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AFRICAN AMERICAN GOSPEL PIANO STYLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

A Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Music
The University of Mississippi

by

RODERICK VESTER

May 2020

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the African American gospel piano style in the 21st century, further examining the role of musical enculturation, transmission, and preservation through the lived experiences and perspectives as reported by five gospel pianists throughout the United States. A collective case study design (Stake, 1995) was used to explore how the gospel piano style is being learned, developed, transformed, transmitted, and preserved. Research questions focused on participants' beliefs about the stylistic transformation of gospel piano in the 21st century and factors that influences those beliefs such as past and present stylistic developments. The data generation method included semi-structured interviews, artifacts, biographies, and recordings. Findings revealed that gospel piano is: (1) primarily learned informally through aural acquisition and listening to other gospel pianists and genres; (2) developed through experiential learning through church performance with assistance from mentors and supportive networks; (3) experienced transformation in the 21st century through evolution, commercialism, infusion of new genres, virtuosic musicianship; and (4) is being transmitted and preserved through teaching, technology, notation, and scholarship. These findings provide valuable insights into the African American gospel piano style for novice and practicing gospel pianists as they continue to develop and become efficient in the genre and for music educators interested in understanding this genre and style of performance practices.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The African American church has long served as a training ground for African American gospel pianists. Lincoln and Mamiya wrote that “many black musicians and artists received their initial musical training in black churches . . .” (p. 4739). It is in the church that musical sensibilities, interpretation, and creative cultural musical communication is nurtured and formed. With gospel pianists situated in the African American church, it served as the viable cultural institution for the artistic development and communal education of gospel pianists (Neely, 1993) positioning gospel pianists not only as musical teachers, but also cultural teachers (Johnson, 2009).

For centuries, music has played a vital role in the African American church worship experience with each denomination having its own unique musical style and characteristics: Chicago’s old’ line Baptist Protestant churches stood as a virtual mirror of their White counterparts in terms of the worship aesthetic. No part of the Sunday morning worship liturgy was more illustrative than the music. At churches such as Olivet and Pilgrim Baptist, two of the largest congregations in Black Chicago, choirs sang the Western European-style anthems and sacred compositions of composers such as Mendelssohn, Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, and Rossini. Ministers in these churches carefully designed worship to control congregational participation, especially its more spontaneous aspects. This meant that they had to avoid the music associated with Traditional Baptist worship. . More seriously, these ministers had to control their preaching as to not stir emotions to

the point that the congregations would erupt into the jubilation and demonstrativeness of the classic Black church. . . (Harris, 1992, p. 178)

In the traditional black Baptist and Methodist churches, Boyer (1992) wrote:

The Baptist “lining hymns,” sorrow songs, jubilee spirituals and Protestant hymns had a firm place in the traditional black Baptist and Methodist church worship service, but this music lacked the intensity heard and felt during the spirited choruses and refrains heard at the street meetings, in the parlors of black Christian homes, and in the new storefront churches. (p. 56)

During and after slavery, the spiritual served as the predominant form of music in praise houses and in rural black churches (Jones, 1963) in addition to serving as a musical basis for subsequent African American sacred and secular musical genres (Wise, 2002). Often signaling escape, these songs helped blacks envision freedom, hope, and liberation (Barnes, 2005). Lined and metered hymns performed in black churches possessed core musical characteristics that would be later adopted and implemented into gospel music (Simmons, 1998), along with the significant contributions by Charles A. Tindley (1851-1933) who uniquely addressed the African American social experiences through song. Tindley’s music served as a cornerstone of African American gospel music and became standard repertoire (Boyer, 1973). With modernization, gospel music displaced spirituals.

Gospel music is a continuum that continues to be shaped by sociocultural processes and constructs. The factors involved in classifying gospel music are outside the scope of this paper because they are “numerous and complex, and only by considering all of them can we begin to approach satisfactory explanations of its changing nature . . .” (Jackson, 1995, p. 185). Gospel music is the music of the African American church.

Departing from the black and Methodist churches, the new storefront churches were a part of the Pentecostal movement in the early 1900s. At one time, they were so popular, they accounted for 80% of Chicago's black churches (Eskew, 1980).

Frazier (1964) commented:

the storefront churches represented an attempt by migrants to re-establish the congenial intimacy of rural worship where members' identities would not be overwhelmed by an impersonal church bureaucracy. (p. 1)

The music in the Pentecostal church was lively and filled with emotion (Eskew, 1980). Recurring songs such as call-and-response and jubilee songs were reformed into shout songs that became the foundation of the Pentecostal song service. Shout songs were characterized as short repetitive phrases with fast tempos, percussive melodies, and polyrhythmic accompaniment (Reagon, 1992). Boyer (1995) added that as a means to express theology, gospel music was selected over all other types of sacred musical forms. Boyer (1995) described the music and performance practices as such:

When hymns were sung by these congregations they were "gospelized." Services were nothing less than ecstatic with forceful and jubilant singing, dramatic testimonies, hand clapping, foot stamping, and beating of drums, tambourines, and triangles (and pots, pans, and washboards when professional instruments were not available). When a piano could be begged, borrowed, or bought, a barrelhouse accompaniment served to bring the spirit to earth. It was not uncommon for a shouting session to last for thirty to forty-five minutes, with women fainting and falling to the floor (where they would sometimes lie for twenty to thirty minutes) and men leaping as if they were executing a physical exercise or running around the church several times. (p. 19)

The African American church was and continues to be the incubator for the gospel piano style (Johnson, 2009). Burnim (1987) expressed that “Black churches are wonderful contexts for learning, where people of any culture, age or religious background are warmly welcomed” (p. 46).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the piano has been the traditional instrument of worship in the black church and at times it has been the only instrument. Relying heavily upon the piano, this instrument has become the lead instrument in many settings, becoming almost a prerequisite in order to promote communal and congregational singing (Johnson, 2009).

Southern (1997) declared that:

One striking aspect of the performance was the role of the keyboard instrument, called the ‘rhythmic piano,’ although it might be a pump organ. It was hardly an accompanying instrument but rather a full partner in the music making and was expected to fill-in pauses in the singing with improvisation – broken chords, arpeggios, runs, glissandos, and other kinds of embellishment – although occasionally pauses might be used for special effects. (p. 102)

Writing about Roberta Martin’s piano playing, Williams-Jones (1992) stated:

The piano did not merely provide background; it was an integral and integrating force in the performance, supplying accompaniment, rhythm, and effects. The pianist could propel the momentum of a song, heightening the drama by tremolos in the bass line or by responding to a call from a singer. Piano introductions usually played while the narrator introduced or “talked up” the songs, set the mood for the singer. (p. 258)

The gospel piano style is viewed as part of an ongoing continuum because it is a “living tradition, and not as relic, or a frozen entity of the past” (Johnson, 2009, p. 363).

African American gospel piano is laced with aesthetic qualities that include the use of antiphonal response, endless variation, improvisation, percussive style playing techniques, repetition, and emphasis on dynamic rhythms (Jones, 1975). The emphasis on dynamic rhythm is realized in performance rather than on the printed music, if available, and is infused with additive rhythms, anticipated and delayed rhythms, and qualitative accents (Johnson, 2009).

In performance practice these qualities take on a number of presentations with the relationship between the two hands varying from one pianist to another. The role of each hand is at the discretion of the pianist. For some, the right hand's role is to play chords while the left hand plays in octave (Allgood, 1990). For others, the left hand's role is less rigid and the right hand plays the melody, offering support to the vocalist (Boyer, 1979).

Statement of the Problem

Gospel pianists, in the 21st century, have moved away from an either/or approach to the role of each hand. An infusion of both techniques is employed throughout musical performance in a random and unpredictable manner. African American gospel piano is a cross-pollination of many American styles including jazz, ragtime, and blues. While these musical characteristics have been infused in the genre since its inception, in some form, the ability to play masterfully and fluently in all styles is an expectation in the 21st century.

In music education, many programs are still tied to learning standard western classical repertoire in notated form (Kratz, 2007). While this traditional method and model creates technically proficient musicians in reading and performing notated music, it does not create opportunities for musicians to interpret and create music for themselves; thus creating dependency in one method that often lacks a "capacity for growth" without direct teacher direction (Dewey, 1958, p. 117).

While some gospel pianists may come under the tutelage and mentoring of an established gospel pianist, most often young musicians usually begin to develop understanding and sensibilities in a passive way (Johnson, 2009). Over time, their musical enculturation is further developed by attending church services, choir rehearsals, concerts, revivals, and listening to gospel music through various mediated forms (Herskovits, 1948). Little research exists on how the African American gospel piano style is being transmitted and preserved. If the current gospel piano style is to be transmitted and preserved for future generations, gospel pianists and scholars must begin to work alongside living pioneers to document their musical and historical contributions. Therefore, this collective case study seeks to deepen the profession's understanding of African American gospel piano style in the 21st century by giving voice to five gospel pianists' perspectives.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this collective case study is to explore the African American gospel piano style in the 21st century, further examining the role of musical enculturation, transmission, and preservation of gospel piano through the experiences and perspectives of five gospel pianists.

The following questions will guide this research:

1. What are African American gospel pianists' perceptions of the stylistic transformation of gospel piano in the 21st century?
2. What factors were perceived to influence the stylistic developments experienced by the participants?
3. How do the participants perceive that gospel piano style is learned, transmitted, and preserved?

4. How did the musical enculturation of the participants influence their development as a gospel pianist?

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following terms and definitions will be used:

Aural acquisition: obtaining musical knowledge through the sense of hearing. This is an information “upload” process.

Christian Contemporary Music (CCM): a genre of modern popular music, with Christian faith-based lyrics, that grew out of the Jesus movement in the 1960s where artists began to incorporate more contemporary musical styles.

Cultural leaders: gatekeepers who possess historical knowledge and understanding of gospel music and its interconnectedness with community and spirituality.

Culture: a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991)

Formal learning: “a sequential music method based on notated music that is “self-evidently the form of music learning” for those participating within the system (Finnegan, 1989, p. 136).

Improvisation: “the spontaneous expression of meaningful musical ideas” (Azzara, 2005, p. 123)

Informal learning: “on the job learning” which functions without any type of musical sequence nor reliance on notated music (Finnegan, 1989, p. 136)

Musical enculturation: “the acquisition of musical skills and knowledge by immersion in the everyday music and musical practices of one’s social context” (Green, 2002, p. 22)

Preservation: “the act of saving music so that performers who are not familiar with the old style may study and refer back to it as they develop new styles of the same genre of music” (Matusky, 2002, p. 56).

Transmission: “the means by which musical composition, performing practices and knowledge are passed from musician to musician” (Rice, 2003, para. 1).

Significance of the Study

A number of general histories have been written that concentrated on individual gospel pianists such as Thomas A. Dorsey, Arizona Dranes, and Roberta Martin (Kalil, 2000; Harris, 1992; Johnson, 2009; Dodge, 2013; Jackson, 1974) examining their styles with detailed analyses of selected performance recordings. However, there has not been equal interest or study of gospel pianists in the 21st century.

Brown (1981) maintained that:

Gospel music is only now being considered in any serious way by the scholarly community. Scholarly works have managed to appear in spite of the narrowness of academic departments, academicians and disciplines whose focus and interest lie outside the western European tradition. For the most part, music scholars have turned to writings in other disciplines in their need to justify the study of gospel music scholarship (e.g. folklore, Afro-American Studies, and black history). (p. 6)

Because gospel piano is deeply rooted in the fabric of gospel music’s DNA, it is crucial to explore the lived experiences of 21st century gospel pianists. This study will contribute to black gospel music literature for practitioners who work with piano students in the genre. Through this study, African American gospel piano will be examined not as a monolithic idea but through the lens of an amalgamation of styles, genres, processes, and approaches all deeply rooted and

situated in sociological, political, psychological, religious, and cultural aspects of Africans and black Americans.

As the need for culturally responsive teaching and inclusion of various musics are emphasized in music education during the 21st century, it is important for researchers and educators to examine alternative genres and pedagogical practices to evaluate their usefulness and effectiveness in a variety of settings while serving a diverse population. A clearer understanding of this phenomenon may lead to more effective means of including this style into music curricula at the secondary and collegiate level.

Chapter Organization

Chapter Two consists of a review of literature synthesizing research that will serve as a foundation to the current investigation. Chapter Three explores the methodology and provides and explanation of the collective case study design (Stake, 1995) used in this study. Chapter Four presents the findings that emerged from data analysis followed by the concluding discussion, implications for the profession, and potential areas for further research in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents a summary of the literature related to African American gospel piano and its role in gospel music. This review of literature has been divided into three sections that include: (a) gospel music and the African American church; (b) the role of the piano in gospel music; and (c) musical enculturation, transmission, and preservation. Procedures and results of these studies are described within.

Few extant studies have explored African American gospel piano. Noting the scarcity of gospel piano scholarship, the current study seeks to examine gospel piano solely through the experiences of current gospel pianists, filling a gap in the research.

DjeDje (1993) examined the piano style in a particular black community in Los Angeles that yielded appropriate information. Levine (1977) commented on the playing style of Arizona Dranes and Raichelson's (1975) dissertation focused a small section on gospel music, in general, but not specifically on the piano. Burnim and Maultsby (1987) examined gospel music performance in light of style of delivery, mechanics, and sound quality while Kalil (2000) explored "The Role of the Great Migration of African Americans in the Development of Traditional Black Gospel Piano" Boyer (1979), Allgood (1990), and Jackson (1974) all examined the playing style of Roberta Martin.

Gospel Music and the African American Church

Before delving into the extant literature on African American gospel piano in detail, it is important to briefly situate the black church as a breeding ground of gospel pianists and a place that embraced, supported, nurtured, and fostered musical creativity. The bedrock of gospel music, Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) described the term *the black church* as a “shorthand reference to the pluralism of black Christian churches in the United States” (p. 1).

The black denominations that make up the black church include: Baptist, Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), African Methodist Episcopal (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc. (PAW), Church of God in Christ (COGIC), and Church of Christ (Holiness), USA. DuBois (1899) identified the basic functions of the black church as modeling moral excellence, promoting social engagement and change, inspiring social advancement, and furthering general education. Barnes (2005) added that the black church has also functioned by using its cultural resources “to organize, shape and motivate slave escapes, direct and tacit revolts, sit-ins, voting drive freedom rides, economic aid and also squelch fear of lynching, beatings, job termination and death” (p. 972-973).

For those African Americans migrating to the north to escape a legal system of discrimination, limiting their quality of life, the African American folk church became a place of refuge as it did during the time of slavery (e.g. praise houses). The church was free of constraints and encouraged freedom of expression. The physical behavior occurring in these worship services included hand clapping, foot stomping, other body movements, and spontaneous verbal shouts of praise (Weekes, 2005).

Religious music had a significant influence on forming black identity. Religious songs such as spirituals became an expression of both desperation and faith (Wortham, 2009) that

helped blacks envision freedom in a way that made liberation seem possible and more than a visual representation of hope fulfilled (Barnes, 2005). In addition, as a cultural tool, spirituals represented both an interpretation of racial meaning and an explanation for how to move forward in the fight for social justice (Barnes, 2005).

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the piano has been the traditional instrument of worship in the black church and often has served as the only instrument used in revivals, concerts, and worship services (Johnson, 2009).

The piano in the African American church. Boyer (1973) evaluated the music during worship services in several black denominations in Rochester, New York. Focusing on harmony, melody, rhythm, performance practices, and overall musical expression within the worship service, he analyzed 15-recorded services. As a result of his analyses, Boyer made the following six conclusions:

1. Accompaniment was extremely varied from simple to complex.
2. Harmony was mostly simple and diatonic.
3. Melody consisted of intervals showing preference for intervals a fifth and smaller.
4. Scales displayed both traditional and combined scales, often using seven pitches or less that outline several modes all at once.
5. Rhythm ranged from the most intricate to very simplistic
6. Text gave either much regard or little regard for words by the congregation of the several denominations, directly associate with education and economic status

Similar to Boyer, Amos (1987) investigated 11 black Baptist churches in North Carolina. His principal objectives were to study the performance styles, music practices, assess level of performance, classify the nature of repertoire, assess the level of preparedness of keyboard musicians, and examine the relationship of these factors to the demographics of the pastor and

the congregation. Amos' results were based on questionnaires and interviews with pastors and keyboardists, Sunday services, and song transcriptions. Amos found that the borrowed styles of jazz and rock were prominent in the church services. Traditional music reading and interpretations skills were displayed in most instances while musical scores served only as a guide and in other instances no musical scores were utilized. While performers' proficiency varied a great extent among keyboardists, overall experience, memory, improvisation, and inspiration were reported as the basis for performance.

In addition, Amos (1987) reported nine areas of performance behaviors needed by gospel pianists playing in a black church: (a) the ability to perform with technique suitable to local church standards; (b) the ability to play standard hymns in gospel style; (c) the ability to improvise with minimal reading requirements and proficiency; (d) the ability to play "by ear;" (e) knowledge of traditional printed music; (f) the ability to play and transpose in several keys; (g) the ability to "locate" the key of a song already in progress; (h) the ability to accompany as well as play solo, and; (i) a working knowledge of modern keyboard instruments.

Aligning with Amos, Allgood (1990) posited that gospel keyboardists should have a working knowledge of jazz harmony and jazz piano technique in order to play gospel music today. In his dissertation, which explored the use of keyboard instruments in North Carolina black Baptist church, Allgood discussed how pianists imitated one another, the role of each hand, and the harmonies: "The right-hand plays chords, while the left-hand plays in octaves. The relationship between the two hands varies from one keyboard player to another. Some double the melody in order to emphasize the importance of the gospel tune; other players may chord with the left hand and improvise on the melody with the right hand" (p. 103).

Having a working knowledge of other genres, particularly secular, has been embedded in gospel piano since its inception as seen with Arizona Dranes.

Origin of the gospel piano style. Arizona Dranes (1889-1963) aided in codifying and promulgating the gospel piano style (Johnson, 2009). Cited as being the first gospel pianist, Dranes piano style was reminiscent of ragtime piano but rather possessed characteristics within its subgenre, boogie-woogie. Her right hand played chords, with no use of runs or improvisation while her left hand played single notes in octaves on and between beats. Dranes left hand primarily served the role of a bass guitar (Dodge, 2013). Other pianists, Allgood (1990) found, preferred to double the melody in the right hand to emphasize the importance of the gospel tune. This was true of Roberta Martin (1907-1969), who built upon the techniques and interpretation demonstrated by Dranes.

Bringing about a refinement to gospel piano, Martin was regarded as a more classical (having studied piano) and ensemble-oriented player who provided vocal support not only chordally but melodically (Kalil, 2000). She utilized richer harmonic textures, along with single and octave melodic scalar runs that supported the vocal lines. Within the left hand, loud and unexpected single octave bass lines could be heard against the softer dynamics occurring in the right hand (Philpott and Legg, 2015). Boyer (1978) agreed, stressing three elements in Martin's playing style:

Richer harmonies (including secondary dominants and seventh chords) connected by single note motives in the right hand; a percussive like "bomb" in octaves assigned in the left hand; and a less rigid, but at the same time, more complex rhythmic use of chords. (p. 33)

This term “bomb” referred to Martin’s use of a strong accent she seemed to save for special occasions usually happening on the downbeat of a measure (Boyer, 1978).

