

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Saints' Paradise

Trombone Shout Bands
from
the United House of Prayer

FOLK
Masters
LIVE
from
Wolf Trap

Saints' Paradise

Madison's Lively Stones

- 1. When the Saints Go Marching In 2:30
- 2. It's Time to Make a Change 3:16
- 3. Never Going to Let You Go 3:17

McCullough Sons of Thunder

- 4. He Touched Me 4:31
- 5. One Day at a Time 3:59
- 6. Sweet! 6:39
- 7. His Eye Is on the Sparrow 2:02

Happyland Band

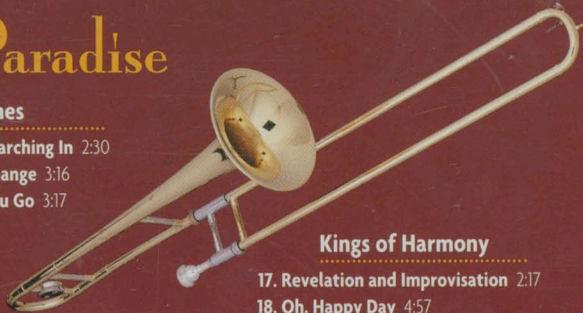
- 8. Won't It Be Sad? 2:27
- 9. America the Beautiful 3:05
- 10. Just a Closer Walk with Thee 4:50

Madison Prayer Band

- 11. Lord, Fix Me 3:22
- 12. Shouting Time 3:14

Clouds of Heaven

- 13. Lord, I'm Troubled about My Soul 1:52
- 14. Spiritual Conversation 2:52
- 15. Keep Oil in Your Vessels 2:22
- 16. Ease My Troubled Mind 3:56



Kings of Harmony

- 17. Revelation and Improvisation 2:17
- 18. Oh, Happy Day 4:57
- 19. When the Saints Go Marching In 3:31

Beyond jazz or gospel as most know it, this is the powerful trombone shout band music of the legendary United House of Prayer for All People. While much public attention is lavished on brass band jazz of New Orleans, these remarkable sacred shout bands of the Eastern seaboard have remained largely unheard except inside the church built by the late Bishop C. M. "Daddy" Grace. In this first-ever anthology, the top House of Prayer shout bands perform live—showing how a choir of trombone "voices" brings congregations to "one accord" of ecstasy with the Spirit. 32-page booklet with photos. 65 minutes.

Folk Masters CD Series produced by Nick Spitzer;
edited by Leslie Spitz-Edson

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Endowment for the Arts and the Lila-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund.



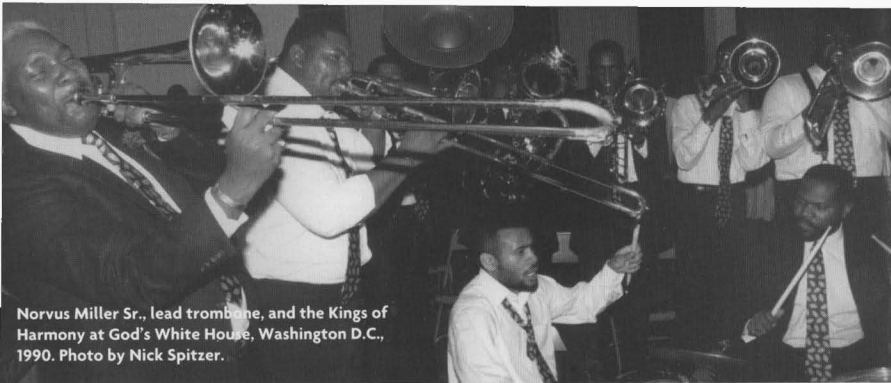
Smithsonian Folkways Recordings



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Norvus Miller Sr., lead trombone, and the Kings of Harmony at God's White House, Washington D.C., 1990. Photo by Nick Spitzer.

MADISON'S LIVELY STONES April 1, 1994, Wolf Trap

1. When the Saints Go Marching In
2. It's Time to Make a Change
3. Never Going to Let You Go

MCCOLLOUGH SONS OF THUNDER

November 13, 1990, Carnegie Hall

4. He Touched Me
5. One Day at a Time
6. Sweet! (Edward Babb/Smithsonian Folkways Publishing, BMI)
7. His Eye Is on the Sparrow
8. America the Beautiful (S. Ward, K. Bates)
9. Just a Closer Walk with Thee

HAPPYLAND BAND April 9, 1993, Wolf Trap

8. Won't It Be Sad?
10. America the Beautiful (S. Ward, K. Bates)
10. Just a Closer Walk with Thee

MADISON PRAYER BAND April 14, 1995, Wolf Trap

11. Lord, Fix Me
12. Shouting Time

CLOUDS OF HEAVEN March 13, 1996, Wolf Trap

13. Lord, I'm Troubled about My Soul
14. Spiritual Conversation
15. Keep Oil in Your Vessels
16. Ease My Troubled Mind

KINGS OF HARMONY Legends of Leaders Celebration, February 27, 1993, God's White House, Washington D.C.

17. Revelation and Improvisation
18. Oh, Happy Day
19. When the Saints Go Marching In

This recording is dedicated to the memories of Norvus "Butch" Littlejohn Miller and George Holland—two of God's trombones who went home.

Saints' Paradise

Trombone Shout Bands: The Men and Their Music

S*aints' Paradise* is the first comprehensive anthology of the musically and spiritually powerful trombone shout bands from the United House of Prayer for All People. It includes performances by the most influential bands, designated by church elders as "The Three Stars of the Kingdom." These are: Edward Babb and the McCollough Sons of Thunder (Harlem, New York City), George Holland and the Happyland Band (Newport News, Virginia), and Norvus Miller and the Kings of Harmony (Washington, D.C.). Each of these bandleaders, who are also renowned trombone players and arrangers, in turn built on his own teacher's style to achieve during the 1960s and 1970s a distinct, overall sound. Their styles and repertoires are now emulated by the next generation of bandleaders and ensembles which are known as "copy bands." Sadly, both Holland and Miller have passed away since these recordings were made; Babb continues to play energetically in Harlem, across the nation, and even abroad. In 1993, Babb, Holland, and Miller were honored by their church for their artistic excellence and

their spiritual devotion in a program in Washington, D.C., called "Legends of Leaders."

