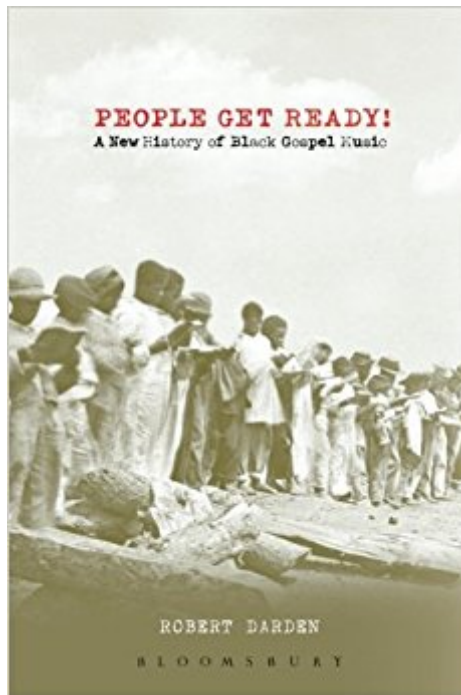




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# People Get Ready!: A New History Of Black Gospel Music



## Synopsis

*People Get Ready!: A New History of Gospel Music* is a passionate, celebratory, and carefully researched chronology of one of America's greatest treasures. From Africa through the spirituals, from minstrel music through jubilee, and from traditional to contemporary gospel, *People Get Ready!* shows the links between styles, social patterns, and artists. The emphasis is on the stories behind the songs and musicians. From the nameless slaves of Colonial America to Donnie McClurkin, Yolanda Adams, and Kirk Franklin, *People Get Ready!* provides, for the first time, an accessible overview of this musical genre. In addition to the more familiar stories of Thomas A. Dorsey and Mahalia Jackson, the book offers intriguing new insights into the often forgotten era between the Civil War and the rise of jubilee-that most intriguing blend of minstrel music, barbershop harmonies, and the spiritual. Also chronicled are the connections between some of gospel's precursors (Blind Willie Johnson, Arizona Dranes, and Sister Rosetta Tharpe) and modern gospel stars, including Andrae Crouch and Clara Ward. *People Get Ready!* knits together a number of narratives, and combines history, musicology and spirituality into a coherent whole, stitched together by the stories of dozens of famous and forgotten musical geniuses.

FROM THE INTRODUCTION"Among the richest of the lavish gifts Africa has given to the world is rhythm. The beat. The sound of wood on wood, hand on hand. That indefinable pulse that sets blood to racing and toes to tapping. It is rhythm that drives the great American musical exports, the spiritual (and, by extension, gospel), the blues, jazz and rock 'n' roll. But first you must have the spirituals-religion with rhythm. In this book, I will show the evolution of a musical style that only occasionally slows down its evolution long enough to be classified before it evolves yet again. In historical terms, spirituals emerged from African rhythm, work-songs, and field hollers in a remarkably short time-years, perhaps days-after the first African slaves landed on American shores. From the spirituals sprang not just their spiritual heir jubilee, but jazz and blues. And gospel music in its modern understanding morphed from the spirituals, the blues, jubilee and-of course-African rhythm. What today's gospel music is and what it is becoming is part of the continuing evolution of African American music. Religion with rhythm."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Robert Darden reaches back to Africa to establish a foundation for his cogent discussion of matter relevant to a historical study of religion and sacred music, and he makes these matters seem like part of the complete fabric rather than vignettes. The approach is scholarly throughout, but the narrative is as lucid and flowing as any lay reader might wish. The book covers a broad range and merits serious consideration. Highly recommended. • "Choice, 5/05 (CHOICE) Mentioned. "Dallas Morning News!, Article: Rhythm & Pews, 4/1/05 (CHOICE) "a meticulously researched but living, breathing story" Darden's book is especially valuable in detailing how much effort, debate and study have gone into finding gospel's origins and into recording authentic examples that have long fascinated researchers. Indeed, his 25-page, A to Z discography stretched in time and scope from Afro-American Spirituals, Work Song, and Ballads, early samples from the Library of Congress, to Vickie Winans by Vickie Winans. • "AOL Black Voices. May 2005 "This meticulously researched book traces the way in which Negro spirituals evolved into contemporary African-American gospel songs" Ultimately, this is the story of the intense and often painful experiences of black Americans and the inspirational music which they have poured out in response. • "The Tablet, May 2005 'Reminds us that when slaves first arrived from Africa the only thing they could bring with them was their tradition of singing.' Methodist Recorder Mentioned. "Dallas Morning News!, Article: Rhythm & Pews, 4/1/05 (CHOICE)

Robert Darden is Assistant Professor of English at Baylor University, and Senior Editor of The Door Magazine. He was gospel music editor for Billboard magazine for 10 years and has written about religious music for most of his adult life. He lives in Waco.

Even this book is not exactly what I expected in terms of academic study, I think it's useful as a first

introduction to the theme.

Really good treatment of. The subject.

The book arrived in perfect condition. Thanks for helping me reach my educational goals.

