knowledge of biblical and sacred traditions.

These textual interpolations also have a syntactic function, creating what Nicholas Cook and others refer to as musical multimedia. In the case of the vamp, the words and music presented by the choir collide with the musical presentation of the texts creating at least four interacting media: 1) the song's text performed by the choir; 2) the pitch material performed by the choir; 3) the textual interpolations performed by the soloist; and 4) the pitch material mapped onto these textual interpolations. Cook argues that "the analysis of multimedia needs to be grounded, at least in the first instance, on the plane of reception rather than that of production [because] multimedia lies in the *perceived* interaction of media."[12] Pursuant to that, I want my

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[10] Horace Boyer, "Contemporary Gospel Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 7/1 (1979): 27.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33.

analysis to reveal how the interaction of words and music in these performances influences the ways that meanings are perceived.

2.2: Experiencing the Vamp

Precisely at the moment the vamp begins, Smallwood performs ecstasy: abandoning his normal vocal tessitura, he leaps into a piercing falsetto scream on the soprano A♭.[13] While the combination of pitch and phonation make it difficult to hear exactly what English word he utters, the sheer affect this moment communicates exceeds what mere words can convey. His next intelligible word is a kind of translation of the scream: he says "listen" and then launches into a recitation of the canonical healing scripture, Isaiah 53:5. Smallwood's "listen" places a demand on, and gives instruction to, the audience's collective consciousness, an instruction that is concomitant with another vital formal shift: up to this point in the performance, Smallwood's interpolated text has been only referential, directly foreshadowing the text that the choir was about to sing. After this excited declamation, however, at what we soon recognize as the beginning of vamp, the interpolations develop their own syntax—that native to the scriptural passage. Although Smallwood's later interpolations are not overtly intertextual, they do operate with their own kind of formal logic. See, for example, figure 2.7, which shows a set of the interpolations characterized by a repeated melodic contour, similar rhythmic figuration, and an extensive use of anaphora, a rhetorical figure in which the first part of a phrase is repeated while the second part is allowed to vary. This technique is ubiquitous in Smallwood's textual interpolations and many sermons.[14]

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[13] http://youtu.be/W0nHUyxeMfI?t=5m50s (5'47"–6'43")

[14] Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Word that Moved America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 128–41.

Figure 2.7: "Healing," textual interpolation

Smallwood
For your heart-ache, for your pro-blem, for your bur-den, for your sit-u-a-tion, for your pain, for your sor-row
Choir
Balm in Gil - e - ad
Piano

One illuminative way of theorizing the perceptual implications of this vamp—and others like it—relates to the notion of "intention," a concept central to phenomenology. Robert Sokolowski describes intention as "essentially 'consciousness of' or an 'experience of' something or other."[15] Perception, then, is perception *of* something. Crucially, intention highlights the percipient engagement at work in any type of consciousness. The utility of this notion for this section of the vamp becomes apparent through Sokolowski's analyses of the apprehension of a cube and of a building. His argument that the unseen sides of both the cube and building are apprehended through "empty intention" sheds light on the formal effects of interpolating well-known, sacred passages into iterations of repeated material. In these vamps, textual interpolation creates its own syntax, playing on memory and anticipation, shaping the affective dimension of this ritual. Comparing Smallwood's interpolation—with the choir's statements in parentheses—and the passage that is the intertext shows how these interpolations circumscribe three iterations of the hook.

[15] Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction To Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 8.

Smallwood's Interpolation

Listen, he was wounded for our transgressions. The word of God says. Hallelujah!
For there's a balm in Gilead!
And it also says that he was bruised for our iniquity.
There is a balm in Gilead!
The chastisement of our peace was upon him.
For there's a balm in Gilead!
And with his stripes I'm healed! I'm healed! Right now I'm healed!

Passage

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.[16]

The instruction to "listen" directs attention away from the repeated material to the interpolations, showing how the piece's multiple media collaboratively shape this vamp. This suggests something specific about the role of intention in experiencing musical multimedia. Following Cook's contention concerning the centrality of perception to the effect of multimedia, I argue that at this moment in Smallwood's performance the divergence of the interpolations from the choir's repeated text highlights the interaction between multiple syntactic strands that are so fundamental to this vamp's form and effect. The text of Isaiah 53:5 is often recruited in songs, sermons, statements, and prayers concerning healing. And built into this quotation from the scripture is a kind of telos, for the entire purpose of reciting this quote is to get to its last word, "healed." When this goal is achieved while the goal of the underlying harmonic progression is denied, a kind of friction between the two media is produced.[17]

With the combination of the scream, the instruction to "listen," and the emphatic scriptural quotation, Smallwood effects an attentional shift. In so doing, he calls for a different

[16] Isaiah 53:5 KJV
[17] Cook identifies this friction as "contest."

kind of listening. Given how striking that high, intense sound is, one can't help but listen to it. But Smallwood's "listen" suggests that this shift is an invitation to listen with the entire body, not just the ear. That the beginning of the song's central formal unit, its vamp, is also the place where Smallwood chooses to tune up reveals the connection between gospel's musical forms and its aesthetic basis.

2.3: The Song as Sermon

Smallwood's communicative goal comes into clearer relief in the reprise of the song's vamp. As the first attempt at ending this already extensive song, the musicians can be heard offering light accompaniment to fill the space. And members of the choir offer their own soft vocal improvisations, contributing to a heterophonic texture. Above this, at 10'00", Smallwood launches into a discussion about the healing that is the subject of the song, observing that:

> Somebody's going through something tonight, right under the sound of my voice, but I want you to know tonight that the healing is in the building right now. It's here right now! All you've got to do is reach out and get it! All you've got to do is reach out and claim your healing!

By turning to the choir and band and quickly stating "there is a balm," Smallwood signals the reprise. As the choir returns to their restatement of "there is a balm in Gilead" and "for there is a balm in Gilead," the composer offers a set of textual interpolations that provide important insight into the work these musical structures are doing. Facing the congregation, Smallwood asks "Do you believe it?" He reiterates the question two more times, for a total of three queries. He then proceeds to say: "Don't worry about your hurt. Don't worry about your pain. Don't worry about your situation." Why? Because the healing of which the song speaks is present. Smallwood makes this point by proclaiming "it's here" seven times, on the high A♭ that has

served as his reciting tone. Before making a transition from the vamp to the coda, the composer combines praise and exhortation, saying: "Hallelujah! Reach out and get it! Hallelujah! Reach out!" As the choir applies the balm with their restatement of "healing for the soul," Smallwood earnestly invites the audience to: "Come on and sing it with us." He then offers what I think is the most illuminating of the song's interpolations: "If you really believe that thing, sing it like you mean it." Putting together the recurring theme of belief—"Do you believe" and "If you really believe it"—and the notion of transcendence that is implied by repeatedly saying of divine healing: "it's here"—points to the communicative purpose of this song, and more specifically of its vamp.

When I asked Reverend Smallwood about the role of vamps in his music, he equated the vamp to the solution of a problem that is only partially a musical one:

> Usually, I want that to be the pinnacle of the piece in some kind of way. Whatever the point of the song…is that's the place that I want to drive it home. So, for example, in healing: the whole meat of the song is "there is a balm in Gilead." We talk about the healing and all the other stuff, but "there is a balm in Gilead" is the answer. So for that answer, which is the meat of the piece and the point of the piece, I want something that is going hammer that home to people who hear it to really give them encouragement and say hey, this is the answer to your issues [and] to your problem.[18]

Smallwood's response reveals what might properly be understood as the composer's fundamentally homiletic urge, one that is clear from the lyrics. The text reads:

> Don't be discouraged
> Joy comes in the morning
> Know that God is nigh
>
> Stand still and look up
> God is going to show up
> He is standing by

[18] Braxton Shelley, telephone interview with Richard Smallwood, August 12, 2011.

> There's healing for your sorrow
> Healing for your pain
> Healing for your spirit
> There's shelter from the rain
>
> Lord, send the healing, for this we know
> There is a balm in Gilead…
> To heal the soul
> Healing for the soul

The lyrics engage a range of causes of distress—sorrow and pain, among others—contending that the balm provides healing for all of these. In this way, by not imposing or insisting on a particular form of healing, the music offers a more inclusive kind of balm—an endless deferral of meaning from signifier to signifier forming a vector of reference back to the primary emblem of healing, Gilead, that allows the listener to hear what s/he needs to hear from it. The intertexts are plentiful: "Joy comes in the morning" is a direct quotation from Psalm 30:5. "Stand still and look up" is a paraphrase of the statement "Stand still and see the salvation of the lord," which can be found in Exodus 14:13. While we have already seen the textual interpolation from Isaiah, some attention to the original context of "balm in Gilead" will be helpful. The phrase, which refers to an emission from a plant found in the region of Gilead, found its way into the Christian tradition through Jeremiah 8:22, which asks: "is there no balm in Gilead?" In "Healing," however, Smallwood is not questioning the power of healing but affirming it. In the song's lyrics he postulates a kind of constructive theology of healing.

What is particularly striking are the multiple levels of discourse at work in this section. While most of the text has either an implied or given second-person subject, the sentence that houses the statement of the hook combines both a prayer—"Lord, send the healing"—and a statement of belief—"for this we know there is a Balm in Gilead." But Smallwood's own

comments about driving home the idea that there is a balm in Gilead suggest that while it concludes a short prayer, it is at the same time directed toward the human auditors. As Smallwood and his choir, Vision, repetitively proclaim that "there is a balm in Gilead," the song's lyrics shed their constative valence, becoming something akin to J. L. Austin's notion of performative utterances: "in which to say something is to do something, or in saying something we do something, or even *by* saying something we do something."[19] In this instance, at the song's live recording, as the choir repeatedly sang that "there is a balm in Gilead" the song accrued a performative, sacramental power which transformed their temporal setting into a transcendent space where the balm from Gilead became palpable in their midst: the balm from Gilead was experienced in Detroit.

This song's effect suggests that it—specifically the centrality of its vamp—functions as a kind of sacred rhetoric. It aims to persuade and to convince the congregants of the availability of healing, while at the same time allowing its affective power to *do* the healing they seek. And the choir's repetitions offer the audience the opportunity to perform their belief by singing. That's why he asks: do you believe it? The interpenetration of words and music, belief and rhetoric in the gospel vamp occasions a question about how we might theorize the relationship between gospel songs and many black sermons. How do vamps turn gospel compositions into sermons in song?

2.4: Studies of Black Preaching

In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), the sociologist W.E.B. Dubois outlines three essential elements of the traditional African American church: "the frenzy, the preacher, [and] the

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[19] J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 108.

music."[20] These three terms refer to different categories of phenomenon—an individual, a performance practice, and the response elicited by both—that are integrated in musical forms of black preaching. I am interested here in how all three of Dubois's categories are imbricated in both black preaching and gospel music. Another early study of black preaching, William Pipes's *Say Amen, Brother! Old-Time Negro Preaching: A Study in American Frustration* (1951) focuses on the work of seven preachers in Macon County, Georgia. Pipes characterizes the emotive musical aspects of these sermons as African retentions designed to provide a kind of catharsis that enabled African Americans to cope with their contemporary predicament. [21] Taking a somewhat different approach, the folklorist Bruce Rosenberg examines the "chanted" black sermons delivered by a cohort of Californians using the oral-formulaic theory developed by Albert Lord and Milman Parry in their work on epic poetry. [22] He contends that the extemporaneous aspects of these sermons recruited a body of linguistic formulas that are shaped to fit black preaching's rhythmic imperatives. Gerald Davis (1985) builds on Rosenberg's study, but proposes that the oral formulas outlined by Rosenberg, following Lord and Parry, are insufficiently illuminative for black sermons.[23] Instead, he suggests that these sermons are narrative texts constituted by textual units that are shaped around the elaboration of a key idea. His study also employs an ethnographic approach in an attempt to understand the metrics by which congregants evaluate sermons.

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[20] W. E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 190–192.

[21] William Harrison Pipes, *Say Amen, Brother!: Old-time Negro Preaching, a Study in American Frustration* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1951).

[22] Bruce A. Rosenberg, *Can These Bones Live?: The Art of the American Folk Preacher* (New York, NY: Oxford University, Press 1970).

[23] Gerald L. Davis, *I Got the Word in Me and I Can Sing It, You Know: A Study of the Performed African-American Sermon* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

The most sensitive approaches to this aspect of black preaching—and those most applicable to the present study—have come from writers who are both practitioners and scholars, beginning with the pioneering scholarship of Henry Mitchell. Mitchell's notion of "celebration," which he defines as the "purposefully focused emotional expression" that is characteristic of much black Christian preaching, lies at the heart of this body of scholarship.[24] More than a simple expression of emotion, Mitchell argues that the heightened rhetoric found at the end of these sermons serves both a spiritual and a pedagogical function: "this gladness … tends to etch into memory the substantive content" so that "the traditionally abstract 'point' in sermons takes on experiential significance." Celebration, then, "serves as ecstatic reinforcement" of the sermon's content.[25] Frank Thomas, following Mitchell, describes celebration as "the culmination of the sermonic design, where a moment is created in which the remembrance of a redemptive past and/or the condition of a liberated future transforms the events immediately experienced." Both "*the goal* of the emotional process of the sermon and *the final stage* of the sermon through which the goal is achieved," celebration "intends, as part of the emotional process of the sermon, emotive movement similar to musical movement."[26] Thomas's critical discussion of celebration points to the enduring implication that much black preaching achieves its affective ends through explicit musicality.

The ubiquity of musical forms of black preaching is evinced by the numerous names used to refer to this practice. As Martha Simmons notes, this practice is referred to by names including

[24] Henry Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990).
[25] Ibid, 35.
[26] Frank Thomas, *They Like To Never Quit Praising God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1997), 31; 106.

whooping, intoning, moaning, tuning, squalling, humming, zooming, and chanting.[27] Simmons draws a distinction between "whooping" and "tuning," noting that the former is more melodic than the later, and that the latter is not restricted to preachers, but also shows up in prayers offered by certain members of the laity. Simmons also notes that many preachers who do not engage melody in their sermons achieve a similar effect through the use of what she calls "cadence," by which she connotes a regular and emphatic sense of rhythm. Notwithstanding the differences between forms of musicality that she points out, the long history and wide variety of this practice is itself the point I want to accent, for I view it is as but one manifestation of a broader system of belief. Hereafter I will use the phrase "tuning up" to refer to all these forms of homiletical musicality because it accents the tradition's explicit connection to musical practice.

I should want to note, however, that there are arguments against the approach I take here. For instance, Cleophus LaRue has suggested that the scholarly focus on black preaching's musicality is excessive and not particularly illuminative. He argues that "the power of black preaching lies preeminently in belief and content and not in style or technique."[28] According to LaRue, this belief takes the form of "a distinctive, biblical hermeneutic" that centers on "an intimate relationship with a powerful God who demonstrated throughout scripture a propensity to side with the downtrodden" and can thus "be trusted to act mightily on their behalf."[29] Larue contends that this conviction constitutes a "sacred story" for black Christians—one that "form[s] consciousness rather than being among the objects of which consciousness is directly aware."

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[27] Martha Simmons and Frank A Thomas ed. *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010. 864–84.

[28] Cleophus Larue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville & London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 5.

[29] Ibid., LaRue, 2000, 1–2. See also: Benjamin E. Mays, *The Negro's God* (New York: Russell & Russell, a Divison of Atheneum Publishers, Inc., 1968), 83; Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1976), 38–39.

This belief, he argues, "is for them a way of being in the world; a way of looking at life that over a period of time constitutes their reality."[30] Discourses focused on emotion, celebration, and musicality in search of the distinctiveness of black preaching are, according to LaRue, attuned to "ancillary characteristics," which are in fact "the expressive by-products of [black Christians'] gut-level belief in the mighty acts of the sovereign god."[31]

From the perspective I wish to develop here, however, Larue's argument flirts with a form/content dichotomy that misses a crucial point: that is, more than mere by-products of belief, the emotive and musical ingredients of black sermons help, to quote LaRue, to "form consciousness." To think of belief as the product of both a set of theological propositions and the cognitive and affective state in which this theology is constructed invites theorists to dissolve the distinction between sermonic words and their musical setting. It is precisely the experience of divine power and presence in the moment of the sermon—one that is frequently facilitated by musicality—that affirms the parishioners' ability to rely on the presence and power of God in their lives. If, as Larue contends, "from beginning to end, therefore, the black sermon has as its goal the creation of a meaningful connection between an all-powerful God and a marginalized and powerless people," then homiletical musicality is one of the central means by which that connection is experienced.[32] Indeed, LaRue's interest in the formation of consciousness through meaningful connection to the divine seems to refer exactly to what Mitchell calls "experiential significance" and what Thomas couches in the language of transformation. The combination of form and effect outlined by these theorists lies at the heart of the approach to black preaching—and gospel performance—that I will develop here.

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[30] Larue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, 3.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 19.

The relationship between the practice of "tuning up" and the belief it foments comes into clearer focus through William Turner's phenomenological approach to black preaching. Turner's argument begins with "the transcendence of Christian preaching over ordinary speech," which, he contends, relies on the assumption that "something transformative is supposed to happen in [black] preaching…its performative power is expected to move people and to cause reaction."[33] Turner grounds this expectation in a definition of black preaching as a "kratophany," which, following Mircea Eliade, he defines as "an object that opens people to an understanding of the transcendent while simultaneously being rooted in the world of tangible, historical reality." Within the black church, Turner argues, "there is no more kratophanic object, none more indicative of the presence of deity, power, and intrusion from another world, than that of the preached Word couched in musicality."[34] Turner's experiential expectation that something transformational will be wrought through preaching's performative power vents "a set of normative and evaluative criteria" that is fundamentally aesthetic.[35] Analogous to Travis Jackson's notion of the "blues aesthetic," this body of cultural knowledge is "constituted by (learned) practices," and is "the sum of the reflective and normative assertions that musicians have made regarding processes of performance, interaction, and evaluation."[36] Those who share this way of thinking constitute an "aesthetic community," which Gerald Davis defines as "a group of people sharing the knowledge for the development and maintenance of a particular affecting mode or 'craft' and the articulating principles to which the affecting mode must adhere

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[33] William Turner, "The Musicality of Black Preaching: A Phenomenology" in Performance in Preaching: Bringing the Sermon to Life, eds. Jana Childers and Clayton Schmit (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 203, 200.

[34] Ibid., 203.

[35] Travis Jackson, *Blowin' The Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 109.

[36] Ibid., 126.

or oppose."[37] And it is in the context of this theomusicological community that black preaching and gospel music reproduce belief. According to Evans Crawford, forming the aforementioned community requires "a rigorous and authentic spirituality on the part of both preacher and congregation."[38] What Crawford terms "spirituality" I refer to as "the gospel imagination."

2.5: Preaching in Community

The steadfastly communal nature of black preaching is an important point of departure for understanding its cultural underpinnings. Although preaching is understood as an inherently public act across many cultures, as the previous examples demonstrate, in black preaching collectivity itself has a theological valence. As Evans Crawford has argued, the formation of community in black preaching is a manifestation of what Martin Luther described as "the priesthood of all believers."[39] By engaging call and response, the practice of "tuning up" summons the long history and the wide range of African American cultural productions. No practice is more integral to these forms than the ring shout, and in *Slave Culture*, Sterling Stuckey shows how this ritual—with its African origins—served as a collectivizing medium for the enslaved Africans who came from different tribes and spoke different languages. The ring shout was "the main context in which [enslaved] Africans recognized values common to them," thus enabling the slaves to experience community with each other through the process of communion with the divine.[40] And its centrality as a symbol of community underlies much scholarship on

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[37] Gerald L. Davis, "Afro-American Coil Basketry in Charleston County, South Carolina: Affective Characteristics of an Artistic Craft in a Social Context," in *American Folklife*, ed. Don Yoder (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1976), 177.

[38] Evans Crawford, *The Hum: Call and Response in African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 16.

[39] Ibid., 15.

[40] Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 16.

African American culture, much of it circulating around the technique of call and response, a prominent manifestation of the aesthetic impulse of the ring shout.

So vital is this predilection to black music making that Samuel Floyd fashioned the term Call-Response as a master trope to describe a host of musical techniques—"calls, cries, hoops, and hollers; call-and-response, illusion, pendular and blue thirds, musical expressions, vocal invitations by instruments, and parlando; multimeter, cross rhythms, and interlocking rhythms"—that are commonplace in black music.[41] Guthrie Ramsey, for his part, theorizes the shared influences of black cultural productions using the language "troping cycles," which he argues are "musical and ideological remnants of the ring shout from the slave past" that "work as a microrepresentations of the syntax of rituals present throughout the African Diaspora." Among these forms are: "the spoken emphatic repetitions in black sermons as well as the dramatic call-and-response patterns at their climaxes; the emotional four-bar vamps of gospel songs; [and] the two-bar 'shoutin' music' cycles that accompany religious dancing in the black church."[42] The practice of "tuning up" engages each of these tropes in order to facilitate a communal experience.

As such, "tuning up" is further illuminated by Victor Turner's concepts of "communitas" and "liminality." For Turner, "communitas" refers to the especially intense—very nearly egalitarian—form of social bond experienced during "liminal" phenomena, that is, during moments of "social and cultural transition."[43] Turner's conception of "liminality" follows the work of the French anthropologist Arnold van Gennup on "rites of passage." As a student of

[41] Samuel Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from African to the United States* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 6.

[42] Guthrie P Ramsey, *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip Hop* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 60.

[43] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), 94–130.

social life, van Gennup argues for a fairly catholic conception of individual transitions, always encompassing three stages: separation, margin (limen), and incorporation.[44] Turner's work is an elaboration of this second stage of the transition. These theories make urgent one of the most interesting features of black preaching: even in the midst of such steadfastly communal events, preachers are charged with great responsibility for the experience. There is, even within the liminal space of worship, an additional dimension of liminality as the preacher is separated from the community (congregation) in order to lead it, and is then responsible for reconstituting the community around his/her sermon. Thus, "tuning up" can be thought of as a rite of incorporation. What these preachers achieve in moments like these is helpfully elucidated by Catherine Bell's theory of *processes of ritualization*. According to Bell, these actions are "culturally specific strategies" for "the production of a ritualized body," that is shaped by its possession of a "sense of ritual."[45] Bell engages Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory to propose that agents who enact processes of ritualization possess "ritual mastery," which is

> the ability—not equally shared, desired, or recognized—to (1) take and remake schemes from the shared culture that can strategically nuance, privilege, or transform, (2) deploy them in the formulation of a privileged ritual experience, which in turn (3) impresses them in a new form upon agents able to deploy them in a variety of circumstances beyond the circumference of the rite itself.[46]

As black preachers seek to "deploy" tuning up "in the formulation of a privileged ritual experience" they bring into relief the relationship between practice and perception.

The combination of practice and perception in this tradition is helpfully illuminated by Harris Berger's ethnographic approach to musical experience. His phenomenological

[44] Arnold van Gennup, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

[45] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 7–8, 98.

[46] Ibid., 116.

ethnography rests on a dialectical conception of the relationship of formal phenomenology—concerned with general attributes of human experience and perception—and humanistic phenomenology, which is more focused on the social conditioning of how we experience. He defines experience as "the contents of consciousness" and argues that the "constitution of perceptual experiences and meanings is a kind of practice" accomplished through "the subject's active, social engagement with the world."[47] Berger studies the means through which musicians "structure their awareness in the thickness of the living present, variously "protenting" (anticipating upcoming sections) and "retaining" (holding in living awareness past chunks of musical material) to form experiences of phrases and sections."[48]

Thus far, I have argued that what Mitchell and Thomas call "celebration" —which, as Simmons notes takes a range of forms, and is referred to by various names—is not opposed to or ancillary to belief, as Larue suggests. Instead, I contend that homiletical musicality is performative: it is fed by the culture that it sustains. In "the gospel imagination," belief and sound, words and music, form and content are inextricably linked. This performative alliance appears throughout the next section of this chapter in two sermonic excerpts that present preachers entering the liminal space of proclamation in order to construct a transformed community through their words. But we will see that their words are not "theirs" in any exclusive sense: rather, this homiletic "process of ritualization" finds compelling ways to use familiar items—scriptures, songs, and sounds—from the shared culture to cultivate original experiences. Along the way, they enrich the system of belief, reception and performance that I have called "the gospel imagination."

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[47] Harris Berger, *Metal, Rock, Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience* (Hanover & London: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), 19, 119.