Saints' Paradise also includes the younger bandleader, Cedric Mangum, with his group, the Clouds of Heaven (Charlotte, North Carolina). Mangum further assisted the elderly Madison Prayer Band, praise singers heard here with guitar and bass (thought to be remnant from early "string bands" that included banjos and mandolins) and the ever-present tambourine. Though each band has younger and older members, the youngest band on the recording is Madison's Lively Stones from Washington, D.C. It seems fitting that "the Stones" exuberance in continuing their tradition opens *Saints' Paradise*, as they process from the back of the hall to the stage on *Folk Masters* at Wolf Trap with "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Dancing with the Spirit of Daddy Grace

In 1903 an African-Portuguese immigrant named Marcelino Manoel da Graca (Charles Manuel Grace), the son of a stone cutter from the Cape Verdean Island of Brava, came to the southeastern

Cover art: "Jamboree" by Jonathan Green, 1999 acrylic on paper 7.5" x 11." Back cover: Daddy Grace at the United House of Prayer, Charlotte, North Carolina. Photo courtesy of United House of Prayer. Inside tray photo: Clouds of Heaven. Photo by Dwain Winters.

Massachusetts town of New Bedford. It was and still is an area known for a diverse Portuguese-speaking population, many of whom were and are fishermen out of New Bedford, Fall River, and Provincetown. In a region that also included old Yankees, French, Irish, Greeks, and African Americans, daGraca, or "Daddy Grace," as he came to be called, emerged as a "Fisher of Men." Although initially laboring as a railroad cook on the Southern Railway, Grace drew on the Holiness Revival of the era and its Pentecostal tone to build his first church in West Wareham, Massachusetts. His primary successes, however, would come further south in Newport News, Virginia, and Charlotte, North Carolina – many of the early revivals were held close to the routes of the Southern Railway – establishing the "United House of Prayer for All People, the Church on the Rock of the Apostolic Faith." Today the House of Prayer (HOP), with over 135 churches nationwide, remains strongest in the Virginia, Carolinas, and Georgia Tidewater/Piedmont region.

Grace's biblical appearance – a visage still displayed prominently in photographs and paintings at every United House of Prayer – was striking, with long curling fingernails, wavy black hair, and majestic robes over tailored cut-back suits that reinforced the impression of a stylish and imposing man who represented God on earth for his congregations. In the late 1920s Grace drew as many as twenty thousand people nightly. Harlem church elder Saint Rose Franklin

said of this era: "I remember Daddy Grace from the first when we threw the leaflets around to come out to the tent, and everybody looked at the picture, and this looked just like Jesus.... We all come stand around, and, when he came to pray for salvation, he'd pull off his coat, and people would line up, and he'd put his hands on them, and most would go down in the [wood] shavings and come up speaking in the other tongue.... It was way back in 1926."

Grace's church was often denounced by other African-American church leaders as a cult. Some criticized the militaristic uniforms (reminiscent of both Marcus Garvey and the Salvation Army) as well as the hierarchical ranks and titles accorded

the leadership of the HOP. Others called him a charlatan, as he proclaimed the value and healing power of a Grace line of products ranging from soaps and toothpaste to coffee beans and cold cream. The charismatic Grace was also often at odds with the law, in

part because of his encouragement of mixed Black and White congregations. During the 1930s he was arrested multiple times for violating segregation laws in the South.

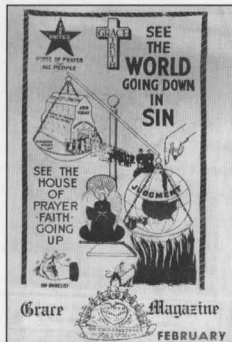
The church's music was also stigmatized. In one Columbia, South Carolina, neighborhood the House of Prayer was sued as a public nuisance. When the state's Supreme Court ordered a church closed in 1938 it weighed in with this description: "...the evidence showed that there is dancing carried on in the church, weird noises and music, shouting, stamping of feet, unearthly sounds, use of drums, trombones, horns, and scrubbing boards."

Since his death in 1960 Daddy Grace's charisma and powerful personality have been well remembered. Even now they are constantly reinforced by the invocation of his name in sermons and depictions of his person over the pulpit in each House of Prayer. Grace's successors, Daddy McCollough and Daddy Madison, have emphasized the importance of Church members' financial and material success, and they have embarked on massive campaigns to build churches of elaborate architectural diversity and style to replace the board and brick edifices of an earlier time – so proclaiming spiritual and social triumph. Even so, the House of Prayer remains a place where ecstatic "shouting" with



Daddy Grace at a street baptism in the 1950s, Washington, D.C.

Grace Magazine cover.
COURTESY OF
UNITED HOUSE OF PRAYER



the spirit and speaking in tongues are essential religious experiences, offering relief from emotional, social, and physical pain.

In *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, written by the eminent Black sociologist Arthur Huff Fauset at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1940s, the descriptions of the House of Prayer in Philadelphia sound uncannily current: "The service usually begins with unison singing, accompanied by piano or band. Then there is testimony. The singing is interlarded with shrieks, handclapping, stamping, and frequently concludes with the wholesale spectacle of a number of followers advancing to the front of the auditorium, where they dance on the sawdust-covered floor. Other members flit about



Daddy Grace presides at Potomac River baptism, Washington, D.C., 1934.

singly through the aisles and passageways. From time to time someone will collapse and fall prostrate to the floor.... All the while there is much calling out in tongues, which is said to be the Holy Spirit speaking through the human form..." (1971: 28).

The relief of suffering through music and spirit remains one of the most essential aspects of a House of Prayer service for young and old alike. Saint Rose Franklin of Harlem further recounted, "I'm 82 years old, but I was right out there [in the spirit]. I have a knee that I fell on and crushed, but when I get the spirit, I don't even feel that." Likewise a trombone-playing teenager in a junior shout band from Harlem, Allen Pickney Jr., adds: "It's a feeling, an addiction, you get used to it. You have to do it. A lot of pain you are going through is alleviated. It takes out the frustration. You put it out through your horn."