I shall need to review the reviews. But let us write. Today it is a book I should still much like to have 'on the book planks,' though the planks are no longer there. To help other candidate buyers some quotes from pages in the book: Entry for 24 May 2007 Gospel Music A Message \_People Get Ready!! Passeh Passeh!! Previous | Next Gospel music From People Get Ready! (A New History of Black Gospel Music) by Robert DARDEN A Continuum (2004) ISBN 0-8264-1436-2 Some early writers including Dr. Seth Rogers, a Northern surgeon during the Civil War, point to field hollers and work songs as one of the basic components of the spirituals. And it is clear that slaves brought the work songs (also known as hollers, "cottonfield hollers," cries, or "whoops") with them from Africa. "A slave's call or cry could mean any of a number of things: a call for water. food, or help, a call to let others know where he was working, or simply a cry of loneliness, sorrow or happiness." Like most of the work songs (some captured by Alan Lomax in the seminal field recordings of the Georgia Sea Islands CD), the hollers contained a rhythmic quality that made the work seem easier, be it rowing, picking cotton, or laying railroad ties. Most were performed in the now-familiar "call and response" format. Noted Ethiopian scholar Ashenafi Kebede differentiates calls from cries. Whereas calls may have been primarily used to communicate information \_to alert a dozing friend of a fast-approaching white overseer \_cries, on the other hand express a deeply felt emotional experience, such as hunger, loneliness, or lovesickness. They are half-sung half-yelled. Vocables are often intermixed in the text. The melodies are performed in a free and spontaneous style, they are often ornamented and employ many African vocal devices, such as yodels, echolike falsetto, tonal glides, embellished melismas, and microtonal inflections that are often impossible to indicate in European staff notation. These cries, Kebede believes, may have evolved into the religious songs of spirituals of African Americans. "There is no doubt," he writes "that these calls were African in derivation and that they were sung in African dialects in the early part of slave history." Suddenly [a slave] raised such a sound as I have never heard before, a long loud musical shout, rising and falling, and breaking into falsetto, his voice ringing through the woods in the clear frosty night air, like a bugle call. As he finished the melody was caught up by another, and then, another, and then, by several in chorus. (p.43) Despite the inroad made by the Holiness/Pentecostal churches,

more African Americans were still Baptists than any other denomination, with sixty-one percent of the 5.2 million black church members in the mid-1920s calling themselves Baptist, followed by the Methodists in distant second. Until Sherwood and Tindley, black Baptist and Methodist churches generally sang modified spirituals and camp meeting songs, along with "hymn-like compositions," similar to those sung in mainstream white churches. According to Boyer, these songs always featured a salvation-based message, a standard verse/chorus format (eight bars each), rhythms dominated by quarter and dotted eighth notes, and an antiphonal chorus. ... Tindley's lyrics focused instead on specific concerns of African-American Christians, including "worldly sorrows, blessings, and woes, as well as the joys of the afterlife. Furthermore, most of his songs were placed in the pentatonic scale and allowed ample room for rhythmic, melodic, and even lyric improvisations. The Tindley Gospel Singers .. to come from the predominant Baptist tradition who were attracted to the new, more emotional music emanating from the Sanctified tradition, but .. "I'll Overcome Someday" (1901) ...(p. 161) Even the more conservative older gospel groups, such as the Pace Jubilee Singers, found his songs too singable to ignore \_ their version of Tindley's "Stand by me" was a hit in 1930. (p.162) One of Tindley's contemporaries was a woman .. Lucie .. Campbell [self-taught] ... NBC National Baptist Convention Convention Golden Gems, Inspirational Melodies, Spirituals Triumphant and Gospel Pearls ..\_ all of which, incidentally, included her compositions. (p.163)

"To truly understand American music, you must first attempt to understand the spirituals and gospel music," says former gospel music editor of Billboard magazine and author Robert Darden. "And it begins where it all began-Africa, a thousand years ago." Darden, an Assistant Professor of Journalism at Baylor University has done his homework.\* His research is extensive. *People Get Ready!* is informative and cites multiple sources. "The aim of African music has always been to translate the experiences of life and of the spiritual worlds into sound, enhancing and celebrating life." Samuel Floyd "Praise songs, songs of insult, boasting songs, litigation songs, mourning songs, topical songs, story songs, love songs, heroic songs and religious songs, and the repertoire of drum language constitute an important part of literature of African peoples created, developed, maintained and transmitted through music." J.H.Nketia, "The Musical Languages of Subsaharan Africa." Work songs, also known as hollers, cries or whoops, contained rhythmic quality making work seem easier, be it rowing, picking cotton, or laying railroad ties. Many were performed as the "call and response". Then there were the 'spirituals' and plantation hymns with the master's whip keeping time... Eventually, America became fascinated with African-American music, which

spread because of the exodus of blacks from the deep South to Chicago. From the spirituals came ragtime, followed by the blues, then jazz. Some time during the migration, jubilee music, using quartets sang spirituals in harmonized verse chorus arrangements. Later, gospel music with its improvisation of individual expression evolved just as spirituals did, by visions, trouble, sorrow, thanksgiving, and joy. Darden includes a chapter dedicated to the Fathers of Gospel music, William H. Sherwood, Charles A. Tindley, and the man behind the melding of blues to religious hymns, Thomas A. Dorsey. In another chapter, he tells of three black divas that helped transform American popular music, as well as gospel, Rosetta Tharpe, Clara Ward, and the high priestess, Mahalia Jackson. The soul music of the 1960's produced artists that had their roots in gospel before moving into the secular realm, Aretha Franklin, James Brown, Lou Rawls, and Wilson Pickett. The spiritual, biblical message proclaimed today is deemed 'contemporary' gospel music. Kirk Franklin summed it up, "We just let the music take us wherever the Spirit led us and wherever the music wanted to go." Robert Darden closes with, "In the beginning was the WORD... And THE WORD got the funky beat, it became GOSPEL." For his book, *People Get Ready: A New History of Black Gospel Music*, the ARSC (Association for Recorded Sound Collections) 2005 Awards for Excellence in Historical Records Sound Research awarded Mr. Darden "Best Research in Recorded Rhythm and Blues, Soul, or Gospel Music." The award is given to authors and publishers of books, articles, liner notes, and monographs, in recognition for outstanding published research in the field of recorded sound and encourages high standards to promote awareness of superior works.

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