[48] Ibid., 121.

2.6: Case Studies

Bishop James Morton, "The Lazarus Conspiracy"

To get a better sense of this practice, consider the conclusion of Bishop James Morton's sermon "The Lazarus Conspiracy," preached at New Beginning Full Gospel Baptist Church in Decatur, Georgia.[49] This sermon examines the conspiracy recounted in Chapter 12 of the Gospel of John in which the chief priests sought to kill Lazarus after he was raised from the dead. Bishop Morton's sermon conclusion flows from the flaw he sees in their plan: namely that their intention to kill Lazarus in order to suppress news of his resurrection is rendered futile by the many others who had been witnesses of Jesus's power.

> If I'd been there, I'da told them: if y'all are gonna kill the testimony, you all are going to have to go on a killing spree. One of the first thing you're going to have to do, you're going to have get all the wedding invitations of **those who were at a wedding in Cana of Galilee**. And hundreds of people saw Jesus turn water into wine. And they'll always be a testimony telling folks, "I was there when he turned into wine."
>
> If you're going to kill Lazarus, you're still going to have to go on a killing spree. Why, ah, you need to find a man who was lying by a pool one day. He'd been laying there for thirty-eight long years and, ah, yes. And Jesus came and told him, pick up your bed and walk. You don't hear me. And the man was seen running and leaping. With his bed on his back. You don't hear me.
>
> If you're gonna kill Lazarus, you've got some more killing to do. Why, ah, you need to find a woman who had an issue of blood, and Jesus told her who touched me. And she said it was I and I have been made whole. You better kill her, too.
>
> If you're gonna kill Lazarus, yeah, you need to find that demonic man, who lived in the tombs, who made his house in the tombs and Jesus cast the devil out the man and sent the devil into some hogs and all the hogs got drowned in the water and the next time we saw this demonic, the bible said he was dressed, he was clothes and in his right man. I wish I had a witness here.

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[49] Bishop James Morton, "The Lazarus Conspiracy," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UMHs9t85xg (0'54").

> If you're gonna kill Lazarus. You need to find the blind man who sat beside the road that day. He was blind and he could not see. But he heard (yeah) that Jesus was passing by and this blind man cried out Jesus, please don't pass me by. You don't hear me. And Jesus spat in his eyes and the man began to see. If you're gonna kill Lazarus, yeah. You need to find ten lepers. Good God almighty, who has leprosy and Jesus told them go show yourselves to the priests. You don't hear me. And the bible says as they went they were healed. And you especially need to find that one leper that turned back and said thank you, thank you. You need to find him because as long he lives he'll be a testimony. (I wish I had somebody praying.)
>
> And if you're gonna kill Lazarus, you better find that bowed woman, who came to Jesus. And Jesus looked at her and said: "Woman, thou art loosed." And straight way the strings that had her tied and she was delivered.
>
> If you're gonna kill Lazarus. (Yeah!) You better look for five thousand men besides women and children who were fed that day off of two fish and five loaves of bread. You better find them.
>
> Not only that, but, as I go to my seat, If you're gonna kill Lazarus, you better get ready to kill me, because as long as I live, as long as I got breath in my body, I will tell the world He's able.

More than just describing the scene, Morton summons a virtual rendering of the scene that he can imaginatively place himself within, recruiting the conditional tense to exclaim: "If I'd been there, I'da told them: if y'all are gonna kill the testimony, you all are going to have to go on a killing spree." In this, the preacher invites his congregants to experience that moment—to transcend their historical location, and to inhabit that ancient space. Morton formalizes this experiential shift and draws his congregation into the sermon by culling the community's knowledge of biblical traditions to collectively imagine those who bore similar testimonies. He began his list by stating: "one of the first things you're going to have to do is to get all the wedding invitations of those who were at a wedding in Cana of Galilee." As he lifted this first example, the preacher also lifted his voice from the domain of speech into that of song. In the excerpt the phrase, "those who were at a wedding in Cana of Galilee," is cast in bold in the

excerpt above to illustrate that it is as he sings these words that Morton "tunes up." The accompanying musicians recognize Morton's shift, and as soon as he settles on the pitch, the organ enters with its antiphonal answer to the preacher's call; Morton's central pitch, E♭, necessarily becomes the tonal center for their accompaniment. The musicians' responses often coincide with, and I would argue, choreograph the audience's response. The music in this event becomes a coordinating technology, enabling the various participants to find their place within the performance. As the celebration unfolds, Morton's melodic presentation continues. Over time, it is intensified as he spends more time in the higher section of the E♭ scale at work in this conclusion. The intensification of the celebration models the intensifying response visible in the choir that stands behind him and the audience members captured on the video footage; as he goes on, more and more people stand and engage in continually escalating responses to his sermon. Morton's long list provides ample opportunity for his congregants to find themselves in the narrative. This is also the preacher's clear goal in this sermon: he is using these repetitions to build up anticipation for the closing line where he says "if you're going to kill Lazarus, you better get ready to kill me."

But his shift from speech to song is not the only musical move. For most of the sermon's close, Bishop Morton recruits formal repetition to shape his text. Each new entry has the basic syntax: "If you're going to kill Lazarus" + some other sacred story. Morton's sermon demonstrates Jon Michael Spencer's contention that in this genre "the preacher provides both the call and the response."[50] In this sermon, the syntax of his verse is joined to the interjections of his congregation, resulting in what Spencer has called "a two-tiered responsorial form."[51] This

[50] Jon Michael Spencer, *Sacred Symphony: the Chanted Sermon of the Black Preacher* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 7.

[51] Ibid.

repetition itself incites its own continuation, but the repeated pattern builds in elements of difference through the rhetorical technique called anaphora. Thus, Morton's rhetorical strategies become musical devices, for, as Elizabeth Margulis has argued, "when language is being repetitive…language is being musical." Linguistic repetition shifts attention "away from what is directly captured by words and toward what is revealed by the structure, prosody, rhythm, and tempo of the utterance of the words." Therefore, linguistic repetition summons "a musical way of listening,"[52] which in this context mirrors his shift in vocal production, his homiletical musicality.

Case Study: Rev. Dr. Gina Stewart, "Am I My Brother and My Sister's Keeper?"

Speaking at the Beautiful Feet Awards Banquet at the 2011 Samuel Dewitt Proctor conference, Reverend Dr. Gina Stewart offered a sermon entitled "Am I My Brother and Sister's Keeper?"[53] This sermon was especially apt for the context because one of this conference's central foci is the issue of social justice. Consider the following excerpt:

> When God asks us about how we treat our brothers and our sisters.
> I don't know about you tonight, when God asks questions:
>
> I wanna be in the company of those who didn't just answer the question with words, but who answered the question with deeds.
>
> I wanna be in the company of those who answered the question with sacrifice and service, who answered the question with courage and commitment, who answered the question with perseverance and persistence.
>
> I wanna be in the number with the brother from South Africa who picked up his friend who was shot in an uprising.

[52] Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, *On Repeat: How Music Plays The Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 162.

[53] Rev. Dr. Gina Stewart, "Am I My Brother and My Sister's Keeper?" https://vimeo.com/26110513

I wanna be in the company of a Samuel Dewitt Proctor, who did not give up on filling up the shoes of Amos, Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

I wanna be in the company of a Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson who fought against oppression and injustice— fought for peace, civil rights, equity, economic parity, and social justice.

I wanna be in the company of Bishop Barbara King who committed her life to the transformation of other human beings' lives, social welfare, education, and the uplift of other human beings.

I wanna be in the company of the Reverend Dr. William Bill Lawson: a prophetic minister with a prophetic mantle, with a commitment to civil rights, youth empowerment and galvanizing community.

I wanna be in the company of a Dr. Dolores Williams: a trailblazer, a justice-seeker, a pioneer, a mentor, a risk-taker, a scholarly scholar, a womanist theologian.

I wanna be in the company of Martin Luther King, Dr. Dorothy Height, of Sojourner Truth, of Rosa Parks.

I wanna be in the company of a Jeremiah Wright, an Iva Carruthers, a Frederick Haynes, a Malcom X, a Clay Evans, a Dr. Sam Mckinney.

I wanna be in the company of a Dr. Otis Moss, Jr.

I wanna be in the company of Madea, Aunt Jane, Uncle John—the folks that didn't have money, but they knew how to love.

I wanna be in the company of Shifrah and Puah who would not obey the king, but they let the boys live.

I wanna be in the company of Esther, who said: "if I perish, let me perish. I'm going to see the King.

I want to be in the company of Deborah who said I'll fight, but the battle is going to a woman.

I wanna be in the company of Miriam who picked up her tambourine after they crossed over the waters and sang praises to God.

I wanna be in the company of Joanna who gave of her resources and supported Jesus' ministry off of Herod's payroll.

I wanna be in the company of those who said:

“A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
(Can I preach it like I feel it?)
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.
To serve this present age,
My calling to fulfill:
Oh, may it all my pow’rs engage
To do my Master’s will!”

Can you tap your neighbor, and say: “I don’t know about you, but I wanna be in the company that said yes to Jesus.”

I wanna be in the company that’s gonna one day stand before the Ancient of Days and hear him say: “Servant, well done! You’ve been faithful over a few things; come on up higher. I’ll make you rule over many!”

Roughly 23 minutes into this 28-minute sermon, Stewart’s celebrative design begins to emerge. Although less overt than Bishop Morton’s shift into song, Stewart’s voice also begins to demonstrate a more discernible pitch; her reciting tone is G4. Although her voice moves back and forth along the speech-song continuum, along the way one of the musicians present for the event joins her, to “back her up” in G. As she moves through the celebration, she occasionally reaches up to the B♭4, suggesting that she, like Morton is exploring an expanded tonal space of the sort more fully developed in song. Dr. Stewart’s sermon close is built on the phrase: “I want to be in the company.” This is well-suited to the event because it allows her space to laud that night’s honorees during this climactic portion of the sermon. As did Bishop Morton in his sermon, Stewart uses anaphora, in this case to construct an extended list of individuals whose identities are connected not only to biblical traditions but also to contemporary issues and African American history. She begins this litany by talking about individuals—Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson, Rev. Dr. Samuel D. Proctor, and Bishop Barbara King, among others—who were known for their commitment to preaching about social justice and engaging in progressive social

activism. But then she shifts to another cast of individuals—Shifrah and Puah, Miriam and Esther—whose names appear in scripture. Near the end of the phrase, Stewart uses her riff to lead into a quotation of the hymn "A Charge to Keep." Jon Michael Spencer offers a context for this sort of move, noting that:

> hymnody, psalmody, traditional spirituals, and gospel songs are important sources of text for the contemporary preacher's spirituals…quotations from these sources also evoke a musical state of mind in the listener, not only due to their formulaic musicality, but because familiarity with the lyric prompts recollection of the music; and the listener's consequential responses contribute to the contemporaneous form of the preaching.[54]

Thus, this sermon ending invites the conferees to imagine a transcendent space, the company, what the writer of Hebrews called "the great cloud of witnesses." To be in the company with people who are deceased is an invitation into the transcendent of the same kind as Morton's invitation for his congregants to return to the scene of an ancient conspiracy. Here, as in the previous example, the conclusion constitutes community around communal knowledge, inviting an experience of transcendence. And the final move of the celebration, is the promise of permanent transcendence—heaven.

Case Study: Rev. Dr. E. Dewey Smith, Jr., "A Seminary from a Cemetery"

A section from 45'34" to 46'57" of Rev. Dr. E. Dewey Smith, Jr.'s "A Seminary from a Cemetery" offers an instructive example of "tuning up."[55] Smith is well known for his virtuosic homiletic musicality. As in the preceding sermons, anaphora appears as a formal device and source of musical coordination in Smith's sermon. Here, anaphora is constructed by starting successive sentences with the words "he died." Smith said:

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[54] Spencer, *Sacred Symphony*, 14.

[55] Rev. Dr. E. Dewey Smith, Jr., "A Seminary from A Cemetery," https://youtu.be/qH9jEnqSsB4?t=45m34s

He died…until the sun when down in the earth.
Died…til dead bodies got up out the streets of Jerusalem.
He died…until the veil of the temple was rent in twain.
Died…to purchase your salvation.

I said (modulation) he died…until a drunk came by possibility
oooo
Shake somebody's hand and say I'm glad he died

He (modulation) died…for your sins and mine
Hung him on the cross,
between two thieves.
He hung his head
in the locks of his shoulder.
And he died!
They took him off the cross,
and laid him in joseph's new tomb

Go tell somebody:
He stayed there…**all** night Friday night.
He stayed there…**all** night Saturday night.

But somebody shout early
(y'all know I'm from Georgia. I just can't say it one time)

Early!
Early!
Early, Sunday morning
He got up with all power!

Although he is preaching in E he leaps up to the tenor G to exclaim "he died" before returning to the reciting tone for the rest of the first phrase. Figure 2.8 shows that Smith truncates the beginning of this second sentence, omitting the pronoun while offering a melismatic version of "died" that falls from G through F♯, E, and C♯, to B, a fourth below his reciting tone.

Figure 2.8: "Seminary from A Cemetery," melisma, 45'39"

The third sentence answers this preceding descent by reaching a whole step above the reciting tone before ending at the place there. After Smith exclaims "he died …" for the fourth time, the preacher gives the accompanying keyboardist a "thumbs up" sign just as he modulates upward by a semitone to F. After uttering two phrases separated in this key, Smith modulates once more to F♯. Once grounded in F♯, Smith moves his narrative from the crucifixion to the resurrection, recruiting one of his characteristic set pieces to state that Jesus stayed there (in the grave) "all night Friday night" and "all night Saturday night." As the bolded text indicates, each statement of "all" is performed as a melisma, sounding pitches that are immediately repeated by the accompanying keyboardist.

Figure 2.9: "Seminary from A Cemetery," melisma, 46'29"

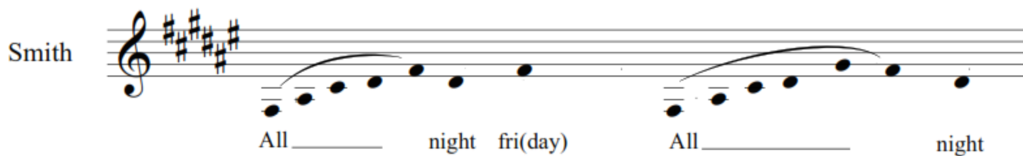

Figure 2.9 depicts the first five-note melisma, which begins on the F♯ an octave below the reciting tone and then passes through A♯, C♯, and D♯, en route to the reciting tone, and the second wherein Smith leaps a step above the reciting tone to the G♯ before returning to that pitch.

2.7: "Melody" In Black Preaching

Given the monodic nature of the sermons we've seen, theorizing "tuning up" will require some consideration of the musicological enigma that is melody. In *Everyday Tonality: Towards A Tonal Theory of What Most People Hear*, Philip Tagg discusses this nebulous term, noting that there are at least three different definitions of melody.[56] According to the first, melody consists of a coherent series of tones that can be "perceived as a musical statement with distinct rhythmic profile and pitch contour." According to a second conception, melody is constituted by the foreground of a musical section, that which is "distinct from harmony and accompaniment." The third, and most capacious definition of melody understands this parameter as "the collection of all the foreground elements in a single musical composition."[57] Highlighting some of the shared connotations of these conceptions of melody, Tagg, following Gino Stefani, offers a list of attributes commonly ascribed to melody.[58] Accordingly, melodies are:

1) easy to recognise, appropriate and to reproduce vocally;
2) perceptible as occupying durations resembling those of normal or extended exhalation (the "extended present," i.e. consisting of phrases lasting between about two and ten seconds);
3) delivered at a rate usually ranging from that of medium to very slow speech;
4) generally articulated with rhythmic fluidity and unbroken delivery of tonal material within one sequence: legato rather than staccato;
5) distinctly profiled in terms of pitch (melodic contour) and rhythm (accentuation, metre, relative duration of constituent events);
6) delivered with regularity and metric articulation of breathing;
7) relative simple in terms of tonal vocabulary;
8) tending to change pitch by intervallic steps rather than by leaps;
9) spanning rarely more than one octave.

When considered alongside this schema, the concluding portions of the sermons we have seen do

[56] Philip Tagg, *Everyday Tonality: Towards A Tonal Theory of What Most People Hear* (New York & Montreal: The Mass Media Scholars' Press, 2009), 57.

[57] Ibid., 57.

[58] Gino Stefani, "Melody: A Popular Perspective," *Popular Music* 6/1 (1987): 21–36.

indeed qualify as melodic. That these sermons are constrained by the preacher's breath satisfies (2) and (6). The fact that melodies from a sermon are often answered responsorially by an accompanying musician or audience member affirms that these sermons fulfill (1). (7) is satisfied by the mostly pentatonic content of these sermons. (9) is realized by the fact that the sermons we have seen here venture no further than an octave in any key.[59] And (3) is a given for any homiletic genre. Tagg further uses the "Metaphorical nomenclature" that is associated with melody as a means to understand the "nature of melody."[60] An etymological discussion of "tune," "a Middle English variant of tone," leads to a discussion of "air," another metaphorical synonym for melody which suggests a kind of "speech, gesture, and movement" that has "taken off." Crucially, Tagg argues that this conception emphasizes "the notion of melody as heightened discourse transcending speech."[61] Tagg's statement about melody mirrors exactly what Henry Mitchell argued about celebration in black preaching.[62]

The prominence of recitation in black preaching is shared with traditions spread across a variety of sacred and secular contexts. Qur'anic recitation is a stellar example of this practice's ubiquity. Kristina Nelson's study of Qur'anic recitation in Egypt shows how this tradition rests on a fundamental paradox between the ideal form of the Quran as an aural preservation of the "word of God," in which both text and the sonic form they take are sacred, and the contingencies of practice where vocal artistry, economics, and other factors figure prominently.[63] Tagg regards recitation as "an experiential rather than formal category of melody in popular song."[64] But this

[59] Smith does modulate up by half step, so his total range consists of a major ninth.
[60] Tagg, *Everyday Tonality*, 59.
[61] Ibid., 60.
[62] Henry Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990).
[63] Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Quran* (Cairo & New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002).
[64] Tagg, *Everyday Tonality*, 74.

statement forms an unnecessary opposition: Tagg's own statement that recited melodies are "usually articulated metrically" points to one of the most important formal and experiential aspects of black preaching—the organization of auditory perception that is effected by a sense of meter.

To see this at work, I want to return to an earlier moment in Smith's sermon. Forty-two minutes into the sermon, after saying "I'm closing," Smith visibly signals what he has already spoken by removing the microphone from its stand while settling on E-natural as a reciting tone. Immediately after he stabilizes his voice on the reciting tone, he reconnects the theme of the sermon's final point, the assignment "to go and tell it," to its original context by offering a kind of narrative summary of Jesus's life as recorded in the New Testament of the Christian bible. After noting that he "traveled down 42 burning generations…[and] stopped off in a village called Bethlehem," from 42'50" to 43'03", Smith offers five roughly equivalent phrases delivered with nearly identical rhythms.[65] Jesus was:

> Born in Bethlehem. (yes)
> Hidden in Egypt. (yes)
> Reared in Nazareth. (yes)
> Baptized in the Jordan. (yes)
> Walked the streets of Galilee and Capernaum. (yes)

As the text suggests, as Smith intones these phrases he formalizes the antiphonal relationship between himself and his audience, inviting a kind of metrical expectation that they realized by interjecting "yes" at the appropriate moment. Although the exact form of these phrases is not maintained throughout the rest of the celebration, this succession at the beginning of the sermon's final section tunes this interaction so that a form of this coordination is maintained throughout.

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[65] Rev. Dr. E. Dewey Smith, Jr., "A Seminary from A Cemetery," https://youtu.be/qH9jEnqSsB4?t=42m50s

What we have observed about this sermon illustrates Jon Michael Spencer's description of rhythm as "the element that gives black preaching locomotion and momentum," noting that this sense of rhythm is often created through "words and phrases repeated responsorially [and] treated as motives."[66] As William Turner argues, "it is the rhythm of black preaching, giving it an element of musicality, that has become normal. As much as any other factor, rhythm is responsible for the incredible power that accompanies black preaching." According to Turner, what is called "the chanted sermon," then, has rhythm as its central element.[67]

This aspect of black preaching resembles the metrical organization effected by the "rhythmic and articulative features" of rap performance—what Kyle Adams has theorized as "flow."[68] The prominence of rhythm in discussions of black preaching and in the sermons themselves invites some consideration of the applicability of recent music theoretic scholarship on rhythm and meter. I want to suggest that Christopher Hasty's phenomenological approach to musical meter is of the greatest use here because the kind of musical coordination that is achieved by what the homileticians have called "rhythm" relies on a kind of predictability that others might understand as "meter."[69] More specifically, the call-and-response frameworks constructed by these sermons are just that: frameworks. But the fact that they are performatively constituted during the course of a sermon suggests the utility of an emergent conception of musical meter.

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[66] Spencer, *Sacred Symphony*, 1–3.

[67] William C. Turner, *The United Holy Church of America: A Study in Black Holiness-Pentecostalism* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2006), 163.

[68] Kyle Adams, "On the Metrical Techniques of Flow in Rap Music," *Music Theory Online* 15 (2009): paragraph 6, http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.09.15.5/mto.09.15.5.adams.html. Adams uses "flow" as a kind of catch-all for a range of rhythmic practices. Musical appropriations of the term are indebted to the more general form of intense concentration and fulfillment outlined by the psychologist Mihaly Csiksentmihalyi in his seminal work, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990.)

[69] Mark J. Butler, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 100–101.

The most useful parts of this theory for our purposes are highlighted in Mark Butler's incisive synthesis of Hasty's argument, which states that, "meter occurs when listeners replicate the duration of an event through a process of 'projection.'" According to Hasty, the onset of some sound projects a potential for duration. When the second sonic onset occurs, the previous sound's duration becomes defined, and becomes the projected duration for the next. When the projected duration is realized a sense of meter has resulted.[70] In Smith's sermon we see five temporally similar statements enable a kind of projection. In preaching's context, the importance of this realization concerns what David Huron has called "primary affect," the positive effect achieved when an expected musical stimulus is experienced.[71] What I want to argue, then, is that while much of the scholarship and discourse surrounding black preaching centers on the role of pitch, the experience of "tuning up" relies most heavily on the ability to set up a rhythmic framework to which congregants can lock in. This is why, as I earlier noted, preachers can achieve the effect of "tuning up" through metrical means even in the absence of a reciting tone. This serves to organize the congregation's attention through entrainment, what Justin London defines as "a synchronization of some aspect of our biological activity with regularly recurring events in the environment."[72] And the process of constructing this rhythmic context in the process of an emergent sermon is precisely the kind of phenomenon that projection describes.

The role of melody and rhythm/meter in black preaching constitutes what Harris Berger has called a "social dynamic of partial sharing." A subset of what he calls the "sociology of attention," a musician's contribution to this dynamic derives from "how intensely the player

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[70] Christopher F. Hasty, *Meter as Rhythm* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[71] David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 13.

[72] Justin London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). 4.

attends to the audience, when the player attends to the audience, and how the player orients his or her action to the audience's attention."[73] The moment in the sermon that is characterized by "tuning up," then, calls for an attentional shift from the congregants, which is facilitated by the preacher. The congregation's interjections evince their attention, and by setting up this fundamentally metric call and response framework, the preacher orients his/her action to the audience. This constructs a kind of groove, achieving what I, following one of Berger's informants, refer to as "locking in."[74] Unlike in a song where there is a given harmonic and metrical framework, in order to successfully "tune up" the preacher and congregation have to construct this structure emergently. Thus, we might say that "tuning up" is achieved by "locking in."

"Tuning up," then, seeks to reorganize attention, calling on both protention and retention to detect the shift and to experience the intensification performed in this heightened space. In order to experience the role of repetition in the sermons, one must recall each previous statement and anticipate the next. Thus, the shift to a more musical approach—whatever its specific form—calls forth a different brand of audience participation that facilitates an experience that can only be found at the level of the collective. More than perceiving the change in voice or experiencing formal repetition alone, "tuning up" uses these phenomenal objects to facilitate the experience of a different reality, what might be called "being in the spirit." But how does the gospel church formalize this new structure of experience?

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[73] Berger, *Metal, Rock, Jazz*, 133.
[74] Ibid, 126.

