



Smithsonian Folkways

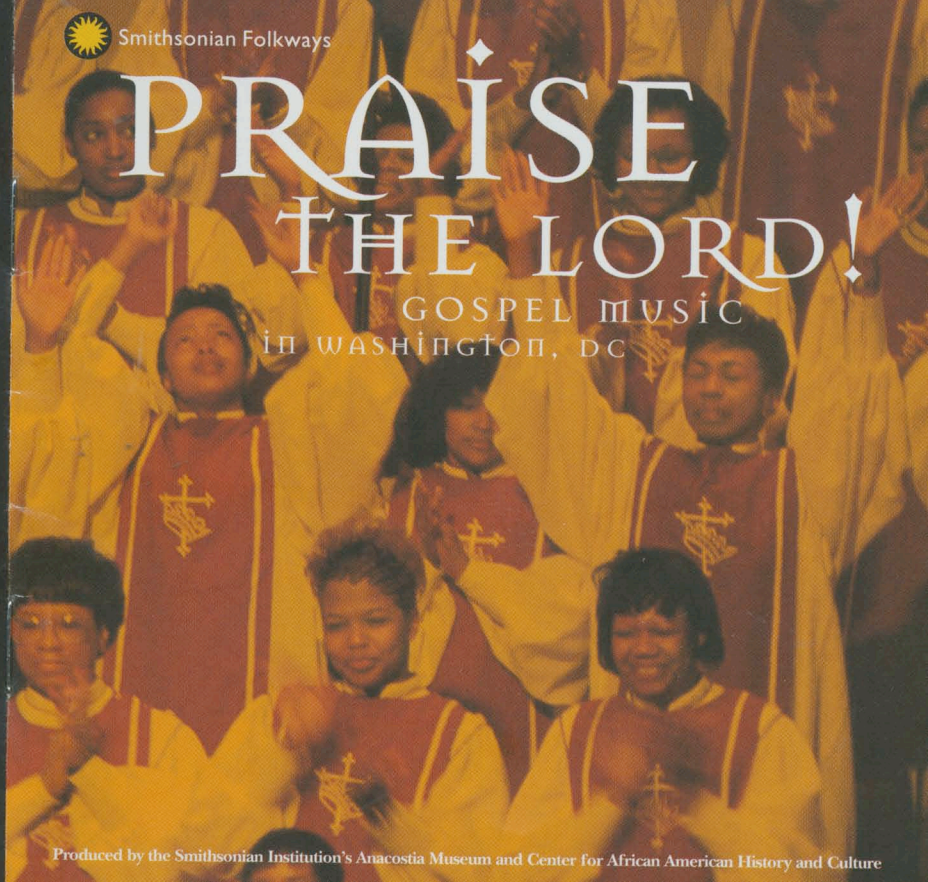
Center For Folklife & Cultural Studies
955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 7300
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560-0953
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Smithsonian Folkways

PRAISE THE LORD!

GOSPEL MUSIC
IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



Produced by the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture

PRAISE THE LORD!

GOSPEL MUSIC
IN WASHINGTON, DC

Praise the Lord! presents contemporary performances that draw on many traditions of African American religious music in the Washington, D.C. area. Nine groups perform a wide variety of gospel styles in solo, duet, quartet, and choir. Recorded at the Bible Way Temple in 1998 by the Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture as part of its exhibition, *Speak To My Heart: Communities of Faith and Contemporary African American Life*, this CD includes notes by Gail Lowe and Horace Boyer, lyrics, suggested listening, and bibliography.

Produced in conjunction with the exhibition *Speak To My Heart: Communities of Faith and Contemporary African American Life* by the Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Smithsonian Institution.

The *Speak To My Heart* exhibition project is generously supported by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., the Henry Luce Foundation, and the Smithsonian Institution's Special Exhibition Fund.

1. I'll Go Firstfruit 3:48
2. Sweet, Sweet Spirit The Curentron Family 4:13
3. Thank You, Lord Alvin Dockett and Blessed 3:46
4. Welcome into This Place Charmaine Faunteroy and Herbert Jackson 5:02
5. Standing on the Promises Bible Way Temple Radio Choir 6:21
6. The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow Salvation Music Ministry 3:02
7. Great Is Thy Faithfulness Herbert Jackson 3:55
8. This Is the Day The Nannie Helen Burroughs School Choir 2:39
9. I Need Thee Every Hour /A Praying Spirit The Curentron Family 5:06
10. Search My Heart, Lord Salvation Music Ministry 4:23
11. Take My Hand, Precious Lord (Precious Lord, Take My Hand) Charmaine Faunteroy 3:51
12. We Will Work The Nannie Helen Burroughs School Choir 1:45
13. The Old Rugged Cross/ (On a Hill Far Away) Firstfruit 5:05
14. My Soul Is a Witness for the Lord Shiloh Baptist Church Senior Choir 3:18
15. Over My Head Alvin Dockett and Blessed 4:17

60 minutes



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50

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A recording of contemporary gospel music in Washington, D.C., produced in conjunction with the exhibition, *Speak To My Heart: Communities of Faith and Contemporary African American Life* by The Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Smithsonian Institution.

SFW 40113 Praise the Lord! Gospel Music from Washington, D.C.

PC 1999 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture

PRAISE THE LORD!

GOSPEL MUSIC
IN WASHINGTON, DC

1. I'll Go 3:48
Firstfruit
(J. Holloway/East Jackson Publishing Co., BMI)

2. Sweet, Sweet Spirit 4:13
The Curenton Family
(Doris Akers/Manna Music, Inc., ASCAP)

3. Thank You, Lord 3:46
Alvin Dockett and Blessed
(J. Cleveland)

4. Welcome into This Place 5:02
Charmaine Faunteroy and Herbert Jackson
(Orlando Juarez/Life Spring Music, Word Inc., BMI)

5. Standing on the Promises 6:21
Bible Way Temple Radio Choir
(R. Kelso Carter)

6. The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow 3:02
Salvation Music Ministry
(Thomas A. Dorsey/Uni-Chappell Music, BMI)