Shout band music has driven United House of Prayer services since the 1920s – a period of tent revivals and the construction of the initial and still influential churches in Newport News, Virginia, New York City's Harlem, and Savannah, Georgia. The idea of "shouting" in African-American religious congregations has its sources in West African praise-singing for the spirits and chiefs alike. In the Afro-Atlantic-connected world of the American East Coast, shouting is generally associated with the older rural congregations in South Carolina's Low Country and the Georgia Sea Islands – particularly around the holiday period of Christmas and New Year's – where special steps, rhythms, and biblical passages are used in a setting called the "ring shout." Although the movements associated with shouting, such as spinning and gyration, shaking the head from side to side, and pumping arms in the air, cannot be considered "dance" in

the secular sense of the word, some House of Prayer members and clergy refer to them as "dancing with the spirit."

Today's trombone shout bands of the House of Prayer provide music for Sunday services, parades, baptisms, funerals, and special convocations, moving congregations to "shout" with heartfelt, spiritual energy. The music builds gradually from slower tempos and sweet melodies with full harmonies to sweeping crescendos and intense "thundering" figures. In such musical passages individual lead horns and horn sections wail and cry in an improvised and overwhelming display of musical and spiritual emotion, underpinned by a dense, booming rhythm section of drums, cymbals, sousaphone, and unison-riffing trombones. The musicians use the power of this thundering chorus to bring the entire congregation to "one accord." Bandleader Edward Babb says, "Once you are on one accord, then the Holy Ghost can come in...when everybody is on that level, and I can feel it, and the members can feel it. And when we feel it, it changes us. We have to get out of self and walk in spirit, not flesh. We feel the Holy Ghost's power then, and the music comes through our horn, and no more is it the average music you'd hear in a night club or a jazz radio station. It's actually music given to us through the spirit of God, through the brass, and the people can feel the radiation of the horns.... It's like fire shut up in the bones!"

These moments of accord recur frequently during a service that – especially when two or more bands are present – may last from early morning to well into the afternoon. Even to a non-initiate it can feel as if spirits are flying about in the church. Mostly women and some men, young and old, "get the Spirit" and speak in praise of the Lord, Daddy Grace, and the Spirit itself using the "other tongue" – a smattering of English, what occasionally sounds like Portuguese, and a rapid-fire of syllables often at alternating low and high pitches.

In explaining why Daddy Grace used shout bands to attract people to his services, Pastor

Daddy Grace in the United House of Prayer in Harlem, New York City.





PHOTO COURTESY OF UNITED HOUSE OF PRAYER

The first United House of Prayer, West Wareham, Massachusetts, built in 1919.

Herbert Whitner of the impressive House of Prayer (also called the “Mother Church” and “God’s White House”) at 6th and M Streets NW, Washington, D.C., noted, “He had to bait his hook to bring in his catch.” Whitner goes on to suggest the biblical basis for the House of Prayer’s highly developed music in citing Psalm 150: “Praise ye the Lord. Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet. Praise Him with psaltery and harp. Praise Him with timbrel and dance. Praise Him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise ye the Lord.”

Gospel scholar Horace Boyer comments that Bishop Grace took the Psalm a bit further in urging “...the use of brass and reed instruments within the church service. It is from his denomination...that modern gospel music – the

most arresting music of the last half of the 20th century – based its use of the accompanying instruments, other than the piano and organ. The legacy of the ‘Daddy Grace Band’ is so strong that it influenced many of the rhythm and blues and jazz instrumentalists of contemporary music” (National Endowment for the Arts, 1997: 5).

If Grace’s shout bands had a certain kinship with secular music, they were also influenced by the gospel quartets of the day. Just as intricate vocal arrangements could update the old spirituals and hymns, so could instruments be used: shout bands employed the saxophone, trumpet, and trombone, and backed them with piano, drums, tambourine, and washboard, applying many of the techniques and arrangements of jazz in the swing and big band era.

Although the late George Williams of the Newport News House of Prayer is generally credited with being the seminal trombone player and organizer in the first generation of shout bands, church historian Dr. Robert O. Washington observed that, “Williams was a bandleader and a soloist, he didn’t make the

trombone into the group instrument that it has become in the shout bands.” The dominance of the instrument seems to have emerged in the early 1960s, when ensembles included here – such as the Kings of Harmony, Happyland Band, and Sons of Thunder – began to expand rapidly into the massive trombone choirs associated with today’s music. An RCA recording of a shout band from the Charlotte House of Prayer in 1936 had no trombones. Trombones were used in this period but not in a fashion that outnumbered other brass instruments. Photographs from the 1940s and 1950s show diverse instrumentation in these earlier ensembles. Yet today a shout band’s prowess is partly evaluated by the many ways in which trombones are used. Eddie Babb of the Sons of Thunder notes, “We have nineteen pieces – a host of trombones – in our band. There’s also trombone, tenor, baritone, second lead trombone, and a special effects unit of four trombones. So it’s a lot of brass, and unusual and uncommon to the average eye.”

Today’s near exclusivity of the trombone as the lead instrument in shout bands may have developed incrementally, but in retrospect it seems an almost inevitable evolution. As the title of Harlem Renaissance writer James Weldon Johnson’s 1927 collection of poetic sermons, *God’s Trombones*, suggests, the valveless slide instrument is uncannily well-suited to recreate the emotional range of the human

voice in service of the Lord – from throaty growls and clarion screams to shimmering melisma and swinging scat. The trombone has become such a definitive voice in the musical tradition of shout bands that current players say they can’t remember first hearing the instrument, because it was always present in their lives at the House of Prayer. Many recount stories of playing “air trombone” with broomsticks and plumber’s pipes. Children who mimic adult trombonists are humorously referred to as “fist bands,” because one hand grips the imaginary instrument while the other fist moves as if holding the slide. At nearly any service one can find a few young boys playing with their fists or “sitting-in” on toy instruments with the teens and older men in the shout bands.