Case Study: Rev. Dr. William C. Turner, Jr, "Terri Waller: A Maker of Joyful Noise"

A final sermonic vignette from Rev. Dr. William C. Turner, Jr.'s sermon, "Terri Waller: A Maker of Joyful Noise," gives us a compelling answer. Near the end of the eulogy for Terri Waller, a well-known local gospel singer, Turner tuned up by settling on middle C as his reciting tone. Highlighting Mrs. Waller's city-wide musical involvement, he chanted that although "we call our houses by different names…to the extent that we are engaged in the worship of God, this is just a satellite station, because the main venue for the praise of God is around the throne." Given that the people in that space represented dozens of congregations, Turner's "satellite station" idea set the stage for the constitution of a more expansive sense of community. Equally important, the "satellite station" delivered in this space of heightened vocality engaged the congregants in the kind of transcendent discourse that we have seen is central in black preaching and gospel music. The notion of transcendence had special salience at this home-going service because it allowed them to experience a brief communion with their suddenly departed loved one. Turner intensified this in the final moments of the sermon when he conjured the memory of a song that Terri and her husband often sang at other people's funerals.[75] Turner asked:

> "Can I tell you what I hear?
>
> In my **imagination** I hear Jerome winding up one last time to sing: "though the clouds hang so heavy, there will be a brighter day. In that land that they call heaven, God shall wipe all tears away. Oh the joy of seeing Jesus, mortal tongues cannot portray, for beside that crystal fountain, God shall wipe all tears away."

Continuing to recite the lyrics of Luther Barnes's "The Other Shore," Turner quickly said:

> but that's enough for you Jerome, because I hear Terri now. She's winding up with that alto saxophone to sing: "We shall be hold the Lamb of God **sitting** on the throne—**no more crying; no more weeping; trouble** will be gone.

[75] Rev. Dr. William C. Turner, Jr, "Terri Waller: A Maker of Joyful Noise," https://www.dropbox.com/s/69kakubykcxmdkm/Waller%20eulogy%20clip.mp3?dl=0 (4'14").

Hallelujah! **Hallelujah!** Peace, joy, forever more, when we reach the other shore."

In this quotation, Turner paints the text and dramatizes the exchange between earth and heaven in pitch. When he gets to the word "sitting," he expands the final syllable by literally *sitting* on the note. But most emotively, although he begins on the same C4 where he had intoned Jerome's verse, when he gets to "no more crying, no more weeping, trouble," he jumps and octave to the alto C, C5—the note Terri would have sung. Turner, subconsciously, perhaps, uses pitch level to analogize the distinction between Terri and Jerome, not just because of her vocal range, but because of her new heavenly location. Music, then, became the medium of exchange between heaven and earth.

When Turner asked for permission to tell the audience the contents of his imagination, he was instructing them to share in that transcendent cognition. More than the contents of a single mind, what Turner summoned in that moment is what I call "the gospel imagination." This combination of belief and musical performance animates all of the performances we have discussed in this chapter, and that we will see in this dissertation. The gospel imagination was summoned by Dr. E. Dewey Smith's survey of the life of Jesus, by Dr. Gina Stewart's chronicle of the company with which she would like to be, and by Bishop James Morton's list of the bearers of the Christian testimony. The gospel imagination is also the mental, physical, and spiritual space wherein Richard Smallwood's song "Healing" was able to transport the balm from Gilead to contemporary Detroit. The gospel imagination, is, in part, analogous to what Judith Becker, following Pierre Bourdieu, calls a "habitus of listening":

an inclination, a disposition to listen with a particular kind of focus, to expect to experience particular kinds of emotion, to move with certain stylized gestures, and

> to interpret the meaning of the sounds and one's emotional response to the musical event in somewhat (never totally) predictable ways.[76]

Becker's "habitus of listening," which is articulated in her work on trance, is one manifestation of a form of subjectivity that is roughly equivalent to what Bell describes with her notion of ritualized social agents. Becker argues that this form of subjectivity, the habitus of listening, constitutes a way of being-in-the-world.[77] Continuing her phenomenological move, she proposes that "by…being-in-the-world [trancers] communally bring forth the world in which trancing is a natural, expected, unsensational occurrence."[78] If we read Becker's "habitus of listening" along with Harris Berger's contention that perceptions are conditioned by and transformative for one's social context, we can understand that the gospel aesthetic proposed in this chapter realizes the world-making power of the practice of perception.[79] "Tuning up," then, facilitates an experience of transcendence, being-in-the-spirit, by using musical coordination to activate the disposition of congregants. When realized, this form of listening is necessarily embodied, involving not only perceptual capacities associated with listening but also those portions of the motor system activated when the corporeal experience of moving to and being moved by music is engaged. Crucially, this effect is not restricted to the sermon: it is also the engine behind gospel performance. More than repeating this commonsense observation, however, I want to fashion this shared aesthetic system as a hermeneutical key—an analytic. We have seen the means through which "tuning up" is achieved in the sermon, but how does tuning up sound in the context of gospel music?

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[76] Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 70–71. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[77] Becker, *Deep Listeners*, 118–19.

[78] Ibid., 124.

[79] Ibid., 119–120.

2.8: "Tuning Up" in Contemporary Gospel Performance

Reconsidering "Healing"

Let me begin by returning to my earlier analysis of Richard Smallwood's "Healing" and considering it in light of the notion of "tuning up" developed in this chapter. In that analysis, I proposed that the combination of the extensive cadential evasion, Smallwood's scream, the instruction to "listen," and the emphatic scriptural quotation demanded an attentional shift from the congregants. While certainly indicative of the forms of intensification that are central to gospel performance, in view of the former discussion of black preaching, I would now like to argue that the aforementioned sonic phenomena collectively enact "tuning up" in the context of this gospel song. Like the homiletical musicality revealed in my case studies of sermons, the phenomena observed at the beginning of this song's vamp call for a different kind of listening. When experienced in the context of "the gospel imagination," these articulations acquire theological significance. More than simply highlighting the song's vamp, these audible shifts in gospel songs point to the fact that vamps, like sermons, use sonic modulation to depict and facilitate spiritual transformation, weaving the shared logic of "tuning up" into individual gospel songs. Given the fundamentally homiletic urge evident in Smallwood's own words it is no wonder that his music uses vamps to "tune up." But this effect is not limited to Smallwood's idiom—this is the special function that makes the vamp indispensable to gospel music. As such, the practice of "tuning up," which announces a shift from a mode of expression that requires only listening to another that demands participation, serves as an illuminative analytic for gospel performance. In what follows, I apply this analytic to three frequently performed gospel compositions: Myrna Summers's "Oh, How Precious," Brenda Moore's "Perfect Praise," and Walter Hawkins's "Marvelous." These analytical vignettes will confirm that the phenomena

observed in "Healing," more than a single composer's idiosyncrasies, are reflections of gospel's animating formal logic.

"Oh How Precious"

A performance of Myrna Summers's "Oh, How Precious" by Kathy Taylor and a citywide chorus in Memphis, TN is an illuminative example of this practice.[80] The song is divided into two formal units, the *A* and *B* sections, respectively. Both of these sections end with a presentation of the song's title lyric that is shown in Figure 2.10.

Figure 2.10: "Oh, How Precious," hook

[80] Myrna Summers, "Oh, How Precious," as performed by Kathy Taylor, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ij_0Yr4Zz8.

S
Pre - cious is his

A
Pre - cious is his name.

T
Pre - cious is his name.

Piano

ii7 bVI bVII9 I

These lyrics are supported by the deferred resolution of a cadential six-four to V/ii and then ii7 en route to the chromatic succession, ♭VI–♭VII9–I. Here, Summers scripts call-and-response between the tenors who sing "Oh, how precious" and the sopranos and altos who echo them, singing "precious," before joining them to sing "precious is his name." This antiphony amplifies the exchange between choir and soloists that is so vital to this song. As in most renderings of "Oh, How Precious," in this performance, the *A* section is presented twice, followed by two iterations of the *B* section.

As Figure 2.11 shows, the *B* section ends with seven iterations of "Jesus," the "precious" name of which the song speaks, accomplished over a four-bar phrase and harmonized by an ascent to the cadential six four, from the tonic, to the subdominant, through the leading-tone diminished seventh of the dominant to the cadential six-four, whose sounding calls forth the song's hook.

Figure 2.11: "Oh, How Precious," vamp, 3' 57"

Soloist
De - mons trem - ble at the name Je - sus. The
Choir
Je - sus. Je - sus. Je - sus. Je - sus.
Piano
I vii7/IV

Soloist
at - mos - phere chan - ges at the name Je - sus.
Choir
Je - sus. Je - sus. Je - sus. Je - sus
Piano
IVb7 vii°7/V

At the end of the second iteration of the *B* section, this recursive activity becomes the song's vamp. Instead of seven recurrences of the name "Jesus" there were 111—13 sets of 8 plus the concluding set of 7. This is accomplished by repeatedly denying the desired progression of the vii°7/V to the cadential six-four, and returning instead to I for the recapitulation of the four-bar module. And at precisely the moment where the *B* section should end, which is also the place where the vamp begins, Taylor stops interpolating lyrics echoed from the choir, marking this shift by singing: "My joy in sorrow; my hope for tomorrow," an apposition for Jesus that is her first autonomous lyric.

"Oh How Precious"
Soloist/(Choir)

My joy
Jesus!
in sorrow
Jesus!
My hope
Jesus!
for tomorrow
Jesus!
Jesus
Jesus!
Jesus
Jesus!
Jesus
Jesus!
Jesus
Jesus!

Demons
Jesus!
tremble
Jesus!
At the name
Jesus!
Jesus
Jesus!
The atmosphere
Jesus!
changes
Jesus!
At the name
Jesus!
Jesus
Jesus!

As the excerpted lyrics show, from this point on Taylor works through many of the stock phrases that are synonyms for the name of Jesus—the kind of phrases that routinely show up at the end of sermons. By recruiting these phrases, Taylor draws from a communal reservoir of meaning fed by the gospel imagination: in this context the fact that the soloist can find this much to say about Jesus becomes evidence that his name is precious. The song, then, becomes an opportunity to

proclaim to all that Jesus is believed to be. This recursive activity, though housed in the *B* section, creates a different formal and affective space. The iteration of this module becomes the song's vamp, and by announcing itself in this way, it constitutes "tuning up." And in this vamp, Taylor exchanges the conventional melodies of the earlier sections for a kind of recitation focused around the song's B♭ tonic. The relationship between Taylor's interpolations and the choir's invariant lyric constructs a discursive flow—one shaped by repetition and difference much like the example from Smallwood and the excerpts from sermons. Here, the invariant lyric "Jesus" fills the space that "Balm in Gilead" did for Richard Smallwood; "I want to be in the company" for Rev. Dr. Gina Stewart; "If You're Going to Kill Lazarus" for Bishop James Morton, and echoes the call-response shaped by Smith in "A Seminary from a Cemetery." But more than a sign that this gospel song appropriates a kind of "preacherliness," what these performances share is a sign that they are both animated by the same cultural logic.

"Perfect Praise"

A performance of Brenda Moore's "Perfect Praise" by Lecresia Campbell and the Houston chapter of the Gospel Music Workshop of America shows how the practice of "tuning up" can be woven into the syntax of a song.[81] A paraphrase of Psalm 8:1, this song's setting of the lyric relies heavily on textural contrast.

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[81] Brenda Moore, "Perfect Praise," as performed by Lecresia Campbell https://youtu.be/UvmqcIhwScM?t=4m33s

Figure 2.12: "Perfect Praise," *A* Section

As Figure 2.12 shows, the *A* section begins with the sopranos, altos, and tenors singing the phrase "Oh, Lord, how excellent, how excellent, how excellent" in unison octaves. The reiteration of the words "how excellent" point to this lyric's importance while at the same time building anticipation for the completion of the sentence. Relief comes in m. 6, when the forth statement of

"how excellent" is allowed to complete its sentence. It is as this point, that the foregoing unison texture gives way to homophony and polyphony.

Figure 2.13: "Perfect Praise," hook comparison

As figure 2.13 illustrates, this phrase will recur, with minor modifications, at the end of each of the song's formal units. While the *B* section, which I call the bridge, is homophonic until the restatement of the hook, the issue of texture is paramount for the song's *C* section, the vamp.

As the end of the second iteration of the bridge gives way to the vamp, the song demands an attentional shift. Although each previous statement of the hook had been followed by a full measure of rest, at the end of the song's bridge, the vamp begins a measure early. And the tenors enter unexpectedly: while the choir enters on beat 4 as in the *A* section, and on beat four as in the *B* section, as figure 2.14 shows, the tenors enter on the and-of-three to begin the vamp.

Figure 2.14: "Perfect Praise," vamp

B1: Hook

Soprano
Je - sus, ex - cel-lent is thy name.
Alto
Je - sus, ex - cel-lent is thy name.
Tenor
Je - sus, ex - cel-lent is thy name.
Piano

B2: Truncated Hook

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Piano

enter on third iteration

is thy name. E-very knee shall

enter on second iteration

is thy name. In all the ear -

tenors' early entrance

is thy name. In all the earth. In all the

Build up ---------Break

I → V/IV

4
2

Soprano

bow and e-very tongue con-fess that he is Lord. Je - sus,

Alto

th. In all the ear - th. In al the ear - th. Je - sus,

Tenor

earth. In all the earth. In all the earth. Je - sus,

Piano

Soprano
ex - cel-lent is thy name.
Alto
ex - cel-lent is thy name.
Tenor
ex - cel-lent is thy name. In all the
Piano

This unexpected metrical position and the missing measure have harmonic implications. Because the tonal prolongation that usually follows each iteration of the hook has been deleted along with the aforementioned measure, while the ear expects a tonic sonority at the beginning of the vamp, this harmony is replaced by V(4/2) of IV. Through this combination of musical modifications concomitant with the beginning of this song's vamp, the song "tunes up," announcing a shift into an altogether different part of the song. What this shift promises materializes during the first three iterations of this vamp. Here, the vamp is formed by textural accumulation: after entering, the tenors sing through this entire module alone. They are then joined by the altos for a second iteration of this material, and finally, on the third iteration of this unit, the sopranos enter. Each vocal part has its own lyrics and pitches so that the polyphonic framework of this section emerges progressively. The addition of the parts both complicates the picture and intensifies the experience as the texture is thickened and the soundscape is crowded. The staggered entrances, the contrasting parts, and, in the case of the sopranos, the differing words comment on the song's

thematic focus. As these polyphonic parts—themselves a vocalization of an aggregation of praise gathered from all the earth—give way to homophony at the end of each iteration of this vamp, we get to hear the kind of unified response that the sopranos sing about when they say: "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is lord."

"Marvelous"

Bishop Walter Hawkins's song "Marvelous" provides my final example of "tuning up" in contemporary gospel music.[82] While this song's overall form can be characterized as *ABCBBD*, the combination of Hawkins's solo voice, the voices of a trio built around Hawkins, and then the 50-voice Love Center Choir adds a sense of emergent drama to the piece's performance. After the *A* section's free dialogue between Bishop Hawkins and the keyboardist, the one-measure transition into the *B* section begins as the percussionist iterates the first three beats of the song's slow 4/4. Hawkins moves back a few feet to take his place between his brother, Edwin Hawkins, and choir member Antoin Timmons in time to sing the *B* section, the chorus, which is represented in Figure 2.15.

[82] Bishop Walter Hawkins, "Marvelous," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0yiTT_ZR-g.

Figure 2.15: “Marvelous,” *B* section

B

repeated rhythm

repeated rhythm

Trio/Choir

You gave that I might li - ve. You gave that

Piano

repeated rhythm

Trio/Choir

I might be set free. Ex-changed your life for mine:

Piano

hook

Trio/Choir

wha† a mar-ve-lous thing you've done!

Piano

V 6 4 7 I

That three of these four phrases begin with the rhythm “two-and” adds an emphatic and repetitive quality this section, one that is magnified by the fact that the first two phrases are quite

similar. After the third phrase's similar beginning, the ear has been trained to expect a similar rhythm for the fourth line, the song's title lyric, but instead this entrance—concomitant with the sounding of the cadential six-four—is delayed, and when it appears, this song's title lyrics are cast in triplets. In this, this phrase is distinguished from the preceding. When the choir takes up this material after the intervening section *C*, the rhythmic propulsion provided by the last two words, leads rather forcefully to the song's beginning, facilitating the section's reiteration.

Figure 2.16: "Marvelous," transition to vamp

Choir
what a won - der - ful thing
what a glo - ri - ous thing
Piano
V 6 4
ii 7
iiø 7

Choir
solo
wha† a mar - ve - lous thing you've done!
Piano
V 6 4
7
I

As Figure 2.16 shows, at the end of the choir's second chorus, Hawkins subverts the expectations he has created, rendering "what a wonderful thing" and "what a glorious thing" instead of "what a marvelous thing," and evading the expected cadence by supporting these two phrases with supertonic sevenths rather than the dominant pedal that accompanies the title lyric. After these two phrases, when the title lyric does appear in mm. 4–5 the choir is silent while Bishop Hawkins sings the final "you've done." Paradoxically, their abrupt silence loudly marks the formal transition into the vamp building anticipation for what they are about to sing.

Figure 2.17: "Marvelous," vamp

Trio/Choir
It's mar-ve-lous mar-ve-lous mar-ve-lous so mar-ve-lous
Piano
V 6 4 V/IV 4 2 IV 6 iiø 6 5

As Figure 2.17 shows, the song's vamp is built on the reiteration of the title lyric. As the vamp begins, Hawkins abandons English, choosing to hum while the choir sings through the first iteration of this four-measure cycle. Hawkins's linguistic shift from sung words into hummed melody mirrors the substitution of the forgoing lyrics for a single word. This is further amplified by the absence of any kind of cadential resolution. Instead, the cadence is evaded by harmonic motion from V (6/4) to V (4/2) of IV to iv 6 to ii ø (4/3) back to the cadential six four. The collective departures from cadential resolution to evasion, from completed sentences to iterated phrases, and for the soloist, from sung words to a hummed melisma at the outset of this song's vamp collectively enacts "tuning up." And the affect unleashed here is only escalated when, after

three iterations of the aforementioned material, the vamp is inverted while "yeah" and "oh" substitute for the first and third iterations of marvelous, constructing what is shown in Figure 2.18.

Figure 2.18: "Marvelous," vamp intensified

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that black sermons and gospel performance both recruit the technique of "tuning up" to achieve their affective ends. More than just a homiletic or compositional strategy, the musical techniques of "tuning up" are one side of the complex of sound and belief that constitute the gospel imagination. We have observed the diverse means through which preachers perform musicality in their sermons. We have seen how homiletical musicality facilitates the experience of transcendence, allowing congregants to imaginatively inhabit other spaces and times. Analyses of four gospel compositions revealed that vamps in gospel songs announce themselves in ways that bear unmistakable resemblances to a preacher's shift from speech into song. The interpenetration of words and music in sermons and gospel songs invites an attentional shift initiated by the performer but engaged by the audience.

Together preacher and audience, choir and congregation, “lock in,” cultivating a kind of musical community where time and space yield to the affective power of music. Through “tuning up” belief is formed and performed.

Chapter 3: "The Presence of the Lord Is Here!": The Gospel Vamp as Sonic Sacrament

Introduction

In chapter 2, I argued that while the phrase "tuning up" is most often used to refer to the practice of shifting from speech into song near the end of a sermon, the phenomenon it indexes, more than just a homiletical strategy, is the formal logic of "the gospel imagination." Just as preachers announce their transition into the ecstatic frame of their messages by "tuning up," gospel performers use pronounced changes in vocality, harmony, texture, and lyrics to mark the beginning of vamps. As these formal shifts present themselves to their audience's consciousness, they invite a reorganization of perception, summoning an imaginative leap from the material world into "the spiritual realm," the space where musical affect accrues theological significance. But what meanings are expressed through these distinctive arrangements of musical form? How does the gospel vamp mediate these intersecting worlds?

Where chapter 2 engages the vamp through its relationship to musical modes of black preaching, chapter 3 theorizes the vamp's relationship to the ecstatic movements called "shouting." I argue that the gospel vamp functions as a sonic sacrament, a medium through which believers experience the presence of God in their bodies. The chapter begins with an analytical essay that examines the interpenetration of collectivity and corporeality in the live recording of Richard Smallwood's "Same God." I then argue that in the gospel imagination, the movements known as "shouting" blend with musical materials giving rise to "shouting music." But I propose an expansive notion of these practices, conceptualizing "shouting" as a category for any movement gospel music elicits, and characterizing the gospel vamp as a form of shouting music. Analyses of the vamps of Lashun Pace's "In Everything Give Thanks" and Glenn

Burleigh's "The Name" will illustrate the vamp's function as shouting music. A final ethnographic sketch of a communion service at Chicago's Greater Harvest Missionary Baptist Church will show how the gospel vamp functions as a sonic sacrament. We will see that the gospel vamp materializes "the spiritual realm," facilitating a corporeal experience of the "presence of God."

3.1: Analytical Essay on "Same God"

On August 23, 2014, an audience of several thousand assembled in *Evangel Cathedral,* a mega-church in Bowie, MD, to witness Richard Smallwood and Vision's latest live recording. I was one of them. As participants in this scene of music-making, we offered our voices and bodies to sanctify a new set of sonic materials. These shared affective labors became evidence that this music possesses the trace of divinity known by many evangelical Christians as "the anointing."[1] The nostalgic theme suggested by the recording's well-advertised title, *Anthology*, was confirmed over and over again that evening. In addition to the reflective focus of the songs "Anthology" and "You Brought Me," two other tracks recorded that evening are extended medleys that combine celebrated compositions from across Smallwood's four decades in the gospel industry. Two other tracks pay homage to gospel icons Edwin Hawkins and Roberta Martin, both of whom were central musical influences for Smallwood. Throughout this performance, then, the attendees were invited to travel back through time to different moments in Smallwood's career. For attendees like me, who were born after Roberta Martin died, the recording was also a musical invitation to imagine moments we had never experienced. In so doing, the composer engaged the

[1] For a discussion of "anointing" see Randall J. Stephens and Karl Giberson, *The Anointed: Evangelical Truth in a Secular Age* (Cambridge & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 7–8.

transhistorical consciousness that we have seen is a central feature of the gospel imagination. Time itself is at issue in "Same God," the composition that would become the CD's lead single.

The lyrics of "Same God" convert the memory of past triumphs into confidence for present difficulties. The song consists of 4 formal units; because of sectional repetitions, its overall form is *ABABCCD*.[2]

A

This mountain looming so large in front of me,
Can't climb it, how I'll get over, I just can't see.
But I remember how you delivered in times before,
for you're the same yesterday, today, and forevermore.

B

This problem seems insurmountable.
My mind says, "I don't think I can get through the pain."
But I'm reminded of what you have done before.
And I know that you're gonna do it again.

C

You just keep on proving yourself,
over, over, and over again!
And the fact that you'll never change
makes me know that
you're gonna do it again.

D

You're the same God!
You're the same God!
You're the same God!
You're the same God!

In the *A* section, Smallwood sings alone: he ponders what to do with the "mountain" he finds "looming so large in front of [him]." This phrase constructs the problem to which the song responds. In the *B* section, the choir sings in unison, confessing, similarly, "this problem seems insurmountable; my mind says I don't think I can get through the pain." While these sections, both of which appear twice, end with a hopeful glance at "what [God] has done before," it is the song's final two sections, the *C* and *D* sections, respectively, that bring relief to the song's plot.

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[2] Richard Smallwood, "Same God," https://www.dropbox.com/s/19arzisbo0ruh8x/01-07-%20Same%20God%20%28Album%20Version%29.mp3?dl=0

The *C* section functions as a bridge, whose shift from unison to harmony and from a low to a relatively high tessitura produces an increasing intensity that paves the way to the song's *D* section—its vamp. In this third section, the choir states emphatically: "you just keep on proving yourself, over, over, and over again." In so doing, they foreshadow the repetitions to come in the vamp, where the choir will insistently iterate the title lyrics, "you're the same God." Thus this section is formed out of a kind of textual fragmentation—the choir's lyrics decrease so that Smallwood's textual interpolations might increase.

To see how the song's pitch content interacts with its lyrics, consider the bass line. Figure 3.1 renders the harmonic/rhythmic framework that occurs four times in the *A* section.