7. Great Is Thy Faithfulness 3:55
Herbert Jackson
(Words by T. Chisholm and music by W. Runyan/
Hope Publishing Co.)

8. This Is the Day 2:39
The Nannie Helen Burroughs School Choir
(John Wesley Lewis)

**9. I Need Thee Every Hour/
A Praying Spirit** 5:06
The Curenton Family
(Words by A. Hawks and music by R. Lowery)
(Words and music by Elbernita Clark)
(Medley arr. Evelyn Simpson Curenton)

10. Search My Heart, Lord 4:23
Salvation Music Ministry
(Von Fontville; arr. Joe Sims)

**11. Take My Hand, Precious Lord
(Precious Lord, Take My Hand)** 3:51
Charmaine Faunteroy
(Thomas A. Dorsey/Warner-Tamerlane
Publishing, BMI)

12. We Will Work 1:45
The Nannie Helen Burroughs School Choir
(Arr. Ronald Winans)

**13. The Old Rugged Cross
(On a Hill Far Away)** 5:05
Firstfruit
(George Bennard/The Rodeheaver Co., ASCAP)

14. My Soul Is a Witness for the Lord 3:18
Shiloh Baptist Church Senior Choir
(Arr. Philip McIntyre/Shawnee Press, Inc., ASCAP)

15. Over My Head 4:17
Alvin Dockett and Blessed
(James Cleveland/Screen Gems EMI Music, BMI;
arr. Alvin Dockett)

Cover photo: The Voices of Ebenezer Choir, Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church, Ft. Washington, MD, embody the spirit of African American worship music. Photo by Harold Dorwin, courtesy of Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution.

THE MUSIC OF WORSHIP

by Gail S. Lowe, Ph.D.

Historian and Curator for *Speak To My Heart*

Since the arrival of Africans in the Americas, religious institutions and spiritual traditions have been at the heart of African American civic, social, and cultural life. Free and enslaved Africans brought their own religious and spiritual traditions — including Islam, Yoruba, and Akan belief systems — with them, and adopted, adapted, and transformed Christianity. Churches provided safe meeting places for community discussion of common problems. Church buildings served as schoolhouses, recreation centers, and hotbeds of civic activism. At church, celebrated men and women delivered rousing speeches and scholarly lectures to people hungry for knowledge and exposure to the wider world. Religious institutions, then, represent a constant which adapts to meet the changing needs of a dynamic community. Through worship services and outreach activities, Black churches not only provide spiritual strength and guidance, but also focus on issues of social and human justice.

African American congregations worship in a range of styles, from solemn contemplative services to ecstatic demonstrations of the Spirit at work. Congregations often weave music, dance, liturgy, and preached word into a seamless offering of praise, prayer, religious nurture, and communal fellowship.

Music — whether sung by choirs as anthems, spirituals, gospels, or contemporary pieces, or played on traditional instruments or by church bands — enhances the worship experience. It lifts spirits and prepares worshippers for the preacher's spoken message.

Many people associate Black church music with "Negro spirituals." Others connect it to the close harmonies of classical European hymns and anthems and African American gospel. Some connect it to a traditional "ring shout." Still others respond to a blend of music that includes the African-inspired rhythms of hip hop and rap.

In the 20th century, African American sacred music has influenced other genres of music, including jazz, blues, and rock and roll. Many well-known, lively rhythm-and-blues songs echo Black Christian sentiments.

In the past two decades, Black sacred music has borrowed back the rhythms and structures it gave popular music. Contemporary gospel, for example, not only explores new musical modes but also merges hip hop and rap with Bible messages or adapts well-known rhythm-and-blues songs to reach and inspire younger members.

Now at the turn of the 21st century, many choirs and singers are redefining gospel music with contemporary instruments, community mass choir arrangements, and modern theological ideas. Even so, traditional gospels, spirituals, and hymns still serve as the core repertoire and basic praise music for church worship services. The choirs and singers heard on this CD render the old traditions in fresh and vibrant ways.

The music of worship, as recorded by Washington, D.C.-area groups and soloists for this compact disc, provides the audio background and texture for the exhibition, *Speak To My Heart: Communities of Faith and Contemporary African American Life*, presented by the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture. *Speak To My Heart* examines the various ways in which African American Christian churches and congregations of other faiths work in our contemporary society. It is part of the Anacostia Museum's continuing effort to explore the role of these unique institutions in Black life. It celebrates the determination of Black congregations and individuals to meet the challenges of a complex society in the 1990s.

This exhibition is about faith and spiritual traditions in the African American community. It is also about church efforts to combat hunger and homelessness. It is about the church as an agent of community and economic development. It is about education and entrepreneurship. It explores gender roles. It looks at ways in which liturgy, vestments, and decor have changed in order to be more reflective of African American culture. It looks at the challenge of providing compassionate care to those living with HIV/AIDS. This exhibition looks at churches at work outside the walls of their sanctuaries on the streets, in prisons, and in schools. *Speak To My Heart* is an examination of the collective will of religious leaders and an exploration of the ways in which individual belief shapes and changes African American history and culture.

COMMUNITIES OF FAITH AND CONTEMPORARY
AFRICAN AMERICAN GOSPEL MUSIC IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

by Horace Boyer, Ph.D.

Everyone knows that Washington, D.C., is the capital of the United States, but not necessarily that it is also one of the capital centers of African American gospel music. With the release of this CD there will be no doubt that "D.C.," as it is called among gospel lovers, will be known as a member of the quintet of cities that dictate what happens in the gospel world: Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and New York City.

This should not come as a surprise, however, for Washington, D.C., early on became a "Black" church community. As early as 1820 African Americans withdrew from the White Ebenezer Methodist Church and established a branch of Richard Allen's (1760-1831) African Methodist Episcopal denomination. The year 1839 saw the formation of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, and the first choir in the community was organized in 1843 at Bethel Union, later named Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church. Indeed, by 1862 D.C. claimed eleven Black churches, including seven Methodist churches, three Baptist churches, and one Presbyterian church.

While these congregations and their choirs sang master choral works, popular standard Protestant hymns of the day, and selected Negro spirituals, gospel music did not come to the District until the "sanctified" preachers arrived in the early 1920s. The two most important of these were the Elders Samuel Kelsey (1906-93) and Smallwood E. Williams (1907-91). Kelsey moved to D.C. in 1923 as a minister of Charles Harrison Mason's (1866-1961) Church of God in Christ and established the Temple Church of God in Christ, where "sanctified" singing attracted large crowds and beckoned musicians who were anxious to try the new jubilant and spirit-filled music. Williams moved to the District in 1927 as a member of Robert Clarence Lawson's (1883-1961) Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith but immediately founded the Bible Way Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith. Featuring a service not unlike that of Kelsey, Williams also championed the new energetic singing style, amassing a huge following in a *very* short time.