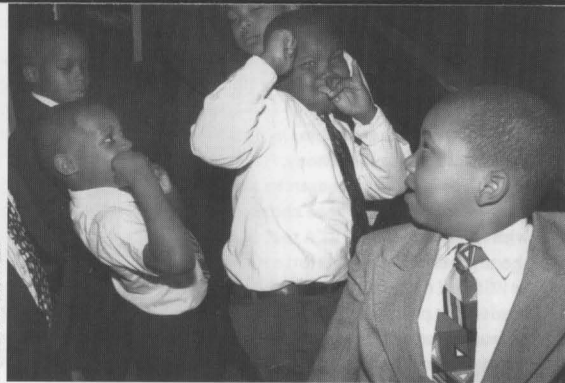
Saints’ Paradise affirms what the children receive by sonic osmosis and what the adults know and feel in their hearts: that this intense enveloping music engages the senses and soul in ecstatic celebration that is at once both personal and communal, both physical and spiritual. The relation of spirit and flesh is one of the enduring mysteries in Christianity – and the improvisatory Spirit-induced African-American sensibilities of an HOP shout band carry that mystery to a blazing experiential level at each service.

Bishop S.C. Madison, “Daddy Madison,” with apostle-like gray beard, in jaunty roll-brim hat and white suit, has carried on the legacy of the United House of Prayer as a total social,

economic, cultural, and spiritual institution. The church continues to build and rebuild its visually memorable churches in the poorest areas, to create low- and middle-income housing, to feed its congregations and their neighbors at cornucopic cafeterias, and to offer hope of economic and spiritual progress to its members. Some churches have hierarchies of multiple senior and junior shout bands that play for, compete with, and energize one another, all the while continuing to move congregations to ecstatic devotion each week at United Houses of Prayer nationwide.

The Washington, D.C., House of Prayer, with its gold dome and black angel statuary, stands like a sort of urban Taj Mahal at the edge of the historic, but struggling, Shaw neighborhood. *Saints' Paradise* takes its name from the adjoining southern-style cafeteria. Just as music animates the spirit, the cuisine at *Saints' Paradise* (and all the other House of Prayer-run cafeterias at churches from New Bedford to Savannah) revives the body. Indeed, a day of service is not complete for many church members without a meal that includes a soul food menu of baked chicken, fish, crab cakes, pigs' feet, barbecue, greens, mashed potatoes, okra,

PHOTO BY NICK SPITZER



The "fist band": Boys pretending to play trombone at the Washington, D.C. House of Prayer, 1994.

butter beans, sweet tea, and cornbread on the side. Musicians exhausted from hours of playing to the edge of their energy eagerly fill their plates amid laughter and anticipation, and many also work in such cafeterias to stay close to the church and its calls for their performances. The *Saints' Paradise* cafeteria is also a daily mecca for District of Columbia construction workers, businessmen, mothers, children, students, and all comers, Black and White, young and old, who seek a "belly buster" meal at trimmed down prices. It seemed appropriate that this essential institution at the D.C. House of Prayer — one where a sense of daily fulfillment of the flesh occurs under a most spiritual of titles — give title to this collection of music.

Madison's Lively Stones

Washington, D.C.

MADISON'S LIVELY STONES is made up of thirteen regular members between the ages of seventeen and thirty. It was formed in 1985 as a way to bring youth into the musical and spiritual experience. The Lively Stones take their name from the Bible. According to Pastor Herbert Whitner, "The Bible speaks of stones being made alive. If we don't pray, then the rocks will cry out."

Jerome Blanchard, the Lively Stones' manager and bass drummer, notes, "We started out as little guys just running around. Apostle Madison gave us a name, we were encouraged by Brother Norvus Miller, and we have made our way." Their sound is different from the older bands through the influence of modern gospel, funk, and even hip-hop. When asked about their similarity to the young jazz brass bands from New Orleans like Dirty Dozen or Rebirth, Blanchard is nonchalant: "They are more for playing parades. They

remind me of the Mummers where I grew up in Philly. We are into our music as a spiritual thing. We are giving God our horns. I like what they play, but it's not my style." All the young men in the band either have jobs or are in school, according to Blanchard. He adds, "We're in it for soul salvation. It gets us closer to God, and it's better than being on the street and selling drugs. And better than any other kind of music. We got it from the older bands, and we just keep going. We're trying to boost up the service."

As with all House of Prayer bands, the Lively Stones wear dark suits with colorful ties. (For this occasion everyone sported Mickey Mouse ties.) Asked how this young band differs from the older, more established groups, trombonist Damon Rodney noted, "Lively Stones, we play our horns more or less like we're singing them. So we have more than one part. A lot of bands have only certain basic parts, but we try to



"The Saints Come Marching In": Lively Stones at The Barns of Wolf Trap, Folk Masters, 1994.

split into voices the way we sing them, and that's how we play them." Jerome Blanchard adds, "Everywhere we go we hear so many bands. Our organization's so big, so I can't even name how many bands are out there. Our band, we try to do something different...different keys, different songs. I guess

some of you are familiar with the Kings of Harmony; they set the foundation. We're walking in their tracks, and we're trying to go higher than they're going. We're trying to start something new."

The Stones have cleared new ground in one special regard: in the early 1990s they

began to play outside the church around Washington—at Dupont Circle, in the alleys of Georgetown, even brightening our day by jamming outside the old *Folk Masters* office at governmentally grim L'Enfant Plaza. Although the House of Prayer historically frowned on such public playing, the Lively Stones have shown it can be done with élan and dignity and as a means of support.

Several of the band members relate individually how the church and music have saved them from an undesirable lifestyle. Jerome Blanchard speaks for the group in addressing the role the spirit plays in his life and his music: "To me, it's an individual thing. When I come to the service, I come with my fire burning already. When I get to the House of Prayer and get in the middle of it, I get that extra charge of God. I'm sure the band will be ready. Tonight we're going to cut loose in here, so put on your shouting shoes."

At this 1994 Good Friday performance, the Lively Stones marched confidently in—wearing the cool, nearly expressionless public faces of today's youth. They heard the screams and applause of a house packed with young female fans and male church elders, as they brought their version

of "When the Saints Go Marching In" (track #1) down the aisle and onto the stage. Their moderate tempo "It's Time to Make a Change" (#2), with its walking bass, has a majestic strutting quality that matches their brassy on-stage and in-the-street personalities. "Never Going to Let You Go" (#3) has a touch of Middle Eastern sound, said by church members to evoke life in the Holy Land. By the end of their set, a six-year old horn player named Andre had joined them on stage, as they marched in a circle, shirts soaked in sweat, waving their shiny trombones triumphantly up and down, back and forth, in time to the music. Their faces showed happy exhaustion—very Lively Stones indeed!