Figure 3.1: Harmonic/Framework "Same God," Section *A*

The bass's chromatic ascent from G to B♭ provides a sonic picture of the mountain Smallwood is worried about climbing. But the fact that each of the section's four phrases successfully ascend to the tonic, E♭, contradicts the struggle that the lyrics imply, inviting us to keep listening, trusting that a lyrical/harmonic resolution will come. As this musical height is repeatedly surmounted and celebrated, the successful attainment of E♭ in the bass, and the concomitant completion of T–PD–D–T progression, gives us the musical schematics for a narrative of overcoming challenges—in the past and in the future.

As Figure 3.2 illustrates, while the song is set in 4/4, the *A* section's last measure is foreshortened, thrusting the listener back into the sonic picture of earthly travail more quickly than anticipated.

<u>Figure 3.2: "Same God," *B* section</u>

The *B* section complicates the expectations engendered by section *A* as it depicts the seemingly insurmountable problem through the bass's frustrated and thwarted attempts to reach the tonic pitch. Here the suspension of resolution becomes a figure of the pain Smallwood "doesn't think [he] can get through." The first dominant is transformed into a third inversion seventh chord en route back to the original bass. The second potential cadence is deferred to the submediant. Even though the third line (mm. 27–29a) is a near mirror of the text from the third line of section *A*, this phrase copies m. 24's evaded cadence. At the end of the first iteration of the *B* section the final chord is harmonized with the fourth scale degree in the bass, creating a subdominant ninth chord, instead of the expected tonic. This harmonized deferral functions as an upper neighbor to the inverted tonic triad that marks the beginning of the *A* section's recapitulation.

As Figure 3.3 depicts, although the end of the *B* section's second iteration successfully arrives at the E♭-major tonic, this fleeting sense of repose soon gives way to a four-chord transition to B♭ major, the piece's dominant and the off-tonic host for the *C* section's opening.

Figure 3.3: "Same God," *C* section

36 **end of B2** **C** *first choral harmonies*

Choir

you're gon - na do it a - gain! You just keep on

Piano

I V/vi vi V/V V
4 7
3

40

Choir

pro - ving your - self. O - ver, o - ver, and o - ver a - gain! And the fact that

Piano

After beginning with the progression from the dominant to the tonic via stepwise motion, the rest of the passage's harmonic material mirrors the *B* section. The off-tonic opening marks this section as distinct from the two that preceded it. And this is amplified by the choir's shift from a relatively low tessitura and a unison texture to full harmonies that stretch into the higher regions of the choristers' voices. The first section of the song that is free from any sense of problematic uncertainty, the *C* section, the song's bridge, offers a new sense of elevation—a kind of heroic gesture, a celebratory shift that makes room for the song's final formal unit, its vamp.

Figure 3.4: "Same God," vamp

Figure 3.4 renders this song's vamp, which emerges through successive iterations of a formative module. Each of these units consists of four homophonic statements of the title lyric "you're the same God." As shown in figure 3.4, the first iteration leads to the subdominant, the second to the submediant, the third to the dominant of the dominant, and the fourth to the tonic,

imbuing the section with a strong sense of directedness to its own beginning, a formal design Tim Hughes describes as "autotelic."[3]

Figure 3.5: "Same God," vamp voice leading

This vamp's strong attraction to its own beginning comes into clearer relief when one considers the section's voice leading, represented in Figure 3.5. The first phrase of the module inverts the ascending bass motion present of previous sections. Instead, the choir's ascending declaration is harmonized by a voice exchange between the soprano and bass that is answered by ascending parallel tenths. The module's second phrase arrives at the submediant through

[3] Tim Hughes, "Trapped within the Wheels: Flow and Repetition, Modernism and Tradition in Stevie Wonder's 'Living for the City'" in Walter Everett, ed., *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: Critical and Analytical Essays*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 242.

another set of parallel tenths. While the third phrase is nearly identical to the first, it replaces the subdominant with an inverted secondary-dominant, lifting the bass from A♭ to and A-natural. The last phrase begins in parallel tenths and ends with parallel octaves created by the outer voices' scalar ascent to the tonic. As the only tonic arrival, this fourth phrase announces the end of each module, while clearing a path for the next.

While we might say that the form of this vamp as disseminated on the CD consists of 15 iterations of this material, such an analysis would ignore the discursive role of Smallwood's textual interpolations. Early in this vamp, Smallwood particularizes the choir's reiterations of the hook by stating:

You're the God of Abraham.
You're the same God.
And Moses, too.
You're the same God.
If He did it for them,
You're the same God.
He's gonna do it for you.
You're the same God.

You're the God of Daniel
You're the same God.
in the lion's den.
You're the same God.
If He delivered back then,
You're the same God.
He's gonna do it again.
You're the same God.

There is no secret
You're the same God.
What God can do.
You're the same God.
If He did it for me,
You're the same God.
He's gonna do it for you.
You're the same God.

Alpha and Omega,
You're the same God.
Beginning and the end.
You're the same God.
Still working miracles,
You're the same God.
Just like He did back then.
You're the same God.

Thus we can see how the (re)iteration of the title lyric gives Smallwood occasion to fill the intervening space with quotations from biblical traditions and other phrases that would be familiar to his audience. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, this practice reaches into the communal reservoir of cultural knowledge—"the gospel imagination"—to invite the community into the song. As he departs from the lyrics of this particular song to incorporate these texts, Smallwood is "tuning up." At 5' 53" on the album version, Smallwood departs from the logic that has characterized his previous interpolations.

You're the same God.
You're the same God.
You're the same God.
You're the same God.
You're the same God.
You're the same God.
You're the same God.
You're the same God.

At this moment, it is as if Smallwood himself is taken up by his song: instead of offering an interpolation that differs from the choir's refrain, he repeats reciting the title lyric rhythmically on the tenor G.

The vamp is animated by repetition at several levels, but unlike many contemporary Gospel vamps, which often incorporate some process that intensifies the pitch materials

performed in successive modules—for example, the modulations we saw in "Anthem of Praise," or the inversions in "It's Working"—this vamp doesn't make use of any pitch-based escalatory technique. Instead, this piece delights in something bordering on exact repetition. This is an instance where what Mark Butler has called "repetitive repetition," is used to reinforce the title's focus on the unchanging nature of God.[4] This text's lyrics provide an opportunity to revisit the dialectical relationship between repetition and intensification that I see at work in gospel vamps. The idea that something is being repeated is an essential, definitional part of vamps, but this repetition itself often has an intensifying effect that can be magnified through the use of escalatory techniques. With regard to "Same God," I do not mean to suggest that the accompanying instruments and Smallwood's textual interpolations fail to inflect the successive iterations of this vamp; they do inflect them. But this song's lyrical focus is a place where the repetition itself has a distinctively rhetorical potency.

[4] Mark Butler, *Playing With Something That Runs: Technology, Improvisation, and Composition in DJ and Laptop Performance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 178–179.

Figure 3.6: "Same God" Vamp w/ fuller rhythmic detail

As figure 3.6 shows, one central contributor to this song's effect is the dense rhythmic activity. Though the piece, and especially the vamp, is cast in compound duple meter, the idiomatic backbeat, shown in the figure in the snare drum, frustrates any sense of stress implicit in that meter. This is further complicated by the fact that each iteration of the title lyric is built on the same syncopated rhythmic pattern, creating a brand of metrical counterpoint. There is an accent on the second half of beats four and two during each statement of the title hook that competes both with the downbeat and the backbeat. And this repeated rhythmic figure is compounded by the syncopated reiteration of the tonic in octaves. Thus, there is some rhythmic attack occurring

on virtually every eighth note during this vamp section. Setting the instrumental texture aside, an additional layer of rhythmic content appears in the antiphonal dialogue of the choir's hook and Smallwood's interpolated text.

Through this vamp, "Same God" becomes analogous to what Brad Osborne calls a "terminally climactic form."[5] Osborne developed this term to describe relatively recent commercial popular songs that are characterized by an ending section that "present[s] a repeated lyrical/melodic hook over a section that is marked by dynamic, rhythmic, or harmonic change."[6] What is most significant about these forms is that the "presentation of the title lyric [and hook] is reserved for the terminal climax," meaning that the song's ending consists of new material, instead of recapitulated material. In this case, the fact that the title of the song—its central thematic focus—appears only in this section also highlights the centrality of vamps to this genre. I add that the dramatic energy produced in these instances makes the beginning of the vamp an important moment of arrival, adding a strong teleological dimension to the song's form, and summoning the attentional shift we studied in the last chapter.

This song's lyrical conjunction of "what God has done before" and certainty that "God will do it again" in the notion of "sameness" gives voice to "the gospel imagination." The assertion of God's transcendence is of a piece with the declaration that "there is a balm in Gilead" in Smallwood's "Healing," and the notion that by singing the vamp of "Anthem of Praise" worshippers can literally lift God higher. Each of these musical and theological speech-acts discloses a desire to go beyond temporal and geographical boundaries, to assert the present relevance of the eternal. And by conjoining the invariant assertion of God's identity with the

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[5] Brad Osborn, "Subverting the Verse–Chorus Paradigm." *Music Theory Spectrum* 35 (2013): 23–47, 23.

[6] Ibid.

many manifestations of divine intrusion, and then joining both to an infectious groove, the vamp manages to synthesize thousands of individuals into a single worshiping body.

3.2: A "Same God" Shout

At the live recording, this vamp was performed dozens of times—occupying more than fifteen minutes. To capture some sense of the endlessness we experienced that evening, the version released on Smallwood's 2015 album features three reprises of the song's vamp. As they attest to our unwillingness to let the song go, these reprises suggest something about the audience's agency at this recording. Our "enthusiasm" called for the vamp's reprises, suggesting that during the performance of this song the category of "performers" grew to include not just Smallwood, his choir, and his band, but also the more than 2500 people whose bodies filled the theater at Evangel Cathedral. Sarah Hearne, a critic, known as Washington, DC's Gospel Music Examiner, said of this performance, "even when it seemed the song would end, [the composer] had no choice but to launch into a reprise [because] the anointing was so heavy in the sanctuary."[7] I propose that the collectivizing effect of this performance derives from not just the sonic particulars we have observed but also from the rhetorical effects generated by the combination of these syntactical elements with the song's lyrics. The endless array of textual interpolations recruited by Smallwood to particularize each declaration of God's sameness served as an invitation for each member of the audience to "fill in the blank" with the stuff of their own personal experiences. As one fellow-attendee told me: "the song couldn't end because I wasn't

[7] Sarah Hearne, "Richard Smallwood: Maestro's Live Recording A Master Class In Musical Excellence," August 25, 2014. Accessed on December 15, 2014 at: http://www.examiner.com/article/richard-smallwood-live-recording-is-master-class-musical-excellence.

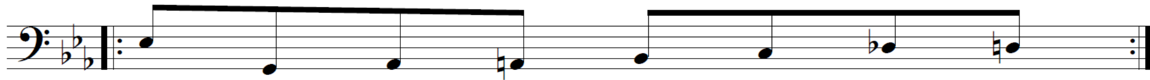
through rehearsing my story."[8] Smallwood's statement "when I look back over the years" doubles as a summons for the members of his audience to engage in a similar kind of remembrance. This is why Smallwood asked three times: "can I get a witness, tonight?" This was surely a rhetorical question whose affirmative answer was evident in the visible and audible engagement of the recordings. While ostensibly directed to those who constituted his audience, the language of "witness" also points to the broader transhistorical "cloud of witnesses" that is used to refer to Christians past, present, and future within Evangelical and charismatic traditions. This points to the multiple levels of discourse that gospel performance mediates. We see this in the vamp where Smallwood's collectivizing interpolations venerate God as "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." This is also evident when he describes the divine as the "God of Abraham and Moses, too." Smallwood's remembrance of God as the "God of Daniel in the lion's den" invites his audience members to transfer the metaphor of averted danger from the ancient Babylonian origins to their contemporary context.

The enthusiasm—by this I reference a kind of spiritual fervor—of Smallwood's human witnesses that necessitated the song's multiple reprises came to its climax during what one reviewer called "a praise break," a colloquial referent for a period of holy dancing, that is referred to as "shouting." This began after the vamp's final reprise in the tension-filled space where the affect that was pent up during the song's performance awaited relief. The cacophony of individuated vocalizations and embodiments of praise was formed into a more synchronized whole as the musicians responded to what was unfolding by playing a brand of repetitive musical materials that practitioners call "shouting music." Their accompaniment began with a paradigmatic shouting music, which consisted of a prominent backbeat, some surface riffs

[8] Braxton Shelley, telephone interview with Joyce O'Rourke, December 14, 2014.

performed by the other harmonic and melodic instruments, and a chromatic ascending bass progression shown in figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: "Same God Shout," bass pattern



After roughly a minute of the music represented in this figure, while maintaining the tempo and metrical framework, the musicians started playing a version the vamp of "Same God."[9] Although this modified vamp had been sped up in order to fit with the metrical framework of the shouting passage, it was harmonically identical to its original form. Responding to the band's move, Smallwood's choir Vision joined in by singing "you're the same God." I will return to this vamp's ability to stand in as shouting music as this chapter continues.

Smallwood encouraged this moment of praise by asking if anybody had a "same God shout." Like the question, "can I get a witness?", this question is rhetorically loaded. On the one hand, one would never make this statement if the audience's reception did not already suggest that certain individuals felt compelled to affirmatively respond to the song's message with their bodies. But on the other hand, such a rhetorical question can intensify the ambient affect simply by naming it. By coordinating their bodies and voices in the experience of "shouting," the recording's audience performed their own kind of sameness—not an elision of personal distinctions, but participation in a greater unity. If "Same God" in the context of this song points to the powerful presence of the divine in every time and every space, and if, as the theologian

[9] Richard Smallwood, "Same God Shout," https://www.dropbox.com/s/cln36q9jizvv726/01-08-%20Same%20God%20%28Shout%29.mp3?dl=0

James Cone proposes, the shout is a manifestation of the presence and power of divinity in a human body, then every shout is a "Same God shout."[10] Since gospel music routinely achieves this kind of effect, how can we theorize the conjunction of gospel performance and the experience of divine presence?

3.3: Scholarly Discussions of "Shouting"

In *Fire in My Bones: Transcendence and the Holy Spirit in African American Gospel*, the anthropologist Glenn Hinson writes the following of his conversation with a Primitive Baptist minister named, Elder Johnson:

> He didn't "suspect" the Spirit was at hand; he didn't just "sense" a presence other than our own. He *knew* it, beyond a shadow of a doubt. Because he *felt* it. And felt it in a way that left no room for skepticism. Not in a way that was shaped by belief, but in a way that *gave his belief its very shape*.[11]

This interrelation of belief and feeling observed in Hinson's study is of a piece with the phenomena observed in the foregoing analysis of Smallwood's "Same God." In both instances, the ecstatic movement called "shouting" emerges from the performance of gospel music. But what is the history of this practice, and what does it contribute to the gospel imagination?

While the examples of "shouting" engaged in this dissertation are drawn from African American Christian worship services, this practice has never been the sole province of Afro-Protestantism. In fact, Ann Taves's work on the nineteenth-century protestant revival tradition shows that these interracial public rituals allowed self-styled "'shouting Methodists' [to] use biblical narratives and bodily knowledge…to…constitute a distinctively American Methodist

[10] James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 21–22.

[11] Glenn Hinson, *Fire in My Bones: Transcendence and the Holy Spirit in African American Gospel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 6–7; emphasis original.

experience of the power and presence of God in new public spaces."[12] Admitting this, there remain important genealogical connections between the antebellum Ring Shout and contemporary African-American religion and culture, as chapter 2 demonstrates. While Ashon Crawley contends that contemporary "shouting" is not "the same as the ring shout dance that was prominent on the seacoasts of Georgia and South Carolina," he hints at the interrelation of these two embodied practices while asking if there was a mode of life "that was transferred [from the ring shout], a way to create a social form that was carried to and then dwelt within [black Pentecostalism]?"[13] An affirmative answer to this query resides in Zora Neale Hurston's anthropological study of *The Sanctified Church*. She defines shouting as "an emotional explosion, responsive to rhythm. It is called forth by: (1) sung rhythm; (2) spoken rhythm; (3) humming rhythm; (4) the foot-patting or hand-clapping that intimates very closely the tom-tom." Hurston notes that shouting may take many forms: from "violent retching and twitching motions…" and "quiet weeping" to "unrestrained screaming [uttered] while leaping pews and running up and down the aisle."[14] Wallace Best's study of how this practice of "southern African American rural religion" became "pervasive and characteristic of black churches across a wide denominational spectrum" in early 20th century Chicago is illustrative of this practice's path to its current ubiquity.[15]

Shouting is not a solitary act. Cheryl Sanders argues that the shout is "the climactic expression of individual and collective spirit possession." Referring to contemporary Black

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[12] Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 78.

[13] Ashon Crawley, "Black Sacred Breath: Historicity, Performance, and the Aesthetics of BlackPentecostalism," (PhD diss., Duke University, 2013), 166.

[14] Zora Neale Hurston, *The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley: Turtle Island, 1981), 91.

[15] Wallace Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915–1952* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 99.

Holiness-Pentecostal worship, Sanders observes that in any context where "the ultimate objective of worship…is some form of spirit possession," the shout is a mainstay.[16] For Glenn Hinson, the experience of transcendence performed through shouting is a brand of physical and emotional transport that evidences "the touch."[17] Following Hinson, Melvin Butler defines transcendence as a "phenomenology of divine encounter," where "Pentecostal believers sing and dance their way across a boundary between earthly and spiritual realms, transcending the self to bring mind and body in contact with the Holy Spirit." Communion with the spirit "may spark any number of behaviors: one person may stand and lift their hands, while another sits and weeps softly; another may cry out words of praise…someone else may hop up and down, run around the ritual space or dance as they feel compelled by the Spirit: another may spurt out ecstatic or glossolalic utterances…" Crucially, Butler notes, "just as spiritual manifestations take many forms even within a single congregation, there are multiple ways in which a feeling of transcendence is obtained through musical expressions."[18] In the gospel imagination, yielding one's body to the spirit grants access into the presence of God. At the center of each discussion is the assumption that transcendence is a way of making congregations feel in concert with God and one other at the same time. What this form of corporeality means, then, is inextricably linked to the experience of collectivity. While Sanders asserts that "shouting," more than "a wild and random expression of kinetic energy," is governed by "a culturally and aesthetically determined static structure [that] sustains the expression of ecstasy in a definite, recognizable form," I argue that

[16] Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 63–64.

[17] Glenn Hinson, *Fire in My Bones*, 1–2.

[18] Melvin Butler, "The Weapons of Our Warfare: Music, Positionality, and Transcendence Among Haitian Pentecostals," *Caribbean Studies* 36/2 (2008): 23–64, 25.

the cultural reproduction of shouting depends on the musical materials that gives these movements their characteristic sound, “shouting music.” [19]

3.4: Shouting Music

To pursue a sharper image of “shouting” and “shouting music,” consider a scene from a 2003 gospel service in Memphis, TN. At the end of his sermon, “A Prayer for Revival,” Bishop G. E. Patterson invited members of his congregation, Temple of Deliverance Church of God In Christ, to the altar.[20] Although the Church of God in Christ is the nation’s largest African American Pentecostal denomination, and this clip took place while the church’s pastor, Bishop Patterson, was that organization’s presiding bishop, the events of this service reflect normative practices in churches characterized by what I have called “the gospel imagination.” The “altar call” or “altar ministry” exemplified in this clip is often one of the most spiritually intense moments in gospel services: to come to the altar is to approach divinity. And this service was no different. Encouraging his congregants to “praise God until [God] touches them,” Patterson was engaged in a kind of bi-vocal discourse—talking to his parishioners and the divine—achieved in part through dual linguistic repertoires—English and Glossolalia. The divine contact that the moment is designed to elicit was inextricably linked to the intense interpersonal contact effected by hundreds of people flooding the altar. There was at least one person per square foot. Patterson’s most emphatic prayer was: “Rain on us, here. Rain! Rain on us, here. We’re waiting at the altar. We need another touch. Our spirits are hungry. Our hearts are thirsty. Rain on us, lord.”

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[19] Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, 61.

[20] Bishop G. E. Patterson, “A Prayer for Revival,” https://youtu.be/F6VLx4NCg8w?t=48m38s

As the congregants began to return to the seats, the rain for which Patterson had prayed seemed to fall.[21] Helping to facilitate this shift, while Patterson exhorted the congregants to praise, the musicians transitioned from the dramatic and metrically free chordal accompaniment to Patterson's prayer into the intensely rhythmic "shouting music." And members performed a host of movements—jumping, running, swaying, and clapping, among others—in time with the music metrical framework. The shouting music played by the musicians at Temple of Deliverance is built on the characteristic "shouting music" trope, a chromatically ascending baseline and a penetratingly reiterated backbeat. Represented in Figure 3.8, this musical motive synthesizes the experience of directedness affected by the chromatic motion from scale degree $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{6}$ to $\hat{8}$ with the circularity that results from its repetition. It is a transposed version of the bass line present in the "Same God" shout.

Figure 3.8: Bass Pattern from T.O.D. shout

This chromatic motion and its rhythmic framework lend the motive an autotelic design such that it leads very strongly to its own beginning. During the period of shouting the keyboard instruments offer a range of melodic riffs that are consonant with this structure of the bass. After several dozen iterations of this idea, the instruments interrupt the cycle with that represented in figure 3.9.

[21] Ibid., https://youtu.be/F6VLx4NCg8w?t=56m35s

Figure 3.9: Expanded Bass Line from T.O.D. Shout

Here the ascent from scale degree $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{5}$ in the bass is expanded to begin on scale degree $\hat{2}$. Once the pattern reaches the dominant, which is used to support a dominant six-four harmony, instead of a root position dominant, it returns to repeat the cycle from scale degree $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{5}$ before a final circuit beginning on $\hat{2}$ and ascending chromatically to the tonic. This interpolated section is clearly an elaboration of the basic motive. This phrase decelerates the progression the ear has become accustomed to, intensifying affect by resisting the music's magnetic forces, for as David Huron notes:

> A common way to increase the feeling of anticipation (and the accompanying tension) is through *delay*. By delaying the advent of the expected event, the state of anticipation can be sustained and so made more salient for a listener.[22]

And when the prevailing two-bar unit returns, an even greater sense of musical relief is produced.

The shouting music employed at Temple of Deliverance and at the live recording of "Same God" exemplifies the phenomenon of groove, which Lawrence Zbikowski defines as "a

[22] David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2006), 328.

large-scale, multi-layered pattern that involves both pitch and rhythmic materials, and whose repetitions form the basis for either a portion or all of a particular tune."[23] Similarly, Robin Attas characterizes groove as "a musical pattern from one to four bars long consisting of a selection of riffs played by the instruments of the pop ensemble and repeated continuously throughout a song or song section."[24] In this particular performance of "shouting music" and in the practice more generally, the repeated pitch material, whether a harmonic progression or an obsessively iterative bass line, resonates with the repeated gesticulations underlying each individual expression of the shout, while the incessant back-beat elicits bodily movement through the process of entrainment, which Justin London defines as "a synchronization of some aspect of our biological activity with regularly recurring events in the environment."[25] This notion emphasizes the means through which the musical form of shouting music is translated into embodied movement and recorded on the collective muscle memory of gospel congregations through what the ethnomusicologist Martin Clayton calls "inter-individual entrainment," the organization and synchronization of multiple individuals joined within a single performance. [26]

The centrality of "shouting" to the gospel imagination necessarily means that "shouting music" is also ubiquitous: the phenomenon occurs in various keys and tempi, underlying countless different expressions of holy dancing. A version from West Angeles Church of God In Christ in Los Angeles, CA illustrates "shouting" occurring in one of the nation's largest African

[23] Lawrence M. Zbikowski, "Modelling the Groove: Conceptual Structure and Popular Music," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 129/2 (December 2004), 275.

[24] Robin Attas, "Form as Process: The Buildup Introduction in Popular Music," Music Theory Spectrum 37/2 (Fall 2015): 275–296, 275.