Other sanctified/Pentecostal/holiness ministers moved to D.C., and by the early 1940s, gospel, the new name for "sanctified" singing, became a fixture in Pentecostal (though the entire congregation constituted the "choir") and Baptist churches. Methodist congregations were reluctant to adopt this new music and did not do so until the mid-1950s. Like the other major music cities in the gospel city quintet, the District began to attract gospel musicians from around the United States. One of the leaders of the D.C. gospel

movement was native-born Pearl Williams Jones (1931-91), daughter of Smallwood E. Williams and an extraordinary singer, pianist, and scholar. Bernice Johnson Reagon (b. 1942) established her group, Sweet Honey in the Rock, in the District, while Robert Fryson (1944-94), Donald Vails (1947-97), and the very popular Richard Smallwood (b. 1947) all had D.C. as a home base. The virtuoso pianist of the Golden Age of gospel (1945-65), Teddy King (b. 1933), set the standard for gospel piano for the District.

Praise the Lord! Gospel Music from Washington, D.C. introduces a new generation of gospel musicians of whom each of the pioneers could be proud. Not only in their talent, sincerity, and musicianship do they further the gospel tradition, but they are assuring the honored diversity that gospel has always promoted. For example, this CD features almost every type of performance medium in gospel: solo, duet, quartet, and choir (the trio will have to wait for the next CD). The selections represent the wide variety of gospel styles: gospelized standard Protestant hymns, concert style and "church" Negro spirituals, traditional and contemporary gospel. This CD, in fact, presents an anthology of gospel groups, styles, and compositions.

As visitors enter the *Speak To My Heart* exhibition, they are greeted by a life-size replica of an usher. As listeners begin their journey through the music, they are welcomed by Charmaine Faunteroy and Herbert Jackson with the announcement: "(You Are) Welcome into This Place" (track 4). While each of the singers will be featured in solos later in the CD, there is an element of welcome in the text and the marriage of soprano, tenor, and piano that makes one feel at home throughout the CD. First singing together and then alternately, the duo illustrates the passion, constraint, and joy found in the African American church and its music.

Charmaine Faunteroy is featured in a solo on the second most popular song in African American Christendom, Thomas A. Dorsey's (1899-1993) "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" (track 11). Composed after the death of his first wife and child, this is an urgent prayer for immediate comfort. In her rendition, this is exactly what Faunteroy demands. With each phrase she employs a different tonal color laced with the urgency of the text. Her rendition is arranged so that she employs the entire register of her range. As each area of range is opened, the passion grows greater. A virtuoso performance of "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" (track 7) is presented in gospelized and Baptist Living Hymn arrangement by **Herbert Jackson**. The living hymn tradition permits the singer to disregard strict time and celebrate each syllable and note of the melody with as much embellishment as the spirit demands. In the church vernacular Jackson must have "gotten happy" during this performance; the listener will certainly do so, too.

The male quintet, **Firstfruit**, sings in the traditional male gospel quartet style (track 1). This group has five members, one of whom is the manager and guitarist. Like the Soul Stirrers, Dixie Hummingbirds, and the Pilgrim Travelers of the 1950s, the group is accompanied by bass, keyboard, and drums, but this does not deter it from incorporating those wonderful sounds and devices associated with the Golden Age. Once the song is settled, the group even brings back such time-honored quatrains as

"If my mother don't go; if my father...; if my sister...; if my brother...", before it reaches the obligatory vamp, where the singers establish a holding pattern with the phrase, "Send me, I'll go." We call this "having church." "The Old Rugged Cross" (track 13) has been a favorite of African Americans since its composition in 1912, and Firstfruit offers an arrangement that harkens back to sounds of the 1940s: solo lead, close harmonies, alternating background humming with text, and passion that can stir a church. Clearly Firstfruit knows and honors its history.

A delightful gem of this CD is the gorgeous singing of the children's choir from the **Nannie Helen Burroughs** (1879-1964) **School** (tracks 8 and 12). These are beautiful voices, beautifully trained and beautifully demonstrated. I am not speaking of the puny, though beautiful, voices characteristic of the English cathedral schools, but the pure, strong, and involved voices of the African American church. Their renditions of "This Is the Day" and "We Will Work" are bold statements of conviction. This group should release a CD of their own.

Blessed (tracks 3 and 15), a high-school-age choir under the direction of the extraordinary pianist Alvin Dockett (principal pianist for the CD), sings in the style of such present-day choirs as Georgia Mass, Florida Mass, and Mississippi Mass Choirs. The singers present a solid "church" sound combined with such contemporary techniques as multiple vamps (two at a time), stop time (the instruments "lay out" for a couple of beats), and closing the mouth and singing in consonance. That they are having a good time is apparent to the listener. "Over My Head" (track 15) offers several delightful surprises. This venerable spiritual is first presented in an updated version that includes explosive releases, pronounced dynamics, and ending words with the syllable "ooh." Just as listeners feel they know what to expect, a funky, jazz beat descends, and the choir is off to a spirited jubilee version. This is contemporary gospel at its best. The listener should pay particular attention to the last part of the song, when the choir offers an encyclopedic description of the "vamp" in all of its guises.

The Curenton Family has produced an extraordinary number of musicians. They are well represented on this CD with the standard Protestant hymn, "I Need Thee Every Hour" (track 9), combined with Elberita "Twinkle" Clark's "A Praying Spirit" and the ever-popular "Sweet, Sweet Spirit" (track 2). Led by singer and pianist Evelyn, they manage to combine the energy, fervor, and passion of "Black" gospel with the devices and techniques of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. At one moment they are accommodating the grandeur of Venice's St. Mark's Cathedral, while at the next they are rendering the soulful sounds of the District's Bible Way churches.