The players are: Jerome "Mann" Blanchard, bass drum; Frank "Butter" Williams III, snare drum; James "Bam-Bam" Tate, second trombone; Damon Rodney, third trombone; Tony "George" Lawson, lead trombone; Stacy Jenkins, third trombone; Dwayne "Tic" Jenkins, lead trombone; Calvin "Scoobie" Harris, baritone horn; Ivan Jackson, tuba; Craig Dudley, first trombone; Thadeous Cradle, first trombone; Curtis "Skee-bop" Graham, first trombone; Dwayne "Chit" Whitner, third trombone.

Eddie Babb and the McCollough Sons of Thunder

Harlem, New York City

THE HARLEM UNITED HOUSE OF PRAYER, called "Sweet Honey, Heaven Harlem," by congregation members, is on the corner of 125th Street and 8th Avenue, down the street from the famous Apollo Theater, and, until recent remodeling, above a Kentucky Fried Chicken. The church's senior band is the McCollough Sons of Thunder, named for Bishop Walter McCollough.

"Son of Thunder," according to James Weldon Johnson, is a sobriquet applied to old-time African-American preachers. For House of Prayer-goers, the name now alludes to the musical practice of "thundering" (usually a repeated horn figure with growing rhythmic intensity) that causes worshipers to get the Spirit. In existence for nearly four decades, the Thunderbirds, as they are commonly called, are directed by lead trombonist Edward A. "Eddie" Babb, also nicknamed

"Trip." Babb, a soft-spoken insurance salesman with an intense, driving musical style, conducts a "chorus" of up to nineteen trombones in unison and section-arranged alto and tenor "voices." The sheer volume of all this brass moving air shakes a church. During this 1990 *Folk Masters* performance, the large chandelier at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall seemed in danger of rattling to pieces!

Leading the foremost band at the Harlem church arguably puts Eddie Babb at the top of the House of Prayer musical kingdom. Indeed, as one hears his subtle melodic techniques and powerful solos, combined with the irresistible drive of swing and the improvisation of modern jazz, it is hard to imagine who can musically top the Thunderbirds with Babb at the helm. The Harlem church's pastor, Apostle H. M. Swaringer, praises both Babb's musical and devotional abilities: "He can judge



PHOTO BY NICK SPITZER

Edward "Trip" Babb (c) lead trombone, and the Sons of Thunder at the Harlem United House of Prayer, 1989.

the mood of the crowd and create a sound that will touch the hearts of every person sitting within hearing distance of his trombone, like he is playing something you

have been waiting to hear and didn't know it." In 1997 the National Endowment for the Arts signaled its agreement with Swaringer by awarding Edward Babb the

highest honor America bestows on traditional artists, the National Heritage Fellowship. The band traveled to Washington, and, beneath a portrait of George Washington, played at the White House for Mrs. Clinton and a packed East Room crowd. Several House of Prayer members in the room got the Spirit.

Of his life in music, Babb recalls, "I was raised here in the House of Prayer. I was born at 15th and Lennox and moved to 125th Street. I started to play horn when I was thirteen years old. It was just a normal thing for a young man in the House of Prayer to do. It was my desire to play the horn to inspire someone to feel the spirit of God. The band has been together ever since 1962. Our nickname is the Thunderbirds, so we try to thunder every time we play."

In "He Touched Me" (#4) drum rolls sustain the musical tension, while Babb leads the band through a series of figures and finally unleashes individual trombone voices to sing in call-and-response fashion. Their dirge-like "One Day at a Time" (#5) sweeps along slowly with the soulful majesty of an old-time prayer band until

the tempo quickens into a jazzy exploration of the melody, replete with lead and section horn runs and fills, and drum accents.

At the outset of "Sweet!" (#6) Babb asks the crowd to meditate on the music to relieve suffering — an essential message in all House of Prayer musical services. "Sweetness" is a quality associated with Daddy Grace and his successors. In Sunday services pastors always refer to "Sweet, sweet Daddy Madison," and the congregation responds by applauding the man and his deeds. The Daddy's sweetness is also embodied in the very notion that he is not the stern father. "He is," in Apostle Swaringer's words, "Daddy because of his kindness. It's sweeter, greater, closer. Father is formal, Daddy is relaxing.... we call our place here 'Honey Heaven Harlem' because, although it has been depicted as a rough place, even in the midst of the hell environment that may be outside the door, we find Heaven in the House of Prayer, because Daddy McCollough once told us here that it was sweeter than sugar. It became honey."

Men in the House of Prayer are expected to be strong, reliable, humble, and spiri-

tual. They accentuate these personal demeanors by dressing in well-tailored clothes. A man's sweetness should infuse and bind all personal characteristics; and there is no man sweeter than the Daddy, who further emphasizes the home atmosphere by sitting in a large (usually white) swivel chair in the sanctuary area behind and above the pulpit at each House of Prayer. The well-groomed, carpeted plateau is often picket-fenced, with potted plants. A clear plastic sheet hangs over Daddy's empty chair until he arrives in this elevated place, also known variously as "God's living room" and the "mountain."

On stage at Carnegie Hall's secular sanctuary known as Weill Recital Hall, Eddie Babb builds the musical arrangement called "Sweet!" (#6) until he urges everyone to follow him "a little higher." In that moment a few dozen people begin speaking in tongues. The band moves incessantly toward a conclusion of thundering fanfares—a final plateau before "climbing the mountain" of "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" (#7). Babb almost frantically paces the stage as he plays, demanding more from his fel-

low bandmembers with each riff from his driving horn. Finally he begins running in place as if climbing an imaginary set of stairs. Sweat flies from Babb's brow as he sprays notes heavenward from his instrument — crescendo upon crescendo until a tumultuous end of brassy bombast, fanfare, and booming drums. The show concludes, and the band and audience are happily exhausted. Horns are packed, hugs exchanged, coats donned, and the world outside in wintry New York City seems a warmer and more joyous place.

Band members include: Edward Babb, lead trombone; William "Brother Bill" Cohen, trumpet; Emanuel Grier, second lead trombone; Andrew Cole, sousaphone; John Byers, baritone horn; David Cole, trombone; Walter Williams, trombone; Sidney Kolluck, trombone; Billy Perry, tenor trombone; Tyrone Pickney, tenor tuba; Anthony Woodard, trombone; John Smothers, trombone; Robert Daniels, trombone; Jimmy Hart, alto trombone; James Daniels, cymbals; William Montgomery, snare drum; Elder Willie Williams, bass drum.