According to Carlton (2004), Martin’s most significant contribution to gospel piano was the use of inserting subdominant harmony and quickly returning to the basic harmony, creating an oscillating boogie effect, a continued technique in gospel piano playing today. Considered the new style of black gospel piano, Martin’s style influenced other gospel pianists that followed her namely James Cleveland and Andraé Crouch (Carlton, 2004). Jackson (1974) asserted that:

Thomas A. Dorsey influenced the piano playing of Roberta Martin who in turn taught Lucy Collier Smith, Willie Webb, James Cleveland (who influenced Aretha Franklin’s piano) and others. What Martin created then, was a school – a way of playing, singing and arranging this new music called gospel. (p. 140)

Raichelson (1975) described early religious music as being “heavily interlaced with ragtime and blues figures and these phrasings were part of a common stock in black music at the time” (p. 403). Burnim and Maulsby (1987) agreed and stated that black sacred and secular music should not be viewed as separate entities. They believed that there’s a continual cross-pollination occurring relating to musical performance, sound quality, and the style and mechanics of it all. Both proposed that there’s a mutual exchange that exists between sacred and secular music.

Kalil (1993) further explained that these secular influences in gospel piano techniques developed as blacks migrated to the north. The northern states where blacks settled were cultural oases of blues, gospel, and jazz. Cox (1998) added that he first heard black church music utilizing forms of blues and rhythm and blues when he was a child and his aunt was the organist

and choirmaster at their local church. The next section will discuss this cross-pollination of secular genres into gospel piano.

Expanded technique and the roles of each hand shifted with the left hand moving away from single octave playing to more chordal inclusion. The right hand's role shifted as well by doubling the melody at times and at others, improvising. This flexibility moved beyond what was initially explored with Dranes. When examining gospel pianists in the church, some common findings included: a) borrowed styles; b) each hand having a designated role; c) variation; d) memorization; and e) improvisation. Lastly, researchers agreed that gospel pianists should have a working knowledge of jazz harmony and piano. The influence of secular genres, including blues and ragtime is not a new concept in gospel piano. This cross-pollination of secular genres has been infixed in gospel piano since its genesis.

Throughout history, gospel pianists have listened to a variety of music and gospel styles. Gospel pioneers would train students in the traditional style and also learn the newer gospel styles from those same students (Wise, 2002). This reciprocity between teacher and student helped propel the gospel piano style forward. Having listened to and excelled in writing in various gospel styles, William Herbert Brewster (1897-1987) favored the Baptist lining-hymn and gospel blues traditions. (Boyer, 1992). Wise (2002) stated that gospel musical styles will continue to develop as long as musicians look to history as a musical source and understanding.

Wise (2002) referenced gospel musicians listening to secular artists such as Earth, Wind, and Fire, Whitney Houston, Prince, and the Staple Singers, among others. Additionally, many reported being influenced by secular genres such as blues, jazz, classical, hip-hop, pop, and Rhythm & Blues. Gospel musicians have implemented these secular influences into their music and have been "shunned by the African American church community for either mixing secular

musical elements into gospel music or for performing gospel music in non-traditional or secular settings” (Wise, 2002, p. 2). In agreement, Jones (1998) stated that Edwin Hawkins and the Hawkins Singer were also criticized for incorporating secular genres into their music as well as performing in non-traditional spaces.

The Role of Piano in Gospel Music

While scholars have grappled to define what black gospel piano is, Jones (1975) provided some aesthetic qualities which are: a) the use of antiphonal response; b) endless variation; c) percussive style playing techniques; d) emphasis on dynamic rhythms, repetition, improvisation, communal participation, immediacy of communication; and e) oral transmission of the idiom. Rhythmic contrast is realized in performance, rather than on the printed score (if available), through the emphasis on dynamic rhythms, additive rhythms, anticipated and delayed rhythms, and qualitative accents. In contrast, faster-tempo songs are highly syncopated and polyrhythmic, whereas, slower-tempo and moderately fast songs juxtapose triplet subdivisions with the meter. Johnson (2009) presented the multidimensionality of gospel piano, categorizing it into nine sub-styles: (a) pre-gospel stride; (b) gospel stride; (c) modified gospel stride; (d) fast stride; (e) fast (syncopated and percussive); (f) fast shout (Pentecostal praise); (g) slow stride; (h) slow gospel blues; and (i) slow (more legato playing) (p. 263). In her dissertation, Johnson (2009) also listed gospel songs grouped according to these sub-styles. Her framework of gospel piano sub-styles helps the reader understand that the gospel piano style is not monolithic and therefore should not be presented in such a manner.

Accompaniment. While gospel music is primarily recognized as vocal music, “the instrumental accompaniment is one of the key features that contributes to the contrast between gospel music and the spirituals and jubilees” (Cheston, 1989, p. 80). In her master’s thesis,

Cheston (1989) discussed gospel piano accompaniment performance practices. She examined the styles, texture, scales, triads, secondary dominants, and formal gospel music structure.

Cheston concluded with three stylistic features: 1) “fill-in” patterns; 2) examples of how some techniques were adapted for use in all three tempo styles; and 3) superficial distinctions of the tempo:

The fast accompaniment style requires extensive syncopation and a percussive sound created by rhythmic use of octaves. The slow style requires extensive use of “fill” patterns to replace the long note values created by slow tempos. The ad lib style requires a more legato style, with extensive reiteration and arpeggiation of chords. (p. 145)

Philpott and Legg (2015) suggested that the use of gospel piano accompaniment developed along with the rise of gospel music in the early 1920s during the Pentecostal religious movement. While the piano served as the lead instrument, these services included instruments such as Hammond organ, guitar, drums, tambourine, trumpet, trombone, saxophone, and washboard which “were probably first to join the spirited singing, supplementing and thickening the pulsing syncopations of handclaps, foot taps, and cried interjections” (Hinson, 2000, p. 97). However, in other denominations, the piano served as the other instrument primarily. In an interview with Don Lee White, Djedje (1989) obtained information about the piano accompaniment in the Los Angeles black community. White recalled that:

Back then, most gospel music you heard were gospel hymns. Most of the time, it was accompanied with just piano. There was a little improvisation. They had the rhythm, maybe a few arpeggios or so. But most of it was basically chordal structures with a few octave runs. The accompaniment was really subservient to the singing; it didn’t overshadow the singing as we hear it now. (p. 3)

Deviating from the piano serving in a subservient role, Southern (1997) suggested that the piano was more than an accompanying instrument but rather a full partner in the music making and was expected to fill-in pauses in the singing with improvisation – broken chords, arpeggios, runs, glissandos, and other kinds of embellishment. In agreement, Boyer (1983) stated that in many situations the piano served as the rhythm section because of its percussive nature and lack of accompanying instruments. The pianist would use the left hand to play the bass notes, often times in octaves, as the right hand played chords. Rhythmically the left hand would play on and between the beats and the right hand would play in a percussive manner versus legato, inserting ornamentations intermittently. As the rhythm section, the left hand served as the bass guitar and the right hand as the lead guitar.

In his dissertation on gospel music, Ricks (1960) agreed with the role of each hand and described three distinct techniques of gospel piano accompaniment: (a) overlapping call and response patterns; (b) bass octaves in left hand, while improvised octaves and chord patterns are played in the right hand; and (c) inner tones moving against stationary tones in the upper and lower positions. Furthering Ricks' ideas, Allgood (1990) more closely examined the role of each hand:

The right-hand plays chords, while the left-hand plays in octaves. The relationship between the two hands varies from one keyboard player to another. Some double the melody in order to emphasize the importance of the gospel tune; other players may chord with the left hand and improvise on the melody with the right hand (p. 101).

Timothy M. Kalil (2000) further noted:

In traditional gospel piano playing, the structure of the piece remains intact; melody notes are played by the right hand but not as much; instead they are presented embedded in chords or displaced rhythmically against chords. Accompanimental notes are played by the left hand, mostly in the form of octaves, boogie-woogie (hereafter, boogie) basses, modified stride, or a combination of all three. . . Most gospel renditions feature “meter modification” where, for example, a piece in three-four and four-four time respectively is compounded into nine-eight and twelve-eight. (p. 174)

Arizona Dranes (1889-1963) began to master this boogie-woogie style of play in the twentieth century and incorporated it into her performances (Johnson, 2009). Dranes chord progressions were ragged yet traditional in hymn-like fashion (Dodge, 2013). She did not use runs in the right hand or chords in the left hand on alternating beats. Instead the left hand served the role of bass guitar, playing single notes in octaves on and between the beats while the right hand provided the chordal content. Her articulation of the notes were percussive versus legato (Carlton, 2004).

Levine (1977) described Dranes’ piano style of as being “marked by the rocking, driving beat that characterized the blues and jazz of the period” (p. 40). Other pianists, in Dranes’ era, such as Elder Charles Beck, Clara Hudman Gholston, and Estelle Allen all followed in her footsteps; exhibiting characteristics on her playing style with the continual “oom-pah” construction in the left hand, accompanied with the chordal melodic material in the left (Johnson, 2009).

Cross-pollination of secular genres in gospel piano. Black gospel piano is a cross-pollination of many American secular styles: including jazz, ragtime, and blues. Often called the father of gospel, Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993) embodied this idea of cross-pollination

(Johnson, 2009). Harris (1992) discussed how Dorsey synthesized a hybrid approach called “gospel blues.” This infusion can be traced to Dorsey’s roots as a blues pianist.

Dorsey’s interpolation of flatted thirds and sevenths helped further develop the use of melodic lines and harmonic structures other pianists, such as Roberta Martin, incorporated in their playing (Robinson-Martin, 2009). Having a style similar to a rhythm guitarist, Dorsey incorporated a slow drag style in his music. This slow drag style is described as having a swing feel in a rocking shuffle: long-short-long-short (Carlton, 2004). While Dorsey was not the first to fuse genres, he was the first to publish and promote them on a large scale (Carlton, 2004).

Not reading music, Dorsey learned how to improvise on the piano by playing at parties and at the clubs. In an attempt to elongate the performances at these venues, sometimes performing for three hours, Dorsey would vary the music and drag it out (Carlton, 2004). Dorsey took improvisation a step further by mixing his Chicago blues style with the standard Baptist hymns, creating a distinct and clear identifiable sound. He utilized blue notes often in his music (e.g. lowered sevenths, fifths, and thirds). His use of compound meter instead of simple could often be heard in his performances. While the sheet music may be notated with two, three, or four beats to a measure, the music is performed with three subdivisions to each beat, creating a six, nine, or twelve beat feel that stresses the first note of each subdivision. Dorsey brought the blues to gospel music, inclusive of runs and trills. These techniques are wildly popular in gospel music today (Harris, 1992).

This section focused on gospel piano playing in the African American church. Expanded technique and the roles of each hand shifted with the left hand moving away from single octave playing to more chordal inclusion. The right hand’s role shifted as well by doubling the melody at times and at others, improvising. This flexibility moved beyond what was initially explored

with Dranes. When examining gospel pianists in the church, some common findings included: (a) borrowed styles; (b) each hand having a designated role; (c) variation; (d) memorization; and (e) improvisation. Researchers agreed that gospel pianists should have a working knowledge of jazz harmony and piano. The influence of secular genres, including blues and ragtime is not a new concept in gospel piano. This cross-pollination of secular genres has been fixed in gospel piano since its genesis.

Continuing, the latter studies represent an examination of the cross-pollination of jazz, ragtime, and blues into the performance practice of gospel piano. Dorsey was a central figure in this amalgamation of musical constructs. By incorporating borrowed chords from the blues including lowered thirds, fifths, and sevenths his contributions became influential. This miscellany of blended musical systems has come to create what is described as the “sound” of African American gospel piano. While this hybridity may describe the sound ideal of gospel piano, there are other complexities in the genre regarding performance style/interpretation, rhythmic usage, melodic and harmonic constructions and interpolations, and improvisation. All of these contribute to what gospel piano was and continues to evolve into.

Musical Enculturation

Aspects of knowledge and skill acquisition often come about through unsystematic, unpurposeful, accidental, and incidental exposure to what is happening in an individual’s environment (Veblen, 2018). Mans (2009) posited that enculturation is a gradual process that occurs early in life and continues for a lifetime. Through informal learning, individuals learn and conceptualize the musical sounds, constructs, structures, rhythms, and performance modes of their culture through immersion.

Campbell (1998) defined enculturation as a process whereby “individuals achieve cultural competence by way of osmosis, absorbing the many facets of their home environment, learning by virtue of living within a family, community, or culture” (p. 65). Campbell investigated the informal musical behaviors of children as they gathered and played in various contextual settings. Observing children as they sang, gestured, vocalized, and became rhythmic in their movements, Campbell reported that children’s own thoughts about music are pivotal for educators to understand in order to teach children. In addition, she posited that parents, siblings, and extended family play a crucial role in children’s enculturation process.

In a review of music cognition and culture, Cross (2001) posited that the process of musical enculturation is not only acquired through everyday experiences but also from listening to the radio, singing, and dancing. Herskovits (1948) labeled enculturation as the conscious and unconscious acquisition of culturally fixed understandings. In turn, through “passive or active exposure, listeners internalize regularities in the music of their own culture, forming long term knowledge schemata into which novel music stimuli are assimilated” (Thompson & Schellenberg, 2006, p. 75).

LeVine (1990) defined enculturation as the process of acquiring characteristics of a particular culture, along with the aspects of socialization that focuses on intergenerational transmission of culture. For Hallam (2004), music enculturation begins at infancy in the home if there is music. As the child grows, aural templates of how the music sounds (the language of music) is developed. This development is primarily caused by the absorption of the musical home environment. She found that the absorption process happens unconsciously and recognized that the parents’ role in the musical enculturation process is crucial. This involved the parents’ encouragement of compulsory school curriculum (e.g. choir involvement or instrumental

lessons) as active participation contributed to the musical enculturation process. Parental involvement, along with mentors and other support networks become influential in the enculturation process. Eccles and Harold (1993) described parental involvement as a "predictor for child outcomes" (p. 570). Similarly, Epstein (1995) identified six types of involvement that are influential over children: a) parenting, b) communicating, c) volunteering, d) learning at home, e) decision making, and f) collaborating with the community (p. 701).

Mentors represent “knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition” (Jung, 1958, p. 71) and serve as an important developmental component to individuals (Levinson, 1978). Examining student and mentor relationships, Polite (2002) interviewed students and teachers in an after-school program and reported that students with mentors better used critical thinking skills to solve problems and accomplish tasks. Similarly, when (Hawkins, 2002) investigated the perceptions of elementary school teachers in the use of high school mentors with elementary-aged children, he found that 43% of the teachers indicated improvement in student academics, behavior, and attitude. Monson (2000) reported similar results examining at-risk children in an alternative school mentor program. Teachers reported that 100% of the students improved in their attitude towards school, attendance, and academics.

While some aspects of musical competence require formal music lessons, such as the ability to read music, other musical competencies come into understanding and are acquired through everyday exposure to music during child development (Trainor & Trehub, 1993; Trehub & Hannon, 2005; Bigand and Poulin-Charronnat, 2006).

Deliège & Sloboda (1996) maintained that knowledge of musical structure is acquired through attention and interaction with music and through listening, and performing, that lead to later familiarization and enculturation. This implicit musical knowledge enables listeners,

regardless of formal musical training, to remember and reproduce familiar tunes and rhythms (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013).

The idea that the role of music in everyday informal settings may affect an individual's implicit understanding of such music aligns with research suggesting that both implicit and explicit learning occur as individuals observe and respond to the environment they navigate (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013). These informal auditory capacities are modified by everyday experiences listening to the music of a particular culture leading to processes of enculturation (Hannon & Trainor, 2007) and without explicit awareness of rules governing musical styles and complex structures, this interaction with music resembles implicit linguistic syntactic knowledge in individuals (Williams, 2009). The definition used for this study is taken from Green (2002) who defined enculturation as “the acquisition of musical skills and knowledge by immersion in the everyday music and musical practices of one's social context” (p. 22).

Enculturation and music education. In kindergarten, when children first enter the music classroom, they already possess numerous and varied musical experiences (Campbell, 1998). Through interactions with parents, peers, television, media, and society their musical worlds have been shaped (Morrison, Demorest, & Stambaugh, 2008). The National Standards recommend that “those who construct arts curricula attend to issues of ethnicity, national custom, tradition, religion, and gender, as well as to the artistic elements and aesthetic responses that transcend and universalize such particulars” (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 2014, p. 14).

For Kelly (2002), “music education also plays a role in the enculturation process by using music to transmit cultural values, skills, and traditions. Thus, music education is a fundamental social component of education that is vital to the continuity of each culture” (p. 40). In addition,

scholars (Kofie, 1994; Elliot, 1995) generally agree that social and cultural norms are transmitted through the teaching of music as well. Thompson and Schellenberg (2006) explained that “through passive or active exposure, listeners internalise regularities in the music of their own culture, forming long-term knowing schemata into which novel music stimuli are assimilated” (p. 75). Cuddy and Badertscher (1997) found that adults with no music training have implicit knowledge of harmonic knowledge and its tonal hierarchy. However, harmony perception appears to be one of the last musical skills to develop (Costa-Gionni, 2003).

Tishman et al. (1993) advocated for a teaching style they named *teaching for enculturation*. This style encouraged conscious personal interactions based on enculturating behaviors, along with enculturative thinking and actions through critical lesson planning. They stated that enculturation occurred in three mutually reinforcing instances: (a) cultural exemplars; (b) cultural interaction, and; (c) instruction in cultural knowledge and activities. The enculturating behaviors included tacit messages in teacher behavior, the use of physical space of the classroom, and the emotional concomitant of personal and classroom interactions. The authors conclude that in teaching for enculturation, teachers must be visible and accountable models of enculturative behaviors.

Music Transmission

Gordon (1990) stated that there is a window of time when children’s music learning is essential and those children that are not exposed to tonal frameworks of music at a young age will never catch up to those who do. Similar to infants learning sounds through spoken language, they also learn music through sounds of music performed leading to vocalizations. This hearing and performance of music that Gordon called audiation is “hearing and comprehending in one’s mind the sound of music that is not, or may never have been, physically present” (p. 399). In his

theory on developing audiation, Gordon stressed the need to involve the child's social environment in the process of musical development. Musical guidance can be either structured (parent led with a specific plan) or unstructured (parent led without specific planning). In the child's family, audiation development can be guided by the following tasks:

1. Stimulating musical thinking in the child by presenting different musical activities performed by the parents.
2. Creating situations, where experiencing music and its elements becomes natural and common for both subjects (the parent and the child).
3. Activating perception of music material, which is strongly diversified in terms of tonality and rhythm (the material is to be sung by parents and children and accompanied by movement).
4. Shaping musical habits, as reactions to musical stimuli that are reinforced on a daily basis. (p. 404)

Holman (1998) disagreed and suggested that while learning is best and most easy at a young age (before the age of nine or ten), children can still learn at any age. After linking language learning to music learning based on his understanding that all Japanese children learn to speak Japanese fluently, Suzuki (1983) concluded that music learning should start from birth. In his book on understanding social and cultural norms when teaching music, Kelly (2009) stated that the classroom teacher is the "individual primarily responsible for enculturation through transmission of cultural norms" (p. 33). In addition, the cultural transmission process typically involves "selecting, guiding, training, and placing individuals into specific roles" (p. 33). Kelly did not provide examples of these roles. Seeking to understand education as an art and addressing the educational experience from an aesthetic point of departure, Alexander (2003)

stated that the educational experience functions generatively in connection to the culture within which it transmits and operates.

While exploring some of the many ways children experience music and create musical meaning, Kerchner and Abril (2009) noted that the classroom has become a key component for the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices. Respected elder musicians, who are educators in the school setting, pass down musical traditions from generation to generation, along with the school ensemble director filling the role of culture bearer. These conclusions were drawn based on their review of research books, textbooks, and trade books in music education literature. They contended that classroom musical experiences can lead to the construction of meaning and learning inciting a deeper understanding of one's self, others, and other cultures. This knowledge and exposure often leads to continued musical engagement and learning experiences throughout life.