Speaking of Bible Way, the **Bible Way Temple Radio Choir** takes us back to Chicago — in 1955, the height of the Golden Age in the founding city — with Roberta Martin's arrangement of the standard Protestant hymn, "Standing on the Promises" (track 5). The soprano lead instills this song with the early Baptist Lining Hymn-Jubilee-Gospel Waltz fervor that had the entire nation shouting to gospel for

the first time. And they are able to do this without the "dated" sound that generally coats traditional gospel. This is a sound that should be preserved, and the listener will immediately recognize the gospel that was introduced by Mahalia Jackson, Clara Ward, and the Robert Martin Singers.

If Firstfruit is a descendant of the pioneering gospel quartets, **Salvation Music Ministry**, certainly is in the tradition of the modern gospel quartet represented by Mighty Clouds of Joy, the Winans, Take 6, and Commissioned (though there are more than four members in each of these groups): smooth and close harmonies that are based on chord formations normally associated with Duke Ellington and Charlie Parker, punctuated responses seemingly inspired by the Pips, change of key, all over a beat, riff, and a groove that could even inspire social dancing. In other words Salvation has mastered the technique of the "contemporary" quartet. "Contemporary" is used here to identify a fusion kind of gospel that combines major elements of the substance and style of rhythm-and-blues, jazz, popular music, and hip hop. Often the packaging of the contemporary is more attractive than the message, but Salvation is good. It is good because the message of "The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow" (track 6) and "Search My Heart, Lord" (track 10) emerges as the important element. In other words, the boys sing gospel. The leader successfully sets up a situation of a battered, fury-fallen, and fortune-passing, but staunchly committed, Christian. He then announces his faith and assurances that "the Lord will make a way, somehow." The background solidifies his every word. This is a new and delightful arrangement of a classic. Their plea to the Lord to "Search My Heart," in a "groove that makes you want to move," carries with it the sincerity and longing that we found in the slave songs and Negro spirituals.

The most novel group on the CD is the **Shiloh Baptist Church Senior Choir**. You may not know that they are singing gospel until something hits you halfway through the song. This choir could be the choir of the Metropolitan Opera. They employ the classical vocal placement and color; they are very conscious of how they sound; even in dialect their diction is precise, and their attacks and releases are "concert" precise. The lush and sensual arrangement by Philip McIntyre (1951-91) of "My Soul Is a Witness for the Lord" (track 14) inspires the choir, and by the time they get to the chorus and the sopranos deliver the call ("my soul"), placing soul as the apex of the performance, the listener is inspired to respond with the other voices, "for the Lord." Oh yes, they can sing gospel.

When you finish listening to this CD, you will have heard a broad range of the African American "church" experience. I hope you enjoy it.

Horace Boyer

Horace Clarence Boyer, gospel singer, pianist, choral director, and composer, is a noted authority on African American music, with a specialty in gospel music. The author of over 60 articles on gospel music, Boyer served as principal advisor on the subject for the New Grove Dictionary of American Music, edited Lift Every Voice And Sing: An African American Hymnal for the Episcopal Church, and recently authored How Sweet the Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel. He has served as guest curator at the Smithsonian Institution and since 1973 has served as Professor of Music at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

THE RECORDING SESSIONS

In April 1998 the Anacostia Museum invited Reverend Herbert Jackson, Jr., a member of the advisory board for the exhibition *Speak To My Heart: Communities of Faith and Contemporary African American Life* and the Music Minister of New Macedonia Baptist Church in Southeast Washington, D.C., to a discussion on the possibilities of recording church music and music ministries for the audio portion of the exhibition. From that meeting and for the next three weeks, Reverend Jackson and the museum staff contacted local churches and performance groups inviting their participation. Answering our call were the Curenton Family, Shiloh Baptist Church Senior Choir, Salvation Music Ministry, Firstfruit, Alvin Dockett and Blessed, the Nannie Helen Burroughs School Choir, Bible Way Temple Radio Choir, Charmaine Faunteroy, and Herbert Jackson himself. They called members together and worked with Reverend Jackson in preparing a range of hymns, anthems, and spirituals.

On Tuesday, April 21st, the recording truck arrived at Bible Way Temple on New Jersey Avenue, Northwest, and for the next three days the sanctuary was filled with joyful music. The result of these sessions is a documentation of the diverse range of faith music that can be experienced at any of the many African American congregations in Washington on a given Sunday. It is music from the heart affirming faith and fellowship.

We dedicate this recording to the generosity of the pastor and staff of Bible Way Temple and to the choirs, performers, and musicians who donated time, energy, and voices to create *Praise the Lord! Gospel Music from Washington, D.C.*

Steven Cameron Newsome, *director, Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture*

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Firstfruit was organized in May 1994. The group consists of "five born-again believers who have dedicated their God-given talents in the service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The group's manager, Alvin N. Bennett, is a member of New Hope Church of God under the leadership of Pastor Ron Harris. At age eleven Bennett began singing in the choir of St. Joseph's Church in Pomprey, Maryland. He learned to play the guitar at age nine and at fourteen began his musical career playing in local bands. In 1986 he rededicated his life to Christ and began to use his talents to serve the Lord. He has played with the Gospel Inspirations of Brandywine, Maryland, for the Black Family Reunion, the Annual Black Congressional Breakfast, and "Spread a Little Sunshine" television program on WUSA Channel 9 in Washington.

Lead vocalist Kevin Ford is a member of Free Gospel Deliverance Temple in Coral Hills, Maryland, Bishop Ralph Green, Pastor. He began singing at the age of sixteen in the Suitland High School Concert Choir and joined the Suitland High School Gospel Choir and Gospel Inspirations. He has participated in People Against Civic Terror (PACT) in 1992, the Dr. Martin Luther King Educational Conference in 1991, and the Metro Talent Show in 1986.

Keyboardist and vocalist Mark Warren is a member and the minister of music of Woodlands Baptist Church, Indian Head, Maryland, under the leadership of his father, Reverend Yancy Warren. He began playing keyboard at age ten and has participated in the Prince George's County Community College Choir, later named Praise Fellowship Choir. In 1992 he participated in the album *Together We Stand* with the Cartwright Singers.

Lead vocalist Wayne Jones is a member of Lothian Church of God in Lothian, Maryland, under the leadership of Elder Raymond Willis. Jones has sung with the Southern Maryland State Choir and several independent a cappella groups and participated in the Columbia Union College Festival and the Christmas Festival for the Homeless.