George Holland and the Happyland Band

Newport News, Virginia

THE OLD NEWPORT NEWS HOUSE OF PRAYER is located in the East End neighborhood near the waterfront. It began as a revival tent in what was then called the Blood Field section of the city. Consistent with the House of Prayer policy of establishing itself in places most in need of social as well as spiritual help, the area had a reputation for roughness. Two years after Daddy Grace's 1926 tent revival appearance, a church was built.

The Happyland Band formed in 1948, building on an earlier influential ensemble called the Seven Last Gospel Band. The late George Holland, Happyland's lead trombone player, had been in the Seven Last. At the time of this concert in 1993, he was, at sixty-seven, one of two members from that original band now playing in the Happyland Band. Holland said of the Seven Last Gospel Band's name: "Bible scholars know the significance behind the number seven. Seven days in the week, seven churches, six days

God worked and on the seventh he rested. So people that are, you know, in communication with God know the meaning and the significance of the number seven."

Holland had a familial base for his music: "I started playing as a sophomore in high school in the town where I lived. I was always associated with the church. My family roots, my mother, and all my brothers, all of my sisters, and all of my children, are in the House of Prayer, and I had a special love for the instruments and had occasion to meet a fellow in our organization that was the beginning of the bands in our church, and we call him the 'father of the trombone,' Brother George Williams. Our association was so close that people thought we were brothers. I received motivation and inspiration from him because of his dedication to what he was doing." Holland's own quiet intensity as a mentor made him seem a bit like a cross between coaches Vince Lombardi and John

Thompson, as his charges — ranging from forty-four-year band veteran trumpeter Joe Jackson to the twelve-year old trombonist Toine Guy, in the band for two years — played with dignity and fervor.

The Happyland Band's moderated, mellow sound reflects Holland's own taste for careful arrangements that break out into a more ecstatic improvisatory approach only in the final stages of a service. Ardent in supporting the House of Prayer for ground-breakings, convocations, baptizings, parades, and funerals, as well as regular Sunday ser-

vices from Miami to New York and back to Newport News, the Happyland Band is renowned throughout the House of Prayer. Holland says, "They called us 'Happyland,' because everywhere we traveled in the Kingdom we made people rejoice and very happy. There are three stars in the Kingdom, and we are one of them."

A retired railroad brakeman and long-shoreman who spent fifty-two years playing the music, George Holland says with conviction, "It's a spiritual connection. It's music that can't be written. That's the mystery of it. It is a

George Holland (seated R) and the Happyland Band, Newport News, Virginia 1993.



PHOTO BY NICK SPITZER

revelation. After all my years on the bandstand, I can be asleep at home and wake at 4:00 a.m. and get a musical revelation."

The smoothness of Happyland's well-drilled performance style reaches to an earlier era in its use of the trumpet and in the overall mix of jazz, gospel, and sweet soul music. This style, from the period before trombones dominated shout bands, is evident in the first phrases of "Won't It Be Sad?" (#8), as Joe Jackson's insistent but contained trumpet jousts with his fellow elder Holland and the young Antonio Guy on trombones. Other trombone soloists and sections add their voices in sequence, with almost amusing transitions based on Sousa figures, creating a unified musical statement that is pleasing across the generations.

Old-style patriotism has long been a hallmark of the House of Prayer. Perhaps because Daddy Grace, as an immigrant, expected American life to be filled with bounty for his followers during the struggle of the Depression, he often made use of flag tableaux and used red, white, and blue colors to ornament churches and pastors' homes – a feature one still sees today. Grace's own Savannah home had

red stripe and blue field motifs covering the clapboards. "God Bless America" adorned his stationery. So it was not surprising when Happyland played this soulful version of "America the Beautiful" (#9), a song they use on the Fourth of July and church ceremonial occasions.

As the band's *Folk Masters* concert drew to its conclusion, the normally reserved Holland approached the microphone and intoned emotionally: "I'd like to say here, before we play our last selection, we are very happy, enthused, and overjoyed at your reception of our performance – especially the youngest fellows that are in our group that are just starting out. I hope that the opportunity will present itself, when at some time in the future, that we will be able to come back again. For our last selection we will play "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" (#10).

The band members are: George Holland, lead trombone; Antonio Guy, second lead trombone; Clinton Griffin, tenor trombone; Joe Jackson, trumpet; Keary Griffin, second trombone; Cory Cook, second trombone; Eddie Perry, sousaphone; Toine Guy, baritone horn; Lorenzo Barner, bass drum; Ernest Bell, snare drum and band president.

Madison Prayer Band

Charlotte, North Carolina

THE UNITED HOUSE OF PRAYER IN CHARLOTTE is a massive church with room for well over one thousand worshippers in its expansive wooden interior. The basement is a social center and cafeteria decorated with the characteristic red, white, and blue motifs that go back to Daddy Grace's era. Old wall murals also show the late Daddy McCollough envisioning the Charlotte church being built in the vineyard of the Lord.

The Madison Prayer Band is a group of elders from the Charlotte HOP who testify to their faith in group song. Such prayer bands hearken in style to the 1930s, and because they once included banjos and mandolins, they are still sometimes called "string bands" – though a guitar is the only remaining vestige of lead string instruments in this group. The primary continuity to the prayer bands of another time is in the many voices that speak and sing testimony and in the older rhythm instruments – tambourines and

washboard – used for accompaniment. Nowadays such bands may open a service, leading up to the larger, more youthful trombone bands. The Madison Prayer Band is also joined by a trombone, played by Cedric Mangum, the leader of the Clouds of Heaven (see below), who helped organize these elders' trip to *Folk Masters* in Washington.

On Good Friday, 1995, the Madison Prayer Band made their first appearance outside the HOP. They began by following the solo trombone of Mangum with soft, almost otherworldly voices on the old standard "Lord, Fix Me" (#11) and fell into a miraculous mix of soulful gospel accompanied by the old-style rhythm section. In "Shouting Time" (#12), band members moved freely into the "other tongue," leaving no doubt that they were comfortable declaring their faith in the Spirit on stage.