Exploring music learning and teaching practices, researchers have posited that cultural contexts are influenced by sociocultural dynamics (Herndon & McCleod, 1982; Lomax, 1976; Merriam, 1964; Netti, 1992) and societal characteristics that impact musical traditions (Kelly, 2016; Small, 1996). Kelly (2016), investigated how music educators could better understand societal impacts. He stated that educators should seek cultural knowledge from the students and communities they are serving, in an effort to become more effective in the classroom. In agreement, Dewey (1958) stated that “for while it [art] is produced and is enjoyed by individuals, those individuals are what they are in the content of their experience because of the cultures in which they participate (p. 326).

Examining transmission in traditional African musical practices, Sunkett (1995) highlighted the importance of making music with elders. In this article, he found that the

emulation of elders' performances is important in the music learning process. In addition to this, those who wished to improve participated in unguided practice time to develop skills. Sunkett also noted that when making music with elders, praise, verbal explanations, and advice all carry great weight as they are moderately used.

The varied ways of music transmission may be grouped into formal and informal categories. According to Veblen (2018), the terms formal and informal are also vernacularly referred to as school and community musics. Formal and informal learning are often paired as polarized constructs. Finnegan (1989) noted formal learning as a sequential music method based on notated music that is “self-evidently the form of music learning” for those participating within the system (p. 136). In contrast, informal learning was characterized as “on the job learning” which functions without any type of musical sequence nor reliance on notated music (p. 136).

Informal learning. A musically saturated environment and rich social setting can be fostered in churches, classical concerts, and festivals (Gardner, 2004; Karlsen, 2007; Snell, 2005), and online communities (Dillon, Adkins, Brown, & Hitche, 2008; Salavuo, 2006; Waldron & Veblen, 2008) and may also be intergenerational (Kerlin, 2004) as an interplay of personal identity and group dynamics form which is important in sustaining musical participation (Kruse, 2007; Pitts, 2009; Ransom, 2001; Reed, 2008; Dyer, 2006).

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) defined informal learning as “the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposures to the environment” (p. 1). Jenkins (2011) added that informal learning implies a self-motivated effort to reach competence in some skill or task and hands-on experience is crucial for acquiring efficiency. Exploring informal learning, Green (2011) stated that individuals:

Largely teach themselves or ‘pick up’ skills and knowledge, usually with the help or encouragement of their family and peers, by watching and imitating musicians around them and by making reference to recordings or performances and other live events involving their chosen music. (p. 5)

Scholars have advocated for the inclusion of informal learning practices used by those musicians from the vernacular traditions (e.g. gospel music) into formal music education (Kratz, 2007; Rideout, 2005; Vakeva, 2006; Westerlund, 2006). Other scholars believe this to be a way to balance teacher and student interests, as well as being relevant to today’s youth (Bowman, 2004; Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2006; Rideout, 2005). This informal method of instruction integrates listening, performing, improvising, and composing (Davis, 2005; Green, 2006, 2008; Harwood, 1998). Jones (2014) posited that by creating informal learning opportunities in the classroom, students are able to bridge their music making experiences from outside of school to help advance their musical skills and knowledge.

Folkestad (2006), using research literature to position elements of formal and informal learning, posited that both formal and informal learning occur in and outside of the classroom and situating formal learning only in the institution and informal learning outside of school is incorrect. He suggested that individuals engage in both making and learning music, along with taking on the role of teacher and student.

Popular music and informal learning. In 2002, Green posited that “by far the overriding learning practice for the beginner popular musician is to copy recordings by ear” (p. 60). She added that this was complimented with peer and group learning. In her study examining how popular musicians learn, Green found that almost all of her participants shared musical practices including enculturation in the music and within musical communities, copying

recordings by ear, and working with other musicians sometimes forming bands. From her study, Green developed five basic principles of informal learning:

1. Informal learning begins with music that the participants chose for themselves.
2. The primary method of developing skills is imitating music recordings by ear.
3. Informal learning can happen alone and in groups with peers.
4. Skills are attained in unordered, idiosyncratic ways, and
5. Informal music learning integrates listening, improvising, and composing at all stages of development and encourages personal creativity. (Green, 2008, p. 10)

Green (2008) believed that incorporating popular music into the school classroom music learning experience would improve student musical skills and motivate them to learn music. Including informal learning practices into the classroom would “make music education more inclusive for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, particularly those who have found it difficult or impossible to make their musicality shine in formal environments” (p. 4). Green’s beliefs and approach does not come without criticism. Scholars have questioned whether incorporating popular music into the school classroom is simply replacing one model of learning with another, leading to a narrower curricula (Clements, 2008; Allsup, 2008; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010).

Individual informal learning practices. Green (2012) also investigated individual informal learning with students enrolled in applied instrument lessons. In a pilot study, Green examined 15 instrumental students ages 10 to 17 in an informal learning setting. Having six to eight 15-minute lessons, students learned songs by ear. During these 15-minute lessons, broken into three stages, students engaged in various activities similar to Green’s previous research methodology in 2008. In stage one, students listened to classical or popular songs and attempted

to figure out presented riffs by ear. In stage two, students performed the same task with a classical piece. In stage three, students were free to choose their own song to copy by ear. From this pilot study, four learning styles emerged: impulsive (in which students play immediately with little attention to the recording), shot in the dark (in which students listen carefully and play notes stopping at each mistake), practical (students break down the task into easier components, and theoretical (students ask questions and process the task in theory before attempting to play). Green suggested that these learning styles could assist educators understand the ways in which students process musical information and learn, therefore informing educators how to better assist students learn in a variety of environments.

Dividing sixteen matched pairs of instrumentalists into control and experimental groups, Baker and Green (2013) focused on individual learning to determine whether students who learned music by ear would score higher on pitch, rhythmic, contour, and tempo accuracy. Results indicated that students with experience playing by ear scored higher than the control group overall with statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in rhythm accuracy. While performed with a small sample of students, the researchers suggested that learning music by ear could be beneficial to students' musical development.

Jeanneret (2010) outlined five principles when recognizing the difference between formal and informal music education: (a) learner-chosen music; (b) importance of aural learning; (c) self and peer learning in friendship groups; (d) concepts learned in meaningful holistic ways; and (e) integration of musical experiences (p. 150).

The role of the teacher in informal learning. In Green's approach, the teacher's role changed drastically. In her 2008 study, the first two to three lessons, teachers were asked to "establish ground rules for behavior, set the task going at each stage, and then stand back and

observe what the pupils were doing” (Green, 2008, p. 24). This led to a new type of pedagogy which:

Involved teaching in a responsive, rather than directive way; metaphorically taking the learner by the hand, getting inside their head and asking, ‘What do they want to achieve now, this minute, and what is the main thing they need to achieve it?’ In this way, the teacher sits alongside the learner and is to a larger extent a learner themselves. (Green, 2008, p. 34)

For Green, teachers did not disappear from the informal learning approach, but were relegated to the sidelines. The absence of or moderated role of the music teacher does not mean there is a lack of mentorship, influence, and inspiration.

In response to the changing role of teachers in the informal learning setting, Allsup (2008) suggested that the relegation of teachers to the sidelines would result in the downfall of teacher certification. He argued the relevance of a certified teacher when any non-teaching musician could watch students construct their own learning approach with little input, guidance, and instruction by the teacher. Cain (2013) viewed the formal and informal pedagogies as attempts to help students understand music and not as opposites. He suggested that the teacher’s role is important in determining which learning style best achieves desired outcomes therefore recommending that teachers become informed within both pedagogies.

Based on Green’s (2008) research, D’Amore (2009) developed an approach to teaching music focused on exposing students to different types of music learning, including informal learning called *Musical Futures*. *Musical Futures* focused on teaching secondary students to play classical and rock instruments, compose songs, work with sound technology, and better understand both western and non-western music. Within D’Amore’s project were four units of

informal learning: (a) in the deep end (students learning music of their choice); (b) modeling aural learning; (c) informal composing; and (d) informal learning of other musics. The use of sound technology in D'Amore's study was minimal. CD players, MP3 players, iPods, and computers were the primary types of equipment utilized by students. For D'Amore (2009), informal practices can be summarized in five key principles: (a) learning music that students choose, like and identify with; (b) learning by listening and copying recordings; (c) learning alongside friends; (d) assimilating skills and knowledge in personal ways; and (e) maintaining a close integration of listening, performing, improvising and composing (p.131).

In conjunction with *Musical Future's* focus on working with technology, Vakeva (2010) posited that because of technology advancement, there has surfaced extended avenues of learning music. A number of music education scholars have begun to examine online communities in order to understand how musicians use the Internet for informal music learning practices (Salavuo, 2006, 2008; Veblen & Walbron, in press, Waldron, 2010; Waldron, 2009; Waldron & Veblen, 2008). Waldron (2012) not only considered YouTube to be a global community of culture promoting engagement but also as a fulfilling mechanism with a significant teaching role in informal music learning. In agreement, Burgess and Green (2009) stated that media platforms, such as YouTube, create engaged musical communities that facilitate peer-to-peer formation and engagement.

While some researchers disagreed whether musical enculturation began at infancy or childhood, all agreed that this process acquired through absorption of everyday musical exposure. Additionally, researchers supported and recommended the addition of informal learning into the classroom setting. Whether listening is done passively or actively, this technique of informal learning occurred automatically and students typically interacted with

music in a more informal way outside of school, although their in-school study was mostly formal (Green, 2001) A student's level of achievement was individualized and expertise was reached through hands-on experience and consistent participation. With the development of the Internet, global communities have begun to evolve, and new ways of learning informally have surfaced and expanded.

Aural music transmission. While educators tend to emphasize note reading, there have been some prominent educators who have promoted sound-before-sign (the development of ear playing before notation introduction). In his teaching manual, Couperin (1974) expressed that, "One should not begin to teach notation to children until after they have a certain number of pieces in their hands. It is next to impossible, while watching their book, for their fingers not to become disarranged and twisted. . . moreover memory is formed much better in learning by heart" (p. 32). In agreement, Rousseau (1979) also stressed, "The intuitive experience and enjoyment of music should come first. . . A good deal of traditional music education has worked deductively: the formal rules have been taught in the abstract, for example, through verbal descriptions of written notation, rather than in the practical context of making the sounds themselves" (p. 215).

American piano instructor Whiteside (1997) fostered similar thoughts by stating that "the only safe beginning for a music student is to play by ear. To believe this completely, one need only observe the ease and accuracy of those students who began in that manner. The skill they develop is never duplicated by those who learned the notes first and built up a coordination depending on the eye" (p. 165).

Informal learning in music may be accomplished through playing by ear or aural transmission of the music being learned. This may help influence and develop a "sharper ear" as

students not only listen for pitch, they also analyze form and style naturally (Abril, 2006).

Playing by ear has been defined by McPherson (1995b) as, “the ability to reproduce on a musical instrument an existing passage or piece of music, which has been learned aurally. Unlike playing music from memory, playing by ear involves the recreation of an existing piece of music at the same pitch level as the original learned model or transposed to another pitch level (p. 147).

He examined the ability of 101 high school clarinet and trumpet players to perform rehearsed music, sight-read, play from memory, play by ear, and improvise. Instrumentalists were grouped together according to two levels of age and ability. Group 1 consisted of students ages 12 to 15 and Group 2 consisted of students ages 15 to 18. McPherson (1995a) found that playing by ear was the skill that exerted direct influence on improvising, sight-reading, and playing from memory and an indirect influence on performing rehearsed music. In addition, he found that two factors had the most influence on participants’ ability to play by ear: 1) early exposure; and 2) activities such as the frequency of participants’ practicing of ear playing or improvisation.

According to Johansson (2004), those musicians who play by ear tend to possess strategies for being able to play back what they have heard. In a study to describe and explain strategies used by ear players, he investigated two bass players, two keyboardists, and two guitarists with extensive experience playing by ear in rock bands. Playing three unfamiliar songs composed for the study, informants indicated listening for harmonic formulae, sound, and instrument idiosyncrasies. The strategies adopted were using chords or melodic motives and building chordal structures from the bass notes.

The method in which our ancestors learned music, along with young people in other cultures around the world, is quite different from the way music students today learn music in

formal education (Campbell, 1998; Hargreaves & North, 2001). Conceding that playing by ear is an acquired skill, Woody and Lehmann (2010) recruited 24 undergraduate music majors representing two groups: 12 formal musicians and 12 vernacular musicians. Formal musician participants' musical training and development occurred predominantly from formal instructional settings and focused on traditional classical music styles. Those vernacular musicians had significant experiences in jazz ensembles, ensembles performing popular and folk music, and church bands. While these musicians were mainly taught informally, some had formal instructional background experiences. Working with two melodies of equal length, each musician was asked to listen then perform each melody. The results of the study found that the vernacular musicians required fewer trials than the formal musicians.

For the gospel pianist, being able to render melodic and harmonic musical material, by ear in real time during a performance, is a necessary skill. This skill is necessary due to the spontaneity that most often happens in performance. There are times when a soloist, preacher, or visiting person, may sing an impromptu song during a worship service, concert, revival, or event where the gospel pianist will have to listen quickly and be able accompany the individual immediately. In gospel music, this is not only a necessity, it is an expectation.

Use of recordings in aural transmission of musical style. As jazz and recording technology emerged and grew in the 1920s, recordings became the single most important tool in the learning of the jazz sound and language. Recordings allowed jazz musicians to listen to certain passages repeatedly to analyze them. Along with analyzing, musicians used recordings to repeat short segments for the purpose of copying and imitating improvised solos.

The importance of audio recordings and the acquisition of performance skills cannot be overstated for jazz musicians, according to Prouty (2006). He called this direct relationship

sound as text and text as sound. In western art music, the score serves as a mode of transmission between the composer and performer. It is not a mode of sound itself. This is what Prouty meant by sound as text and text as sound.

Green (2008) also discussed the importance of audio recordings in informal learning, stating that in the nontraditional setting students may utilize audio recordings as a point of reference for acquiring the musical content they are trying to learn. She furthered described this informal learning process as a solitary process involving “purposive and attentive listening leading to close imitation and improvisatory adaptation” (p. 96).

Palmer (2016) posited that the ability to hear external and internal sound sources is crucial in improvisation. For successful improvisation, one’s aural ability must be correlated with strong technical facility on their instrument and these abilities must be matched. His study found that superior technical facility created greater capacity for higher levels of improvisational achievement.

In an interview, Burnim stated, “Gospel music must be learned and experienced in its context. It cannot be learned by reading musical notation or by studying the score in isolation from the musical performance. Listening to recordings is a valuable and important experience, but a vital element of the live performance is the performer-audience interplay” (Campbell, 1995, p. 43).

This strategy of imitation by listening is similar to Green’s findings when she interviewed popular musicians in the genre of rock. Interviewees shared that they listened purposively to audio recordings and in some instances played along with the recordings copying what they heard. Copying recordings were a part of their enculturation process. For those that engaged in guitar lessons, copying recordings was a continued and habitual practice of learning. Green

found that some musicians transcribed audio recordings, but notation was very much secondary to the learning by listening process (Green, 2002).

In informal learning, playing by ear becomes a necessity and this recreation of music works hand in hand with the transmission of music. Researchers found that vernacular musicians were able to play back music with fewer trials than those who received formal training primarily (Johansson, 2004; Woody & Lehmann, 2010). The act of playing by ear is not a skill that is unreachable. As with any skill, it takes frequent practice to be sharpened. Additionally, those who play by ear have strategies and schematic templates that help them move towards a level of fluency. Researchers found that these musicians listened for harmonic constructions in step with bass notes and melodic motives. Lastly, audio recordings are a large part of the acquisition of performance skills that aid in imitation and improvisation. While there are some musical scores available for gospel music, oral transmission remains the primary method for music learning. With gospel piano playing being steeped in the ability to play by ear, this knowledge of informal learning becomes critical for the current study.

Music Preservation

There are different meanings for the term preservation. From safe keeping to issues of endangerment, preservation is ultimately the process of upholding or sustaining the state of something. Matusky (2002) offers a working definition that will be accepted in this current study. He stated that, "Preservation is the act of saving music so that performers who are not familiar with the old style may study and refer back to it as they develop new styles of the same genre of music" (p. 56). The saving of music can be done through audio and video recording technology and stored in an archive or library. For Matusky, utilizing both audio and video

recording is ideal to capture the method of instrument play and design, along with viewing the kind of clothing worn during performance of a given genre of music.

Oral tradition. Pedagogical interaction can occur in both written and oral forms. Those musicians operating in informal musical settings and apprenticeships are learning within the context of orality, which departs significantly from the practices of the western art music tradition. This general classification indicates that the musical information is passed on either through word of mouth or through observation (Prouty, 2006).

Departing from Prouty, Ong (1982) argued that orality operates differently from the written processes. He added that real study is impossible in a truly oral culture due to a lack of various effects and materials needed to be analytical. Sidran (1971) disagreed stating that for African American oral culture these other mediums of written processes get in the way of communication. Along with Sidran, other researchers have criticized Ong.

Friedson (1996) questioned Ong stating that oral traditions are a part of a sophisticated system of musical transmission and analytical conceptualizations without the use of written processes. Friedson explained his field observations with a drummer among the Tumbuka culture of northern Malawi. He found that the drummer was able to break down complex drumming patterns and transcribed those patterns.

Writing on the Kaluli peoples of Papua New Guinea, Feld (1981) recalled:

Although I once believed that there were fundamental differences between symbolic systems based on literate versus oral transmission, field research in a small-scale, traditionally non-literate society has convinced me that the theories of Edmund Carpenter, Marshall McLuhan, and Walter Ong explain little about the dynamics of oral

tradition. On the contrary, I am persuaded that “orally” does not determine, fix, or cause differences in world view or consciousness. (p. 18)

Both formal and informal learning are sophisticated systems that operate within the realm of music. Informal learners function within the oral tradition, which departs from the western art music tradition that embraces written tradition. These learning styles should not be in conflict, however. Each serve a meaningful purpose for cultures around the world as orality creates meaning and social reality (Tuominen, Talja, & Savolaninen, 2002). With orality creating meaning and social reality, Mulholland (2007) cautioned that because certain music is developed through the oral tradition (folkloric in nature), the absence of the natural enculturation process may create difficulties in preservation with those not familiar with the music; thus raising issues of authenticity which potentially endangers the art form. Greyling & McNulty (2011) posited that creative expression places emphasis on individuality which maybe antithetical to traditional and indigenous cultural norms. Referencing social media technologies, Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) stated that individuals create and share self-generated content which often is not aligned with indigenous knowledge and standards.

The oral tradition has long served as a method of storytelling throughout history. The sharing of personal narratives have created a means of transmitting both nonmusical and musical constructs, ideas, and performance. Through both oral and written accounts, the oral medium is a sophisticated system that is processed differently within cultures. Some cultures find that written texts create barriers within communication while other cultures find it accessible and non-problematic. While learning cultural traditions and practices by sitting among those cultural teachers and experts is valuable, finding other means to preserve the music becomes crucial long

term. By examining the African American gospel piano style in the 21st century, this study seeks to explore the experiences and perspectives of five gospel pianists who are cultural teachers and experts, thus preserving current musical practices in written form.

Conclusion

This chapter has served to examine literature on gospel music in the African American church and the role of gospel piano in gospel music, within the framework of musical enculturation, transmission, and preservation. The literature supports the importance of flexibility and individualistic interpretations of pianists' and their foundational role in gospel piano style. Creativity emerged in the literature as an important tool possessed by gospel pianists and their ability to generate fresh ideas played a crucial role in the continued codifying of the style (Johnson, 2009). These creative skills and improvisational ability have been shown to develop through a lifelong process of enculturation; achieved through accumulating musical experiences (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974).