Drummer Ricky Jones is a member of Zion Baptist Church in Welcome, Maryland, under the leadership of Pastor William A. Thorpe. Since the age of fifteen Jones has played drums with the Woodland Village Baptist Church Choir and his home church.

Since the inception of the Shiloh Baptist Church of Washington, D.C., in 1863, the **Shiloh Baptist Church Senior Choir** has rendered hymns, anthems, spirituals, cantatas, and oratorios for worship services and special observations of the church. For twenty-nine years, following a long line of distinguished leadership of the Senior Choir, Charles Woodrow Fleming has served as director; Everett Pendleton Williams, Jr., has served as church organist since 1982. Nationally renowned for its annual presentation of Handel's *Messiah*, the choir has performed on national television programs as well as for local religious and fraternal organizations. The choir has produced two recordings, *Choral Favorites From The Shiloh Senior Choir* in 1977 and *Treasures Worth Preserving* in 1991.

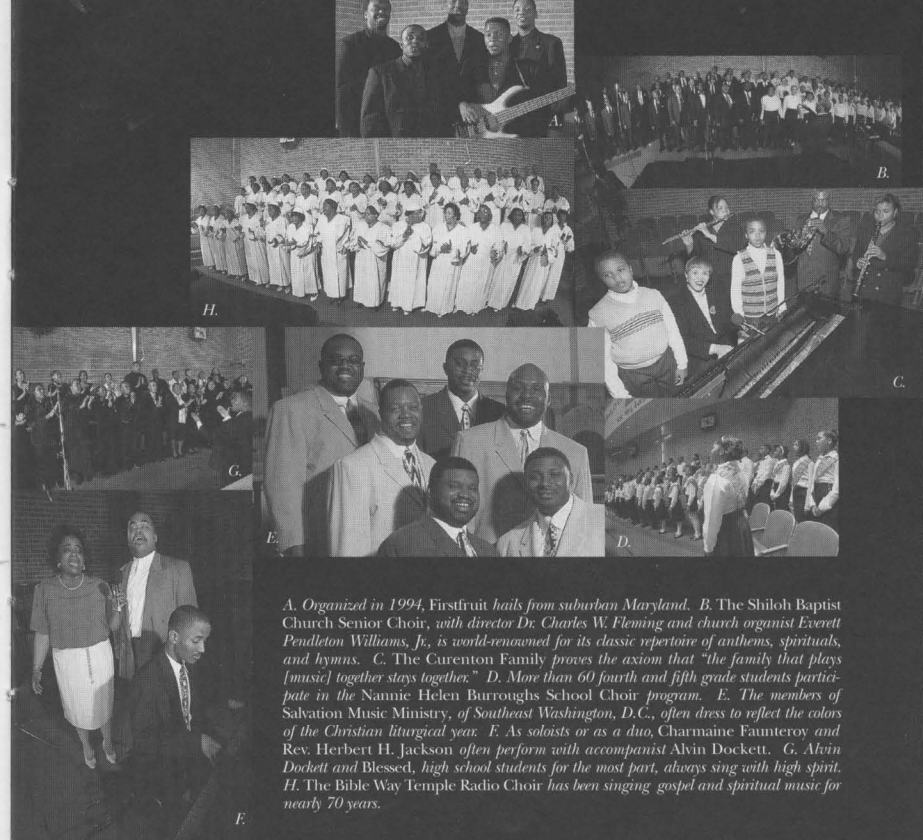
The **Bible Way Temple Radio Choir** was organized in 1930 by the wife of Bible Way's founder and apostle, Bishop Smallwood E. Williams. Mother Verna Lucille Williams combined her God-given talents and formal training in the development of the choir dedicated to traditional gospel music. The choir ministered to the Bible Way congregation every Sunday at 8 a.m. and again at 11 a.m., as well as appearing on local and syndicated radio programs. In 1981, under the direction of Dr. Pearl Williams-Jones, the choir expanded and has traveled extensively to venues that include the Kennedy Center and the National Religious Broadcasting Convention. Willie Harrod, Jr., is the present director.

The **Nannie Helen Burroughs School Choir** continues the tradition of music education and training established by the school's founder. Today under the leadership of principal Shirley G. Hayes, music director Monica Howard, and vocal teacher and accompanist Esther Wroten, the students perform before many governmental agencies and local businesses. The choir sings in various languages and performs in sign language.

The Curenton Family

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, composer, arranger, pianist, organist, vocalist, and choral director, is a graduate of Temple University, where she majored in music education and voice. At age two, Evelyn began to play the piano; at five, she began formal music lessons, and by the age of nine, she was accompanying her renowned musical family, the Singing Simpsons. Mrs. Curenton is a versatile and gifted artist who has arranged for and performed with national orchestras and opera societies. For several years she was assistant director and arranger for a regular televised religious program in Philadelphia. She has created arrangements for Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman and the Porgy and Bess Chorus of the Metropolitan Opera. She lectures and participates in workshops on early eighteenth-century Black religious music and music of African Americans during the Civil Rights Era. Mrs. Curenton's most recent accomplishments include two commissioned works by the American Guild of Organists, premiered January 1996 at the Kennedy Center, and "Two Psalms," premiered in February 1996 in Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Edward Emmanuël Curenton, Sr., is a graduate of Temple University with Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Music Education degrees from the Philadelphia Music Academy. Mr. Curenton taught instrumental music in the Philadelphia school system. Since 1982 he has been a member of the U.S. Army Band based in Fort Myer in Arlington, Virginia.



A. Organized in 1994, Firstfruit hails from suburban Maryland. B. The Shiloh Baptist Church Senior Choir, with director Dr. Charles W. Fleming and church organist Everett Pendleton Williams, Jr., is world-renowned for its classic repertoire of anthems, spirituals, and hymns. C. The Curenton Family proves the axiom that "the family that plays [music] together stays together." D. More than 60 fourth and fifth grade students participate in the Nannie Helen Burroughs School Choir program. E. The members of Salvation Music Ministry, of Southeast Washington, D.C., often dress to reflect the colors of the Christian liturgical year. F. As soloists or as a duo, Charmaine Faunteroy and Rev. Herbert H. Jackson often perform with accompanist Alvin Dockett. G. Alvin Dockett and Blessed, high school students for the most part, always sing with high spirit. H. The Bible Way Temple Radio Choir has been singing gospel and spiritual music for nearly 70 years.