The Madison Prayer Band includes: Saint Dolores Peay, Saint Essie Bryant, Saint Jo Anne Graham, Saint Lily Mae

House, Saint Sarah Young, Saint Cora L. Frederick, Saint Mary Williams, Saint Vera Gaston, Brother William Ford, Saint Mary Williams, and Deacon B.D. Degraffinrid,

vocals, tambourines and washboard; accompanied by Cedric Mangum on organ and trombone; Charles McCauley, guitar; and Andrew Williams IV, bass.

Madison Prayer Band at The Barns of Wolf Trap, Folk Masters, 1995.



Cedric Mangum and the Clouds of Heaven

Charlotte, North Carolina

GIVEN THE PROMINENCE OF CHARLOTTE IN DADDY GRACE'S EARLY TENT REVIVALS and the large and influential institution the House of Prayer has become there, it is no surprise that an array of musical talent is associated with the church. The Charlotte HOP is the site of grand convocations and baptisms with the Bishop present. It is a place where as many as a dozen bands will gather to play at such special outdoor services in the football field-sized parking lot. The Clouds of Heaven are today regarded as one of the top bands in the Charlotte House of Prayer.

The Clouds, as their House of Prayer fans call them, were formed in 1965 under the direction of Elder Johnnie E. Phifer. At the time they were called the Number Two Shout Band, because there was already one band at the church, the McCollough Tigers. In June, 1984, at a convocation in Los Angeles, the Number Two Shout Band was renamed the Clouds of Heaven by Bishop McCollough. The

McCollough Tigers have been reorganized and are now in Gastonia, North Carolina, and the Clouds of Heaven, under the exuberant directorship of Cedric Mangum, have assumed a lead role.

A hairstylist by day, Mangum got his start in music playing drums, and it was as a drummer at age nine, in 1969, that he first joined a shout band. In 1974 he switched to the sousaphone and about two years later to the trombone. Today Cedric Mangum is not only a remarkable trombonist and arranger but also a fine organist. He rose to the directorship of the Clouds of Heaven in 1974, initially assisted by Elder G. Ricks. When Cedric was growing up he lived across the street from another trombone player, Brother Zeb Harrison, who is now a member of the Clouds of Heaven. Cedric recalls that when they got home from school in the afternoon they would go out onto their respective porches and play, answering each other back and forth, drawing quite a crowd. That musical front porch jam of trombone



Cedric Mangum (l) and the Clouds of Heaven at The Barns of Wolf Trap, Folk Masters, 1996.

voices had the effect of promoting the House of Prayer in the neighborhood and is recreated here with son Cedric Jr. taking Harrison's place in what Cedric Sr. calls a "Spiritual Conversation" (#14).

As a "copy band," part of what the Clouds of Heaven do is pay tribute to the prior generation of influential bands known as the "Stars in the Kingdom." "Lord I'm Troubled about My Soul" (#13), with its walking bass and mesmerizing brass drones, is a tribute to Norvus Miller, late legendary leader of the Kings of Harmony. "Keep Oil in Your Vessels" (#15), with its minor mood, has the admonishing feel of a church elder citing biblical examples for a righteous life. Mangum's crisp trombone

provides the voicing for the sermon. Complementary to the Clouds' initial selection on this CD, the uplifting conclusion, with inflections of soul and pop music, is "Ease My Troubled Mind" (#16).

The Clouds of Heaven members include: Cedric Mangum Sr., lead trombone; Cedric Mangum Jr., second lead trombone; Wayne Parker, second trombone; Anthony Monroe, second trombone; Anthony Patterson, second trombone; Willie Johnson Jr., first tenor trombone; Fred Hargro, baritone horn; Clifford Gibson Jr., second tenor trombone; Miles Kilcrease Jr., sousaphone; Marcel Sinclair, drums; Thomas Hudson Jr., bass drum; Blair Smith, cymbals; Lorenzo Camps, tambourine and cowbell.

Norvus Miller and the Kings of Harmony

Washington, D.C.

NEITHER THIS RECORDING NOR THE ENTIRE SERIES OF HOP SHOUT BANDS presented on *Folk Masters* would have been possible without Norvus "Butch" Littlejohn Miller, the late leader of the Kings of Harmony based at "God's White House." It is here that the Kings have performed together for over three decades. I first met Miller during fieldwork with Susan Levitas for her production of a series of "District Cultures" concerts in 1987 under the auspices of the National Council for the Traditional Arts. As a result, the band was also invited to the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife in 1988, where they greatly enlivened a program on culture in Washington, D.C. In those days Pastor Herbert Whitner sang with the group. In the years that followed, Miller and Whitner opened their arms to us, as we attended Sunday services, parades, prayer meetings, and artists' workshops, and we became frequent guests at the House of Prayer and in homes of band members. In

return we were able to invite the Kings to a series of major events outside the church, such as the National Folk Festival in Lowell, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C.'s Fourth of July parade and annual *American Roots* concert on the National Mall.

Norvus Miller's energy was amazing — directing a band, playing trombone, always off to another performance. One night after playing late to close a show in Lowell, the Kings rode overnight to do Sunday services in New Haven, Connecticut, then returned to Lowell for a concert that afternoon. Miller spoke fondly of his trips around the country with Daddy Grace and then Daddy McCollough. Norvus's own part-time line of work, driving a long-distance "Luxury Liner" bus for the House of Prayer, neatly dovetailed with his musical travels with the Kings. At the drop of a hat he also accompanied me to Newport News to seek out the retired George Holland and urge him to pull the Happyland Band back together to play on

Folk Masters. Here, as everywhere, Miller diplomatically broached the value of public performances for House of Prayer musicians with local pastors, senior church leaders, and Daddy Madison himself. Whether at a House of Prayer in Savannah, South Philadelphia, or Harlem, knowing Norvus Miller got us invited into the House of Prayer inner sanctum, to dinners overflowing with fine Southern cooking, and to large musical occasions where the presence of the Spirit was overpowering.