As gospel piano cycled throughout history, its musical elements and characteristics became more distinct. In the 1900s, harmonies ranged from pentatonic scales to seventh chords and rhythms were bouncy with altered pulses. In the 1930s with Thomas Dorsey, the gospel waltz was introduced, with the use of compound meters such as 12/8 for songs written in 4/4. Later pianist Roberta Martin expanded gospel piano's chordal and harmonic constructs with the inclusion of a wide range of progressions (I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi, viii). During this time, non-harmonic, passing tones, and chromaticism was also applied (Wise, 2000). By the time, gospel piano entered its contemporary stylistic period in the late 1960s, polyphony and the use of suspensions, dissonances, extended and altered chords prevailed. Additionally, new rhythms such as calypso and swing were introduced (Wise, 2000). Gospel piano ultimately entered a

period of florid accompaniment with the use of trills, riffs, and other ornamentations. Throughout these innovative musical periods, the “sound” of gospel piano morphed into and through a spectrum of genres including blues, jazz, soul, and rhythm and blues. For those classically trained pianists in gospel, the genre, at times possessed musical elements of the western art tradition.

In the African American culture, studies have found that oral tradition has been the primary means of transmission and preservation versus written processes (Sidran, 1971). Therefore, the use of informal learning was determined to lead to musical competence through the process of musical enculturation and aural immersion. As music is being transmitted orally and aurally through informal learning, preservation was found to be achieved through audio and video recording technology and stored in an archive or library (Matusky, 2002).

In sum, these studies suggest that oral tradition has served as a communicative tool for centuries. This sophisticated system of interaction and engagement has formulated systems of preservation that ultimately are designed to be teaching and learning tools for others. However, due to the historical nature of many of these aforementioned studies, research has only begun to document the processes by which African American gospel piano is being preserved today, bringing forth the importance of this study to document the complexities of these challenges.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodological choices made in examining the African American gospel piano style in the 21st century. Results of this study are intended to provide positive insight into the African American gospel piano style for novice and practicing gospel pianists as they continue to develop and become efficient in the genre and for music educators interested in understanding this genre and style of performance practice. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are African American gospel pianists' perceptions of the stylistic transformation of gospel piano in the 21st century?
2. What factors were perceived to influence the stylistic developments experienced by the participants?
3. How do the participants perceive that gospel piano style is learned, transmitted, and preserved?
4. How did the musical enculturation of the participants influence their development as a gospel pianist?

Summary of the Research Design

A collective case study design (Stake, 2010) was employed as the method for this study. This collective case study sought to explore the experiences and perceptions of five gospel pianists. In addition, case study research was used to gain a better understanding of subjects within a bounded system, whether through setting, specific location, events, or places (Creswell,

2017). In this study, the cases were bound by setting (black churches), by event (pianists performing in the African American gospel piano style), and by specific situation (within the 21st century).

Collective case studies examine multiple cases and offer within-case and cross-case analyses, through which deeper understanding can be gained. By examining multiple cases, the researcher added confidence to findings and developed solid descriptions and explanations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Exploring this phenomenon through the perspectives of multiple participants allowed me to better understand how different individuals experience enculturation, transmission, and preservation of gospel piano.

Each gospel pianist represents a case enacted within a particular context. Within each case, each individual and their experiences framed the analysis. This collective case study research design followed the traditional pathway of qualitative research, with a goal to better understand participant perceptions regarding a particular phenomenon or concept (Merriam, 1998).

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to obtain participants for the current study. Commonly associated with qualitative research, this form of sampling allowed me to deliberately select individuals and sites that facilitated the examination and understanding of the phenomenon being examined (Creswell, 2012). For qualitative case studies, Stake (1995) advocated selecting cases that may offer more, than less, opportunities to learn and suggested, “potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness” (p. 130). Therefore, the sample for this study included participants that could enhance the purpose of this investigation.

A total of five black gospel pianists, from across the United States, agreed to participate. I accepted all five participants in the study. All participants were advanced, having over 20 years of experience as gospel pianists and possessing the ability to play in all gospel genres masterfully. The age range expanded from early thirties to mid-sixties. In conjunction with the criteria below, these individuals were selected for their individual and social merit (being well respected, in the field, on the basis of talent and achievement), in addition to their potential contribution in understanding the phenomenon of the transformation of the gospel piano style in the 21st century. To protect the privacy of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned and used throughout the study (See Table 3.1 for a description of participants). The criteria for selecting these five participants were:

1. Pianists who have played for prominent gospel singers
2. Pianists who can play various gospel styles
3. Persons who are knowledgeable about earlier pianistic styles and musicians
4. Persons who have or are experiencing the phenomenon being investigated
5. Recommendations from gospel pianists and church music leaders

Data Generation

Data generation took place during a four-week period from December 16, 2019 to January 13, 2020. Participants identified and understood my role as the researcher (Stake, 2010). In order to answer my research questions, the primary data source used in this study was semi-structured interviews with participants. Artifacts, including participant biographies and recordings of performances by participants, were also collected.

Table 3.1

List of participants

Name	Years of Experience	Level	Church Denominational Background
Mitch	28	Advanced	Baptist (Missionary)
Lucy	41	Advanced	Church of God in Christ, Disciples of Christ, Catholic, Baptist (Missionary)
Jake	25	Advanced	Church of God in Christ
Paul	24	Advanced	Baptist (Missionary)
Carol	53	Advanced	Church of God

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews (Roulston, 2010) were conducted with each of the participants. The choice of a semi-structured approach to interviewing allowed the flexibility necessary for a creative approach to interviewing, permitting the inclusion of prompted questions during the interview. Interviews were scheduled at a time most convenient for participants and took place via telephone. Each interview lasted 60 minutes.

All interviews were conversational in nature and were guided by the proposed Interview Protocol Questions (Appendix D). At the beginning of each interview, some informal chatting occurred along with me expressing appreciation for the time each participant took to participate in this study. Due to the semi-structured approach, additional questions were injected through conversation to probe more deeply into a particular line of inquiry. This allowed me the opportunity to respond to ideas and situations at hand (Merriam, 1998). These follow-up

questions facilitated insights into particular narratives as they arose. Throughout the interview, while actively listening, I attempted to engage each participant in the same manner; responding in a professional, supportive, and non-biased way.

After completing the transcripts from each interview, I listened to the recordings again while reading the transcriptions to ensure accuracy. Any needed corrections were completed in real time. Stake (1995) called this process viewing the data reflectively. The timeframe for interviews is outlined in Table 3.2. Finally, data were also gathered through memoing throughout both the data collection and analysis processes. Memos consisted of my descriptions of interesting or significant statements, observations from interviews and the artifacts.

Table 3.2

Interview Schedule

Date	Interview	Participant(s)	Time
December 9	#1	Mitch	1 hour
December 10	#1	Lucy	1 hour
December 11	#1	Jake	1 hour
December 12	#1	Paul	1 hour
December 13	#1	Carol	1 hour
January 6	#2	Mitch	1 hour
January 7	#2	Lucy	1 hour
January 8	#2	Jake	1 hour
January 9	#2	Paul	1 hour
January 10	#2	Carol	1 hour
Totals	10 interviews	5 participants	10 hours

Data Analysis

Stake (1995) defined data analysis as a “matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to find compilations” (p. 71). Through patterns, meanings, and relation, I reduced and organize the complex data into categories that supported issues, contexts, and behaviors central and unique to each case (Stake, 1995).

At the conclusion of my interviews, I used rev.com to transcribe each participant’s responses individually and coded the data based on commonalities, comparisons, and thematic topics. I used Creswell’s (2007) five step data analysis spiral as an analytic guide: (a) data collection; (b) data managing; (c) reading and memoing; (d) describing, classifying, and interpreting; and (e) representing and visualizing (p. 151).

Following data collection, I managed my data using QSR NVivo 12 Plus (2020) qualitative analysis software to assist with the organization and coding of data. Memoing involved the documentation of thoughts related to the study as the data were reviewed. I read and reread transcripts, keeping notes as I processed them. Memos were made in the margins of the transcriptions (Bodgan & Bilken, 2003; Creswell, 1998) and coded as well. From memoing, I described, classified, and interpreted the data by creating codes, noting emergent themes, and interpreting the results.

Coding is a core aspect of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2007) where “the goal of coding in qualitative research is to fracture the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). I adopted the descriptive coding method of Saldana (2016) as a basic analytic technique for the study. Saldana offers a general framework for coding that involves two cycles of applied techniques for case study research.

Advancing through Saldana's cyclic model, transcriptions and memos were coded using open coding (first cycle coding methods), which allowed me to translate and interpret the data. In the first cycle, three coding techniques were applied with the assistance of QSR NVivo 12 Plus to derive meaningful nodes from the data: attribute (participant data and demographic information), structural (frequency count of words, ideas, and texts) and in-vivo coding (inductive coding of verbatim lines of data). A second cycle process was applied where transcriptions and memo were coded again to organize coded data into categories based on structural nodes and common attributes, defined as categorical aggregation by Stake (2010).

Thematic analysis. In the present study, themes encapsulated important aspects of the data in relation to the research questions. Serving as the instrument, I made decisions about how the themes and patterns were formed based on my judgement and interpretation of the data. The final stage in the second cycle process involved thematic coding, where codes that shared common meanings were classified into categories and themes (Saldana, 2016). The summary of data were synthesized and analyzed to answer the research questions of the study. The emerged patterns and discussions could potentially lead to future studies (Saldana, 2016).

Within-case analysis. In a collective case study, Stake (2010) suggests that the researcher seek to understand a single case and depict meaning from one participant at a time and be willing to see multiple viewpoints of the case. According to Stake (2010), the purpose of within-case analysis is to identify, aggregate, and codify patterns in search of themes. I identified and analyzed patterns, themes, and relationship developed within the cases of each participant.

Cross-case analysis. Cross-case analysis was performed by the researcher, after completing the with-in case analysis. Cross-case analysis involved the observance of patterns as they appeared in each case and served as a process of creating broad statements. Each case statement

and comment were compared against one another to find commonalities and patterns. After comparison between case one and two was completed, I used this same process for the remaining cases/participants, working through each transcript methodically, along with field notes, and recordings searching for repeated patterns across all case data.

Cross-case analysis allowed me to look at amalgamated meanings of all cases in the study, examining composite meaning of all cases (Stake, 2010). This ongoing process of coding and recoding helped me to look for “overarching themes” (Braun & Clark, p. 89).

The final data analysis spiral consisted of representing and visualizing data through words, diagrams, and figures. The QSR NVivo 12 Plus software allowed me to compile all of the codes, categories, annotations, and text associated with codes. I was able to review the data in sets categorized by participants and by questions. I reviewed each research question and created nodes (codes) for each question based on the repetition of words used in participants’ responses.

Verification and Trustworthiness

For purposes of this study, member checking, the gathering of rich, thick descriptions, and peer review were triangulated to ensure credibility, accuracy, and validation (Stake, 2010). Member checks involved forwarding my findings and interpretations to the interviewees for accuracy verification and their approval. Participants were given drafts of interview transcriptions to review for accuracy and agreeability (Stake, 2010). Each participant received a transcript of both interviews in order to have the opportunity to make changes, if needed. No participants submitted changes.

Maxwell (2005) defined rich data as accounts “detailed and varied enough that provide a full revealing picture of what is going on” (p. 110). By collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources, I sought to present rich descriptions in support of my interpretations (Stake,

2010). Through memoing, I noted thoughts, ideas, recurring terms, voice inflections, and concepts pertaining to potential meanings and/or themes. Several types of artifacts were collected during the study. The artifacts consisted of student music assignments, music scores, rehearsal plans, biographies, and other public materials. Examining a variety of artifacts allows the researcher to develop a broader perspective on the topic over the course of the study (Creswell, 2017). I organized each artifact by type for analysis and then inspected and cross-referenced each with participants, interview transcripts, and recordings (audio and video).

I made use of a peer reviewer to minimize bias and to question my rationales as I analyzed the data (Spall, 1998). My peer reviewer had previous experience with qualitative methods and informal learning strategies. She asked questions for clarification, challenged my assumptions, challenged some of my coding levels and language, and confirmed my thematic findings.

Limitations

Every research study has limitations or potential weaknesses (Creswell, 2012). Due to the use of a collective case study, this study is limited to the lived experiences of the individuals selected for this study as qualitative data is not normally generalized and therefore is intended to be interpreted by lived experiences (Creswell, 2012). These lived experiences may not be generalized across the entire field of African American gospel piano style. Purposeful sampling was used in this study which also reduced opportunities of generalizability across the entire field as the research focused on particular individuals in the United States. Additionally, participants in the study were advanced musicians with many years of experience which may not be representative of typical gospel pianists. The selection of five black gospel pianists was based on

limited time which limited the amount of data gathering for the study. Given the scope of the study, this limitation did not have a negative effect however.

The interview data were reviewed, analyzed, coded, and interpreted solely by me which may represent an additional limitation of the study. The absence of an additional coder prevented inter-rater reliability and may affect the validity of conclusions. The findings of this study were limited to the perspectives of five participants. The goal of this study was to examine noteworthy cases in a broad context with no plan to generalize to a broad population.

Lastly, while I aimed to realistically depict the lived experiences of African American gospel pianists in the 21st century, I acknowledge my own bias as a practitioner in gospel music. My understanding of the participants experiences are understood through a framework of my own teaching, exposure, and training. However, I made every effort to ensure participants responded to the interview questions with honest interpretations and not socially acceptable ones (Christensen et al., 2011). I recognize participants may have responded in a manner agreeable to me as interviewer and practitioner.

Clarifying Researcher Subjectivity

Qualitative researchers are to be closely involved in their work (Torna, 2000). In addition, Stake (1995) stated that the researcher should exercise “subjective judgement” and at the same time “realize their own consciousness” while analyzing and synthesizing each case (p. 41). Therefore, it is important to clarify my subjectivity as a researcher and my relationship to this topic and the participants.

I have been a pianist and organist for 32 years. While I performed within various genres including classical and jazz, I have performed as a gospel pianist since the age of 10. My experience as a gospel pianist has been the catalyst for this study. As a pianist, my training has

been both traditional (formalized experience) and informal (informalized experience) with learning occurring both in one-on-one settings with private piano instruction within the western tradition of classical music (formal) and in larger settings in the African American church (informal).

As an active performing practitioner in gospel music, my position places me close to the phenomenon in this study and should serve as a positive attribute for examining this topic through the perspectives and experiences of my peers (Creswell, 2007). While I did not possess a personal relationship with the participants in the study, there was a familiarity with most of them. This familiarity allowed for rapport and trust but it may have allowed for reluctance or minimizations in reporting by participants. To address such potential hindrances, I was intentional and consistent with how I defined my role as the researcher, separate from my role as a practitioner. Lastly, I reemphasized the confidentiality restrictions within the study to bring ease and comfortability to each participant in an effort to promote and gain in-depth insight into their lived experiences.

Summary

This chapter provided a framework for the method used in the present study. Detailed information concerning the research design, research setting, participants, researcher's role, researcher bias, and the methods for data generation, analysis, interpretation, and verification were provided. By describing my method clearly, I provided researchers a way to replicate my study and to sufficiently judge the value of this contribution to the research literature

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

As previously stated, the purpose of this collective case study was to explore the African American gospel piano style in the 21st century through the lens of the five participants' experiences and development as gospel pianists. Upon completion of an analysis of the data, I identified four emergent themes that provide narrative to this exploration: learning the style, developing the style, transforming the style, and transmitting and preserving the style.

Learning the Gospel Piano Style

Participants agreed that learning the gospel piano style encompassed a multi-faceted approach that navigated throughout various stages that most often began with listening. Gospel pianists adopted an informal learning methodology that focused on aural acquisition which was gained through the process of trial and error. This self-initiated learning, grounded in exploration and experimentation, provided participants with a solid foundation, which they continued to build upon as they gathered, cultivated, and synthesized musical knowledge.

Informal learning through aural acquisition. The role of informal learning through aural acquisition was foundational to the developmental process of learning gospel piano style. Participants recalled their experience growing up listening to other gospel pianists either in person or on cassette or CD recordings and perceived that gospel piano, in the 21st century, is learned similarly. Having an interest in gospel music, due to church involvement, each participant began learning gospel music by ear early in their musical development.

Playing by ear. Participants primarily learned to play gospel piano by ear; a method that has remained consistent throughout the history of the genre. Aural acquisition often occurred at a very young age. Its onset seemed to be natural and connected with their interest to learn music and the role of music in their home life. Some participants took lessons that included ear training through observation of a more experienced player. Lucy stated:

I definitely went by ear when I first started, but I think more or less listening and starting different styles of music in gospel helped me develop as a gospel pianist. . . . At the age of seven, I began taking lessons at Ms. Baker's home. I would hear Ms. Baker play and others and I would go home and try to do exactly what they did.

Jake reinforced the importance of learning by ear and his enculturation of the gospel piano style. He stated:

I engulfed myself with gospel piano. At the age of 12, I began taking lessons at the Taylor Studio of Music for six months. It was more informal because they didn't teach me how to read music. You would play popular gospel songs by them writing the chords out on paper. My teacher would then show me how it goes and how to approach the song. After six months, I was learning on my own. I practiced every day. Over time it was just more of trial and error.

Imitation and correction were also crucial to the development of gospel pianists. Paul's experience was unique in that he studied with a classically trained teacher. Interestingly, she emphasized imitation and listening as the pedagogical approach to teaching gospel piano but elected to use a more traditional, technical method to teach him in the classical style:

I'm a classically trained pianist. I started off taking piano lessons in a very strict traditional manner; playing Hanon exercises, Chopin etudes, preludes, and things of that

nature. Ms. Robinson was the Minister of Music at my church. She was a classically trained pianist who also played well in the gospel piano style. I would literally just show up and she would sit down and play something, I would play it back. I'd listen and look at her hands. When I played, she would correct me by literally moving my fingers and saying, 'No, do it this way,' or 'Use the octave.' I was practicing several hours every day.

Exposure to various gospel music served as a critical first step for each participant. With continued practice, participants found that their aural skills developed more and more.

Participants focused on pitch and rhythm primarily in their emulation practices. Aspects of dynamics, articulation, and expression followed. These musical qualities developed over time and weren't at the center of the informal learning experience, initially.

Listening to other gospel pianists. Past recordings of gospel pianists informed and influenced pianists in the 21st century. In addition to past recordings, some participants attended gospel concerts and/or church services and recorded gospel pianists in real time. Both methods of collecting musical material assisted in the learning process. Participants, like Mitch, began listening to gospel music at a very early age:

Listening has always been most important to me. At the age of seven, I began to listen to my brother play gospel piano. He kind of showed me what to do. I became a sponge and began to tape record other musicians I was hanging around. I would go home and try to figure out how to do what they were doing. I probably spent three to four hours a day practicing, after school and all that. At the time I was 14, I started playing with community choirs and being around the community choir scene gave me motivation to practice. I began listening to different gospel music CDs and tried to emulate what I was hearing.

Participants emphasized the importance of not only listening to other gospel pianists but listening to other genres and styles of music within gospel. The enculturation of participants into various style of music throughout their development reinforced the cross-pollination of styles that remains prevalent in 21st century gospel music (See Table 4.1, Appendix).

Gospel pianists attributed their exposure to various music and gospel styles to their household and church environment. Hearing a variety of gospel music styles played in their home and performed in church promoted curiosity, interest, and later engagement. Participants discussed how listening to a wide variety of music and gospel styles significantly influenced their growth as gospel pianists. Listening to music remained a best practice in the development of gospel pianists in the 21st century as it was in generations before.

Growing up in conservative Christian homes was not uncommon for gospel pianists. In these homes, parents typically took a strong and strict stance against secular music, viewing it as void of doctrinal Christian truths and inimitable to Christian practice. Carol expressed only being able to listen to gospel music in her home growing up. Even with this, she was limited to listening to traditional gospel music with such artists as Mahalia Jackson, James Cleveland and the Clara Ward Singers. This was Carol's first introduction to gospel music which sparked her curiosity.