Evelyn Nancy Curenton attends West Potomac High School in Alexandria, Virginia. She has received many honors and awards. She has occupied the first chair in her high school band since her freshman year and first chair in the District's band wind ensemble. She has been a member of Virginia's All State Band since ninth grade, was a member of the Disney Second Annual Symphony Orchestra in Los Angeles, California, performed as a soloist at the Kennedy Center with the Festival Children's Choir, and has been awarded the best musician in band award since sixth grade. Evelyn was a member of the American Youth Philharmonic and studied clarinet at the Levine School of Music with Sidney Forrest. She is currently studying with Michael Rusinek, a member of the National Symphony.

Julietta Marie Curenton is a sophomore at West Potomac High School. She won second place in the Arlington Symphony competition in January 1997. Julietta was selected to play in the Mid-Atlantic Flute Fair's Master Class coached by Claudia Anderson. She is first chair flute in the Virginia Youth Philharmonic and also in the District 11 Concert Band. She has studied for five years with Maria De le Cerda, U. S. Army Band, and is currently studying with Karen Johnson at the Levine School of Music. Julietta and her sister Evelyn were recipients of the WGMS Young Artist in the Community Award.

Organized in 1989 and based in Southeast Washington, **Salvation Music Ministry** performs a unique blend of spirituals, jubilee, gospel, and contemporary music styles, making their message accessible to all generations. The group has traveled nationally, sharing the stage with many gospel performers including Albertina Walker and Kirk Franklin. Their television appearances include "Religious Voices Around the World", "Bobby Jones Gospel," and "Black Entertainment Television Video Gospel."

Alvin Dockett and Blessed began their music ministry in 1996 as a praise and worship team and eventually became a permanent group. They travel extensively on the East Coast and throughout the Washington Metropolitan area, "...sharing the vision the Lord has given us and letting the world know that we are 'BLESSED'."

Charmaine Faunteroy is a native Washingtonian and a member of New Macedonia Baptist Church since 1989. She is a member of the Mass Choir, the Comforters of Christ, and the Anointed Voices of Praise. She performs as a soloist in many churches throughout the Washington area.

Herbert H. Jackson, Jr. is the founding pastor of the Life Changing Bible Baptist Church, Temple Hills, Maryland. He is a former member of New Macedonia Baptist Church where he served as an associate minister, co-chairperson for Christian education, superintendent of the Sunday School, and coordinator of the Music Department. He works with various choirs locally and nationally including the D.C. Mass Choir and the Youth for Christ Fellowship Mass Choir, as well as with the Progressive National Baptist Convention. Reverend Jackson is a member of the advisory board for the exhibition *Speak To My Heart: Communities of Faith and Contemporary African American Life*.

SONG LYRICS

1. I'll Go

Performed by Firstfruit

I'll go if I have to go by myself [have to go by myself].

I'll go if I have to go by myself [have to go by myself].

If my mother [don't go], my father [don't go], my sister [don't go],

Or my brother, you all [don't go],

I'll go if I have to go by myself [have to go by myself].

I'll go if I have to go by myself [have to go by myself].

I'll go if I have to go by myself [have to go by myself].

If my mother [don't go], and my father [don't go], my sister [don't go],

Or my brother, you all [don't go],

I'll go on and on and on if I have to go by myself [have to go by myself].

Here's another thing I'll do, you all:

I'll sing [sing on] if I have to sing by myself [have to sing by myself].

I'll sing if I have to sing by myself [have to sing by myself].

Say, oh Lord! Lord, if my mother [don't sing], and my father [don't sing], my sister [don't sing], or my brother, you all [don't sing],

I'll sing on if I have to sing by myself [have to sing by myself].

Listen, I'll pray [pray on] if I have to pray by myself [have to pray by myself].

I'll pray if I have to pray by myself [have to pray by myself].

Say, oh Lord! Lord, if my mother [don't pray], and my father [don't pray],

my four sisters [don't pray], or two brothers, you all [don't pray],

I'm gonna pray on and on and on [pray on and on and on] if I have to pray

by myself [have to pray by myself].

Oh send me [send me out, Lord], send me [send me out, Lord].

Sometimes I get burdened [send me out, Lord], sometimes I get worried [send me out, Lord],

But if you want me to sing for You [send me out, Lord],

Lord, I don't mind singing for You [send me out, Lord].

Sometimes I get worried [send me out, Lord], sometimes I get burdened [send me out, Lord],

But I made up my mind, I'll go if I have to go by myself [have to go by myself].

Yeah, yeah.

2. Sweet, Sweet Spirit

Performed by The Curenton Family: Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, piano and vocals; Edward Curenton, french horn; Julietta Marie Curenton, flute; Evelyn Nancy Curenton, clarinet

There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place,
And I know that it's the spirit of the Lord.

There are sweet expressions on each face,
And I just know that it's the presence of my Lord.
Ohhh, sweet holy spirit! Sweet heavenly dove!
Stay right here with us and just keep feeding us
with Your sweet love.
And for these blessings, Lord, we just want to lift
our hearts in praise.
Without a doubt, we'll know we have been revived
When we shall leave this holy place. Amen.

3. Thank You, Lord

Performed by Alvin Dockett and Blessed: Peter Chatman, keyboard, Davin Wright, drums

Look how far He's brought us; look how far
we've come,
We're not where we ought to be, but we're not
where we used to be.

Thank you, Lord [We thank you]. (2x)

Thank you, Lord, for what You've done.

Look how far He's brought us; look how far
we've come,
We're not where we ought to be, but we're not
where we used to be.

Thank you, Lord [we thank you]. (2x)

Thank you, Lord, for what You've done.

Look how far He's brought us, look how far
we've come,
We're not where we ought to be, but we're not
where we used to be.

Thank you Lord [we thank you]. (2x)

Thank you, Lord, for what You've done.

Thank you, Lord; look how far He's brought us (2x)

[We're gonna] thank you, Lord

[Lord, we're gonna thank you]

Look how far He's brought us

[Lord, we're gonna thank you] Thank you, Lord.

[Lord, we're gonna thank you] Look how far

He's brought us;

[Lord, we're gonna thank you] Thank you, Lord

[Look how far He's brought us]!