[25] Justin London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

[26] Martin Clayton, "Entrainment, Ethnography and Musical Interaction" in *Experience and Meaning in Musical Performance*, eds. Martin Clayton, Byron Dueck, and Laura Leante (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

American Pentecostal churches.[27] A performance of "shouting music" at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Nashville, TN provides a similar perspective.[28] What is most interesting is how much the two preceding examples have in common with periods of "shouting" that routinely occur in smaller congregations like Helping Hands Church in Rocky Mount, NC.[29] Although these three performances stretch from the West Coast to the East Coast, and from one of the nation's largest churches to a small storefront congregation, they share the aggressive backbeat and bass pattern we examined a few moments ago. Like martial or pastoral topics in classical music, these shared sonic signatures have discursive functions.[30] One way to understand their significance is through the issue of musical quotation, which according to Ingrid Monson, "serve[s] to index a prior performance iconically and place it in juxtaposition to the present." When thought of intertextually or "intermusically." the musical fundaments of "shouting music," "point to the indexical capacity of music—that is, its ability to establish through aural means a point of spatio-temporal reference relative to its context of occurrence."[31] While, in the first instance, shouting music's recurring characteristics embed the worship practices of geographically and demographically divergent congregations in a shared tradition, the notion of indexicality offers one further insight to the present discussion. When conceived as a sign that points to something else because it is routinely experienced alongside it, the index offers a way to think about the sacramental significance that obtains from shouting music's blend of sound and spirit-induced movement. Pursuant to this, we might then say that shouting music is about memory—the

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[27] https://youtu.be/Z8UvcdxZyrI?t=11m50s

[28] https://youtu.be/aEldERHkx6Y

[29] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_js5qcJyTLY

[30] Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 9.

[31] Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 188.

individual recollection of previous embodied ecstasies and the kind of communal memory that Paul Connerton calls an “incorporating practice.”[32] Shouting music encodes the physical and spiritual discipline of shouting so that in performance it can activate the collective muscle memory of the gospel church.

But how are sound and spirit fused in the gospel imagination? What is the relationship between inherently audible music and an invisible God? To begin answering these questions, it will be helpful to first think about bodily engagement with shouting music in explicitly phenomenological terms. I propose that these embodiments of belief rely on a form of what Maurice Merleau-Ponty called “motor intentionality,” that is, “being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body.”[33] Tiger Roholt, following Merleau-Ponty, contends that:

> our bodies do not merely serve to give us an orientation toward things, which then constitutes a foundation for subsequent, full-blown, cognitive understanding; our bodily engagement with things is itself a kind of understanding. Our bodily apprehension is a practical, prereflective, noncognitive sort of understanding. This is the kind of understanding that rests in our active engagement with objects.[34]

While I allow that “bodily apprehension” precedes reflection, I do not agree that it necessarily constitutes a “noncognitive sort of understanding.” Rather, I assert that the gospel imagination is a form of “situated” or “embodied cognition,” for as Vijay Iyer proposes, “if we grant that cognition is structured at least to some degree by bodily experience, then we must understand the

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[32] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72–74.

[33] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenemenology of Perception*, 140

[34] Tiger C. Roholt, *Groove: A Phenemenology of Rhythmic Nuance* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 98–99.

body to be immersed in an environment that shapes its experience." "The body and its environment," according to Iyer, "not only provide constraints but also *enable* cognition."[35]

One can see the cognitive dimensions of these cultural practices in the term "shouting music" itself. This formulation provides evidence for what cognitive theorists call conceptual blending—a "cognitive process in which elements from two correlated mental spaces combine in a third," which, in this case, accents the ways that embodied experience shape gospel's musical imagination.[36] If, as Lawrence Zbikowski suggests, "the basic function of music culture is to represent through patterned sound various dynamic processes that are common in human experience...[including] those associated with the emotions and the movements of bodies—including our own—through space," how does gospel's embodied knowledge become a compositional strategy?[37] To pursue this question, it will be helpful to first think about how sound and space are mapped onto each other in the context of social dance. We can find a useful vocabulary for our discussion from Lawrence Zbikowski's suggestion that dance music's temporal and tonal frameworks "construct a sonic topography that is in dialog with the spatial topography activated by the dancers' movements."[38] In this context, shouting music's aggressive backbeat constitutes a "temporal framework" that offers the person shouting "a rich array of musical events," to which to entrain. Likewise, we might say that the characteristic bass line functions as a

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[35] Vijay Iyer, "Embodied Mind, Situated Cognition, and Expressive Microtiming in African-American Music," *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 19/3 (Spring 2002): 387–414, 390.

[36] Lawrence M. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 245.

[37] Lawrence Zbikowski, *Foundations of Musical Grammar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 20.

[38] Ibid., 170.

kind of "tonal framework," analogizing "dynamic processes like departure, return, and arrival" to facilitate the continuous motion of shouting.[39]

What chiefly distinguishes shouting music from the traditional mapping between sonic and spatial topographies is an imaginative move whereby space and sound are used to materialize "the spiritual realm." More than just an affordance of the music or an intention of the listeners, this materialization and sonicization reflect the gospel imagination's commitment to experiencing God through the body. When music is engaged in this way, the movement across physical space is experienced as movement in the spirit. While the "holy dance" we have seen in the preceding examples is the climactic expression of spiritual affectivity, the diverse ways in which individuals perform the presence of God suggests that shouting be understood as a category for any movement gospel elicits, embodiments of praise ranging from standing, clapping, and swaying with music, up to the climactic act of the holy dance. And if "shouting" is to be understood in this expansive sense, then the category of "shouting music" must also include the gospel vamp.

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[39] Ibid.

3.5: The Gospel Vamp as Shouting Music

<u>"In Everything Give Thanks"</u>

To see the gospel vamp serving as shouting music consider a performance of Lashaun Pace's "In Everything Give Thanks," at Temple of Deliverance's 2005 Thanksgiving Day service by the church's mixed-voice adult choir, featuring soloist Evangelist Patricia Crutcher, and backed by its multi-instrument band.[40] The performance begins with an accumulative introduction that highlights the interaction of multiple percussion instruments. As this video shows, while the soloist walks across the stage to take her place between choir and congregation, the band's percussion section enters the texture. While there are three musicians playing live percussion instruments, the first sound actually comes from a click track, a semi-automated musical element that gospel performers frequently use to synchronize large bands and to add density to the rhythmic texture. After the choir sings their first two words they start clapping, adding their hands to the click track and three live percussion instruments. Soon several thousand congregants follow the choir's lead and start clapping, adding still another layer to the song's rhythmic framework.

This rhythmic activity animates the song's four formal units: the chorus, verse, bridge, and vamp. Accounting for sectional reiterations, the overall form is *AABABCCD*. The clip includes the first two iterations of the song's 16-bar chorus. The *B* section, the soloist's verse spans 32-bars. And the song's bridge, section *C,* stretches across twenty measures. But the performances longest temporal span is dedicated to the song's vamp, which is formed through the repetition of a two-measure module, which is depicted in Figure 3.10.

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[40]Lashun Pace, "In Everything Give Thanks," as performed at by Evangelist Patricia Crutcher at Temple of Deliverance Church of God In Christ, Memphis, TN, https://youtu.be/NMJGw9ZGJEE?t=15s

Figure 3.10 "In Everything Give Thanks," Vamp

This vamp's constitutive groove combines a plagal progression with the chromatic bass line we saw in the earlier examples of shouting music. As a part of this, the choir repeats the phrase: "Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord!" nearly 60 times. After the 12th iteration, this refrain is intensified through the technique of choral inversion, which, in gospel parlance, refers to a revoicing of each of the chord notes upward to the next chord tone. All of this is driven forward by the vocal improvisations of the soloist, Evangelist Crutcher. Engaging the song's call-and-response framework, she moves through a list of things for which she is thankful, beginning with a conventional testimonial phrase: "I thank you for my life, health and strength." She expresses thanks for her pastor, for her family, her salvation, and for being "filled with the Holy Ghost." Among many other phrases, Crutcher says:

Oh—hey, I'm not gonna complain, but I'm gonna tell Him…
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
Thank You, Jesus
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
Thank You, Jesus
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
For waking me up
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
Early this morning
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
And starting me

Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
On my way
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
I've got my life
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
Health and strength
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
I've got my family
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
I'm saved this morning
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
I'm sanctified this morning
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
And I'm filled
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
With the Holy Ghost
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
And I wanna thank Him
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
I thank Him for the good
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
I thank Him for the bad
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
Thank Him for my ups
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
And I thank Him for my downs
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
I thank You, Jesus
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
For being good
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
For watching over me
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
Taking care of me
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
Letting me see
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!
Another thanksgiving
Choir: Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord!

Soon, Evangelist Crutcher offers a glimpse of what it might look and sound like to be "filled with the Holy Ghost." She sings herself in. That is, she gets lost—or found—in the spirit, and begins shouting and "speaking in tongues." Crutcher's affective state seems to become

contagious; before long, the church's altar becomes a dance floor as dozens of people run from their seats to shout at the front of the church while many others dance at their seats. Eventually the choir stops singing, but the band continues. More and more people join in, submitting their bodies to the flow of the music. As it entrains more and more bodies to holy dancing, this vamp realizes its function as shouting music.

What are the characteristics of this vamp that enable it to serve as shouting music? What is its relationship to the earlier examples of shouting music? On one level, there are structural similarities between this vamp's two-bar groove, prominent backbeat, chromatic bass line and the freestanding examples of shouting music we saw earlier. But more than these structural similarities, the vamp's ability to elicit and sustain shouting derives from its relationship to the rest of the song. The escalating sense of musical coordination created by the section's distinctions from the preceding formal units facilitates the gospel vamp's choreographic function. In the case of "In Everything Give Thanks," the shift from sections *A*, *B*, and *C* with their lengths of 16, 32, and 20 bars respectively to the vamp's two-bar groove constitutes an emphatic turn toward a logic of iteration. The repeated lyrics, choral sonorities, and harmonic progressions of this and other vamps amplify the iterative elements of the rhythmic texture, becoming metaphorical backbeats, predictable sonic events that facilitate corporeal coordination. And, given the participatory nature of this tradition, the vamp's iterative structure means that every congregant who is singing with the choir is incessantly repeating the same utterances, contributing to their own ever-intensifying sense of bodily engagement. Finally, the transition from extended impersonal scriptural quotations in the earlier sections to the directed statement "thank you, Jesus. Thank you Lord" creates dialogue between the congregants and their Lord. By fashioning a kind of supernatural speech while providing a sonic framework for shouting, this song becomes

a technology of transcendence, a resource for relating to the divine.

“The Name”

To see the gospel vamp function as shouting music in a different worship space, consider a 2010 performance of Glenn Burleigh’s “The Name” by the sanctuary choir of Chicago’s Trinity United Church of Christ.[41] This song consists of three formal units, and is set in G major in a moderate 12/8. In contrast to the diatonicism of the *A* section, the song’s vamp, the *C* section, makes extensive use of modal mixture. It consists of two basic musical ideas illustrated in Figure 3.11.

Figure 3.11: “The Name,” Vamp

G major tonality
modal mixture: parallel minor
Vocals
C1
I love to call him by his name.
reassertion of G major
Piano
Vox.
C2
aeolian progression: bVI-bVII-I
tierce de Picardie
Bless-ed be the name of the Lord. Oh
Pno.
subdominant -- dominant -- tonic
iv b 7 b 3
v 7
I

[41] Glenn Burleigh, “The Name,” as performed at Trinity UCC, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQVkfQjt0q0

The first, which I call *C1*, is built on the syncopated iteration of a G minor triad, whose flattened third pitch is then contradicted by the bass progression that leads back up from the diatonic B-natural to the G at the beginning of each two-bar phrase. Even more chromatic is *C2*, a four-measure phrase that combines a subdominant-dominant-tonic progression with what has been called "the Aeolian progression," ♭VI–♭VII–I, to create minor seventh chords on both the subdominant and the dominant harmonies. The resultant arrival at the tonic creates the Picardy third effect, inflecting "the name of the Lord" with the return to G major. Even though *C1* and *C2* are considerably shorter individual formal units than either the *A* or *B* sections, their repetition occupies two-thirds of the song's performance time.

Unlike the event from Temple of the Deliverance, the performance at Trinity does not lead to holy dancing during the temporal span of the song, rather the shout breaks out after the song has ended.[42] To support this shout, the band begins with a G-major version of the archetypal progression we saw earlier, but about 20 seconds into the shouting music, they move into a modified version of the vamp's *C2*, which is depicted in figure 3.12.

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[42] "The Name: Praise Break," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZngX0wfSoRY

Figure 3.12: Vamp of “The Name” as Shouting Music

As soon as the choir director recognizes what the band is doing, he returns to the center of the choir loft, and leads the choir in singing this modified version of the vamp. In order to serve as shouting music, the original vamp is simply sped up, moved to 4/4 time, and supplemented with the all-important backbeat. More than comparing the original vamp to its shouting-music version, I want to interrogate this improvised decision to substitute the pitch material of the song’s vamp in place of a trope more characteristic to the gospel tradition. It seems to me that this performance move, one that I have seen in numerous contexts and with many different songs, affirms that the gospel vamp is understood as a kind of shouting music. Even when its tempo and meter depart from the conventions of shouting music, the vamp’s conceptual linkage of music and movement remain intact. As gospel vamps facilitate movement, they are engaged as portals through which to enter the presence of God. This is what it means to be a sacrament.

3.6: The Gospel Vamp as Sonic Sacrament

Services of worship at Chicago's Greater Harvest Missionary Baptist Church are especially illustrative of the sacramental value of sound in the gospel imagination. The sense I got from regular attendance is strikingly consonant with the church history's proud report that Greater Harvest was barred from the National Baptist Convention "because it wasn't considered Baptist, but rather sanctified." The church's founder, Rev. Louis Boddie was a native Mississippian who "taught holiness, the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues."[43] The church's emphasis on experiencing the presence of God is especially evident around what most Baptists call the "ordinances of the church," communion (known by many as the Eucharist), and full-immersion baptism. One particularly revealing anecdote comes from a church member who notes that each time the church offers baptisms to "new converts," many long-time members take the opportunity to return to the water. Some walk through the pool, while others tarry in the baptismal waters, waiting to receive a prophetic message from the pastor. These members do this because the founder taught that God would "trouble the water," presenting God's self in the materiality of the water, transforming an ordinary pool into a fount of healing. This aspect of Greater Harvest's local theology is perpetuated by the testimony of members who report receiving miraculous healings after re-entering the baptismal pool. This same imagination infuses the church's monthly celebrations of Communion.

At 8:00 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month, Greater Harvest celebrates Communion. While it is customary to arrange the communion elements—trays, bread, wine, and sheets—before the service, Greater Harvest bids congregants to watch as the unadorned pulpit is transformed into the space for communion in the middle of the service. Deacons and deaconesses

[43] "Greater Harvest MBC," http://www.candrsoft.com/Church/default.aspx.

dressed in white and red come one by one to bring their contribution to the sacred scene. A deaconess sweeps the pulpit off with a small broom. A group of deacons rolls in a modified table, whose sides fold down to reveal plates prepared with elements to be distributed. In so doing they reveal the reverent preparation that has occurred before the service began. As a member notes: "the deaconesses who prepare the communion have an entire room dedicated for that purpose. While they do their work there is no talking."[44] Even before the pastor proclaims words of institution, these symbols echo the verse the words: "the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silent before him."[45] But, while the deaconesses acknowledge the presence of God through silence on Saturday, the entire congregation performs that presence on Sunday with joyful noise.

Among the dozens of services that I have attended, the 8:00 p.m. service on Sunday, January 5, 2016 was most instructive regarding the interrelation of sound and belief at Greater Harvest.[46] Between the sermon and the celebration of the communion service, the pastor, Elder Eric Thomas, began to sing the refrain of Margaret Douroux's canonical gospel selection, "He Decided to Die." This song, realized in figure 3.13, provided accompaniment for the deacons' and deaconesses' acts of preparation.

[44] Braxton Shelley, telephone interview with Quincy Rhinehart, March 29, 2016.

[45] Habakkuk 2:20.

[46] Greater Harvest MBC, Communion Service, January 5, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGoZ0Ob_XLE

Figure 3:13: "He Decided To Die," as performed as Greater Harvest Service

♪ = 113 **B1**

Choir

He would not come down from the cross just to save him-

Piano

I *tonic pedal* ii

5

Choir

self. He de - ci - ded to die just to save

Piano

ii (I) ii V (V/V) V

6 6 6 5

5 4 3

B2: inverted choral arrangement

9

Choir

me! He 2. me! He would not come down from the

Piano

I

13

Choir

cross just to save ——— him - self. He de -

Piano

16

Choir

ci - ded to die just to save ——— me! He

Piano

B3: vamp

20

2.

Choir

ci - ded! He de - ci - ded! He de - ci - ded to

Piano

V ii V ii (V/ii) ii V - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
6 6 b9 6
4 4 4

23

Choir

die just to save ——— me!

Piano

V - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - (V/V) V I
6 5
4 3

The pairing of words and music in this refrain reinforces the communion service's thematic focus. The majority of the chorus's words are delivered in staccato making the two iterations of the word "save" noteworthy for their duration. While the intensity and brevity of these lyrics depict Jesus's dogged determination to endure crucifixion, the centrality of salvation itself is amplified by the durational privilege and harmonic setting of both iterations of the word "save." The first statement of this word is concomitant with the chorus' first bass motion (from the tonic pedal up to the supertonic, F). The second statement is linked to the resolution of the cadential six-four.

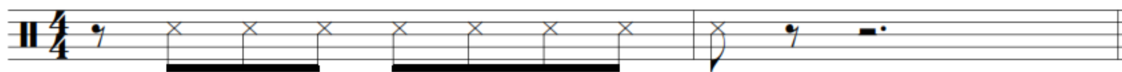
As Elder Thomas led the choir and band in singing "he would not come down from the cross just to save himself. He decided to die just to save me," Thomas seemed to acquire new energy: though he had been resting on the pulpit, at this moment, he stood up, visualizing the internal motion of his voice as it leaped up an octave, calling for a similar intensification from the choir. As the figure shows, the choir responded to their pastor's affective shift by inverting Douroux's chorus. In keeping with Douroux's design of the song, after inverting, they vamped on the last line of the refrain, repeatedly exclaiming "he decided." By repeatedly uttering this lyric, the musicians encouraged the congregants to transport the original scene of the crucifixion to this specific liturgy of remembrance. And as the performance of "He Decided to Die" continued, the musical groove elicited by the interplay between the band, the choir, and the pastor intensified, prompted escalating movements from members of the congregation and choir. Two women started to run around the sanctuary. The pastor vented the feeling that seemed to course throughout the building when he said: "I feel the holy ghost" and then turned to dance for a moment. His movements and statements affirm that he understand that shout to be a

performance of divine presence. This corporeal experience of transcendence gave Thomas the authority to declare that this week would be "a week of success." The significance of Thomas's words come into clearer relief through the theologian Jeremy Begbie's observation:

> to partake of Christ [in communion] means not the negation of our created temporality, but its transforming and reshaping. Likewise, every Eucharistic celebration can be seen as a repeated opportunity for time-laden creatures to be incorporated into a temporal environment, established in Christ, in which past, present and future coinhere, in such a way that our identities can be healed, recast and reformed.[47]

The indexical functions of communion and the shout feed an imagination where time itself acquires new meaning. The regularity of the various components of the musicians' shouting music make it clear that time is passing, while also shaping a liminal zone of experience that exists outside of more quotidian moments. As people continued shouting, Elder Thomas repeatedly uttered phrases like "the blood of Jesus" and "got my joy." Each of the statements repeated in turn constructed a complementary media pair wherein the pastor's repetitive statements amplified the repetitive shape of the "shouting music" by which he was accompanied.[48] Later, while the musicians were maintaining the metric and tonal framework of shouting music, Elder Thomas, who himself is a renowned organist, turned to the band and gestured the following rhythm with his hand:

Figure 3.14: Riff Gestured by Pastor Thomas



[47] Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 166.

[48] Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 99.

Elder Thomas then said, "I just felt that in my spirit."[49] This rhythm's strong association with a characteristic melodic riff, leads one of the keyboardists to mimetically echo the pastor's physical gesture with a musical one before the band makes it the centerpiece of their shouting music. This kind of imitation is commonplace especially in the context of musical black preaching, where an organist or guitarist will replicate a preacher's melodic riff in the space between statements. In this particular performance, gospel's traditional mapping of movement onto sound is reversed, this time the gesture comes first.

Figure 3.15: Greater Harvest Shouting Music

As the bodies entrained to the framework constructed around this riff, this even greater musical coordination became evidence of the pastor's spiritual sensitivity. It was as if he could feel just what rhythm the people needed to achieve their highest form of communal praise. Having exclaimed "I feel the holy ghost," by telling his musicians that he just "felt" a very specific rhythm riff in his spirit, Thomas elevates musical syntax into the realm of divinity, disclosing what Katherine Hagedorn calls a "theology of sound." Hagedorn contends that "talk about music reveals deeply embedded ideologies about identity and territoriality—literally one's place in the

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[49] Elder Eric Thomas, Communion Service at Greater Harvest Missionary Baptist Church, Chicago, IL, https://youtu.be/SGoZ0Ob_XLE?t=11m45s

world."[50] A "theology of sound" refers to "how the function of sound is theorized by musicians and adherents within a religious context, such that 'divinely targeted sound,' as well as discourse about that sound, map the experience of divine transcendence onto a human grid."[51] Elder Thomas's "theology of sound" interprets musical and physical movement as spiritual movement. Illustrating that in this context, feeling the spirit and feeling the music become one in the same. Sound is sacramental.

While Elder Thomas's use of the term "sacrament" to describe the materials distributed during the communion service places him outside the mainstream of many Baptist clergy, his word choice accurately reflects the meanings ascribed to these media for many African American Christians. While the term "ordinance" is typically used to avoid the theological controversy surrounding the relationship between bread and wine and the presence of God, the fully embodied nature of black Christian worship, with its emphasis on the experience of divine presence, makes it very difficult to understand why the spirit that pervades every other aspect of the worship service would be absent from communion. The thirteenth-century theologian Thomas Aquinas's definition of the sacrament as "the sign of a sacred thing insofar as it sanctifies human beings" centers on the provision of grace, a trace of divinity that these elements leave with their partakers.[52] Sacraments, then, are conjunctions, channels that transport divine presence into human bodies forming a kind of subjectivity that Louis Chauvet calls

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[50] Katherine J Hagedorn, "Toward a Theology of Sound: Drum Talk, *oricha* Worship, and Other Ecstatic Phenomena," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 36:2 (2006): 33-38, 36.

[51] Ibid., 36.

[52] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q.60, a.2; q. 62. See: Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan, S.J., and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 15.

"(arch)sacramentality,…the very essence of Christian existence."[53] In "the gospel imagination," musical syntax takes on sacramental efficacy, for as the philosopher James A.K. Smith's contention that "there is a kind of sacramentality of Pentecostal worship that sees the material as a good and necessary mediator of the Spirit's work and presence."[54] That the gospel vamp facilitates the experience of shouting, which is a performance of spirit possession, means that the vamp functions as a channel, a medium through which believers experience God in their bodies. As it combines, words, music, and movement, the gospel vamp becomes a technology of transcendence, proclaiming through every performance that "the presence of the Lord is here!"

3.7: Feeling Together

What has been observed in these pages about the relationship between gospel vamps and shouting is a distinctive example of a ubiquitous human phenomenon: using music to elicit and maintain collectivity. What we might call "feeling together" has inspired a vast array of scholars to theorize the relationship(s) between music and various forms of dance. Mark Butler, Robert Fink, and Luis-Manuel Garcia have each offered perceptive studies of Electronic Dance Music.[55] Geoffrey Burgess's 1998 dissertation includes an illuminating look at the chaconne from Lully's *Amadis,* focusing on the role of its musical structure—its extended length and repetitive

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[53] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament,* 2.