Stylistic influences. Participants acknowledged past influences, including progenitors of gospel piano, on which the 21st century gospel piano style was built. Participants acknowledged that current gospel pianists have elaborated on and embellished the stylings of past pianists such as Thomas A. Dorsey, Thomas Whitfield, Arizona Dranes, and others. Gaining an awareness of stylistic interpretation was important to the participants in understanding foundational elements such as harmonic construction, stylistic characteristics, rhythmic usage, formal structure, and the

gospel sound. Jake discussed the prevalence of specific styles of music that emerged and evolved over time to influence 21st gospel piano style:

You have to go back to Thomas Dorsey who did a lot of jazz and blues in the gospel piano. Then even before him, Arizona Dranes incorporated boogie and ragtime into gospel piano and then of course as time went along, gospel music has always been this kind of chameleon.

For Paul, historical knowledge of the style is required for those who aspire to be cultural leaders in this field. In gospel music, cultural leaders served as gatekeepers who possess historical knowledge and understanding of the art form. Cultural leaders shared their experiences and knowledge with others to foster community, musicality, and spiritual ties. He stated:

The real torchbearers and truth-tellers [cultural leaders] are the ones that should have the platform. I feel like so many of the young musicians are really good, but they don't necessarily know historical context and content.

Similar to classical pianists' study of Bach, Chopin, and others, participants also studied past important performers in the genre. However, this wasn't a requirement in gospel music as it often is in classical music training. Participants found this troubling and shared that they would like to see a system put in place that would set an expectation of past knowledge/histories and a set standard of excellence for current and future gospel pianists.

Mitch: I think the biggest challenge is just not really spending the time to learn the craft. I don't think musicians are really taking time learn their craft and knowing the piano's purpose.

Paul: I wish the younger musicians would embrace the old and the more traditional style. I found a lot of younger musicians have not gone back and learned how to play in that style. Traditional gospel music, as we know it, is very rare in today's contemporary churches. . . There's a style that many of the young musicians cannot play.

Carol: I guess the thing I'm concerned about is that we keep the variety of gospel music alive. I think sometimes when I turn on the television, and they have gospel represented, that they only say in one era. Either they stay straight contemporary, or they stay straight traditional, and I see very few of these programs that are going around the world embracing the whole story of gospel music.

A need for matriculation within gospel piano surfaced in the discussion of stylistic influences and development of skills. At present, gospel pianists entering the genre are not required to have any prior knowledge or course of study, even informally, to perform the genre. There's no standard of excellence that has been formalized for the art form. This lack of matriculation posed concern around issues of authenticity, standards of practice and performance, and preservation.

Developing the 21st Century Gospel Piano Style

Mapping the learning process of gospel pianists provided sequential understanding. This process began with self-direction, which took place alone or as part of a group, and with the assistance of a teacher. Because the individual was seeking to learn purposefully, this stage was both conscious and intentional. From self-direction, participants learned stylistic musical knowledge without being aware of its complexity. Eventually, gospel pianists internalized values, skills, and behaviors that are unique to the gospel style.

Experiential learning. As participants moved throughout the developmental process, they each approached the time to implement what they had been spending time developing. Participants shared similar church experiences. They all began playing in church at a young age and found the church to be a nurturing and grooming environment that positively influenced their performance experiences.

Participants stated that the black church served as a form of musical enculturation as they became immersed in the gospel music culture; demanding they learn music each week for the church service(s). Participants were consistently involved in the intra-musical sound structures of gospel music and church culture. As they experimented with various learning methods leading to their success, each participant had to further their understanding of the musical sensibilities, such as knowing when and what to play during the worship service, being historically informed when performing and interpreting the music, and other musical elements including performance modes and gospel stylings.

Church performance experiences. Participants regarded their involvement in church as highly beneficial and supportive in their development as gospel pianists. The church allowed space for musical mistakes as each experimented with service play and developed their understanding of success as a pianist.

The overall tone by church members was usually one of acceptance. Participants recalled feeling welcomed and valued by church members. This level of appreciation provided a healthy outlook on service to the church, which became a lifelong attachment and journey. Church members helped influence and increase participants' achievement, learning, and effectiveness.

Even at a young age, the ultimate goal for participants was to be fluent enough in the style to play for a church service. Mitch discussed the importance of simulating a church service in his training:

I began playing in church when I was seven. To help me play better in church, my piano teacher, Mr. Dotson would pretend we were in a church service, during our music lessons. He would say ‘You get on the organ and I will play the piano.’ He would play and sing a song and I would play along with him. It was very informal but definitely helpful. By the time I was 14, I started playing with community choirs.

Even as early as age 11 and 12, the participants were actively playing, in various contexts, for their churches. These experiences, including feedback from peers and mentors, were critical to their development as pianists:

Lucy: I started playing in the church at seven but playing for the youth choir at 11, at my home church. At seven, I was playing for Sunday school every week. We were having rehearsals every week and I was teaching the youth choir.

Paul began playing in church by age 10. He recalled his first experience:

The very first song that I played in church was The Doxology. Not the Old Hundredth, but rather the Roberta Martin resetting. It was the one that Charles Nicks re-recorded and was very famous. We’d end on that every single Sunday. I was a child playing really complicated music like that. I learned it all by ear. That was my introduction into Gospel music. Then from there, I started playing with our young adult choir. I was 10 years old. By 14 or 15, I ended up going to play for another church around the corner which was a United Methodist Church.

Feedback, both positive and negative, from church members and mentors was an integral component of Jake's development. He stated:

At my home church when I began playing in church, at 12, I would have mentors to say, 'No that's not right' and they would show me how to play something correctly. I was more of a shadow; just really playing chords or something on the keyboard. Even though I was on my own learning, I was still around people that, at that time of my life, that still kept me grounded and also guided me on what it should sound like versus what it shouldn't. The church let me learn by trial and error. I dealt with criticism, playing in the church, but it was a very supportive environment. I could mess up, be corrected, and still play in church. I was also around a musical family in the church. They encouraged and promoted growth in me.

Similar to Jake, interactions with church members encouraged and motivated Carol throughout her development. Regardless of the accuracy of her performance, she felt supported as her skills and confidence improved:

I received a lot of support from others in church. When I would make a lot of mistakes, someone would say 'You're doing a good job. Keeping working at it.' Playing in the African American church has been such a wonderful experience. It's been a wonderful support system. Even when I was tinkering on the piano, people would say 'Good job. Glad you're here.' Even if it was a mess, they would still encourage me. It was a blessing to have that kind of support through the years. They were so encouraging and supportive.

Participants credited the black church as a place of solitude and appreciation. Some initially engaged in a guided instructional environment, facilitated by a teacher or mentor, but later began to learn autonomously. Others expressed engaging in peer-to-peer learning groups

leading to more traditional teaching practices such as modeling. Ultimately, by promoting excellence and inspiring musical advancement, the church became a crucial component of their success as gospel pianists. Participants musical interaction was guided by individual curiosity, encouragement from family and teachers, and support.

Mentoring and support. The importance of mentoring and supportive relationships emerged as an important component of participants' development as pianists. Participants valued their relationships with their family, friends, peers, and the black church that provided them an opportunity to perform and grow musically. These supportive relationships within their musical culture influenced their development as gospel pianists.

Each participant was positively influenced by their relationship with their mentor(s). They shared the influence that their mentor(s) had on their lives and their development as a gospel pianist. Mentors possessed experience, skill, knowledge, and credibility. Equipped with empathy and healthy interpersonal skills, participants' mentors were able to understand what it meant to be a creative being. This understanding allowed for instructional flexibility and empowerment. In addition, each shared the ways they are serving as mentors for other gospel pianists today.

Jake: As a mentor, a lot of people have reached out to me about doing tutorials on YouTube and doing some online lessons to show them what I know and how I approach music. Over the years, I never really expected to be someone that has that type of influence on people around the world.

Having good mentoring relationships yielded profound effects and benefits for the participants, but particularly for Mitch. He benefited both musically and personally from his positive interpersonal relationships with mentors and added that they instilled a sense of pride

and self-efficacy within him. As a result of this positive impact of peer mentoring, Mitch now mentors other gospel pianists:

When I was growing up, I had guys that are my age now that were really pouring into and correcting me. I was hanging around peers that pushed me. Some had a harsh way of pushing me but they definitely pushed me. As a mentor, I have a lot of guys that reach out to me. I try to have a different approach and a different grace to approaching someone to correct their playing. I might say ‘Hey, maybe you should try this or maybe you should try that in your practice time.’ I try to be as nice as possible. Sometimes you can say the right thing but with the wrong tone and it just comes off totally wrong. I mentor a few guys now.

Teachers. Participants described how their teachers were an integral part of their support system, allowing them to fail as well as succeed. There were emotional connections between teachers and students that were described as kind, caring, and motivational. Teachers saw potential in the participants, which boosted self-esteem and drive contributing to their successful development as professionals and musicians.

Lucy: As a kid, Mrs. Baker saw potential in me. She told my parents, ‘You need to get Lucy into a school. She’s going to be great, be something.’ I traveled a lot with musicians that influenced me. Mr. Clardy would take time out with me every Saturday afternoon. He would take me to the symphony and things like that.

Jake: I’m happy that I had people like Jesse [Director of Music at Jake’s church] and others. I’d find myself learning a song but after I tried to play it at church, he’d say no that’s not right. To have somebody tell you no that’s not it was difficult yet helpful.

Paul: Ms. Forshea and Ms. Smith were my piano teachers and mentors to me. They were both classically trained but also church musicians. I could go between playing things like Chopin etudes, preludes, and things of that nature, to learning gospel piano. I was blessed in that they both had classical backgrounds. I got the best of both worlds. I think my influence and mentorship has actually ironically been stronger in Europe for the past three to four years.

Carol: I started taking piano lessons when I was five because my mother and father said I started picking out melodies. I had a mentor in my piano teacher. My elementary music teacher was also my mentor and would let me lead the recorders in class. She would have me walking around to help with the kids learning the songs from the little books because we were learning how to read.

Designed to empower and foster growth, mentoring helped to shape each participant musically, professionally, and personally. In the lives of participants, mentors played a critical role in their musical development. Beyond tutoring, advising, and facilitating, the developmental process involved shadowing, which took the form of peer-to-peer interaction and activity. Having a supportive network of mentors who provided a variety of needs including emotional, psychological, and psychosocial was beneficial for each participant. Teacher efficacy, instructional abilities, pacing, and instructional delivery were perhaps most important for development and the desire to serve as mentors to others. Participants expressed healthy reciprocal relationships with their mentor(s).

Family and other support systems. Participants also described the significance of their family system in helping foster a purposeful musical identity. Each credited their parents for seeing something in them and investing time, energy, and resources in them at a young age.

These family systems were not limited to simply DNA but extended to social networks including church members. Lucy and others shared the sacrifices their parents made to support their training and development as a pianist. She stated:

My parents put me into lessons right away. When my mentors told my parents to get me a piano, they got it quickly and I had a piano from, I guess, age seven or eight when I first started. And then when I was able and ready to pay for a piano, myself, my parents paid half and I paid the other half. It's the piano I still have today, and I think I got that at the age of maybe 18 or 19. . . My parents did what was needed to try to perfect my gift as much as possible. They sacrificed quite a bit to get what I needed.

Involvement, empowerment, and encouragement extended beyond the four walls of home. Each participant recounted a communal support system that began in the home but extended outside of the home into the church. This community of people fostered a safe and healthy learning environment; one that facilitated personal growth in participants, like Mitch:

At the age of 12, my dad put me in music lessons. At the time, I was learning a lot of contemporary music being around peers and he wanted me to learn traditional gospel music. Mr. McGallan was an older guy. My dad also connected me with another hometown hero Derrick Jackson. My mom was very supportive of me taking music lessons too. We would listen to songs riding in the car. When I began playing for the youth choir, the church was so supportive and allowed me to grow as a leader and musician.

Not only were Mitch's parents supportive but they facilitated connections with experienced players that were crucial to his growth and development as a musician. Participants' success originated with and was dependent on parental involvement. Each parent actively

responded to their child's curiosity about gospel piano. This activation and response became the cornerstone for enrichment, productivity, and a lifelong love and passion for the art form.

Parental participation ranged from exploring piano lessons, church involvement as a pianist, reinforcement of learning at home, and participation in other musical ensembles for some who began playing for gospel community choirs. Parental involvement played a significant role in Paul's motivation to pursue and explore his desire to learn to play gospel piano.

He stated:

I'd play into the 11:00 pm, 12:00 am hours of the night as a child and they (my parents) would not stop me. My parents never stopped me from practicing unless I had a test or we had to go somewhere. They placed me in music lessons at the age of four. They saw something in me. I even had a piano in my bedroom.

The family system served as a strong indicator in affecting participants holistically. The home environment helped shape not only the emotional and religiosity of participants but their early onset of gospel music understanding. Before exploring other genres and interests, participants simply listened to what their parents listened to.

Participants' musical development was shaped by various experiences and individuals. This developmental process began with exposure to gospel music, through family members, at an early age which became salient to each participant. From family members, the emotional concomitant to the genre became further crystallized through the influence of authority figures such as mentors and music teachers. In conclusion, performing gospel music in church became a significant part of each participants development; leading to lifelong involvement.

Transforming the Style

According to participants, gospel pianists today take more musical risks through innovation. They push the boundaries, paint outside the lines, and create as if there is no musical box. Participants perceived that the transformation of the gospel piano style in the 21st century was influenced by economic, social, cultural, and generational factors. As the standards of musical excellence was raised, so were the expectations of performing musicians.

Relevance through evolution. Evolution in gospel style was considered inevitable by participants based on their knowledge of the changes that have occurred throughout gospel music since its inception. The role of the piano accompaniment in gospel style was no exception. Participants, such as Mitch, linked the stylistic gospel piano transformations to a need to remain relevant within the tradition. He stated, “Everything is changing. Everything’s evolving. I think everybody is looking to find new ways to recreate.”

Commercialism. Gospel pianists discussed being surrounded by an amalgamation of genres, styles, influences, and instant access to others via the internet. There was a sense of commercialism related to the evolution of gospel piano. The influence of trends, popular culture, and what sells was discussed briefly by participants. Participants stated that currently there exists social pressures, as a result of commercialism and perhaps globalization that have effectively managed to compromise some aspects of gospel piano and gospel music at-large. However, participants applauded those pianists and artists who have not succumbed to the forces of commercialism to the extent where the ethos and tradition of the genre has become warped. With some having worked with major record labels, participants discussed how record sells were more important than content. With a focus on profit and the genre moving into popular mainstream,

participants questioned whether gospel piano will eventually no longer belong to the church but to “the world.”

With the insurgence of secular genre in gospel piano, certainly American and Western musical expressions, culture has influenced and informed gospel music. Participants, such as Carol, saw these commercialized sounds and performance practices as being entrenched in gospel piano stylings in the 21st century:

You had the California style, you had the Philadelphia style, the Chicago style, the style of Roberta Martin and many different ones. Everybody had their own style.

During the Edwin Hawkins era, people began to start moving towards what sells, and how can I be popular.

Participants articulated their perceptions of the evolution of gospel piano playing in the 21st century toward a more commercialized product. This evolution involved the manipulation of rudimentary applications, genre oscillation, and musical complexity. Participants explained that rudimentary applications consisted of basic harmonic constructions typically found in hymn playing, consisting of three to four chords. Genre oscillation was the ability of gospel pianists to move seamlessly through various genres (e.g. blues, jazz, classical, soul, funk, Latin rhythmic influences, and R&B) in performance. Musical complexity for participants involved a totality of harmonic, genre, and rhythmic spectrums all displayed in performance.

Participants discussed how there are core properties in gospel piano that are primitive and sustaining (e.g. flatted notes, syncopated rhythms, and pentatonic scales) yet while fundamentally retained, these core musical properties have been altered and/or expanded throughout history. Through their extended musical palate and technical prowess, gospel pianists in the 21st century style oscillate between genres in performance with great fluidity, abandoning

simplicity and moving towards a greater level of musical complexity. This change has been a result of remaining relevant in the 21st century and keeping current with surfaced trends that promote secularity and popularity in lieu of focusing on traditional gospel stylings. In this re-working of gospel piano, pianists have included additional chordal extensions, harmonic substitutions, and re-harmonization.

Participants agreed that while the influence of past performers was important to their development, they expounded on that foundation by infusing their own personal style and improvisational skills into their playing. Individual improvisation, performance, and cognition (the ability to discern, reproduce, and recreate) all contributed to the stylistic influences discussed by participants. This individuality was expected by peers and listeners. In addition, this individuality was found to manifest itself within the performance through use of creative harmonies, rhythms, scalar activity/riffs, and variation of sorts. The pianists' ability to synthesize the gospel "sound" by past pianists, along with his/her creativeness, helped dramatize and heighten the participants' musical performance.

Beyond studying past gospel pianists for style, participants recognized that some contemporary pianists are listening to their peers and studying what's current (e.g. greater tonal harmony, a jazzed-up approach, and excessive embellishments) versus the past. Participants echoed the importance of past exposure and knowledge of pianists who helped shape the sound of gospel piano. All pointed to gospel pianists from the 1990's except Mitch who expressed that contemporary pianists are looking to other contemporaries for inspiration.

Infusion of new genres. Since its inception, African American gospel piano has been infused with many American secular styles including blues, jazz, and ragtime. Participants all

agreed that this phenomenon continues in the 21st century but added that rock, classical, and contemporary Christian music are new genres included today.

Carol: Today, I think the harmonies are a fusion of jazz and you even hear a little Michael Jackson pop. And I'm hearing us getting away from our traditions as African Americans and moving more to almost a white pop/rock sound which is interesting to me that a lot of our music is having that kind of feeling, and the chord progressions you know, that some of the white groups are doing.

Jake: You're open to so many different ways to approach music due to the infusion of so many genres mixed with gospel music. So you have all these different nuances that you're trying to replicate in your services or wherever you're playing because what you hear on these current gospel recordings. On another spectrum, gospel piano has also seen more of this CCM (Contemporary Christian Music) movement, which is very simple and basic, having just four chords the whole song.

Contemporary Christian music (CCM) is a genre of modern popular music which contains lyrics focused on the Christian faith. This genre surfaced in the 1960s as a result of the Jesus movement; a movement where musical expression took on a more contemporary style other than hymns, gospel, and southern gospel. In some ways gospel piano has become complex and in some regards simpler while continuing to be non-monolithic.

Resembling popular-secular musical styles, cultural relevance has challenged gospel artists and the evangelical American churches. The infiltration of newer genres in gospel piano has given rise to gospel piano's popularity, in the 21st century. Jake's perception of gospel piano, utilizing characteristics of CCM, points to the notion of popularity, trendiness, and the need to

remain relevant. The infusion of CCM was perceived to help make gospel piano accessible and catchy.

Virtuosic gospel musicians. The idea of change and a focus on evolution was strongly connected to relevance and trends. According to participants, gospel pianists today, because of their musical abilities, have in many ways exceeded the parameters of what it means to be a gospel pianist. Different from the Golden Age of Gospel, the performance style of gospel piano today is over adorned in many ways; placing heavy emphasis on its jazz influences. With their ability to move through various genres in the span of a series of sonorities, 21st century pianists bring exceptional technical achievement to the music today. The transition from modesty to at times excessive improvisations was perceived to have contributed to the stylistic transformation of gospel piano in the 21st century.

Musicianship. Advanced technical skills and high levels of musicianship were also perceived by participants to set apart the current generation of gospel pianists from previous generations. Participants discussed the complexities in harmonies, rhythms, and impressive improvisational skills of 21st century gospel pianists. Each agreed that the level of skill has increased drastically from what gospel pianist were doing in the past. Paul stated:

I think now you have musicians who are a little more astute. The role of the pianist has just totally changed but current gospel pianists have built on the past greats. You have more virtuosic musicians.