In February 1993 Norvus was celebrated along with Eddie Babb and George Holland at a “Legends of Leaders” concert held at the “Mother Church” at 6th and M Streets in Northwest Washington, D.C. It could have been just another of an endless array of honors and plaques Miller had been awarded, but this was special. He was with his two peer musicians, and the event was captured on video by Susan Levitas for *The Music District*, a documentary on African-American performance traditions in the nation’s capital. A little over a year afterwards, on May 1, 1994, exhausted from working up to three jobs and playing music, and often awake as many as twenty hours a day, week in and week out, Miller died suddenly of a heart attack. He was forty-eight years old. Levitas

was asked by the House of Prayer to document Norvus Miller’s funeral for *The Music District* and for church members themselves.

The crowd at the funeral was so huge that services had to be held twice. Eddie Babb and every major shout band in the southeastern United States were there. Norvus Miller’s casket, accompanied by a flower display in the shape of an HOP “Luxury Liner” bus, was attended by a rotating honor guard of fellow House of Prayer bus drivers in full traditional uniforms: purple coats with epaulets and gold buttons, white gloves, and a distinctive HOP driver’s hat. These men also served as pallbearers. Miller’s son, Norvus “Butchy-Butch” Jr., led the Kings of Harmony in a tribute of wailing trombone voices that still echoes in my heart.

When Daddy Madison arrived at the church, his wide-brimmed planter’s straw hat was carried into the sanctuary by a young woman attendant, dressed in white, as is the tradition. Daddy Madison soon entered and was greeted with thunderous music, applause, and cheers. His sermon evoked Norvus’s selfless service and his love of Madison and his predecessors. Before and after Daddy Madison spoke, he sat benevolently on the “mountain” (a raised area behind the pulpit) in

his white swivel chair, fanned by young women attendants. In this case, Madison’s wife, Lady Dee, also sat at his right hand.

Pastor Whitner led a testimony-filled service that continued for hours and invited many non-church members to express their appreciation for the fallen friend and musician. Finally, accompanied by more trombone players than I could count, the coffin was carried out into the rainy streets for several blocks of musical salutation and finally spirited away in a hearse.

Though Norvus Miller is gone, his lovely family and the Kings of Harmony live on. One particular inspiration to the group is that Purcell “Rob” Miller (son of the late Miller) has taken up a career as a professional boxer. At several of Rob’s fights the Kings have marched into the arena behind him — a statement of heavenly power that intimidates opponents. A punishing welterweight, Rob is undefeated at this writing.

The recording here of a jam session by Miller, Babb, and Holland at the noted “Legends of Leaders” event can also be seen in *The Music District*. Eddie Babb suggested it be called “Revelation and Improvisation” (#17). The two other selections, “Oh, Happy Day” (#18) and “When the Saints Go Marching In” (#19), include vocals by Virgil



Trombone salute at Norvus Miller, Sr.’s funeral, outside the United House of Prayer, Washington, D.C. 1994.

Smith and are from the Kings’ all-too-brief performance at *Folk Masters* in 1992.

The band members include Norvus Miller, Sr., lead trombone; Norvus Miller, Jr., trombone; Virgil Smith, vocalist; Joseph Hayward, snare drum and band president; James Freeman, bass drum; Anthony Roberts, trombone; Henry Cleveland, trombone; Sidney Wiggins, trombone; H. Shepherd, trombone; Joseph Chambers, trombone; Lloyd Mays, trombone; Glen Lewis, trombone; Purcell R. Miller, trombone; Marick Stewart, baritone horn; Darren Strouse, sousaphone; and Perry Smith, trombone.

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Note on sources: The above video, radio, recorded, and written documents augmented interviews and fieldwork done by myself and

Susan Levitas over a period of years for the *Folk Masters* series and various festival performances. A definitive history or ethnography of Daddy Grace and the United House of Prayer has yet to be written. Very few of the hundreds of shout bands and other church musical ensembles have been recorded – virtually none in the current era with the church's permission. Several graduate students in music, folklore, and American studies are researching aspects of the House of Prayer for theses and dissertations. One church member working on a history is Dr. Robert O. Washington. A native of Newport News and son of noted House of Prayer pastor R.L. Washington, Dr. Washington was a sousaphone player for George Holland as a youth in the 1950s and is currently a professor of urban studies at the University of New Orleans.

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ABOUT FOLK MASTERS

From 1990 to 1996, *Folk Masters* presented 175 American traditional artists or ensembles in over seventy concerts, which were recorded and produced for public radio. The full-house concerts at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall (1990) and The Barns of Wolf Trap (1992-96) explored the use of the proscenium stage and intimate concert hall to serve a variety of cultural aesthetics, setting production standards for the field of public folklore presenters. The live concerts were edited, re-mixed, and presented with commentary for radio audiences. *Folk Masters* was distributed by Public Radio International to over 300 stations here and abroad. The programs received multiple awards from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for artistic and technical excellence as well as community impact.

Directed and hosted by folklorist Nick Spitzer, *Folk Masters* concerts unfolded as remarkable variety shows of joyously diverse but ultimately connected forms of music. Some highlighted cultural kinship; others featured a single instrument as played by masters from different traditions. The artists were assembled through original fieldwork and with the help of numerous advisors. *Folk Masters* emphasized virtuosity as defined by the groups in question and used local outreach to attract members of these groups to the concerts. On any given night the approach might combine Chautauqua with the Grand Ole Opry, concert hall with church service

or dancehall. But it always put the music and musicians first, presenting them with intelligence, humor, and respect.

Bringing together the diversity and spirit of folk festivals with concert hall and recording studio production values, *Folk Masters* created a *fin de siècle* gathering of many of the finest traditional performing artists from America and beyond. Many of these artists either emerged from or went on to appearances at the National Folk Festival. Some had been or became National Heritage Fellows of the National Endowment for the Arts. *Folk Masters* was a ground-breaking collaboration between Wolf Trap, Radio Smithsonian and Nick Spitzer. The *Folk Masters CD Series* on Smithsonian Folkways Recordings presents great performances selected from these wide-ranging and influential concerts.

Folk Masters artistic director Nick Spitzer received his B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and Ph.D. from the University of Texas in anthropology. Known for his work in cultural creolization, public folklore and the media, Spitzer served as Louisiana's first state folklorist. A former senior folklife specialist with the Smithsonian, he contributes to NPR's *All Things Considered* and hosts *American Routes*, the weekly two-hour Public Radio International program devoted to the roots and branches of popular music. Spitzer is professor of folklore and cultural conservation at the University of New Orleans.