[54] James A. K. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, Mi: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), 81–82

[55] Mark Butler, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006). Mark Butler, *Playing With Something That Runs: Technology, Improvisation, and Composition in DJ and Laptop Performance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2005. Luis-Manuel Garcia, "On and On: Repetition as Process and Pleasure in Electronic Dance Music," *Music Theory Online* 11/4 (October 2005), accessed December 1, 2012, http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.05.11.4/mto.05.11.4.garcia.html.

character—in the veneration of the sovereign.[56] Christopher Wells uses "carnal musicology" to imagine the relationship between musical structure and the movement of Lindy Hop dancers.[57] And Marisol Berrios-Miranda has written sensitively about how the "musical concept of *afinque*" symbolizes "the bond that unites dancers and listeners at a salsa performance." As in the vamps that shape gospel music, "the tight locking of the various rhythmic layers, melodies, and harmonies produced by all the instruments in the salsa ensemble…move the audience to dance and listen enthusiastically." The successful performance of this music facilitates "a sense of unity and togetherness," "a magical communion between audience, dancers and musicians" that reproduces a sense of musical and cultural identity.[58]

In each case, individuals "learn bodily" through "affective transactions with the environment."[59] This way of attending to music makes individuals "pre-adjusted to the situations in which they operate and of which they are the product" such that shouting or raving, hopping or salsa dancing becomes "a particular but constant way of entering into relationship with the world…"[60] More than simply entering the world, these dances' role in cultural reproduction suggests that these ways of engaging with music "construct the world by a certain way of orienting itself towards it."[61] Here lies the important qualifier in Charles Saunders Pierce's definition of the sign as "something that stands *to somebody* for something." In order to understand the world in which gospel performance and shouting repeatedly converge, I have sought to

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[56] Geoffrey Burgess, "Ritual In The Tragedie En Musique From Lully's Cadmus Et Hermione (1673) To Rameau's Zoroastre (1749)" (PhD diss ., Cornell University, 1998).

[57] Christopher Wells, "'Go Harlem!': Chick Webb and His Dancing Audience During the Great Depression" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014).

[58] Marisol Berrios-Miranda, "The Significance of Salsa Music to National and Pan-Latino Identity" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1999), 4.

[59] Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 141.

[60] Ibid., 145; 142.

[61] Ibid., 144.

understand their theological and cultural frames of meaning in order to conduct the most illuminative music analysis of this distinctive brand of communal affect.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the function of the gospel vamp is essentially sacramental. We have seen that gospel vamps are shaped by their interaction with ecstatic movements known as shouting and the musical tropes conventionally used to accompany them, shouting music. Close readings of performances of Lashun Pace's "In Everything Give Thanks" and Glenn Burleigh's "The Name" have illustrated how the vamp functions as shouting music. By announcing a departure and a turn toward a space of heightened iteration, vamps condition gospel's characteristic form of bodily attention. Our closing example from Chicago's Greater Harvest has made explicit the forms of belief on which gospel music depends, an imaginative use of music to materialize the invisible subject of one's belief. Shouting is an embodied proclamation that "the presence of the lord is here." And if shouting is what the movement of the spirit looks like, the gospel vamp is what it sounds like.

Chapter 4: "Pressing on the Upward Way": Toward A Formal Theory of Gospel Vamps

Introduction

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the meanings produced in gospel performance are inextricably linked to the system of belief, production, and reception that I have called "the gospel imagination." In chapter 2, we saw how gospel music and black preaching use the practice of "tuning up" to facilitate a communal experience of transcendence through which congregations break free of the limits of temporality, gaining access to a spiritual world where belief is incarnate. When music and belief meet in the body, the result is shouting, the embodied performance of transcendence. The central argument of chapter 3, that "the gospel imagination" interprets music as extensions of divine presence, is the point of departure for the current chapter's central question: how does the vamp's function shape its form? How does the music of the vamp choreograph the movements of the vamp?

In this chapter, I offer a phenomenological approach to the vamp's form, arguing that gospel vamps emerge as repetition and intensification become musical technologies of transcendence. The chapter begins with an analytical essay on the live recording performance of Richard Smallwood's "I Will Sing Praises," which shows how this piece's relentless pursuit of intensification parallels the procession through which worshippers gradually move into higher forms of spiritual ecstasy. I then offer analytical vignettes of nine gospel compositions that show how the admixture of repetition, tonal modulation, "inversion," and textural accumulation—the techniques operative in "I Will Sing Praises"—give rise to vamps in other selections from the gospel repertory. This chapter's argument braids together the frequently opposed notions of repetition, groove, and teleology to theorize the vamp's affective trajectory, a phenomenological

approach to musical form which argues that vamps come into being as gospel performers—musicians, singers, and congregants—use iterative materials and processes to "tune up."

4.1: Analytical Essay on "I Will Sing Praises"

The lyric of "I Will Sing Praises"[1] is a paraphrase of Psalm 27 in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible:

A	"Lord, you are my light. Lord, you are my joy. You're my salvation. Whom shall I fear? I don't have to worry. I won't be afraid, for in the time of trouble you shall hide me, hide me. You shall hide me, hide me.
B	He shall hide me in his tabernacle. He shall set me upon a rock of stone. He shall hide me in his tabernacle. He shall set me upon a rock of stone.
C	I will sing praises, praises unto you. I will sing praises, praises unto you."

For comparison, consider the text of the psalm, which reads, in part:

> **The LORD is my light and my salvation**; **whom shall I fear**? the LORD is the strength of my life; **of whom shall I be afraid**? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. **For in the time of trouble he shall hide me** in his pavilion: **in** the secret of **his tabernacle** shall he hide me; **he shall set me up upon a rock**. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, **I will sing praises unto the LORD**. (Psalm 27: 1-6, KJV)

[1] Richard Smallwood, "I Will Sing Praises," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VujLdVRPe4

While the bolded sections of the psalm indicate the portions that are engaged most closely in "I Will Sing Praises," one of the most instructive differences between the psalm text and the song's lyric relates to the implied audience of the text. While the psalmist makes descriptive and declarative statements about "the Lord" and about the writer's intention, Smallwood's lyric personalizes these words. Rather than simply stating: "the Lord is my light and my salvation," the choir sings, "Lord, you are my light…you're my salvation." In Smallwood's paraphrase, then, "the Lord" becomes the subject of direct address rather than abstract description. As these lyrics facilitate a kind of transcendent communication, they disclose a poetics of gospel performance: a sense of gospel songs, and especially gospel vamps, as vehicles for spiritual transport. As this analysis unfolds, I point to ways that the musical organization of "I Will Sing Praises" capitalizes on what I have called "the gospel imagination," using it to move congregants to a higher place.

Like many of the other pieces we have seen in this dissertation, "I Will Sing Praises" consists of three formal sections, the *A*, *B*, and *C* sections, respectively. Performed in a moderate 4/4, section *A* occupies an unusual temporal span: rather than the even-numbered hypermeter characteristic of most of the pieces examined in this dissertation, this *A* section spans 11 bars. As Figure 4.1 shows, although this song is grounded in the key of C major, this opening section makes extensive use of modal mixture. The subdominant harmonies that appear in mm. 1, 3, and 5 are all borrowed from the minor mode. This chromaticism reappears in the four-fold statement of God's promise to hide followers from times of trouble. Here, repetition and text painting combine to construct an aural picture of the protection Psalm 27 promises.

Figure 4.1: "I Will Sing Praises," Section *A*

A

♩ = 92

Choir

Lord, you are my light; Lord, you are my joy.

Piano

I iv7 V I

Choir

You're my sal - va - tion. Whom shall I fear? I don't have to wor - ry. I

Piano

V/IV 4 2 iv7 V I V 4 2 iv vii7/V

Choir

won't be a - fraid, for in the time of trou - ble, you shall hide me.

Piano

V V/ii ii V V/IV 4 2 I 4 2

Found in mm. 8–11, these four iterations of "hide me" are identical with regard to lyrics and rhythm, but they are differentiated into two pairs by the addition of the words "you shall" in m. 7 and 9, and by the variant pitch material. In both pairs, there is a chromatically harmonized descent from scale degree $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$ over a tonic pedal. The first upper triad consists of the three upper voices of a dominant seventh chord built on the tonic, V/IV, which then slides down to create a third inversion supertonic seventh, ii (4/2). The next chord lowers the fifth of this supertonic seventh, transforming it from the harmony diatonic to C major, a minor seventh chord, to the version diatonic to C minor, a half-diminished sonority. The chromatic inflection of both upper harmonies gives them a strong downward attraction to the following chord—when realized, this musical motion sonically analogizes the act of pulling down a shield over something one wishes to hide. And the choir's vocal smear reinforces this sense of concealment. The force of this text-painting—the reassurance of protection—is amplified by the repetitions present in these measures, reiterations that can be understood as microrepresentations of the sectional recapitulations through which the song takes the form: *AABABC*.

At the end of the *A* section's second iteration, the band moves to tonicize G major, the piece's overall dominant. As figure 4.2 illustrates, each of the *B* section's eight measures begins on a G major sonority. This bridge divides neatly into two halves. In the first four bars, the repeated passage from G major in root position to the inverted C major tonic by means of a third-inversion dominant seventh chord gives way to the progression back to G major. Together, the shift away from C major to G major and the concomitant inability to escape this pattern, effected by the repetitions, offer a kind of sonic image of being "hidden [away] in a tabernacle." The second four-bar group of this section is an intensified reiteration of the first, except that each of the choral sonorities have been inverted upward to a higher version of the same harmony. The harmonic progression replaces the first inversion C major chord with a root position version. This new sense of height emphasizes a sonic picture of being lifted, followed by the more stable version of the C major harmony that invited listeners to imagine being set on a rock of stone.

Figure 4.2: "I Will Sing Praises," Section *B*

b': inverted choral arrangement

This tendency of musical motion to facilitate cognitive and affective modulation in the listeners acquires renewed energy in the song's final formal unit, its vamp, which appears at the end of the *B* section's second iteration. Like "Same God" and the majority of the songs we will see in this chapter, "I Will Sing Praises" is a "terminally climactic form."[2] This generic consistency suggests that we can understand the gospel vamp as a particular sort of terminal climax, a section where intensifying iteration becomes a homiletical device. The vamp is built on

[2] Brad Osborn, "Subverting the Verse–Chorus Paradigm." *Music Theory Spectrum* 35/1 (2013): 23–47.

the harmonic template shown in figure 4.3, which combines chromatic bass motion from E to G, ending in the first instance with an evaded cadence, and in the second with an authentic cadence.

Figure 4.3: "I Will Sing Praises," Harmonic Template For Vamp

Above this harmonic foundation, the material of this vamp is assembled through the use of a process that I call *textural accumulation:* the gradual building-up of a polyphonic texture. Smallwood uses textural accumulation to construct the vamp's polyphonic texture over the course of the module's first five iterations.

Figure 4.4: "I Will Sing Praises," Vamp C^1–C^2

As shown in figure 4.4, the vamp begins (at C^1) with the sopranos offering their version of the title lyric twice. Because they are roughly identical, two statements constitute a larger segment of the song's vamp.

Figure 4.5: "I Will Sing Praises," Vamp C^3–C^4

Figure 4.5 shows that for the third and fourth iteration of this vamp's formative module, the sopranos are joined by the altos who sing the same words with different rhythms, intensifying both the pitch and rhythmic parameters of this performance.

Figure 4.6: "I Will Sing Praises," Vamp C^5–C^6

Soprano
I will sing prais - es, prais - es un - to You. I will sing
Alto
I will sing prais - es, prais - es un - to You.
Tenor
I'll sing prais - es un - to You.
Piano

S
prais - es, prais - es un - to You. I will sing
A
I will sing prais - es, prais - es un - to You.
T
I'll sing prais - es un - to You.
Pno.

Figure 4.6 shows that the fully-formed choral texture first appears during the fifth iteration of the vamp's structuring module. Here, the sopranos and altos are joined by the tenors. Each of the three vocal parts sings a different rhythm, figurations that are staggered to ensure that the entrance of each vocal part is distinct. Although all three vocal parts sing the phrase's concluding lyrics, "praises unto you" in homophony, the sections offer slightly different words: the sopranos' and altos' lyric is "I will sing praises," but the tenors' late entrance only leaves room for them to offer the contraction: "I'll sing." What I have termed *textural accumulation* is helpfully contextualized by Mark Spicer's work on accumulative processes in popular music. His notion of "accumulative forms" refers to "many current pop-rock songs [that] feature…a cumulative process of textural growth, [effected as] various interlocking riffs…are introduced one by one until the groove is complete."[3] Spicer notes that "listening to an accumulative beginning is not unlike assembling the pieces of an aural jigsaw puzzle: only when all the layers of the groove are put together can we understand the complete picture."[4] The textural modulations at work in "I Will Sing Praises" make the role of each piece in the larger structure explicit. In contrast to the procedure I have been outlining, however, Spicer's "accumulative forms" are "most often employed at the beginning of songs."[5] Rather than extending the introduction, laying the groundwork for the crux of the song, textural accumulation in gospel vamps adds energy to the formal unit where intensification itself acquires theological significance. In this sense, accumulative processes in gospel vamps are more analogous to what Mark Butler calls "the buildup" in Electronic Dance Music: the space where "various instruments are added to the texture, usually one at a time…increas[ing] intensity—not only by thickening the texture but also

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[3] Mark Spicer, "(Ac)cumulative Form in Pop-Rock Music," *Twentieth-century Music* 1 (2004): 29–64, 32–33.

[4] Ibid., 29.

[5] Ibid., 33.

by filling in various rhythmic positions within the measure."[6] In gospel vamps, vocal lines take the place of EDM's recorded instrumental loops.

When the formative process of textural accumulation is completed in "I Will Sing Praises," the domain of texture gives way to key center as the chief generator of musical affect. After the sixth iteration of this module, C^7 is announced by a semitonal shift from C major up to D♭ major. And this continues as each of the next odd-numbered modules are announced—that is, distinguished from the preceding and succeeding section—through semitonal modulations. Figure 4.7 displays this vamp at its highest point, C^{19}–C^{20}, pitched a perfect fifth, seven semitones, higher than the first iteration.

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[6] Mark Butler, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 224.

Figure 4.7: "I Will Sing Praises," Vamp C^{19}–C^{20}

Given the centrality of recursive processes to the emergence of this vamp, how can we characterize its overall form? Yes, the vamp consists of forty statements of the lyrics "I'll sing praises unto you," but the harmonic plan, in which the first leads to a half cadence and the second to an authentic cadence, suggests that these forty statements should in truth be understood as twenty pairs. Further, the fact that each pair is stated twice before any tonal or textural change is made suggests a further segmentation into ten segments, three shaped by

texture, and seven differentiated by pitch center. But this modular analysis only reveals the parameters through which the segments are differentiated. The most accurate representation of this musical design is as an emergent form shaped by the syntactical processes of repetition, textural accumulation and tonal modulation, by which the manifold iterations of the module are shaped into an intensifying climb.

The semitonal modulations employed here and throughout the gospel repertory are helpfully contextualized by recent work on modulation in rock music. Unlike the motion by step or semitone that is common in gospel, Christopher Doll's discussion of "expressive modulation" in the rock "breakout chorus" notes that most of these key shifts move from the relative minor to the relative major, or up by five semitones. [7] Doll refers to these as "pump up modulations," noting that they have been defined by a growing list of names, including: the "crowbar modulation,"[8] "the truck driver's modulation,"[9] and the "shotgun modulation." More recently, Dai Griffiths offered the term "elevating modulation" as a way to describe the technique's effect and to challenge the derision it has sustained. [10] Griffiths proposes that multiple modulations of this type combine to create an "elevating form." And Scott Hanenberg has used markedness theory and narrative theory to offer five archetypes for the functions modulation can have in rock music.[11]

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[7] Christopher Doll, "Rockin' Out: Expressive Modulation in Verse-Chorus Form," *Music Theory Online* 17/3 (October 2011).

[8] Peter Kaminsky, "The Popular Album as Song Cycle: Paul Simon's Still Crazy After All These Years," *College Music Symposium* 32 (1992): 38–54.

[9] Walter Everett, *The Foundations of Rock: From "Blue Suede Shoes" to "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[10] Dai Griffiths, "Elevating form and elevating modulation," *Popular Music* 34/1 (January 2015): 22–44.

[11] Scott J. Hanenberg, "Rock Modulation and Narrative," *Music Theory Online* 22/2 (June 2016).

The tonal modulations employed in "I Will Sing Praises" also serve theological and experiential purposes: as the choir sings about praise, the rising pitch level signals, and—I would argue—produces the affective lift that I have called "tuning up." Along the way, not only do the singers demonstrate the wide range of their vocal instruments—prompting many to wonder just how high they will go—but also they can be interpreted as suggesting that no voice, no matter how virtuosic, can extend high enough to offer sufficient praise. More than commenting on the quantity of praise or the extremity that praise might require, the musical syntax offers a kind of analogy. The preposition "unto" proves to be of significant consequence in this regard. For this sense of lift, this emphatic sense of ascending, becomes a sonic picture of what it means to sing praise unto the Lord. By singing higher and higher there is a sense in which the participants are getting closer to the divine, performing the climb inherent to any image of transcendence. As such, this vamp combines "textual narratives and formal, musical design … [that] reinforce each other," generating what Jocelyn Neal has called a "narrative paradigm."[12]

While following the general outline of Psalm 27, Smallwood's use of the title lyrics, "I will sing praises," only in the song's final sections, positions praise as the response to the divine promises recounted in the preceding sections. It is as if when we reach G major again, this time by half-steps as opposed to the earlier tonicization, we have reached the goal. As such, this vamp has become what Henry Mitchell calls "ecstatic reinforcement" and what I want to call an "ecstatic response" to the promises lodged in the psalm.[13] In "I Will Sing Praises" Smallwood organizes the lyrical content of ancient scripture to reinforce the form of contemporary gospel

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[12] Jocelyn Neal, "Narrative Paradigms, Musical Signifiers, and Form as Function in Country Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 29/1 (2007): 41–72, 42.

[13] Henry Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 30.

songs. This temporally conjunctive move—setting ancient texts in modern form—facilitates the transhistorical communion that gospel songs seek to foment.

Likewise, the related yet distinct vocal parts comment on the movement that attended the performance of this song.[14] Throughout the song, but especially in the vamp, each of the members of the vocal aggregation, the musicians, and Smallwood himself move in synchrony with the music. Some shift their entire bodies while others only engage their arms. Some arm motions are upward while others are lateral. There is a kind of diversity found in this shared experience of spontaneous but regular bodily movement. The bodily engagement of the "performers" was met with participation by the audience members. Indeed, observing the audience's participation in this performance reveals a crucial aspect of this performance: the ever-intensifying nature of the vamp is joined by a similarly escalating response from the congregants. With each successive textural and tonal modulation, more and more congregants stand from their seated positions and engage their bodies in the performance. By the song's end, the distinction between choir and congregation has dissolved: the vamp has literally moved the audience. The video of the performance shows that the modulation from F major to F# major that announced the shift from module 18 to 19 was mirrored by an affective intensification: dozens of people leap from their seats in response to this tonal shift. It is as if by listening and attending to this music another kind of union has also taken place between the bodies and minds of this collective and the music around which they have been aggregated—a union so strong that the force of a musical modulation was sufficient to pull them up out of their seats.

What this song suggests about the inextricable linkage between musical syntax and the movement of gospel congregants that is forged in "the gospel imagination" returns us to the

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[14] Richard Smallwood, "I Will Sing Praises," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VujLdVRPe4.

central argument of this dissertation—that one of gospel's central functions is fomenting communion within human collectives and between these groups and the divine—with a clearer sense of how the gospel vamp achieves its affective ends. The foregoing observations concerning this particular vamp's linkage of escalatory tonal and textural devices and intensifying movement reveal this performance's expression of "tuning up," what I have called the formal logic of "the gospel imagination." Although I highlighted three examples of "tuning up" in gospel songs in chapter 2, the issues raised in my analysis of "I Will Sing Praises" point toward a more systematic account of the means through which this formal tendency shapes the gospel vamp.

4.2: Towards A Formal Theory of the Vamp

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, vamps are the main vehicles through which gospel performances achieve their affective ends. Guthrie Ramsey's use of the term *troping cycle* to describe these events is meant to highlight "the aesthetic demands and requirements" these sections obtain.[15] As numerous writers have noted, in gospel performance, intensification is chief among these demands. David Brackett, for example, writes that "the ostinato vamps at the end of gospel songs and most soul songs…allow for vocal/instrumental improvisations of increasing intensity causing a corresponding shift in the music to a higher energy level…"[16] Likewise, Jean Kidula's discussion of the "chained vamp" in Andrae Crouch's "Power in the Blood" notes that "in addition to harmonic extensions and instrumental improvisations with each successive vamp, sometimes the volume of the instrumental accompaniment [is] increased to dramatize the

[15] Guthrie Ramsey, *Race Music: Black Music Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 60.

[16] David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 118.

expressive emotional response."[17] And Mary McGann, in her work on music in African American Catholic worship, proposes that "vamps are holding patterns—stalls in the rhythmic and melodic unfolding of a song, that hold a community of music-makers in a relentless build-up of energy and intensity…"[18] But the tension implicit in McGann's discussion of the vamp as both a "holding pattern" and a "relentless build-up" points to a broader lacuna in these discussions of vamps in gospel music: the lack of attention to the role of relatively determined syntactical elements in the intensification of gospel vamps.

To construct a fuller account of the role of vamps in gospel intensification, I begin with Ingrid Monson's description of intensification as

> a deliberately amorphous term that combines musical events internal to a particular performance that contributes to the feeling of musical climax (such as changes in dynamics, rhythmic density, register, timbre, melody, harmony, interaction, and style of groove) with intermusical aspects of performance…that link it to issues of history and the African American sensibilities of "taking it to another level" and grooving.[19]

As I noted in my analysis of Smallwood's "I Will Sing Praises," while there is no ad-libbing soloist offering vocal improvisations, and while there certainly is a consistent sense that this vamp is built on the iteration of a recognizable musical unit, the piece demonstrates an unmistakable syntactical preoccupation with escalation. In this particular song, textural accumulation and tonal modulation add intensity to successive iterations of the vamp's formative module. What occurs in this performance is representative of the gospel repertory. Therefore, in this chapter,

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[17] Jean Kidula, "The Gospel of Andraé Crouch: A Black Angeleno" in California Soul: Music of African Americans in the West, ed. Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje and Eddie S. Meadows (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 309.

[18] Mary E. McGann, *A Precious Fountain: Music in the Worship of an African American Catholic Community* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 140.

[19] Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 139. One finds an insightful discussion of tempo escalation in: Regula Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 205.

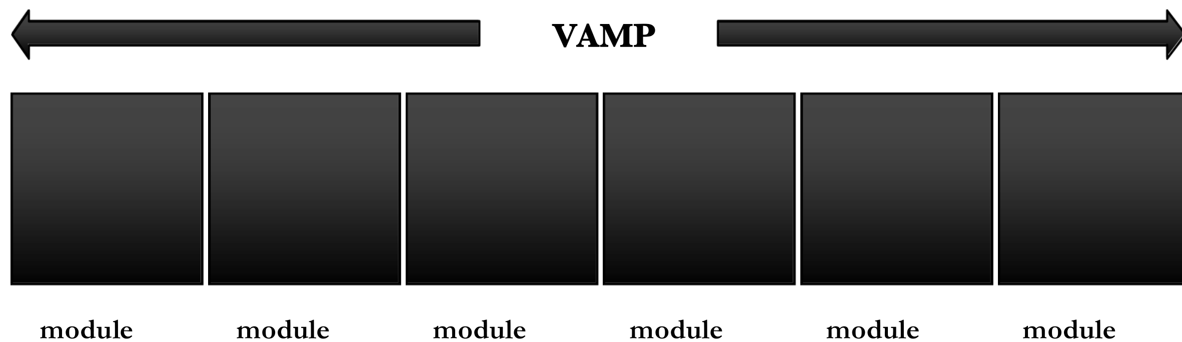
while affirming the crucial role of vocal and instrumental improvisation to gospel performance, I develop a formal theory of the vamp that focuses on the role of escalatory techniques woven into what previous writers have referred to as simply frameworks for intensifying performance. While most discussions of intensification in gospel music problematically conceive of vamps as mere backdrops for the creation of intensity these notions are built on another, more fundamental, under-theorization. Monson notes that "vamps are repeating figures (usually two to four bars in length)," but she writes that they are also "integral textual components of the compositions themselves."[20] Likewise, Guthrie Ramsey's substitution of *troping cycle* for *vamp,* in order to accent the form's affective dimension, fails to resolve a more fundamental ambiguity: in his discussion, the term *vamp* denotes both the "harmonic successions and melodic patterns" characteristic of a section *and* the section itself.[21] In both Monson and Ramsey's discussions, then, the vamp is simultaneously an iterated musical figure and an entire formal unit. But what is the relationship between these two levels of musical organization? The centrality of pitch and texture-based intensification to gospel performance leads us to an answer. In this chapter, I argue that the larger entities known as vamps are formed emergently as the smaller musical modules are iterated. These formative modules are the local sonic entities that have also been referred to as vamps. In gospel performance, while these musical modules are repeated they are intensified by escalatory techniques including "inverting," tonal modulation, and textural accumulation, giving rise to the broader formal units known as vamps. As performers "tune up" the interaction of repetition and intensification form the vamp's syntax by providing specific arrangements of

[20] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out To Jazz and Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 100–101.