The ability to play masterfully and fluently in all gospel styles is an expectation in the 21st century. Pianists' means of effortlessly navigating between genres was perceived to transpire easily and trouble free. This ease was likely the result of enculturation, opportunity, and access available in the 21st century.

Improvisation and style shifting. Similar to jazz piano, gospel piano is unique because of improvisation. One's ability to improvise well depends on a sophisticated knowledge of style, repertoire, and technical expertise. Gospel pianists, in the 21st century, have developed a level of improvisational expertise as demonstrated by their technical fluency, ability to work outside of musical constraints, and their knowledge base.

Participants described a centrality in stylistic approach which pointed to greater improvisation occurring in gospel piano today. Improvisation ranged from polychordal constructs to polyrhythmic elements. Concerning harmony and rhythmic implications, Mark stated:

Stylistically, there's a lot more involvement of tonal harmony, and just a sense of I guess coloring as well. Then rhythmically and polyrhythmically, there's a lot that goes on. I'm often impressed by the prowess that these musicians have. Man, the musicianship, their chops, their abilities, even down to some of their comprehension with regards to the stuff that they are actually playing is remarkable.

Lucy added:

So I would say the improvisation is very skillful. Their creativeness is so broad now that they really intertwine various genres. Back in the day, they would just let it settle instead of fill it up. Now everything is so filled up. Getting from point A to B, it's more improvisational, which is more secular with a twist of R & B or an urban feel. It's more musical and it gives more life by filling up empty spaces with creative improvisation.

While participants found this level of play imaginative, artistic, and unconfined, there was some hesitancy regarding accessibility.

Accessibility. Participants shared that gospel pianists, in the 21st century, have achieved an advanced improvisational level consisting of aural imitation ability, memorization of varied riffs, learning to play melodies and riffs in all keys, having a perceived confidence while improvising, and possessing keen listening habits. This advanced level of musicianship, however, was perceived to be out of reach for some pianists causing performances and abilities to be considered inaccessible (lacking the ability to replicate):

Lucy: When you hear gospel music now, you don't know that it's gospel. It's gotten so complex.

Mitch: Everything can't be so complex that people can't play it on Sunday morning. It becomes inaccessible at times. We can't determine a pattern in a lot of songs now. . . You can't figure out the pattern. I think we lose the foundation [ethos] of Gospel music at certain levels. Some people are going too far. It's [piano accompaniment] become inaccessible in many ways.

Jake: As far as complexity, it can be overwhelming to some that came from an older generation. There's so much vocabulary that you have keep up with in order to perform it. So that can be, to someone that really hasn't branched off into that type of playing, that could be complex for them. It's brilliant musically. You have the nice progressions, nice riffs, and all of that. It sounds great.

Soloistic function. Participants discussed a time when pianists could instruct their choir to listen to the piano for their voice parts within the rehearsal. Due to the evolution and complexity of the style, the role of the piano has transformed in its relationship to the choir. Gospel piano has moved from serving as strictly accompaniment to becoming soloistic in nature and within its chordal structures:

Jake: The newer trend is just so technical now. It's brilliant musically. You have the nice progressions, nice riffs and all of that. It sounds great and it touches your ear musically but does it really stay with your heart. Does it keep you wanting to go back and listen over and over again?

Paul: I don't know if they [gospel pianists] could play an accompaniment without embellishing at all. I don't know what's happened in the middle of this. It's almost like there's a whole generational thing that's gone.

Participants discussed form as including repositioning of verses, choruses, and other sections of songs. Strophic, binary, and ternary forms were all found to be present in gospel music. In addition to forms, repetition was also used as a form and a stylistic trait. Repositioning of various sections of songs involved repetition and improvisation. Any section of a gospel song can be repeated as desired and often reprises occur as an emotional response from the audience and/or performer(s).

Piano material, in this current style, was perceived as varied and/or inclusive of new musical material throughout the repositioning of structure and design. The feedback and information about relevance and the role of the accompaniment were valuable in understanding perceptions of the stylistic transformation of gospel piano in the 21st century.

Participants perceived the transformation of gospel piano in the 21st century as being complex for some, especially generationally. Those who have played in the traditional gospel piano style found the current gospel piano style difficult to perform and therefore were less inclined to accept the new and current trends, such as polychordal, polyrhythmic, and improvisation in style and approach.

However, for younger pianists, like Jake, employing complex chordal extensions, substitutions, and other extended techniques is normative. He stated:

We've heard how gospel piano sounded prior to this new trend [of heavy improvisation, extended tonal harmonies, and an overall jazzed up approach to scalar activity] and I think a lot of us have the ability to accept it more and embrace it more versus those that were brought up in an older era.

The musical prowess that currently exists lends itself to a certain level of dexterity, facility, and ability needed to perform as a gospel pianist in the 21st century. The piano playing has become much more involved with little to no space or silence present in the music. This involvement contains a great deal of improvisation that serves as a connecting agent; bridging point A to point B. The musical road to get from point A to B is solely dependent upon the preferences and imagination of the performer. Participants found the creativity of current pianists to be remarkable, yet complex.

Transmitting and Preserving the Style

Data analysis revealed that the cultural traditions of gospel piano were passed down aurally from one generation to the next. Inherited from past generations, this living art form encompassed not only musical expressions but social practices, centralities, rituals, and knowledge essential to its development, transmission, and preservation. According to participants, preserving gospel piano required an active effort in order to safeguard it and all agreed that the best way to preserve the art form was to share it with others.

Teaching. In their transmission of gospel piano through teaching, participants adopted a combination of a structured and unstructured (formal and informal) musical guidance process. For example, while Paul scores most of his music, he continues to teach informally when

discussing embellishment and improvisational techniques. Overall, participants opted to transmit the art form in the same way they were taught, informally. These autonomy-supportive environments allow for creative sharing per instructor and student, further allowing the student to direct their own learning. Mitch shared:

I teach how I was taught honestly. With Mr. Thompson it was really informal. We just played a lot together in our lesson and I had to stay with him. If I had a question, I would stop him and say, 'Hey, what was that you just played.' I do that with the gospel pianists I work with now. With some, we play a song together and I tell them to stop me when they have a questions about something I do. I then try to explain to them the theory of what it is. When we meet for a lesson I ask, 'What songs do you know?' or 'What songs do you play at church?' From there, we try to tackle them and see what we come up with.

Student-led instruction. Student-led instructional strategies emerged as a preferred form of preservation. Understanding that content must be carefully selected for him to have a minimal presence, Jake helped students meet established goals by designing experiences involving various scenarios, such as mock worship services involving periods of song performance, improvisation, transitional music, praise breaks, and the preaching period accompaniment. Applying technological tools (e.g. YouTube and social media) was another way Jake was able to design a student-led learning experience, while also preserving the art form digitally; a preservation strategy unique to a generation learning to play gospel piano in the 21st century.

Jake: My lessons are more of a choose your own adventure type of thing depending on what the student wants to accomplish as a gospel pianist or organist. Some of them want to get better at atmosphere music in the church and others want to become better at playing hymns of preaching chords. So, I work with them on that. Students learn by me

showing them what to play and they are learning by ear, listening to gospel music, watching YouTube, looking at videos on social media...things like that.

Technology. Technological advances have allowed more efficient ways for individuals to access music. This emerging distribution paradigm has increased the demand for digital music and now this demand lies at the fingertips of each consumer. Both Lucy and Jake mentioned how YouTube is serving as both a method of transmission and preservation of gospel piano. It is serving as a significant tool in informal music learning for gospel pianists. One is able to not only hear but see others perform gospel music in various styles and with various interpretations.

Lucy: Eight years ago I was a part of a gospel piano video masterclass series. It was in the traditional vein, more or less, but I would try to create a few chords and contemporary ideas and stylings. I would improvise around the melody. I wanted to do another video but life happened and I became busy with other stuff. The video is available on YouTube. When I was asked to do the video by Sebastian, he wanted to feature more women playing. He had seen me play and wanted me to be a part of this masterclass. That's one-way gospel piano has/is being transmitted.

Other participants mentioned how Facebook has allowed musicians to create "pages" where they can upload music for users to listen and/or purchase their music. In addition to serving as a social media platform, Facebook serves as a social networking system and a means of preservation. Participants expressed concern that there were many musical interpretations available on YouTube. Unfortunately, they are often poorly performed.

Musical notation. For participants, musical notation served as a method of preservation. Participants expressed that musical literacy goes beyond one's ability to read music and in some ways believed that music notation served only as an interpretative measurement system since

gospel piano required flexibility that lead away from a script. However, having music written down emerged as an important step in the protection, and formalization of gospel music.

Paul: There are musicians I've gotten to work really closely with in Europe. I write down a lot of my music, and then when I go, I'm able to show them how I embellish it and how I color it and stuff. They seem very fascinated. I think with the advance of technology and things like Finale and Sibelius, you have pianists who are now more astute musically and are taking the time to actually write down things that they've played so you can see what it looks like on paper as best you can. This helps with transmission and preservation. So much of what we learn in gospel music is still being canonized I feel.

Participants expressed hope in the future of gospel piano transmission and preservation. They are optimistic about the developing pedagogical approaches that are surfacing through video/social media, dissertations, and lectures. Carol is currently serving on a committee at a large state university where they are working towards preserving African American music, including gospel music. This project consists of video recording live performances to be archived. Carol has been recorded playing in the gospel style incorporating stride, honky-tonk, and other cross-pollinations of genres. In addition to the video recording of live performances, various gospel artists will be interviewed in an attempt to preserve cultural memories and knowledge.

In discussion, there was some brief hesitation around the passing on and promotion of authentic gospel piano interpretations. Participants pointed to the music not being truly legitimized and written down as a result of poor performances and interpretations.

Scholarship. Building knowledge through scholarly research and writings about learning in the gospel piano style was perceived to create public awareness by educating those who are

both preserving and transmitting the genre. Authenticity and representation in research emerged as a critical component of telling the story of gospel music by those who know it well. Carol shared:

You have more people writing about gospel music, doing dissertations such as yourself. And the more our people write about our music, we can preserve our own music, from our perception. We have an appreciation and respect for our music and from where our music comes from. More of us need to do more dissertations and write about our music, lecture on our music because we understand where it comes from and we're not doing it out of a third person experience.

Carol was passionate and adamant about authentic narratives and storytelling. She believed that stories played a critical role in constructing identity and inaugurating meaning. By gospel pianists telling their own stories, categorizations of stereotypes and minimalization of the genre can be dismissed, allowing for appreciation and importance to be advanced.

Transmitting authenticity. With gospel music being an important facet of black church, a sense of pride and validation emerged as a valued attribute of the art form. Ultimately, participants agreed that transmitting this musical art form with authenticity was perceived to be the work and responsibility of the gospel artists.

Mitch: Certain artists are working hard to keep gospel piano authentic. I would say in addition to YouTube and social media making the world small and serving as a preservation tool for gospel piano, gospel artists and responsible for preserving gospel piano and gospel music.

Lucy: Gospel musicians have a responsibility to keep the gospel sound alive. What we hear now is not often labeled gospel but urban Christian music. Keeping it in church and playing it as much as possible is crucial. Gospel artists have a responsibility to keep the gospel piano style alive as well. It needs to be preserved by maintaining and protecting it.

Jake: Gospel artists serve to preserve the music. As long as they continue to release music, it will be preserved. We have a lot of Pentecostal churches that long for gospel music and piano playing, whether old or new. So you have pastors and music department leaders that are making sure that it continues to be in their service.

In addition, Paul and Carol suggested that cultural leaders of gospel piano should begin to pull together and gather materials to share with those interested in learning gospel piano.

Conclusion

Through the lens of the participants' experiences and analysis of the rich data, a narrative emerged that revealed the roles of learning, development, transformation, and preservation within the context of 21st century gospel piano style. Informal, aural, and experiential learning were all critical components of the gospel pianists' development, progression, and achievement through the genre. Occurring in stages, the informal learning process was comprised of various instructional strategies leading to on the job "training" in the black church.

Social support served as an important element for gospel pianists. Both formal and informal in nature, participants recounted how these relationships were positive, healthy, and crucial for their development musically, professionally, and personally. This positivity helped participants feel esteemed, cared for, and valued which motivated them to pursue their careers as gospel pianists.

Finally, advanced musical skills, abilities, and the desire to remain relevant were credited for the stylistic transformation in the 21st century. Pianists have demonstrated virtuosic elements and characteristics in their reworking and reimagining of gospel piano demonstrated by a rich knowledge base of past styles, harmonic and melodic intricacies, and excellent recall. New genres, such as classical, rock, and Contemporary Christian have been introduced into gospel piano today creating more improvisational possibilities. However, these possibilities raised concerns over whether gospel piano has become too technical and too far reaching for the novice player. Discussion of emerging themes, implications for the field of music education, and suggestions for future research will be discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This collective case study examined the African American gospel piano style in the 21st century by exploring musical enculturation, transmission, and preservation through the experiences and perceptions of five gospel pianists in the United States. In this chapter, I discuss my findings and examine the implications of this research in relation to the research questions that guided the study and the research literature. I also discuss the implications of the present study for music educators and offer suggestions for further research.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one. *What are African American gospel pianists' perceptions of the stylistic transformation of gospel piano in the 21st century?*

The African American gospel piano style is a “living tradition, and not a relic, or a frozen entity of the past . . . it is part of an ongoing continuum” (Johnson, 2009, p. 363). Participants, in this study, agreed that gospel piano has experienced a stylistic transformation in the 21st century. This stylistic change was found to be the result of the evolution and change in musical characteristics and function that has occurred generationally; each generation bringing forth their own set of musical experiences, training, and changes.

With the inclusion of the rhythm section in gospel music today, the role of the gospel pianist has changed. Pianists in the 20th century served as the rhythm section. Chords were played with the right hand and the left hand served the role of the bass guitar (Dodge, 2013). The role of each hand, in the 21st century style, has transformed with the inclusion of the rhythm

section. While there continues to be flexibility within the role of each hand, the pianists' left hand isn't solely responsible for the bass notes played in octaves, which is in contrast to Allgood (1990). Findings revealed that in some styles of gospel piano and when a rhythm section isn't available, the right and left hand may indeed function as previous research has suggested (Allgood, 1990; Ricks, 1960; Kalil, 2000). Ultimately, the role of each hand is at the discretion of the pianist.

According to the participants in the study, a duality exists, in the 21st century, between commercialism and indigenous value systems in gospel music. Each hinted on a sociocultural phenomenon occurring due to the demands of evolution and relevancy. The constructs of sociocultural aspects have been a recurring theme in literature on music, culture, and society in which researchers have posited that music learning and teaching practices were influenced by cultural context within cultural boundaries (Herndon & McLeod, 1982; Lomax, 1976; Merriam, 1964; Netti, 1992).

Responding to how culture impacts the ways in which music was learned, taught, and performed, Radocy and Boyle (1979) stated that "culture clearly affects musical behavior [and that] music may influence the culture [in which it is produced]" (p. 27). With this sociocultural phenomenon, participants expressed that at times the musicianship, in the 21st century, while technical, advanced, and impressive lacked the ethos that is the very foundation of gospel music; spirituality and God centered. Even with this pause for concern, participants were excited about the stylistic transformation of virtuosic gospel pianists and the reworking of gospel piano through the inclusion of new genres, expanded tonal harmonies, and extensive improvisation.

Musicianship. Virtuosic playing has been a part of the development of gospel piano since the early 1920s (Johnson, 2009) and it continues in the 21st century. The virtuosic playing

and technical ability of gospel pianists has helped facilitate the musical complexity experienced in the 21st century gospel piano style. The highly innovativeness of gospel musicians is a result of individual imagination, determination to push through barriers, exposure to various sound worlds, and varied genres that are readily available on the internet. Having access to an amalgamation of music served to influence style and creativity. Virtuoso piano playing is now an expectation in gospel music.

Participants perceived the level of musicianship as one of the primary factors that has influenced the stylistic transformation of gospel piano in the 21st century. Participants discussed how the advanced technical skills of current virtuosic gospel pianists have led to a greater complexity in harmonies, rhythms (Boyer, 1973), and improvisation (Amos, 1987). Some participants expressed that the complexity by these virtuosic musicians, who perform rather soloistically, has led to the inability for some to perform and/or replicate the style. Other participants stated that in every genre there are virtuosic musicians, thus complexity should not be considered a barrier for performance or for others entering the genre. However, for those church musicians who are expected to replicate what they hear and do not possess the technical facility to do so, this could potentially create challenges with employment. These findings on complexity demonstrate the evolution that has occurred within the style from Boyer (1973) who when evaluating the music during worship services in several black denominations found that the harmony was mostly simple and diatonic.

Gospel piano has been on a continuum of creative and expressive progression over the past several decades. The metamorphosis experienced in the 21st century has generated and produced stylistic changes with virtuosic musicians contributing to the stylistic shifts in the harmonic and rhythmic content. Drawing upon greater complexities because of their musical

astuteness and technical abilities, gospel pianists have continued to push the limits with their improvisational creativity and their musical contributions continue to propel the genre forward with zeal.

Research question two. *What factors were perceived to influence the stylistic developments experienced by the participants?*

Participants stated that understanding gospel piano in the 21st century ultimately requires an understanding of jazz harmony and improvisational skills, which confirms previous research (Allgood, 1990; Amos, 1987). Chordal constructions are based on triads, seventh chords, and extended chords with alterations occurring throughout. In many ways, gospel pianists continue to utilize past chordal constructs such as lowered sevenths, fifths, and thirds similar to Thomas A. Dorsey's piano style (Carlton, 2004) but these constructs have been met with additional harmonic reinventions. With the use of major, minor, dominant, half diminished and diminished seventh chords, gospel pianists often apply these chords above different bass notes, giving the sonorities a different coloring. This superimposition also allows for various harmonic possibilities.

For gospel pianists, improvisation is not a skill that is learned separately. It is embedded in the genre and is learned in tandem with learning to play in the gospel style and is refined on the job during experiential learning in the church. The ability to improvise has always been a significant part of gospel piano (Amos, 1987; Johnson, 2009; Jones, 1975; Djedje, 1989; Ricks, 1960) and it continues to be laced with endless variation, percussive style playing techniques, repetition, and emphasis on dynamic rhythms (Jones, 1975). Participants stated that stylistically there is more musical involvement happening in gospel piano overall. It's over adorned and excessive at times.

Participants expressed that gospel pianists have a shared understanding of harmonic and melodic content that's typically found in gospel music (Cheston, 1989). This shared understanding of harmonic assumptions assisted in constructing a musical road map, leading to the generation of chordal and/or melodic improvisation. Because of the cross-pollination of genres in gospel piano, this unpredictable improvisational scheme becomes both aesthetically and sonically intriguing. Genre oscillation often occurs during improvisation as well with the pianist moving fluidly through jazz, blues, R&B, rock, and other genres and stylings rather quickly.

The ability to oscillate through sacred and secular genres with fluidity is a result of gospel pianists listening to various gospel styles and genres which supports findings by Wise (2002). Participants remain influenced by traditional, contemporary, urban gospel, along with jazz, soul, funk, R & B and other genres. Gospel piano remains multidimensional, consisting of various sacred and secular styles and forms of stride (Johnson, 2009), along with past influences by pioneers Thomas Dorsey and Roberta Martin (Kalil, 2000).

Participants perceived that gospel piano, a key feature of gospel music, has been influenced by popular culture and the commercial music industry (Wise, 2002). As a result, 21st century gospel pianists have examined popular musical trends and genres and have incorporated those musical styles into gospel piano. The amalgamation of varied genres, styles, and musical influences is not new to gospel piano. It has always been a cross-pollination of many American secular styles including jazz, ragtime, and blues (Johnson, 2009).

In the 21st century, gospel piano continues to be "heavily interlaced with ragtime and blues" stylings (Rachielson, 1975, p. 403) but participants added that gospel piano has now incorporated Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) and elements of rock.