(Repeat 19 times)

Thank you, Lord [we thank you]. (2x)

Thank you, Lord, for what You've done.

Thank you. (Repeat 19 times)

Thank you, Lord [we thank you]. (2x)

Thank you, Lord, for what You've done.

4. Welcome into This Place

Performed by Charmaine Faunteroy and Herbert Jackson, vocals; Alvin Dockett, keyboard; Davin Wright, drums

Welcome into this place,

Welcome into this broken vessel.

For You desire to abide in the praises of Your people;

So we lift our hands, as we lift our hearts,
As we offer up this praise unto Your name. (Repeat)

Welcome [oh welcome] into this place
[welcome Jesus],

You're welcome, You're welcome

Welcome into this broken vessel [yeah].

You desire to abide [oh Lord] in the praises of
Your people;

So we lift our hands, as we lift our hearts,
As we offer up this praise unto Your name.

Welcome [You're welcome, Lord] into this place
[You're welcome, Holy Spirit],

Welcome [mmmm] into this broken vessel.

For You desire to abide [yeah] in the praises of
Your people [yeah, Lord];

So we lift our hands, as we lift our hearts,
As we offer up this praise unto Your name.

So we lift our hands [yeah, yeah], so we lift our
hands [oh, Lord],

As we lift our hearts, as we offer up this praise
unto Your name.

So we lift our hands [yeah], we lift our hearts to Jesus,
So we lift our hands, as we lift our hearts,

As we offer up this praise unto Your name.

5. Standing on the Promises

*Performed by the Bible Way Temple Radio Choir:
Margaret Petris, soloist; Sadie M. Woodard, organ;
Shelby Willis, piano*

I'm standing on the promises of Christ my King,
Thro' eternal ages let the praises ring;

Glory in the highest I will shout and I will sing,
I'm standing on the promises of God.

I'm standing on the promises, I cannot, I cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall — I shall prevail,
I'm standing on the promises of God.

I'm standing [oh yes, I'm standing]; I'm standing
[oh yes, I'm standing];

Oh standing [on the promises] on the promises
[on the promises] of Christ [of Christ my Savior];
I'm standing [oh yes, I'm standing]; I'm standing
[standing]

Oh, I'm standing [on the promises] on the promises
[on the promises] of God [on the promises of God].

I'm standing on the promises, I cannot —
I cannot fall,

I'm listening every moment to the Spirit —
the Spirit call,

And I'm resting in my Savior; He's my all —
my all in all,

I'm standing on the promises of God.

I am standing [oh yes, I'm standing]; ah yes, I'm
standing [oh yes, I'm standing];

I'm standing [on the promises] on the promises
[on the promises] of Christ [of Christ my Savior];

Oh, I'm standing [oh yes, I'm standing]; ah yes
I'm standing [standing]

Oh, I'm standing [on the promises] on the promises
[on the promises] of God [on the promises of God].

(Repeat 4 times)

6. The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow

Performed by Salvation Music Ministry

Like a ship that's tossed and driven, mmmm
Battered by an angry sea, oh yeah,
When the storms of life are raging
And the fury falls on me —
I wonder what I have done
Just to make this race so hard — so hard to run!
Well, said I...to my soul, "Soul, take courage!
The Lord will make a way somehow!"

He will make a way./Good God Almighty
I know He will./Oh yes He will./Oh yes He will.

He will make a way./Don'tcha doubt Him.
I know He will./I know too much about Him.
Oh yes He will./I know He will./C'mon, sing.

He will make a way/Put your trust in Him.
I know He will. Yes He will! Yes He will!
He'll make a way./I know He will. C'mon band.

He will make a way./Don'tcha worry about a thing.
Ohhh yes He will./Oh yes He will.
I know He will. C'mon sing.
He will make a way [make a way].
I know He will./Out of no way.
Yes He will./Oh yes He will.
I know He will. C'mon.

He will make a way./Yes He will.
I know He will./Ohhh yes He will.
Oh yes He will./I know He will. Sing.

He'll make a way [make a way]./I know He will.
He'll make a way./Oh yes He will.
Oh yes He will./I know He will.

He will make a way./Good God almighty.
I know He will./Oh yes He will. (Fade)

7. Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Performed by Herbert Jackson, vocals; Alvin Dockett, piano

Great is Thy faithfulness, oh God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.
Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Oh great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hands have provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, oh Lord, to me!

Oh great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Every time I wake up in the morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hands have provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Oh Lord, to — to me! To me! To me!

8. This Is the Day

*Performed by the Nannie Helen Burroughs School Choir:
Monica Howard, music director; Esther Wroten, piano*

This is the day the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice in it and be glad! (4x)

Join in the dance of procession (2x)
Unto the horns of the altar

Give thanks to the Lord/For He is good.

This is the day the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice in it and be glad! (4x)
You are my God and I will give thanks! (2x)
You are my God and I will exalt You.
Give thanks to the Lord/For He is good.

This is the day the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice in it!/Let us rejoice in it!
Let us rejoice in it and be glad!

9. I Need Thee Every Hour

(instrumental)/Praying Spirit

*Performed by The Curennton Family: Evelyn Simpson-
Curennton, piano and vocals; Julietta Marie Curennton,
flute; Evelyn Nancy Curennton, clarinet*

Lord, give me a praying spirit,
Give me a praying spirit,
Lord, teach me to say "yes"
Yes, yes, Lord;/Yes, yes, Lord.

Lord, give me a praying spirit,
Give me a praying spirit,
Teach me to say "yes"
Lord, teach me to say "yes"
Oooo yes, oooo to say yes, Lord
Ah, teach me, Lord, to say "yes"
Oh my Lord, yes, Lord.

10. Search My Heart, Lord

*Performed by Salvation Music Ministry: Anthony White and
Leon V. McManus, vocals and guitar; Vincent Sims, vocals
and keyboard; Joe Sims, vocals and electric bass*

I said, "Lord, oh Lord! Please search my heart!
Lord, oh Lord! Please search my heart!"

Cause You know when I'm right
And You know when I'm wrong!
Ohhh Lord, oh Lord!"

I said, "Lord, I'm down here waiting on You
Because I don't know nobody else can do the
things You do—"

I said, "Lord, I'm down here waiting on You
Because I don't know nobody else can do the
things You do."

