

DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN GOSPEL PIANO STYLE (1926-1960): A SOCIO-MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF ARIZONA DRANES AND THOMAS A. DORSEY

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African-American gospel music has long been recognized as a vocal music, and its piano accompaniment has also been an indispensable and important component in shaping and defining the genre. This dissertation traces and examines the historical and stylistic development of the gospel piano style from 1926 to 1960. Arizona Dranes and Thomas A. Dorsey are highlighted as two of the earliest and formidable practitioners who aided in codifying and promulgating the gospel piano style. The four primary areas of investigation include: 1) explicating the musical development of the piano style from 1926 to 1960 through the pianistic styles of twenty-three gospel pianists; 2) providing biographical information on over twenty-five gospel pianists; 3) examining the sacred versus secular dichotomy through musical similarities and differences that exist between the gospel piano style and other popular, African-American piano styles; and 4) presenting an ethnographic exploration of the musical and sociohistorical roles of gospel pianists. Each area of inquiry is informed by methods in Ethnomusicology and Musicology, and augmented by methodologies in African-American Studies, Anthropology, and Sociology. Wilson’s work on conceptual approaches to African and African-American music-making (1974, 1984, 1992), and Gates’ work on Signifying (1988) provide the major theoretical framework for the musical analysis. Fifty-five recordings of various gospel pianists, representing nine sub-styles, are transcribed and analyzed in order to define and delineate established practices, techniques, idiomatic harmonic movement, and shared motives, riffs, and "fill-ins" -- all which are important in establishing a stylistic and performance canon for the gospel piano style. Eleven motivic techniques that are endemic and idiomatic to the foundation and development of the gospel piano style are identified. The gospel piano style is grouped into three historical periods. Dranes and Dorsey define the first period with twenty-six musical characteristics, thirteen musical characteristics define the second period, and ten musical characteristics define the third.
August Wilson represents the experiences of African-Americans in each decade of the 20th century in his Pittsburgh Cycle, a collection of ten plays. Throughout this canon, language is used not just as an important form of communication amongst the characters, but also as a means of communicating the African-American experience and its changes across the decades of the 20th century. "Niggers got style. Negroes got blindyitis. A dog knows it's a dog."

In many contemporary works by African-American artists such as comedians and musicians particularly those individuals involved in the rap and hip-hop scenes, the term "nigger" is most frequently used as a term that expresses brotherhood and a history of shared experience. Complete your Arizona Dranes record collection. Discover Arizona Dranes's full discography. Shop new and used Vinyl and CDs. Profile: American gospel singer, died in 1963. Variations: Viewing All | Arizona Dranes. Arizona Dranes And Choir, Arizona Juanita Dranes, Dranes. [a307271]. Artist. Edit Artist.