This new hybridity has allowed gospel music to move from African American markets into more industrialized and mainstream markets. While some found this blending as homogenous, with gospel music/piano losing its authenticity and traditional values, other participants viewed this as a method to develop wider appeal in the popular market. This dilemma has not affected gospel piano as-a-whole. There are still gospel pianists who have maintained a more traditional playing style and approach to the musical, performative, and social conventions that marked gospel in the 20th century.

Research question three. Research question three asked: *How do the participants perceive that gospel piano style is learned, transmitted, and preserved?*

Similar to previous findings, all participants learned gospel piano informally where they acquired and accumulated knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposures to their environment (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). This finding also supports Green (2011), who posited that those individuals who learn informally “pick up skills and knowledge on their own or with the help or encouragement of their family and peers, by watching and imitating musicians around them, and by making reference to recordings or performances and other live events involving their chosen music” (p. 5).

The most frequently cited and common strategy for learning gospel piano informally was done aurally, supporting previous research (Amos, 1987; Ricks, 1960; Carlton, 2004; Wise, 2002). In an interview, ethnomusicologist Burnim stated that gospel music, “cannot be learned by reading musical notation or by studying the score in isolation from the musical performance.” (Campbell, 1995, p. 43). Participants recalled the process of aural acquisition occurring naturally with their ears developing over time. This development aligns with previous research that suggested playing by ear developed a “sharper ear” as students not only listened for pitch but

analyzed form and style naturally (Abril, 2006, p. 40). At an early age, participants developed an interest in gospel music through their home environment and church involvement. Participants began to listen to gospel music more and from these habitual listening practices began reproducing what they heard and learned aurally as participants did in previous research (McPherson, 1995b; Johansson, 2004).

The informal learning practices of participants in this study followed the basic principles of informal learning developed by Green (2008) including: (a) informal learning began with music that the participants chose for themselves, (b) the primary method of developing skills was imitating music recordings by ear, (c) informal learning happened alone and in groups with peers, (d) skills were attained in unordered, idiosyncratic ways, and (e) informal music learning integrated listening, improvising, and composing at all stages of development and encourages personal creativity (p. 10).

In mostly informal settings, participants were mentored by more experienced peers. As suggested by Morrison, Demorest, and Stambaugh (2008) peer interaction was influential in shaping musical interests. Peer mentoring served to encourage and support participants as they moved throughout the informal learning process (Jung, 1958; Levinson, 1978). In addition to problem solving, peers also provided positive feedback and constructive criticism to promote musical growth (Polite, 2002; Monson, 2000). Based on a developmental relationship, peer mentorship ultimately focused on growth and career development (Hawkins, 2002).

Paul and Carol were classically trained pianists. This type of training consisted of a very traditional and sequential way of learning. Similar to findings by Veblen (2018), Paul and Carol viewed formal and informal learning paired as polarized constructs, however they perceived that both learning strategies complemented one another. Exploring informal learning as a

complement, Green stated, “an ideal situation could involve an integration of informal learning with more formal approaches.” (Green, 2008, p. 182). All participants recognized that their listening skills improved because of their informal learning and expressed their ability to listen beyond the piano to hearing other instruments within recordings.

Informal learners galvanize a myriad of musical templates when learning by ear inclusive of videos, media resources, and recordings (Mans, 2009). Use of recordings played an integral role in aural acquisition, transmission of musical style, and performance skills for each participant paralleling the findings of Burnim (1995). Their interests and curiosity led them to form practice techniques in learning and learning through the use of recordings and modeling. This method of collecting musical material, whether attending live gospel concerts, church services, or listening to recordings, assisted participants in the learning process.

Participants in the present study repeatedly discussed the importance of imitation and listening to gain skills and knowledge of gospel piano and its technicalities. Recordings allowed musicians to listen to certain passages repeatedly for the purpose of aurally analyzing the music, (Campbell, 1995; Davis, 2005), the style, and applying informal techniques to copy and imitate the music (Prouty, 2006; D'Amore, 2009). In addition, the strategy of imitation is similar to Green's (2002) findings with popular musicians in rock music. Participants created musical schemes/mapping and strategies for being able to play back what they heard, such as listening for musical and rhythmic patterns (Trehub & Hannon, 2005), along with melodic and harmonic sequences (Bigand & Poulin-Charronnat, 2006).

Coinciding with the findings of Johansson (2014), participants adopted strategies of listening closely to chords, chordal constructs, and melodic motives. The acquisition of musical structures through attention, interaction, listening, and performing aligned with

Deliege & Sloboda (1996) who posited that this type of engagement reinforced familiarity and enculturation with the style. Imitating live performances became important as gospel pianists progressed in the genre (Sands, 1996). Attending live performances provided opportunities for participants to view the art form in action and grasp other distinctive traits involving communal participation (Sands, 1996), mechanics, physicality, and delivery (Burnim & Maultsby, 1987). Lastly, viewing a variety of live performances also helped participants gain insight into multiple performance styles (Amos, 1987).

All participants undertook gospel piano musical instruction for a short period of time and expressed their teacher's role as minimal, comparable to the role of the teacher observed by Green (2008). This student-led instructional approach allowed participants to design their own learning experience with the teacher serving as a moderator and facilitator. Participants also recalled having gospel pianists who mentored them during their process of learning (Sunkett, 1995) with participants now serving as experienced musicians that are transmitting the gospel piano tradition to others through unstructured/informal learning styles, inclusive of student-led instructional strategies and technology.

Vakeva (2010) noted that because of technology advancement, there are extended ways of learning music. Participants perceived YouTube to be a significant tool in the informal learning process of gospel piano in the 21st century, involving both transmission and preservation. Participants not only used this digital platform to view performances by gospel pianists but they also recommended their students watch certain performers and performances (Dillon, Adkins, Brown, & Hitche, 2008; Salavuo, 2006; Veblen & Walbron, in press; Waldron, 2010).

Enculturation and aural transmission were found to be defining attributes of gospel piano practices and foundational to the history and evolution of the style (Mans, 2009; Green, 2002). Gospel piano playing became a part of everyday life that practitioners engaged in within the church and community. Skill level was achieved as a result of “aptitude and desire” (Merriam, 1998, p. 435) and rote learning of gospel piano and repertoire was a multidimensional and ongoing process. By understanding the importance of the genre to participants, it was important to discuss in what ways its preservation was being procured. Current research has only begun to document the processes by which African American gospel piano is being preserved today.

Orality as preservation. Matusky (2002) stated that, “Preservation is the act of saving music so that performers who are not familiar with the old style may study and refer back to it as they develop new styles of the same genre of music” (p. 56). Along with gospel piano being passed down aurally, it is also transmitted orally and through visual observation. This finding supported Prouty (2006) who asserted that musicians operating in informal settings are learning with the context of orality. Transmitting oral traditions authentically was a topic of discussion during each interview. Participants expressed that there should be standards of excellence adhered to within the genre and because of social media, at times, quality is threatened (Mulholland, 2007; Greyling & McNulty, 2011; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

Cultural leaders. Participants deeply valued gospel piano. Reflecting on gospel piano’s past, present, and future participants expressed their appreciation for its progenitors and those apprentices who are continuing to push forward the genre. Participants called upon cultural leaders who carry a deep understanding and knowledge of the art form. Gospel cultural leaders are those that the tradition has travelled through and those who have galvanized the genre.

Possessing a sociolinguistic awareness, these leaders are often "institutions all by themselves" (Johnson, 2009, p. 352) with training pianists often seeking advice from them since the gospel piano style doesn't exist in books or formal schools (Johnson, 2009). These findings pointing to the importance of cultural leaders for the preservation and transmission of gospel piano style, corresponds with Kerchner and Abril (2009) and Sunkett (1995) who found that respected elders passed on musical traditions from generation to generation.

Musical notation as preservation. The readiness of gospel scores are based on supply and demand and because gospel music is primarily learned by rote, participants perceived that there was no real need for sheet music. However, participants expressed that having the music written down could help to protect and formalize the music (Ong, 1992). Without gospel piano being legitimized it remains amorphous in many ways, leading to pedagogical issues.

Although sheet music has been available in gospel music, Williams-Jones (1992) argued that notation has been "unable to capture the performance sounds and techniques" and because of this limitation, playing by ear is implemented over purchasing sheet music (p. 265). In agreement, Southern (1997) reported that "gospel scores were generally written very simple, with only the bare essentials of vocal and piano notation to allow room for extensive improvisation by the performer" (p. 477).

Research question four. Research question four was: *How did the musical enculturation of the participants influence their development as a gospel pianist?*

Participants posited that learning through the informal aesthetic is important for enculturation and in developing the gospel piano style. Paralleling Green (2008), participants stated that those musicians not "brought up" within the context of gospel piano found it difficult to hear all its nuances and perform it authentically.

Campbell (1998) suggested that “individuals achieve cultural competence by way of osmosis, absorbing the many facets of their home environment, learning by virtue of living within a family, community, or culture” (p. 65). Similarly, the participants in this study praised the support of their family, mentors, and support systems. They contributed a great deal of their success to the encouragement and investment of others. Comparable to Thompson and Schellenberg’s (2008) findings, participants heard gospel music played in their home all the time which allowed them to internalize the musical regularities of their own culture; immersing them in the intra-musical sound structures of the culture (Mans, 2009) and helping them become aware of rhythms, tonal patterns, timbres, and performance stylings and modes of their culture.

Outside of the home, participants also heard gospel music in church and on the radio. This parallels Cross’ understanding of musical enculturation involving listening to the radio, singing, and dancing (Cross, 2011). Participants’ musical competence came into understanding and was acquired through everyday exposure to music during their childhood years (Trainor & Trehub, 1993; Trehub & Hannon; Bigand & Poulin-Charronnat, 2006). Similar to Tishman et al. (1993), participants’ musical development was reinforced by cultural interaction and instruction in cultural knowledge and activities (playing in church) and cultural exemplars (supportive networks).

Participants began playing piano in church at a young age. This first step in performance served as a time of nurturing, grooming, and development. Comparable to musicians in previous research (Gardner, 2004; Karlsen, 2007; Snell, 2005), participants often gained experience in the church, which allowed a deeper understanding of requisite musicianship skills and acquisition of the gospel piano style as musically saturated environments can be fostered in churches and church pianists. Participants agreed with Johnson (2009) that the piano served as a lead

instrument and full participant in the worship service. This finding also supports Southern (1997) who suggested that the piano was more than an accompanying instrument but rather a full partner in the music making. In addition to the piano being the traditional instrument, participants viewed the piano as a large part of the worship and musical experience, adding mood and meaning.

Playing in church was an extension of musical enculturation as participants became immersed in the performing practices of gospel music and gospel piano playing. This is similar to Herskovits (1948) who suggested that musical enculturation is further developed by attending church services, choir rehearsals, concerts, revivals, and listening to gospel music through meditated forms. Serving as the bedrock of gospel music, participants regarded the black church as a supportive, beneficial, and safe space for them to develop as gospel pianists. These outcomes support the findings of Neely (1993) who posited that the black church has always served as a viable cultural institution for the artistic development and communal education of gospel pianists.

Supportive parents, mentors, and peers, that believed in each participant's ability to progress as musicians, was revealed as vital to the development of gospel pianists. Parents invested in their children by placing them in piano lessons, taking them to gospel concerts, connecting them with other musicians, encouraging and facilitating community involvement, and even purchasing keyboards and/or pianos for them to practice on. These findings support those of Eccles and Harold (1993) who posited that parent, child, and community are all interconnected and influential in child outcomes and success. Additionally, Epstein (1995) affirmed the importance of parental and community involvement and support for the success of children.

Beyond the family system, participants received the support of peers, mentors, and other social networks including church members. As novice pianists, participants were able to make musical mistakes and were encouraged to keep trying. Mentors were able to correct musical mistakes constructively. As noted by Sunkett (1995), verbal praise by elders carried great weight for developing gospel musicians. Participants stated mentors understood that the learning process is a continual one, which involved periods of exploration and periods of trial and error (Busch, 2005).

African American culture cannot be separated from the historical significance of the black church. Beyond being an emotional, psychological, and social support system for the African American community, the church has served and continues to serve as a training ground for exceptional gospel pianists, providing a nurturing and caring environment. Twenty-first century pianists continue to possess identical performance behaviors, found by Amos (1987) and Allgood (1990) including the ability to play by ear, to improvise, to accompany as well as play solo, and having a working knowledge of jazz piano and harmony. Enculturation began in the church setting for all participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this collective case study, the purpose was to examine the African American gospel piano style in the 21st century specifically exploring music enculturation, transmission, and preservation through the experiences and perspectives of five gospel pianists. The following recommendations for future scholarly inquiry could further illuminate the transformation and understanding of the style:

1. Quantitative or descriptive studies involving a larger sample of gospel pianists to

provide experiences and perspectives of the phenomenon studied could enhance or refute the findings of this study.

2. A phenomenological study of gospel piano teaching that involves the researcher attending gospel piano lessons and interviewing both the teacher and student, over a longer period of time, would be beneficial in understanding the practicality of teaching the genre to this generation of musicians.
3. With gospel piano being a self-guided exploration, further investigation of cultural gospel piano leaders' practicing habits, principles, and strategies could be beneficial. This exploration could shed light on gospel piano learning and best practices for developing and improving practice regimens.
4. The influence of technology in the 21st century related to authentic preservation was a topic that surfaced during this study and one that is relatively new when discussing gospel piano. Technology and the use of smartphones have been used to record solo and live performances of gospel pianists that are not always well studied in the genre. However, these individuals are often seen as gospel leaders and authority figures because of their large social following. Exploring these social, cultural, and virtual music communities could equip researchers with insight into how the impact of technology is helping or hindering the art form and field at-large.

Conclusions and Implications for this Study

Throughout its history, the African American gospel piano style has constantly evolved as a musical art form. In the 21st century, the awakenings experienced in gospel piano stylistic transformations were in part inspired by a heterogeneous set of factors including societal, cultural, cross-functional, musical, commercialism, and technological advances. Remaining

constant, however, is the deeply embeddedness of spiritual consciousness that continues to embrace its ministerial function in the church.

The perceptions, beliefs, and lived experiences investigated in this study uncovered the musical innovativeness and performance practices of gospel pianists in the 21st century. Continuity and stability have aligned itself in tandem with creativity and versatility evolving the art form into greater depths of diversity. Virtuoso musicians, in the 21st century, have borrowed and synthesized musical material from previous eras and have merged these core elements with current trends to form new musicalities and styles through creative improvisation and genre oscillation – birthing new musical expressions in the 21st century not previously seen or heard.

While gospel piano has moved increasingly outside of the church into mainstream settings and onto broadened platforms; sacred and secular alike, it continues to serve as an important part in the black church experience. In the 21st century, the black church continues to serve as a training ground for African American gospel pianists and its foundational significance remains an integral part of nurturing aesthetic experiences. In addition, musical intelligence, sensibilities, and improvisational skills are also strengthened in the church through experiential learning

The findings of the present study shed light on some core stylistic transformations that are associated with African American gospel piano in the 21st century. For example, the style is complex dependent on an individual's understanding and technical proficiency in many musical styles, along with new genres being implemented into the genre. Like the other investigations that preceded this study, gospel piano continues to be taught through informal learning and enculturation, and generally not formally notated in anyway. This becomes problematic if gospel pianists desire to move the genre outside of its current setting, culture, and incubator into the

sphere of traditional music education. As traditional music education continues to rely on musical notation and in some ways connects notation to musical legitimacy, gospel pianists will need to strongly consider transcription of their music. Not only does this assist in moving the genre outside of the gospel community, it establishes and crystallizes a record and guide for performance accuracy.

Musical communication was found to extend beyond musical notation. The gospel piano style cannot be fully expressed through notation. If musicians are not within the culture and context of gospel music, it may be difficult to understand all the nuances that leads to authentic performances. Therefore, those who are sufficiently versed in the tradition become essential in the preservation and transmission of gospel piano. If the current gospel piano musical and performance styles are to be transmitted and preserved for future generations, gospel pianists, leaders, and scholars must begin to seek out, interview, and work alongside living pioneers to document their lived experiences, musical and historical contributions.

Implications for Music Education

In 2000, Bennett Reimer stated that the field of music education had failed in educating students in the many other facets of music beyond performance and traditional music study. These other facets consisted of composition, arranging, improvisation, historical and cultural context and the relationship music has to other arts forms. Reimer posited that music educators have not considered or attempted to address standards outside of the preexisting structures and constructs of traditional music courses. His call sparked music educators to adopt to ways of thinking about music education and the possibilities that lie ahead. As a result, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) published a new set of standards for music

education. The new standards called for music educators to create music courses that moved beyond exclusive roots in traditional pedagogical practices.

Labeled as non-traditional, informal learning practices are not often utilized in the classroom setting. If this remains true, gospel piano will continue to be exempt from the classroom and from the curriculum in traditional schools. Music educators do not need to separate informal and formal learning strategies. It is not an all or nothing approach. All musical study, if done correctly, assists in developing proficient and musical literate musicians. It also becomes important and necessary for preservice teachers to be familiar and willing to embrace and incorporate nontraditional curricular approaches like informal learning into their toolbox. This prerequisite will aide in breaking the cycle of strictly traditional ways of thinking in music education.

As in all things, challenges can be expected with newness. Generating a generalized system for gospel piano study might be difficult and teachers should be flexible when working with beginning students. Teachers must be willing to design individualized schedules, in collaborations with students, that promote student-led teaching strategies and will bring about the best results. In practicing and developing musical skills, the teacher's role is to guide the student in developing a system that incorporates a wide range of genres, musical styles, and exercises. Self-reflection, capacity, and developmental analyzation should be a part of the evaluation process. Lastly, music educators should encourage peer involvement, ensemble playing, and live performance opportunities for their students.

In sum, domestic diversity and immigration continue to create vibrancy by fostering mixed communities of cultures, races, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses, among other pluralities. As the demographic landscape continues to shift in United States schools, the

importance of multicultural education will continue to grow. The field of music education is not exempt from these social and cultural conditions. Effective music educators will need to be able to respond positively with the challenging yet inspiring complexities that will occur in schools, at every level. Emerson and Shaw (1995) state that education must evolve to reflect, include, and welcome the wealth of diverse cultures that are present in today's classroom, including gospel music. The findings of the present provide a clearer understanding and insight into the African American gospel piano style in the 21st century thus helping to empower those educators who may feel unprepared and hesitant to teach this art form. A willingness to try is crucial for our future.

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Table 4.1

Influential Musical Artists as Identified by Participants

Participant	Artist	Genre	Music Period
All participants	Andraé Crouch	Contemporary	1980–90s
All participants	Walter and Edwin Hawkins	Contemporary	1960s–80s
Mitch, Lucy & Carol	James Cleveland	Traditional	1920s–60s
Mitch, Lucy, Jake & Carol	Vanessa Bell–Armstrong	Contemporary	1980–90s
All participants	Thomas Whitfield	Contemporary	1980–90s
Paul	John P. Kee	Urban	1990s–2000s
All participants	Hezekiah Walker	Urban	1990s–2000s
All participants	Kirk Franklin	Urban	1990s–2000s
Lucy & Jake	Oscar Peterson	Jazz	1950s–2007
Jake	Art Tatum	Jazz (stride)	1920s–50s
Jake	Bill Evans	Jazz (modal, cool)	1950s–80
Jake	Thelonious Monk	Jazz (cool, bebop)	1940s–73
Jake	Dave Brubeck	Jazz (cool)	1940s–2012
Jake	John Costa	Jazz	1950s–96
Mitch & Jake	Earth, Wind, & Fire	Soul, funk, R&B	1960s–90s
Jake	Luther Vandross	R&B	1970s–2000
Paul	Charlie Wilson/The Gap Band	Funk, R&B	1970s–2000
Paul	George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic	Funk, psychedelic funk, electro-funk, soul	1950s–2000

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF PARTICIPATION

Investigator

Roderick Vester, M.A., M.M
Department of Music
131 Music Building
University of Mississippi
University, MS 38677

To whom it may concern:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Music at the University of Mississippi. Because of your in-depth knowledge of gospel music and esteemed career, I am soliciting your participation in my doctoral research. The purpose of this study is to examine the transformation of African American gospel piano style in the 21st century specifically examining musical enculturation, transmission, and preservation.