Won't You search it?
Please do it for me, Lord.
Search it, Lord. Yeah!
We need You, we need You to search it, Lord.
I can't make it alone, no —
Search it, Lord. C'mon, this need.

Here is something I know He will do
When you're in trouble He will see you through.
When things start going bad
He'll never let them make you sad.
Trust in God and never doubt
He's the only one who will bring you out.

I am one who will always say,
"I know the Lord will make a way."

I've never been to heaven, but I've been told
[witness, witness, my soul is a witness for my Lord],
The streets up there are paved with gold
[witness, witness, my soul is a witness for my Lord].

I'm sometimes up and sometimes down
[witness, witness, my soul is a witness for my Lord],
But still my soul is heaven bound
[witness, witness, my soul is a witness for my Lord].

Oh Lord [witness, witness for my Lord],
I'm a witness [witness, witness for my Lord]!
Oh Lord [witness, witness for my Lord],
I'm a witness [witness, witness for my Lord]!
Oh Lord [witness, witness for my Lord],
I'm a witness [witness, witness for my Lord]!
Will you be a witness for my Lord?

If you get there before I do
[my soul is a witness for my Lord],
Tell all my friends I'm coming too
[my soul is a witness for my Lord].
My soul is a witness [for my Lord],
My soul is a witness [witness, witness for my Lord],
My soul is a witness [for my Lord],
My soul is a witness [witness, witness for my Lord].
Oh Lord [witness, witness for my Lord],
I'm a witness [witness, witness for my Lord]!
My soul is a witness [will you be a witness?],
My soul is a witness for my Lord.
For my Lord!

15. Over My Head

Performed by Alvin Dockett and Blessed: Peter Chatman, keyboard; Davin Wright, drums

Over my head, I hear music in the air. [Oooo]
There must be a God somewhere!
Over my head, I hear music in the air. [Oooo]
There must, there must, there must,
There must,/There must be a God somewhere!

I hear music. (2x)
I hear music, in the air.
I hear music, music in the air.
There must be a God somewhere! (3x)
I hear music. (2x)
I hear music, in the air. (2x)
There must be a God somewhere! (3x)

Think about it. (8x)
Why (2x)
Why don't (2x)
Why don't you (2x)
Why don't you think (2x)
Why don't you think about it? (4x)

Why (5x)
Why don't (3x)
Why/Why don't/Why don't you/
Why don't you think
Why don't you think about it? (4x)

There must be a God somewhere! (3x)
[Oooo!]

SUGGESTED LISTENING

African American sacred music—from anthems to contemporary gospel—can be heard throughout the week on several stations in local radio markets. Radio is important in spreading the message of the music, in developing audiences for concerts and record sales, and in ministering to the needs of the listening community. For example, in the Washington, D.C., area AM stations such as WPGC (“Heaven 1580”), WYCB (1340 AM), WWIN (1400 AM, a Baltimore, Md., station) and WWGB (1030 AM) play gospel and spiritual music twenty-four hours a day. FM stations, notably WHUR (96.3 FM) and WMMJ (Majic 102.3 FM), feature gospel programs primarily on Sunday mornings and afternoons. For similar stations throughout the United States, please consult local radio listings.

Related Music on Folkways

Are You Ready for Christmas?: Black Church Service, Rev. Audrey F. Bronson and Becky Carlton (1979) F-32425.

The Fisk Jubilee Singers (1955). F-2372.

Hughes, Langston. *Tambourines to Glory*—Gospel Songs by Langston Hughes, Jobe Huntley, and The Porter Singers (1958). F-3538.

Jackson, Mahalia. *I Sing Because I'm Happy*—Interviews and Four Songs (1992). Reissue of F-31101 from 1979 and F-31102 from 1979. SFW 90002.

Reed, Doc, and Vera Hall. *Spirituals* (1953) F-2038.

Anthologies of African American Music on Folkways

Been in the Storm So Long: A Collection of Spirituals, Folk Tales and Children's Games from Johns Island, South Carolina—The Moving Star Hall Singers (1990). Selections from F-3841 from 1964 and F-3842 from 1964. SFW 40031.

Black American Religious Music from Southeast Georgia (1983). F-34010.

Johns Island, South Carolina: Its People and Songs (1973). F-3840.

Music from the South, Vol. 9: Song and Worship (1956). F-2658.

Negro Folk Music of Alabama, Vol. 2: Religious Music (1951). F-4418.

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Voices of the Civil Rights Movement: Black American Freedom Songs 1960-1966 (1997). Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40084.

Wade in the Water: African American Sacred Music Traditions: Volumes 1-4 (1997) SFW 40076 (4-CD set).

Wade in the Water, Vol. 1: African American Spirituals—The Concert Tradition—Florida A&M Choir, Fisk Jubilee Singers, others (1994). SFW 40072.

Wade in the Water, Vol. 2: African American Congregational Singing—19th Century Roots— McIntosh County Shouters, Rev. C.J. Johnson, others (1994). SFW 40073.

Wade in the Water, Vol. 3: African American Gospel—The Pioneering Composers— Sweet Honey in the Rock, others (1994). SFW 40074.

Wade in the Water, Vol. 4: African American Community Gospel— Gospel Harmonettes, Poole Brothers, others (1994). SFW 40075.

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Credits

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The Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture is devoted to increasing public understanding and awareness of the historical experiences and cultural expressions of people of African descent and heritage living in the Americas. The Anacostia Museum was established in 1967 and merged with the Center for African American History and Culture, an outgrowth of the National African American Museum Project, in 1995.

Offering exhibitions in its galleries in Southeast Washington and in the Arts and Industries Building on the National Mall, the museum serves as a national leader in the preservation and interpretation of the African American experience. Its collections include historical objects, documents, videos, and works of art. The museum is distinguished by its multifaceted approach to community involvement.

For general information, exhibits, and programs go to www.si.edu/anacostia or please call (202) 287-2060 or (202) 357-4500 or write Anacostia Museum, 1901 Fort Place, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20020.

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The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways from the Moses Asch estate in 1987 to ensure that the sounds and genius of the artists would be preserved for future generations. All Folkways recordings are available on high-quality audio cassettes or by special order on CD. Each recording is packed in a special box along with the original LP liner notes.

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