[21] Ramsey, *Race Music*, 60.

coherence within segments and articulating the differences between those units; table 4.1 illustrates this form.

Table 4:1, schematic of the vamp



By enacting the process of "tuning up," the gospel vamp functions as a musical technology of transcendence. This conception builds on Mark Butler's definition of musical technologies in Electronic Dance Music (EDM) as "principles of design affording certain kinds of performative interaction…" Notwithstanding the cultural and religious divergence of the two practices, the materiality of gospel vamps is helpfully elucidated by Butler's notion that musical techniques:

> enable novel, contingently developing improvisations to be formed through the creative transformation of recorded musical objects. By structuring musical temporality in distinctive ways, they allow musicians to affect these transformations within the dynamic environment of live performance. Their implications for the unfolding of an event constitute an energetic field of possibility that musicians navigate.[22]

Butler's conjunction of "technology" and "possibility" is apposite for analyzing the contingency of gospel performances: imagine a rendering of "I Will Sing Praises" that only modulates four

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[22] Mark Butler, *Playing With Something That Runs: Technology, Improvisation, and Composition in DJ and Laptop Performance* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), *175*.

times, ending in E major.[23] Envision an enactment of "Same God" that has one reprise instead of three. Picture a version of "Healing" that iterates the hook considerably more or fewer times than Smallwood's live recording version. Indeed each song has undoubtedly been performed those ways countless times. In each of these scenarios the aforementioned differences in duration and content do not change the identity of the song or the vamp. This ontological durability qualifies gospel compositions as a version of what Georgina Born calls "provisional works."[24] They reside somewhere in the middle of the continuum that Mark Butler, following Born, uses to measure "the relationship of musical specificity to time …" In Butler's system, "sonic outcomes that are specified only *in time* form one end of the continuum, while those that are maximally specified *ahead of time* form the other."[25] My argument that gospel music realizes *in time* materials and procedures that are formed *ahead of time* constitutes a kind of recombinant ontology. This brand of musical identity runs counter to the "work concept" described by Lydia Goehr, an ideological construct that feeds many object-like notions of the musical work and rigid analytics for musical form.[26] In contrast to these static approaches, the emergent conception of the vamp shaped in this dissertation is inspired by Janet Schmalfeldt's processual approach to musical form.[27] She uses form-functional reinterpretations to accent the temporal nature of musical performance. For the purposes of this project, I want to apply Schmalfeldt's phenomenological supplement to James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's notion of modular assembly in sonata form, which they define as: "the forging of a succession of short, section-specific musical units (spaces of

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[23] See, for example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTTmaKUvXws.

[24] Georgina Born, "On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity," *Twentieth-Century Music* 2/1 (2005): 7–36.

[25] Butler, *Playing With Something That Runs*, 120.

[26] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[27] Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

action) linked together into an ongoing linear chain—pressing down and connecting one appropriately stylized musical tile after another."[28] If we take our cue from Schmalfeldt and imagine this formal assembly occurring *in time*, during performance, the notion of emergent modularity acquires real usefulness for the analysis of gospel music. During gospel performances, musical modules are iterated to develop what Butler has called "logical flow."[29] In gospel vamps, this logic is realized as modules, specific arrangements of musical material comparable to what Robin Attas calls "groove state[s]," are formed into vamps through the recursive application of escalatory techniques, the practice we know as "tuning up."[30] In the next section of this chapter, I contextualize the practice of "tuning up" in scholarly discussions of repetition, groove, and teleology, in order to argue that gospel vamps dissolve the opposition that is often posited between repetitive grooves and musical teleology.

4.3.1: Repetition

Throughout this dissertation we have seen the centrality of repetition—both of entire formal units and of smaller musical ideas—in gospel performance. In recent years, this long-derided musical phenomenon has been the subject of increasing scholarly interest. An early, but exemplary work by the composer and theorist David Lidov proposes that musical repetition takes three different forms: formative, focal, and textural repetition. According to this theory, formative repetition interprets what is repeated, focal repetition directs attention to the presence of repetition itself, and textural repetition focuses attention on other, changing aspects of the

[28] James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 16.

[29] Mark Butler, *Unlocking the Groove*, 242.

[30] Robin Attas, "Meter as Process in Groove-Based Popular Music," (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2011), 275.

musical texture, while influencing the quality of those changing details. While he recognizes that categories of repetition are not mutually exclusive, Lidov connects each category to a specific number of repetitions, the proximity of the repetitions to each other, and to the position they occupy in a piece of music. According to Lidov, formative repetition is exemplified by single, immediate repetitions or single and multiple delayed repetitions. Focal repetition can be found in a three- or fourfold immediate repetition of a musical unit or a single repetition that crosses the boundary of a longer section. He contends that textural repetition occurs with the "continuing repetition of an idea more than three or four times."[31] Although Lidov's attempt to affix specific numbers of iterations to his schematic proves to be his theory's undoing, his supplement of a more nuanced sense of repetition makes space for the account of repetition that I offer in these pages. Lidov's particularization of repetitive phenomena is fundamentally consonant with Richard Middleton's emphasis on the contingency of musical repetition. Middleton argues that

> [t]he significance of repetition is closely bound up with its role in the total syntactic structure, that is, first, with the nature of what is repeated, and second, with the relationship of the repetition to the other processes that are present…[32]

He proposes that repetition in popular music relies on a distinction between "musematic repetition," the more or less immediate reiteration of short musical elements, and "discursive repetition," the repetition of larger formal units. Middleton contends that musematic repetition is characteristic of "Afro-American musics," while discursive repetition reflects more "literate modes of composition."[33] As we have seen throughout this dissertation, however, gospel performance problematizes Middleton's distinctions. In gospel, discursive repetitions are iterated

[31] David Lidov, *Is Language a Music?: Writings on Musical Form and Signification* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 30–37.

[32] Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), 269.

[33] Ibid.

so extensively that they acquire a kind of musematic quality. Moreover, a central argument of this chapter is that gospel vamps are animated by the tensions and resonances that occur between different types of repetition within a single performance.

In gospel music, repetition is a multivalent and productive musical process. It functions here, as in genres like EDM, as "a way of actively structuring time, music, and performance."[34] Mark Butler's distinction between the various effects of repetitive aspects of EDM is instructive for the present discussion. He posits seven gerundial formulations—repeating, cycling, going, grooving, riding, transitioning, and flowing—meant to tease apart the different sonic elements of electronic dance music that might all be clumsily labeled as simply "repetitive" and to "emphasize the active, dynamic ways in which they operate."[35] Each of these technologies builds on the other, modeling a kind an idealized EDM experience. As *repetition* structures time, "dynamic configurations of musical energy," namely, *cycles*, *go* forward; along the way, they constitute *grooves* that enable the technologically mediated experience of *riding*.[36] *Transitioning* problematizes the notion of teleology implied by the term transition, producing instead a "sense of constant flux," which, when extended over entire sets, inculcates *flowing* as the affective signature of EDM performance.[37] Inasmuch as repetitive musical technologies are inextricably linked to repetitive bodily movements in gospel—as in EDM—repetition's origin as "a more general form of human behavior has musical implications" and its musical form has psychological implications.[38] Elizabeth Margulis's work in music cognition likewise emphasizes that musical repetition can be understood as "a particular kind of *behavior*" instead of as "a

[34] Butler, *Playing With Something That Runs*, 178.
[35] Ibid., 175.
[36] Ibid., 178–179
[37] Ibid., 223–228.
[38] Ibid., 181.

particular kind of *object*." This behavioral conception applies equally to the behavior of performers and listeners. In this way, then, repetitive modes of listening including, "hitting the repeat button in iTunes, cycling through the same CD again and again in your car, [and] revisiting the concert of a favorite performer every night he's in town," are akin to "…some collaborative, participatory kinds of music making where the lines between composer and listener blur…" Here, "questions about musical repetition become questions about repetition-related acts."[39] When directed to the performance of gospel vamps, the question "why repeat?" finds an insightful answer in John Rahn's description of repetition as "a process of continual transcendence towards who knows what end." For repetition, thus conceived, "the focus is always forward, un-self-ish, opening away from the current entity in the direction of something larger and unconfined."[40] Rahn's conjunction of "repetition" and "focus" is consonant with the directedness of gospel performance, a vital formal question that has a complex relationship with the issue of musical teleology.

4.3.2: Teleology

In gospel vamps, as we have seen, a sense of goal-direction obtains from the harmonic progressions and melodic motions constitutive of each vamp's formative module. The force of the half cadence and imperfect authentic cadence in each iteration of the module in "I Will Sing

[39] Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, *On Repeat: How Music Plays The Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 55.

[40] John Rahn, "Repetition," *Contemporary Music Review* 7/2 (1993), 50.

Praises" exemplifies this. Additionally, in vamps where a polyphonic choral texture resolves to homophony at the cadence, this tension-release arc also provides a kind of micro-teleology. Moreover, in our opening analysis of "I Will Sing Praises," although there is no definite musical destination, the sense of heightening achieved by the seven modulations does imbue the form with a tangled sense of direction. As Butler observes concerning EDM participants,

> within grooves and other small-scale spans, he or she will sense a clear and specific goal ahead. The listener will also feel strong growth processes and climaxes over midlevel spans, especially the sections of increasing intensity known as buildups. The specific point at which the buildup will peak, however, is not defined and in most cases is difficult to anticipate precisely.[41]

More integral than these local musical goals are the notions of teleology that shape "the gospel imagination." The theological significance of musical teleology is richly articulated by Will Boone in his ethnographic study of Faith Assembly, an African American Pentecostal church in North Carolina. As Boone observes, "Christian life, for the believers at Faith Assembly, is goal-directed." This goal-direction appears in

> preached messages, prayers, songs, and conversations [that] are saturated with the language of achievement—"triumphs," "victories," "breakthroughs," "next levels," "new dimensions," "higher heights and deeper depths"—each of these words or phrases representing one step closer to a divinely ordained destiny.[42]

Boone insightfully notes that "since spirit-filled believers do not achieve true destiny until the afterlife…living as a Christian involves not only goal direction, but [what Robert Fink calls] the 'heroic delay of gratification.'"[43] Thus, what I have called the gospel imagination's tangled sense of direction affirms both the fundamental inscrutability of the Lord *and* the potential for spiritual

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[41] Mark Butler, *Unlocking the Groove,* 221.

[42] Will Boone, "Hearing Faith: Musical Practice and Spirit-Filled Worship in A Contemporary African American Church" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2013), 121–122.

[43] Ibid., 122; Robert Fink, "Goal-Directed Soul? Analyzing Rhythmic Teleology in African American Popular Music," Journal of the American Musicological Society 64/1 (Spring 2011): 182.

transport. The idea that God is "high and lifted up" but also "just a prayer away" is of a piece with a

> teleological view of existence [that] manifests in various aspects of sound in Spirit-filled worship, very often in the form of an experiential climb or buildup. A sermon will begin in a reflective or meditative mode and gradually build toward climactic moments of instrumentally-punctuated chant. A song will begin sparsely with piano and solo voice, adding instruments as the verses progress and modulating to higher keys before reaching a triumphant vamp.[44]

And the words of singers and worship leaders echo this as they "exhort the congregation with teleological rhetoric, casting their participation and praise as a goal-directed activity: 'Break through, just break through!' 'Press on, press! press!' 'If we just push a little farther!' 'Come on! Let's go a little higher!'"[45] But the theology this reveals runs counter to the well-worn scholarly conviction that "…African American popular music is not supposed to have goal direction…"[46] Thus, as Robert Fink notes:

> …the large number of musical analysts who have been interested in musical teleology have not, in general, been very interested in grooves; and the smaller/ number who have been very interested in grooves have not been at all interested in musical teleology.[47]

In contrast to this view, I want to build on Boone's and Fink's proposition that these genres are fed by the productive "tension[s] between telos and presence, between goals and grooves."[48] In order to convey both the directedness of "the gospel imagination" and the open-endedness of gospel vamp, I will replace the term "teleology" with "trajectory." The affective trajectory of gospel vamps realizes the original meaning of transcendence: climbing higher in pursuit of some surpassing reality.

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[44] Boone, "Hearing Faith," 122.
[45] Ibid., 123.
[46] Fink, "Goal-Directed Soul," 184–185.
[47] Ibid., 183.
[48] Boone, "Hearing Faith," 125; Fink, "Goal-Directed Soul," 187

4.3.3: Groove

The pursuit evident in gospel vamps comes into even clearer view through Tim Hughes's work on "groove" and "flow." Beginning with Mark Spicer's definition of groove as: "the complex tapestry of riffs—usually played by the drums, bass, rhythm guitar and/or keyboard in some combination—that work together to create the distinctive harmonic/rhythmic backdrop which identifies a song," Hughes notes that the term is used to refer to musical units of quite different sizes: as a referent for "different backdrops that support different parts of a song…the song as a whole…or to a part as small as a simple riff."[49] Like my earlier distinction between the vamp as formal unit or as formative module, Hughes argues, "a figure is not a groove unless it is *designed to be repeated*."[50] Wherever grooves are found, Hughes argues, they "must be designed to function when played a single time, when following itself, when preceding itself, or all of the above."[51] Affording extensive repetition is the chief characteristic of what I call formative modules. As such, these musical units fuse William Caplin's distinction between "grouping structure" and "formal function."[52] When these modules are repeated, the effect is what Hughes calls "a sense of forward motion," what he calls "flow."[53] Following John Rahn and Leonard Meyer, Hughes offers the following rather phenomenological account of musical repetition:

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[49] Mark Spicer, "British Pop-Rock Music in the Post-Beatles Era: Three Analytical Studies," (PhD diss., Yale University, 2001), 10. Tim Hughes, "Groove and Flow: Six Analytical Essays on the Music of Stevie Wonder" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2003), 14.

[50] Hughes, "Groove and Flow," 14.

[51] Ibid.,15.

[52] William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9.

[53] Hughes, "Groove and Flow," 16. The musical phenomenon that Hughes refers to as "flow" can be understood as a specific manifestation of the more general form of intense concentration and fulfillment outlined by the psychologist Mihaly Csiksentmihalyi in his seminal work, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990.)

> First, a musical figure is stated. When this happens the listener knows, or cognizes it. Then the musical figure is stated again. At this point, the listener cognizes the second figure and also re-cognizes it. We recognize at once that it is the same as the first figure and yet also know that it is different: it is the second of two identical statements. When the second figure is recognized as a repetition of the first, the listener also recognizes that they are both part of a series of statements that has not yet ended—suggesting that further statements of the figure may follow.[54]

What Hughes calls "flow," then, is created by "an alternating sequence of expectation and fulfillment [that] extends forward through time." Like the musical forms he calls "autotelic," flow is also self-perpetuating, generating the musical affect that David Huron calls "prediction response."[55] The relentless pursuit of intensification that we have seen in gospel vamps offers listeners a generic expectation that is realized in varying ways throughout the gospel repertory.

The phenomenological conception of musical form implicit in Hughes's discussion of "flow" and explicit in my theory of the vamp relies on a type of hearing that, according to Harris Berger, includes "the anticipation and vague awareness of the upcoming parts that runs continuously into the present perceptual moment and beyond that into the recent past. This is the notion of protention that enables us to exist within a 'thick' living present in which anticipations of the near future and retentions of the recent past form an ever-changing gestalt."[56] The experiential matrix that animates the performance of gospel vamps, then, relies on an expanded form of what Christopher Hasty has called "projection." [57] This model of metrical experience implies that "meter occurs when listeners replicate the duration of an event." In "projection," the onset of some sound projects a potential for duration. When the second sonic

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[54] Hughes, "Groove and Flow," 16–17.

[55] David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2008), 13.

[56] Harris Berger, *Metal, Rock, and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), 132.

[57] Christopher F. Hasty, *Meter as Rhythm* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 84–91.

onset occurs, the previous sound's duration becomes defined, and becomes the projected duration for the next. When the projected duration is realized, a sense of meter has resulted. I want to extend Hasty's notion of projection from the domain of meter and argue that it offers an insightful way to understand the way repeated musical processes are perceived in gospel performances. As in Smallwood's "I Will Sing Praises," I want to argue that for experienced listeners the onset of both textural accumulation and tonal modulation allows individuals to project the next application of that procedure. But more than just perceiving formal changes, "projection" allows gospel performers to tune themselves up, to "grapple," in the words of Harris Berger, with the music, to inhabit a space that David Lewin calls being "inside the music."[58] Synthesizing *performative stance*, *compositional stance*, and *audience stance*, gospel vamps are formed as congregants "actively grapple with a [musical] entity … and bring that entity into experience."[59] More than simply registering the details of a particular performance, or being entrained to its recurrent elements, a gospel performer who operates with an active and agential "stance" uses musical technologies to pursue transcendence. Even when musical performances become all-absorptive, they rely on the modes of attending that have been constructed over time. Thus, my theory of gospel vamps argues not simply that vamps emerge during performance, or that performers experience the vamps agentially, but that vamps are constituted by this agential experience.

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[58] David Lewin, *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 159. Harris Berger, *Stance: Ideas About Emotion, Style, And Meaning For The Study Of Expressive Culture* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010).

[59] Berger, *Stance,* 15–16.

4.4: Analytical Vignettes

In the remainder of this chapter, nine analyses will show how the practice of "tuning up" shapes gospel vamps through the admixture of the repetition and the escalatory techniques discussed in the analysis of "I Will Sing Praises": tonal modulation, "inverting," and textural accumulation. These three formative processes are the most conventional pitch-based techniques in gospel vamps. We will see tonal modulation form the vamp of Twinkie Clark's "Balm In Gilead," John P. Kee's "The Anointing," and Donald Lawrence's "When Sunday Comes." Likewise, we will discover how the vamps of Thomas Whitfield's "I Shall Wear A Crown" and Norman Hutchins's "Because of You" rely on the process gospel practitioners call "inversion." The vamps of A. Jeffrey LaValley's "Revelations 19:1," Malcolm William's "The Blood Still Works," and Patrick Bradley's "I Know Something About God's Grace" will be shown to emerge through textural accumulation. My final analysis will illustrate how the vamp of Kurt Carr's "For Every Mountain" combines both inverting and tonal modulation.

4.4.1: Tonal Modulation

"Balm In Gilead"

Tonal modulation is the central escalatory technique at work in the vamp of Twinkie Clark's "Balm in Gilead." Recorded by her sister, Karen Clark Sheard, on the 1995 album *Finally Karen*, this song's vamp is built on a four-measure module that is iterated five times.[60]

Figure 4.8: "Balm In Gilead," module *C*

As figure 4.8 shows this module, *C*, consists of two iterations of a two-measure idea, *a*. Within both statements of *a* are two instantiations of the lyrics, "there is a balm." The first is cast as a diatonic descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$ in the soprano; the second is a chromatic ascent back to the initial sonority, all over a tonic pedal. The first progression, shown in measure 1, is supported by

[60] Twinkie Clark, "Balm in Gilead," https://youtu.be/j5y0mUayAkM?t=3m41s.

harmonic motion from I to IV9; the second progression, given in measure 2, passes from I through IV9 en route to an altered dominant, V11 that sounds rather like a combination of IV and V. The second iteration of *a* is identical to the first, except the dominant achieved is the dominant in the new key, the major key a semitone higher. Figure 4.9 renders the entire vamp, showing the first modulation from G major to A♭ major in m. 4 (C_2); subsequent modulations lift the piece from A♭ major to A major in m. 8 (C_3), from A major to B♭ major in m. 14 (C_4), and from B♭ major to B major in m. 16 (C_5). These four modulations extend this vamp over five key centers.

Figure 4.9: "Balm In Gilead," vamp

C2: module elevated by a semitone to Ab

C3: module elevated by a semitone to A

11

Choir

is a balm! There is a balm! hey! hey! hey! There is a balm! There is a

Piano

C4: module elevated by a semitone to Bb

14

Choir

balm! hey! hey! hey! There is a balm! There is a balm! hey! hey! hey! There

Piano

C5: module elevated by a semitone to B

17

Choir

is a balm! There is a balm! hey! hey! hey! There is a balm! There is a

Piano

20

Choir

balm! hey! hey! hey! There is a balm! There is a

Piano

This modulatory strategy is amplified by Karen Clark-Sheard, the lead vocalist who, while exploring the full range of her voice, uses her entire body to mark important musical transitions. As Guthrie Ramsey noted while analyzing her performance of "I Won't Complain," "Clark-Sheard's body language adds another level of semantic content to the performance…her left hand gestures along with the run, moving it in sync with the melodic direction."[61] In a similar fashion, in "Balm in Gilead," Clark-Sheard uses her body to emphasize the modulations, gesturing outward and leaning forward while belting each key's new tonic. The soloist's bodily articulation of musical form summons a kind of "kinesthetic empathy" from the congregants, so that the vamp's semitonal modulations become points of affective articulation: as in "I Will Sing Praises," people were literally moved—from standing to sitting or from one position to another—by each successive modulation.[62] After the song's first ending, the band chromatically shifts back down to G major to make vocal and affective space for the performers to tune up even more. Although they are recharting the same tonal areas, the opportunity to climb again, here, as in "Anthem of Praise," proves too tempting to resist.

"The Anointing"

The vamp of John P. Kee's "The Anointing" is also built on a four-bar module, *C*, that is intensified through repeated tonal modulations.[63]

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[61] Ramsey, *Race Music*, 206.

[62] On kinesthetic empathy, see Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds, "Kinesthesia, Empathy and Related Pleasures: An Inquiry into Audience Experiences of Watching Dance," *Dance Research Journal* 42/2 (2010): 49–75.

[63] John P. Kee, "The Anointing," https://youtu.be/z7yb5XYGTEc?t=3m5s.

Figure 4.10: “The Anointing,” Vamp

C1

a a a

Choir

Thea - noin - ting. The a - noin - ting. The a - noin - ting. The a-

Piano

I V/ii ii I V/ii ii I V/ii ii I V/ii

11 b11 6 11 7 6 11 b11 6 11 7

b9 b9

C2: module elevated by a semitone to B

5

a

Choir

noin - ting. Thea - noin - ting. The a - noin - ting. The a - noin - ting. The a-

5

Piano

ii I

6

C3: module elevated by a semitone to C

9

Choir

noin - ting. The a - noin - ting. The a - noin - ting. The a-

9

Piano

hook

Choir

noin - ting. The a - noin - ting makes a di - ffer-ence in my life!

Piano

The material of this vamp is a fragmented version of the song's hook, which is depicted in mm. 12b–14 of figure 4.10. The hook begins with a doubled sixteenth note anacrusis that propels the first two syllables, "the a-," across the bar line to meet the rest of the phrase. In the vamp, however, only the title lyrics, the first two words of the hook, "the anointing" remain. Reiterated once per measure—four times per module—this musical idea derives insistence from the octave that is formed between the soprano and bass. As *a* unfolds, the bass ascends from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{3}$ while the soprano descends from $\hat{4}$ to $\hat{3}$. In each measure, the choir's statement of the hook is answered by an altered secondary dominant (of the supertonic), which provides harmonic direction back to the supertonic—where the cycle begins. While the vamp begins in B♭ major, the performers tune up, modulating up in m. 5 to B major (C^2) and to C major in m. 9 (C^3). These reiterations of *C* produce a kind of tension with the repetitions internal to this module. The modulations articulate the four-measure unit, allowing each subsequent model to be heard as directed towards that point of inflection. This forward drive is in tension with the autotelic shape that results from the homogeneity of each measure: within the module, moving forward and moving back are one in the same. And the modulations themselves, inasmuch as they are repeated, add to the repeated material a processual repetition. Taken together, this recursive activity amplifies the song's lyrical focus. Since the notion of "the anointing" uses the practice of applying potions to one's skin to

build a metaphor for the trace of divinity deposited on an individual though contact with the eternal, this vamp offers images of rising to enter the space where anointing is possible while also working up what one prominent minister calls a "holy ghost lather."[64]

"When Sunday Comes"

The vamp of Donald Lawrence's "When Sunday Comes" is one of the best examples of virtuosic vocality in contemporary gospel performance.[65] Daryl Coley's work here is of vital significance to this song's effect, but the more or less invariant aspects of this song enable the song's power. Tonal modulation is the key syntactical contributor to this effect.