The study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. What are African American gospel pianists' perceptions on the stylistic transformation of gospel piano in the 21st century?
2. What factors have influenced these stylistic developments?
3. How is the gospel piano style learned?
4. How is the gospel piano style transmitted?
5. How is the gospel piano style being preserved?

Each interview will be audio recorded so that data can be accurately transcribed post interview. In addition, descriptive notes will be used to record any additional questions that may surface in the interview. There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to this research and findings could lead to greater public understanding of the transformation of African American gospel piano style in the 21st century.

Enclosed is an Informed Consent Form, which should be returned at your earliest convenience. I would like to contact you via telephone next week to confirm your willingness to participate, to set up an interview, and to answer any questions you may have. In the interim, if you have any questions please call, write, or contact me via email. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Regards,
Roderick Vester

APPENDIX B: HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH CERTIFICATION OF COMPLETION

  Completion Date 15-Oct-2019
Expiration Date 14-Oct-2022
Record ID 33755248

This is to certify that:

Roderick Vester

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Human Research (Curriculum Group)
Group 3A SBR Graduate Students at the University of Mississippi. (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of Mississippi - Oxford



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w78419d22-1135-4d83-8d70-61ba1d8f84ab-33755248

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Investigator

Roderick Vester, M.A., M.M
Department of Music
131 Music Building
University of Mississippi
University, MS 38677

Research Advisor

Elizabeth Hearn, Ph.D.
Department of Music
131 Music Building
University of Mississippi
University, MS 38677

I _____ voluntarily consent to be a participant in the doctoral research entitled “ The Transformation of African American Gospel Piano Style in the 21st Century: An Investigation into Musical Enculturation, Transmission, and Preservation.” Roderick Vester, a doctoral candidate in music education at the University of Mississippi will conduct the research. I understand the purpose of this project is to examine the transformation of African American gospel piano style in the 21st century specifically examining musical enculturation, transmission, and preservation.

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I further understand that I may withdraw from my participation at any time and without explanation. I further understand that I will be audio recorded and interviewed by the researcher. I understand that after the transcripts have been approved by me, the recordings will be destroyed as per my request.

I understand that I will be informed before all or part of this study is published in a format other than the discourse for which it was originally intended. I further understand that my consent and participation may be withdrawn at my request at any time without prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which otherwise I am entitled.

I understand that I have the right to ask and have answered any questions concerning the study. I further understand that I may contact Roderick Vester 131 Music Building, Oxford, MS. for answers to questions about this research or my rights. I verify that I have read and understand this consent form.

IRB Approval: This study has been reviewed by the University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board(IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meet the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have any questions, concerns or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB at 662-915-7482.

Participant’s Signature Date

Participant’s Name Date

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol (Script)

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. I want to learn of your experiences and gain insight into your thoughts on the transformation of African American gospel piano in the 21st century. This interview will take approximately 1 hour to complete. After each interview you will be provided a transcript to review.

I will be recording our conversation so that I can transcribe it later and will be taking a few notes during our call as well. Your participation in this study will 1) remain anonymous, and 2) your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. Again, thank you for agreeing to participate. I will now start the audio recorder.

[Start recorder]

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. I want to ask you questions about your music experiences. Is it okay if I audio recording this interview? You can stop the interview at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Are you ready?

1. Has there been a transformation in the African American gospel piano style in the 21st century? If so, what and how has the style transformed?
 - What are your thoughts on the current style?
2. How did you learn to play in the gospel style?
 - Have you received any formal piano training?
 - How did you learn informally?
 - What was your progression like?
 - How often did you practice?
 - Were your piano playing fundamentals learned primarily with the assistance of a teacher?
 - Can you describe the way you learn music?
 - What types of music do you listen to?
 - Do you infuse other genres in your playing?
3. How has your playing in this style evolved?
 - What have you learned from playing in the current style?
 - Do you feel your listening skills have improved?
 - Do you practice? If so, how often?
 - What type of instrument do you practice on?
 - Do you own a piano?
4. How did you learn your improvisational skills?
 - Can you describe your process?
 - When improvising, are you working from already developed strategies and schemes?
 - Is there new material that you are creating in real time?
 - If so, how are you creating this new material? What's the process?

5. Who influenced you? And whom do you influence?
 - Are there opportunities for you to help other gospel pianists?
 - There are videos of you on YouTube, do you believe you influence other gospel pianists through that system?

6. What influence did the African American church have on you as a musician, if any?
 - How many years of experience do you have as a church musician?
 - What are your duties, in addition to piano performance in church?
 - If you rehearse a choir, what medium do you use to share music for them to learn?
 - Are these audio recordings? Video recordings?
 - Are there any learning instructions you give to choir members?
 - How is church music learned by the choir?
 - Is printed music used?
 - How often does the choir rehearse?
 - Did you learn to play in the Baptist, COGIC, Pentecostal church style with the assistance of a teacher?
 - How is church music learned by you?
 - In what medium do you receive music to learn? Mp3? YouTube links?
 - What type of piano is used at church? Piano (grand, upright)? Synthesizer? Organ?

7. How do you believe gospel piano is being preserved? What mediums?
 - How is gospel piano/music being preserved today?
 - Are there any challenges you see?

APPENDIX E: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL

11/20/2019

Mail - rvester - Outlook

IRB Exempt Approval of 20x-105

irb@olemiss.edu

Mon 11/11/2019 11:31 AM

To: rvester <rvester@olemiss.edu>

Cc: ehearn <ehearn@olemiss.edu>

PI:

This is to inform you that your application to conduct research with human participants, "The Transformation of African American Gospel Piano Style in the 21st Century: An Investigation into Enculturation, Transmission, and Preservation." (Protocol #20x-105), has been approved as Exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(#2).

Please remember that all of The University of Mississippi's human participant research activities, regardless of whether the research is subject to federal regulations, must be guided by the ethical principles in The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.

It is especially important for you to keep these points in mind:

- You must protect the rights and welfare of human research participants.
- Any changes to your approved protocol must be reviewed and approved before initiating those changes.
- You must report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others.
- If research is to be conducted during class, the PI must email the instructor and ask if they wish to see the protocol materials (surveys, interview questions, etc) prior to research beginning.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the IRB at irb@olemiss.edu.

Miranda L. Core & Mary K. Jourdan

Research Compliance Specialists, Research Integrity and Compliance

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

The University of Mississippi

100 Barr Hall

University, MS 38677-1848

+1-662-915-7482

irb@olemiss.edu | www.olemiss.edu

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REMINDER: YOU CANNOT HAVE CONTACT WITH RESEARCH SUBJECTS UNTIL YOU RECEIVE THE FORMAL IRB PROTOCOL APPROVAL LETTER OR EMAIL

VITA

Roderick Vester

EDUCATION

Master of Music, Musicology with Minor in Theory and Composition, 2015

The University of Memphis

When Bad News Becomes Good News: Lucie E. Campbell's 'Something Within' From The Jordanaires to Nathan Carter (Thesis)

Master of Arts, Counseling, 2006

Harding Graduate School of Religion

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, 2000

The University of Memphis

PUBLICATIONS

- Vester, Roderick and Kevin Davidson. "I Am" a choral composition for SATB, with solo, orchestrated by Lari Goss from the collection *Fill This Place*, published by Lifeway: Biblical Solutions, September 2006.
- Vester, Roderick. "Here I Am" in *Total Praise: Songs and Worship Resources for Every Generation* Hymnal, published by GIA Publications, Inc. and by the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Choral Rehearsal Planning Techniques of One Selected Successful High School Choral Conductor

- Missouri Music Educator Association Conference, Osage Beach, MI., 2017
- Tennessee Music Educator's Association Conference, Nashville, TN., 2018

Black Gospel Piano Music Preferences by Non-Music Majors: Responses to Sound Ideals

- Mid-South Music Education Research Symposium, Oxford, MS., 2019

Overcoming Structural Racism in Chamber Music Organizations (Panel Speaker)

- Chamber Music America (42nd Annual Conference), Manhattan, NY., 2020

African American Gospel Piano Style in the 21st Century: A Collective Case Study

- Missouri Music Educators Association Conference, Osage Beach, MI., 2020

OUTREACH AND EXTRAMURAL CITIZENSHIP PRESENTATIONS

Internet Famous: New Strategies and Models for Sharing Your Music

- PRIZM Summer Camp and International Chamber Music Festival, Memphis, TN., 2018

Beyond the Instrument: Exploring Other Music Opportunities

- PRIZM Summer Camp and International Chamber Music Festival, Memphis, TN., 2019

DEPARTMENTAL PRESENTATIONS

Multicultural Music: The Importance, the Challenges, and the Desire

- The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS., 2018

The Rise of the Negro Spiritual: Lyrical Implications, Coded Messages, and Rhythmic Alterations

- The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS., 2018

Mandarin Song-Singing Clubs: Music Activities and Politics

- The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS., 2018

Music in the Black Church: Is Diversity Important?

- The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS., 2018

Tracing the Origins of Black Gospel Piano Styles and Examining its Complexity in the 21st Century: An Interview with Three Selected Black Gospel Pianists

- The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS., 2019

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Graduate Teaching Instructor

The University of Mississippi, 2017 – 2020

- Teach undergraduate Introduction to Music to non-music majors, music performance and music education majors.
- Teach undergraduate Introduction to Technology to music performance and education majors.
- Organize lesson plans and teaching objectives for teaching classes; adapt content, presentation and examples to suit the needs of the class.
- Reinforce concepts and answer students' questions from the lecture portion.
- Evaluate students in daily and semesterly skills assessments.
- Assess assignments and exams; assign course grades.
- Utilize technology to strengthen the teaching/learning process.

Curriculum Development

The University of Mississippi, 2020

- Designed, implemented, and taught a new and relevant curriculum for Introduction to Music Technology Course.

Rehearsal Accompanist

The University of Mississippi, 2018 – 2019

- Run sectional rehearsals with the University Singers and Concert Singers.
- Serve as rehearsal accompanist in absentia of the staff accompanist.

Piano Instructor

Brown Baptist Church Music Academy / Southaven, MS. / 2018

- Taught weekly individual lessons to piano students (primary, secondary, and post-secondary)
- Developed syllabus clearly defining performance and practice expectations.
- Developed personalized repertoire to meet individual students' goals.

Band Director

Geeter Middle School / Memphis, TN. / 2016

- Worked as Director of Bands.
- Presented stimulating daily lessons and musical activities that included all musical levels and training.
- Collaborated with the feeder high school for additional training, practice sessions, and mentoring from students and staff.
- Incorporated singing into each rehearsal.
- Instilled a sense of music appreciation and encouraged students to expand their interests.
- Assisted students in improving study methods and habits.
- Served as a positive role model for students.

Choral Music Educator

Snowden Middle School / Memphis, TN. / 2014

- Worked as Interim Director of Choirs and Piano instructor.
- Presented stimulating daily lessons and musical activities that included all musical levels and training. Instilled a sense of music appreciation and encouraged students to expand their interests.
- Conducted assessment of student learning styles.
- Utilized technology to strengthen the teaching/learning process.

Adjunct Instructor

The Visible School: Music and Worship College / Memphis, TN. / 2010

- Developed and presented stimulating daily lessons that accommodated multiple intelligences aligned with curriculum and state standards.
 - Instilled a sense of music appreciation and encouraged students to expand their interests.
 - Developed strong working relationships with all students to make certain that they felt welcomed, at ease, and appropriately challenged within the classroom.
 - Assisted in the selection of books, equipment, and other instructional materials.
-

MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS CREATED & IMPLEMENTED

2018. PRIZM College Audition Preparation Workshop

- This workshop is designed to assist high school instrumentalists and vocalists who plan to audition for a college/university level performing arts programs and students who are interested in music scholarships.
 - This workshop is held annually at Rhodes College in Memphis, TN.

2018. PRIZM Ensemble Winter Camp

- This Winter Camp *When Classical Meets Soul Music* was created to keep local students engaged in high quality music education and performances during the winter break. In collaboration with another music organization, the camp blends together classical and soul music – intentionally bringing together a diverse population of students.
 - This camp is held annually at Hutchison School.
 - Need-based scholarships are available.

2018. PRIZM Ambassadors Program

- This program provides international travel to local music students, allowing them to perform in prestigious chamber music camps like the Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival in South Africa.
 - Due to successful grant opportunities, students are able to travel for free. However, there are educational processes, journaling, presentations, cultural sensitivity training, among other items required of each student.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Executive Director

PRIZM Ensemble / 2018 - present

Strategy & Planning

- Creates PRIZM Ensemble's compass (mission, vision, and values) and promotes excellence.
- Spearheads development of the strategic plan, including measurable goals and objectives, and organizes it as a collaborative effort.

Finance & Operations

- Safeguard PRIZM Ensemble financial health and reports financial results to the Board in a timely manner.
- Ensures that up-to-date business plans and projections exist for all PRIZM Ensemble projects and services; makes certain people operate in accordance with their respective business plans.
- Oversees all development, fundraising, and grant efforts for PRIZM Ensemble.
- Recommends new programs/services and modification or discontinuance of current programs/services, as appropriate.

Talent Management

- Ensures that PRIZM Ensemble has a talent strategy that is purpose driven, principles based, performance oriented, and includes succession planning.
- Selects, builds, manages, and leads high performing, results oriented team members.
- Effectively delegates responsibilities; sets clear performance standards and expectations.

Leadership

- Establishes a culture based on PRIZM Ensemble's mission, vision, and values.
- Consistently demonstrates commitment to ethical and integrity-based leadership.
- Fosters collaboration and builds trust with all stakeholders.
- Seeks innovative ways to change, grow, and improve.
- Recognizes the contributions of others by showing appreciation for individual excellence and creating a spirit of community.

Board & Community Relations

- Recruits, engages, and maximizes Board member contributions.
- Serves as the "face" of the PRIZM Ensemble to the greater Memphis community, arts community, government, foundations, and media.

Board & Community Relations Cont'd

- Works to establish mutually beneficial relationships with Board members.
- Communicates effectively and gives regular progress reports on the strategic plan to the Board.
- Is aware of and involved in national cultural events and initiatives.

Director of Music

First Baptist Church-Broad / Memphis, TN. / 2010 - 2018

- Directed the planning, coordination, operation, and evaluation of a comprehensive Church music program including choral, vocal and instrumental ensembles, dance, and drama teams.
- Determined Music Department goals, organization, leadership, finances and administrative processes.
- Assisted in worship planning and was responsible for the selection of music.
- Supervised the work of all music leaders, staff personnel, and volunteers within the Music Department.
- Coordinated the performance schedules of all choral and instrumental ensembles.
- Supervised the maintenance of and additions to music library and equipment, including music materials, supplies, and instruments.
- Prepared annual Music Department budget reflecting the needs of the entire music ministry. Administrated the budget once approved.
- Served as a leader in the worship services, giving direction to the congregational singing, choir and instrumentalists, and other phases of worship.
- Conducted regular staff meetings for the purpose of evaluation and planning.
- Enlisted and trained leaders for the music department as well as song leaders and accompanists.
- Planned, organized, and promoted concerts, choir tours, retreats, workshops, and other special programs to enhance the music department.
- Prepared reports necessary to keep the church fully informed regarding the music department.

Music Assistant

Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church /Memphis, TN. / 2003 - 2010

- Served as church organist/pianist.
- Utilized 72 Rank - 4 manual Moeller Pipe Organ.

- Provided leadership and supervision to all assigned choral and instrumental ensembles.
- Responsible for planning, organizing, executing and evaluating music for worship services to provide quality worship with excellence.
- Arranged music for production by instrumentalists and vocalists.
- Recruited and auditioned music personnel.
- Ensured full integration of worship services by coordinating participation of various ministries (including drama and dance in the worship experience).
- Developed and administered various budgets.
- Drafted and implemented job descriptions for all music staff.

Church Organist/Pianist

Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church / Memphis, TN. / 1997 - 2003

- Served as church organist/pianist for all assigned Sunday worship services.
- Demonstrated with accuracy: styles, tempo and nuances for optimum musical offering during performances.
- Possessed skills in chart reading, transposition and improvisation.
 - Awarded “Team Player Award” in recognition of outstanding performance
 - Awarded “Teamwork Award” for extraordinary commitment in a group effort

Home Recording Studio Owner and Manager

Fully Vested Music / Memphis, TN. / 2010-present

- Handle everyday operations of Fully Vested Music
- Scheduling clients and studio booking
- Perform initial client assessments
- Serve as Chief Recording Engineer

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Choral Directors Association, 2019

National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, 2019

National Association for Music Education, 2018

American Guild of Organists, 2012

Broadcast Music, Inc., 1997

HONORS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND AWARDS

Award: Outstanding Achievement in Music Theory, The University of Mississippi, Spring 2019

Award: Outstanding Achievement in Music Education, The University of Mississippi, Spring 2019

Phi Kappa Phi, 2018

Recipient: Graduate Music Fellowship, The University of Mississippi, Fall 2017

Recipient: Graduate Minority Fellowship, The University of Mississippi, Fall 2017

SERVICE AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Faculty Search Committee, graduate student representative

- Served on a Search Committee to identify a full-time faculty member in the College of Music

- Served on a Search Committee to identify the Chair of the Music Department, which involved interviewing candidates.

Responsibilities for both committees included:

- Assisted in writing the vacancy announcement.
- Assisted in establishing a timeline for the search process.
- Helped determine the most effective recruitment resources and position advertised appropriately.
- Helped develop interview questions to be utilized in the process.
- Assisted with interview scheduling, facilitation, and execution.
- Made recommendations as to applicant's patterns of strengths and growth areas, along with assessing his or her ability to contribute to the needs of the department and the University as a whole.
- Screened applicants to determine if an applicant met minimum qualifications.

Chamber Music America, member

- Served on the planning committee for the 42nd Annual Chamber Music America Conference.
- Serving as a Career Coach for the 42nd Annual Chamber Music America Conference (2020)

SELECTED PERFORMANCES AND ACCOMPANYING EXPERIENCE

Organ accompanist for Oleta Adams – 1997

Piano accompanist with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra – 1997, 2002, 2003

Organ accompanist for Smokie Norful – 2002

Organ accompanist for Victor Trent Cook (formerly of Three Mo' Tenors) – 2003

Organ accompanist for Cece Winans – 2004

Piano accompanist for Lamar Campbell – 2005

Organ accompanist for Kelly Price – 2006

Organ accompanist for V. Michael McKay – 2007

Organ accompanist for Kurt Carr - 2007

Piano accompanist for Judith Christie-McAllister – 2007

Organ accompanist for Edwin Hawkins – 2008

Organ accompanist for Aretha Franklin - 2009

Organ accompanist for Tye Tribbett – 2010

Organ accompanist for Richard Smallwood – 2010

Artistic Collaboration and Piano accompanist for Le'Andria Johnson – 2011

Organ accompanist for St. Philips Episcopal Church Choir Concert - 2012

Staff Accompanist and Instrumental Director for the Memphis Symphony Orchestra – *Sounds of Celebration* – 2013

Artistic Collaboration for Ted and Sheri – 2014

Artistic Collaboration for Smokie Norful – *He Brought Joy* Annual Christmas Concert - 2014

CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Over 30 CD recordings serving in multiple roles including: pianist, organist, producer, music director, composer, arranger, and/or studio recording engineer.