Figure 4.11: "When Sunday Comes," module *C*

[64] Carlton Pearson in the "Old Song Medley," https://youtu.be/vKUp_sbl6ec?t=5m5s.

[65] Donald Lawrence, "When Sunday Comes," https://youtu.be/m2HxcIZBAaE?t=7m17s.

Set in a moderate 6/4, the vamp's four-measure formative module, *C*, given in figure 4.11, consists of two two-measure harmonic cycles that progress from ii9 to iv9 to iii7 to vi7, which then becomes V6/ii which leads to the second repetition of that basic progression. The second vi7 is followed by a break during which the performers modulate up by a half step. Within each unit, repetition characterizes the choir's participation, they iterate "Sunday" twice each bar, eight times in each module. The chorus's sustained tonic triad can be heard as a kind of pedal that operates independently from the harmonic activity below. Heard this way, "When Sunday Comes" offers a gospel iteration of what David Temperley calls "the melodic-harmonic 'divorce' in rock music."[66] The resultant two layers of musical activity parallel the interaction(s) we have discussed between conceptions of the material world and "the spiritual realm" in the gospel imagination, which, in this instance, might contrast uninterrupted heavenly peace (the choral pedal) with a kind of earthly disorientation (the circular accompanimental progression). After the first four measures, there is a semitonal shift up from G♭ major to G major, and in m. 8 there is a shift up from G major to A♭ major. This is depicted in Figure 4.12. Here, again, repeated processes join with repeated material—the interaction of different kinds of repetition at different levels. In this song, repetition and intensification help to transform the word "Sunday" into a metonym for every Christian hope. This gospel vamp turns a referent for a day of the week into a tool of transcendence. In so doing it offers a musical performance of "the Baptist close," a retelling of the crucifixion/resurrection narrative tailored to reinforce the content of any specific sermon. Here, the triumphant modulation of key center lets believers hear Jesus rise from the dead, inviting them to celebrate the promise of their own resurrection.

[66] David Temperley, "The Melodic-Harmonic 'Divorce' in Rock Music," *Popular Music* 26/2 (2007): 323–342.

Figure 4.12: "When Sunday Comes," vamp

C2: module elevated by a semitone to G

Choir
Sun - day. Sun - day. Sun - day. Sun - day.
Piano

Choir
Sun - day. Sun - day. Sun - day. Sun - day.
Piano

C3: module elevated by a semitone to Ab

Choir
Sun - day. Sun - day. Sun - day. Sun - day.
Piano

Choir
Sun - day. Sun - day. Sun - day. Sun - day.
Piano

4.4.2: Inversion

"Because of You"

Set in a deliberate 12/8, the vamp of Norman Hutchins's "Because of You" begins as the choir iterates the lyrics "thank God I made it."[67] Figure 4.13 shows that there is a productive tension between repetition and difference here, although the harmonic support suggests that the vamp consists of a two-measure unit, the choir iterates identical material in both measures. After two times through this cycle, the choir inverts, exchanging pitches in the way we have earlier described. Here, again, the two-bar unit contains the internal repetition of the choir's material. This is iterated twice before shifting into the third segment of the vamp, which performs a kind of inversion: its first sonority begins where the inverted version of the previous material would have, and its other harmony is an inverted version of the previous section's highest choral sonority. This moment in the vamp differs from the preceding section in that instead of iterating "thank God I made it" the choir iterates the title lyric "because of you," three times followed by exclaiming "yeah." The different lyrics carry with them different rhythms, which mark the distinctions between the two sections. In addition, the harmonic support provided by the instruments is different for this section: instead of sitting on the A♭ minor tonic, this section scripts motion to the dominant, passing from i to IV7, via an altered and inverted tonic harmony, then to the vii of V en route to a modified dominant, V11.

[67] Norman Hutchins, "Because of You," https://youtu.be/N0N0hIbu928?t=2m36s.

Figure 4.13: “Because of You,” Vamp

C1

♩. = 40

a *a*

Choir

Thank God I made it! Thank God I made it!

Piano

i (V) i bVII IV 9

inverted choral arrangement

C3

Choir

Thank God I made it! Thank God I made it!

Piano

inverted and modified choral arrangement

C5

Choir

Be-cause of ___ you! Be-cause of ___ you! Be-cause of ___ you! Yeah!

Piano

i V/IV 9 6 #5 IV 9 vii° 7 V 11

“I Shall Wear A Crown”

As in the preceding examples, the vamp of Thomas Whitfield’s “I Shall Wear A Crown” is built on a four-bar musical module.[68] But unlike many of pieces we’ve examined in this dissertation, this song’s vamp occurs in its second section. Although the third section is often repeated, it functions as a coda—a space where the energy gained during the vamp is gradually released. In contrast to the extended durations of significant words in the song’s *A* section, in the vamp, depicted in Figure 4.14, the successive eighth notes lends a strident, emphatic quality to the choir’s declaration that “I’m gonna put on my robe [and] *tell* the story [of] how I made it over.”

Figure 4.14: “I Shall Wear A Crown,” vamp

♩ = 60
B1-B2
Choir
Piano
I'm gon-na put on my robe, tell the sto-ry how I made it o - ver.
V 6 4
I
Phrygian upper neighbor
IV 9
inverted choral arrangement
B3-B4
Choir
Piano
I'm gon-na put on my robe, tell the sto-ry how I made it o - ver.

[68] Thomas Whitfield, “I Shall Wear A Crown,” https://youtu.be/UrSYhUXktNI?t=2m22s.

B5-

twice-inverted choral arrangement

Choir

I'm gon-na put on my robe, tell___ the sto-ry how I made it o - ver.

Piano

As the choir declaims "put on my robe" they are also reiterating the upper members of a cadential six-four chord, a chord whose promise of resolution is frustrated. The tonic that appears for a brief moment on beat 3 of m. 3 is subordinated by a Phrygian upper neighbor to the more significant arrival on IV9, a sonority that literally combines I and IV, showing the difficulty of "making it over," while pointing to the duality inherent in earthly songs about heavenly actions. After two iterations each of *B*, B^1 and B^2, the choir inverts to sing an intensified form of the module, which I refer to as B^3**.** Although the choral parts are inverted, the fact that B^3 features identical rhythms and harmonies confronts us again with the tension between repetition and intensification that gives life to gospel vamps. At B^5 the material is inverted again, in what appears here as m. 9. We are then given two iterations at this pitch level. In performance this highest section is often repeated more than twice; occasionally, each choral section sings its part in unison separately before returning to presenting the homophony. These inversions musically depict ascending to the heavens, in so doing, this escalatory technique offers participatory congregants the musical means through which to "make it over" themselves.

4.4.3: Textural Accumulation

“The Blood Still Works”

The vamp of Malcolm William’s “The Blood Still Works” is a stellar example of the role textural accumulation plays in gospel vamps.[69]

Figure 4.15, “The Blood Still Works,” vamp

♩ = 100

Soprano **enter at C1**

I know the blood still works!

recitation

Alto **enter at C5**

I know that the blood still works! Oh,

Tenor **enter at C3**

I know the blood still works!

Piano

repeated progression

[69] Malcolm Williams, “The Blood Still Works,” https://youtu.be/U0B-pPkvBHM?t=2m20s.

3

Soprano

Oh, yeah, the blood still works!

Alto

yes, I know the blood still works! Oh,

Tenor

Oh, yeah, the blood still work!

3

Piano

repeated progression

This vamp is built on a four-bar module realized completely in figure 4.15. But this choral texture forms gradually. During C^1 and C^2, the tenors sing their part alone. During C^3 and C^4, the tenors and the sopranos sing together. From C^5 on, all three parts sing together. Thus, this vamp is literally constructed before our ears over the first five iterations of its formative module. The segments of the vamp are differentiated by the vocal part(s) singing, and they are clearly leading to the point at C^5 where the texture, which has previously included all three parts in homophony, once again includes the sopranos, altos, and tenors. As in "I Will Sing Praises," the entrances are staggered to distinguish each vocal part; as each successive voice enters the texture, the experience of this vamp is intensified. The shift from the sopranos singing alone to them being joined by the tenors adds not only textural and rhythmic complexity, but also a higher pitch level

to the choral framework. And the addition of the altos at *C*[5] offers a further jolt of energy because of the insistence of their recitation, and its contrast with the sopranos' and tenors' sustained notes.

The repetition that inheres in the alto part is but one of the ways that this vamp's formative module subtly interpenetrates repetition and difference. First, the harmonic progression in mm. 1–2 is repeated in mm. 3–4. Secondly, although the lyrics of the sections change slightly between mm. 1–2 and mm. 3–4, the pitch material and rhythmic figuration of all three choral parts is identical between these two halves of the module. The delicate interplay of repetition and difference within the module resonates with the formative energy provided by the tension(s) between different forms of repetition in gospel vamps.

"Revelations 19:1"

The vamp of A. Jeffrey LaValley's "Revelations 19:1," as recorded by Stephen Hurd, is also shaped through textural accumulation.[70] This third section of the song begins when the expected tonic harmony appears as V 4/2 of IV, beginning the four-bar progression that is realized in figure 4.16.

[70] A. Jeffrey LaValley, "Revelations 19:1," https://youtu.be/CgoK1zukBBE?t=2m3s.

Figure 4.16: “Revelations 19:1,” vamp

The altos are the first voices to enter this section; because their part begins with an anacrusis, they will also be the first section heard during each module of the vamp. Indeed, the rhythmic placement of each part is identical to the order in which they enter the vamp. In C^1 they sing

alone until beat 4 of measure 4 where the entire choir sings “he is wonderful” in homophony. This vamp’s conjunction of polyphony and homophony produces a kind of tension-release arc that drive us towards to the cadence. The simultaneity of the cadence and the return of homophony make homophony itself a goal, a kind of textural resolution. In C^3, the altos are joined by the sopranos. The sopranos’ part adds an extra layer of nuanced repetition to this iterative structure as they sing “hallelujah” six times, four times with the same rhythmic figuration, and three times with identical pitches and rhythms. Like the alto part in “The Blood Still Works” the sopranos’ line is less melodic—and more recitational—than that of the altos and tenors. This recurrent feature suggests that these three-part polyphonic frameworks require one of the voices to be relatively stable with regard to pitch. At C^3, the tenors enter nearly shouting “hallelujah, salvation and glory…” lyrics that also appear at the beginning of the song’s *A* section. As each choral voice enter the increase in volume and substitution of harmony for unison modifies the experience of the vamp, but this accumulation serves a broader purpose. The progressive addition of each voice scripts also the gradual engagement of more and more congregants. Those who know the song and who identify with particular voice parts enter and begin to sing along with the congregation when their particular part occurs. In some sense, then, these accumulative vamps model the interpersonal aggregation that is the goal of gospel performance.

“I Know Something About God’s Grace”

As in the previous examples, the vamp of Patrick Bradley’s “I Know Something About God’s Grace” emerges from a four-measure formative module.[71] As figure 4.17 shows, the bass line that underpins this module conveys a sense of constant motion.

Figure 4.17: “I Know Something About God’s Grace,” vamp

[71] Patrick Bradley, “I Know Something About God’s Grace,” https://youtu.be/m1hoemAP2kc?t=2m33s

3

Soprano

some-thing a - bout God's grace, some-thing a - bout God's grace.

Alto

co - ver - ing, grace, grace.

Tenor

that you could - n't have made it with - out the grace of God.

Piano

$\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{6}$ $\hat{7}$

IV6 V6

descending fifths sequence

The vamp begins with a stepwise descent from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{7}$; then a seven-limbed descending-fifths sequence leads to $\hat{4}$ where another descending step to $\hat{3}$ initiates a three-limbed descending-fifths sequence to $\hat{2}$. The cadence is achieved by two ascending steps up from $\hat{6}$ to $\hat{1}$ support the progression from IV6 to V6 to I, initiating each new iteration of the module. This vamp is formed over the course of iterations of the module by the process of textural accumulation.

The vamp, *C*, begins with the soloist, Gaye Arbuckle singing the tenors' melody once. The tenors then sing their section once. This iteration of the module is then followed by the tenors and altos singing together; and then by all three vocal parts singing the completed texture. Once all the parts enter at C^4, this material is repeated at C^5. In the first instance the gradual accumulation of this polyphonic framework achieves the effect of accumulation by the addition of choral harmony where there had been unison, and the increased volume effected by doubling—and then tripling—the number of voices singing a specific part. But that this

progression begins with the tenors and leads to the sopranos means that pitch level itself also contributes to this intensification: the tenors occupy a lower tessitura than the alto, and the sopranos, by definition, occupy a higher tessitura then both of the other two voices, so that the addition of these voices to this vamp effects a literal ascent in the pitch level being occupied. Although the entire section is iterated five times, there are also repetitions inherent in the section: the sopranos sing the same material in mm. 3 and 4. And the altos have G as a kind of reciting tone, a repeated pitch that resonates with the closely related rhythms of the first three gerunds. The tenors, the first section, clearly have the main melodic line. The altos' recitation functions to complete the harmony and texture, only because their first three utterances are timed with the tenors.

"For Every Mountain"

The vamp of Kurt Carr's "For Every Mountain" is formed by both inversion and tonal modulation.[72] Unlike the preceding examples, this vamp is built on an 8-bar module, *C*, shown in figure 4.18**.**

[72] Kurt Carr, "For Every Mountain," https://youtu.be/HUaGoS2LW5g?t=2m33s.

Figure 4.18: "For Every Mountain," Module *C*

The module's two main harmonic goals divide the second into two four-measure units, *a* and *b*. The choral framework for each of the first three measures offers identical pitches and rhythms, even though the words are different. This rhythmic recursion foreshadows the iterative processes through which this vamp will emerge. Entering on the and-of-one in each measure, the choir forms a kind of antiphonal relationship with the band, who enters on the downbeat. This call-and-response framework amplifies their connection with the soprano soloist, Yvette Williams. Measures 1–3 of *a* feature a descending bass line that harmonizes the progression from i to i (4/2), to VI7 over three measures, and then from ii7 to V in m. 4. This dominant sonority

becomes V (4/2), leading to V6 of iv, instead of i, reinforcing the lyrical shift from recounting mountainous trials to experiencing blessings. The natural response to receiving a blessing, "hallelujah," follows along with the expected subdominant harmony. We do not, however, expect the bold assertion of V/V that initiates the cadential progression. This E major sonority sounds particularly bright when heard against the backdrop of the d minor tonic achieved at m. 8.

The reassertion of minor tonality at the cadence reminds us that we are not yet free from the bad memories. We will retrace this ground again and again with a higher perspective. After the first iteration of this module there is a double inversion.

Figure 4.19: "For Every Mountain," double inversion

choir at m. 1
choir at m. 9
Choir
double inversion
For ev - 'ry moun tain
For ev - 'ry moun - tain
Piano

Instead of moving to the next pitch level, as figure 4.19 shows, the sopranos shift up a fifth to the previous alto pitch in a higher octave, the altos ascend a sixth to the tenors' note in the higher octave, and the tenors ascend a sixth to the sopranos' previous pitch. Figure 4.20 demonstrates that the module is then repeated with the identical harmonies and lyrics, adjusted to this next level.

Figure 4.20: "For Every Mountain," Vamp, *C*²

C2: twice-inverted choral arrangement

Choir

Piano

For ev-'ry mountain you've brought me o-ver, for ev-'ry tri-al you've seen me through

13

for ev-'ry bless-ing, hal-le-lu-jah, for this I give you praise.

And we are not done climbing. As Figure 4.21 illustrates, in m. 16 and again in m. 24 tonal modulations, forceful semitonal shifts up from D minor to E♭ minor and from E♭ minor to E minor, lift us even higher.

Figure 4.21: "For Every Mountain," vamp C^3–C^4

C3: choral arrangement elevated by a semitone

17

Choir

For ev - 'ry moun-tain - you've brought me o - ver, for ev - 'ry tri - al you've seen me through

Piano

21

Choir

for ev - 'ry bless - ing, hal - le - lu - jah, for this I give you

Piano

C4: choral arrangement elevated by an additional semitone

24

Choir

praise. For ev - 'ry moun - tain

Piano

buildup* --- *break

26
Choir
you've brought me o - ver, for ev - 'ry tri - al
Piano

28
Choir
you've seen me through for ev - 'ry bless - ing, hal - le-lu - jah, for
Piano

31
Choir
tierce de Picardie
this I give you praise.
suspension
Piano

Through these collective shifts the audience not only gets to hear a musical depiction of scaling a mount, but rather, as they participate in the performance, they are literally brought up and over their own mountains. When the fourth segment of this vamp, C^3, begins at m. 25, an instrumental break becomes the sign of achievement. It is as if the band is no longer needed to transport the singers—they have arrived, and can stand by themselves. In this section of the vamp, each emphatic choral declaration is preceded by the band's breaks. Here, the band becomes an overtly antiphonal voice that introduces and begs for the choir's forthcoming

declaration. And the vamp's ending recruits the tierce de Picardie effect: the final harmony appears first with a 4–3 suspension that resolves to an E major sonority. This joyful noise is the sound of praise. In "For Every Mountain" this conventional procedure acquires theological valence: its conversion from minor to major, foreshadowed by the modified tonic found in the middle of each phrase, makes audible the transformation that is the goal of gospel performance. Even more conventional than the tierce de Picardie effect in tonal music, the vamp in gospel again demonstrates its remarkable ability to use repetition and intensification to deliver all kind of Christian messages. It is in this sense that the gospel vamp is, in the words of the historian of religion C. Eric Lincoln, a "homiletical instrument."[73]

4.5 **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have seen how the function of gospel vamps, facilitating the experience of transcendence, shapes their form. Ten analyses have illustrated the ubiquity of tonal modulation, "inversion," and textural accumulation, three techniques through which gospel performers "tune up." This emergent conception of the vamp's form highlights both the agency of performers in gospel and the dissolution of distinction between different kinds of performers. More significant that the specifics of their compositional, performative, or receptive behavior at any particular moment is the imagination that unites them. This "gospel imagination" uses the body as a site of mediation between audible and visible forms of belief. Vamps, then, become the means through which believers make their way into the presence of God. By routinely facilitating this brand of divine encounter, these vamps acquire cosmic significance. More than mere

[73] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 362.

microrepresentations of the escalating process of shouting, gospel vamps becomes agents of spiritual formation; like preaching, they facilitate the reproduction of "the gospel imagination." As such, vamps come to symbolize what we might call the syntax of celebration: the promise of eternal triumph at the end of earthly travail.

While the lyrical content of "Balm in Gilead" and "The Anointing," both of which signify the application of some supernatural material, differ from "I Shall Wear A Crown" and "For Every Mountain," two songs where heightening reinforces the textual message, all four pieces having in common escalatory vamps. This intensifying form, which is generally characteristic of gospel vamps, reflects a shared intention: using music to gain access to a bodily experience of God. Tuning up, as the formal logic of the gospel imagination, sounds the duality of African American Christian identity—an embodied presence in the material world and belief in the accessible reality of a spiritual world. The tension between these two realities, what Cheryl Sanders has likened to an "exilic existence,"[74] demands expressive resources that allow believers to traverse the distance between these two realms, to transcend the temporal, to "come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace to help in the time of trouble."[75] Much more than a means for escape, "tuning up" is a mode of transformation—it produces a subjectivity that expects the infinite to be made immanent in the everyday.

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[74] Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 123.

[75] Hebrews 4:16

Conclusion

In these pages, we have seen that vamps in African American gospel music function as technologies of transcendence, media through which many African American Christians routinely access the invisible subject of their belief. Over the course of this dissertation's four chapters, I have developed an analytical paradigm for African American gospel music that braids formal analysis together with insights from anthropology, cognitive theory, homiletics, phenomenology, and theology in order to elucidate the music of Richard Smallwood and sixteen other composers. In chapter 1, I proposed that the musical tradition signified by the term *gospel* exceeds the limits of categories like genre, performance, and practice, revealing a system of belief, performance, and reception that I call the gospel imagination. In Chapter 2, we saw that the gospel imagination takes sound in both gospel music and musical forms of black preaching through the practice of "tuning up." I argued that this colloquial referent for a preacher's shift from speech into song, more than just a homiletical strategy, is also both the formal logic for gospel performance and the impetus for the gospel vamp. In chapter 3, we observed that, when the gospel imagination takes sound, it also takes flesh, calling forth the ecstatic movements that are known as "shouting." As such, the gospel vamp functions as a sonic sacrament, a vehicle through which believers experience the presence of God in their bodies. As sonic extensions of the divine presence, the gospel vamp materializes "the spiritual realm," the space where musical affect accrues theological significance. In chapter 4, the preceding chapters' exploration of the vamp's function culminates in a theory of the vamp's form. There I argue that gospel vamps emerge as repetition and intensification are deployed as musical technologies of transcendence. This phenomenological approach to musical form argues that vamps come into being as gospel

performers—musicians, singers, and congregants—use repeated materials and processes to "tune up."

At present, one query that might be asked of this project is whether its emphasis on modes of religious expression thought to signify Pentecostal or charismatic identity excludes the experiences of those who engage Gospel music from different vantage points, both within and without the framework of African American Christianity. My responses are several. While it is possible to sing gospel music without having a confessional connection to its lyrical content, this does not remove the music's theological specificity. "Healing" and "Same God," "Marvelous" and "He Decided to Die" all contain explicitly theological content, so that to sing one of these songs is an invitation to make theological claims—to express one's beliefs. And while it is possible to sing with ambivalence toward the forms of corporeality this music often elicits, this possibility does not eliminate gospel's embodied orientation. Thus, if there is an exclusion being made, it is being performed by the music, not the analyst. Moreover, by conceiving of gospel vamps as musical technologies, I accent the role of human agency in this musical culture. All that gospel music affords depends, for realization, on performative reproduction.

A second question that might be put to this project regards the relationship between the gospel imagination and other musical cultures that have similar affective, corporeal, and theological entailments. I deal with some of these issues in section 3.7: Feeling Together, where I point to the interpenetration of sound, bodies, and the construction of identity in genres ranging from Salsa and EDM to Lindy Hop. Music's relationship to movement in these idioms points to the enduring connections between the somatic and the sonic, a nearly universal phenomenon that is of significant interest to me. I am also quite interested in the parallels between the gospel imagination and the musical dimensions of Sufism. The phenomena discussed in these pages,

then, are distinctive, but not unique. While I am fascinated by the cross-cultural implications of music's pervasive connections to ecstatic movement, these questions are outside the scope of this project.

One other possible objection regards the role of excess in this project. In these pages, I have argued that the cadential evasions in "Healing" and the modulations in "I Will Sing Praises," like those in Lawrence's "When Sunday Comes" and Clark's "Balm in Gilead," representatively indicate a propensity towards excess—an effect that is routinely produced through timbre, dynamics, and through the forms of movement that gospel often occasions. Excess inheres to both my analysis of individual hermeneutic windows (like the aforementioned modulations and cadential evasions) and to my broader discussion of the gospel imagination as a system that exceeds categories like genre and practice. Excess figures so prominently in this dissertation because I see it so prominently in the music. In this project, excess as an analytic category does not carry a value judgment—it is an observation. In gospel, excess is normative, but its pervasiveness does not makes it cease to be excessive, any more than routine forms of ecstasy cease to be ecstatic by reason of routinization. Excess persists as a way to escape the parameters of the material world and to tap into a kind of alterity. We might then say that these technologies of transcendence must remain excessive in order to remain useful.

What I have called the gospel imagination is not an interpretive framework imposed on these phenomena from the outside, but an analytic drawn from the concerns of the music itself. The notion that the divine is immanent in sound, and that sound can mediate the experience of this presence is what enables a balm from ancient Palestine to be felt in the contemporary USA. The sounds of gospel also immerse believers in spaces where a preacher can feel a specific rhythmic gesture "in his spirit," and where harmonic progressions and textural modifications

become literal manifestations of St Paul's promise that "all things work together for good to them who love the Lord."[76] At the same time, this cultural fund motivates musical procedures like extensive cadential evasions and incessant semitonal modulations, collectively constituting a nexus of sound and belief that is coterminous with many expressions of African American Christian identity. These examples of gospel's ritual power, and the many others discussed in the preceding pages, are all realized through the vamp, for it is through the vamp that gospel compositions become sermons in song.

[76] Romans 8:28

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