

Unit 701

Gospel Music

An introduction to ensemble vocal performance

You will learn to:

1. Sing in time and in tune
2. Follow simple performance directions
3. Perform in two-part harmony

Key Vocabulary

Choir - an organised group of singers, especially one that takes part in church services or performs in public.

Ensemble - a group of *musicians*, actors, or dancers who perform together.

Blend - the seamless integration of multiple voices to create a single, balanced sound.

Articulation - the way a note is played – for example, smooth (legato) or detached (staccato).

Pitch - how high or low a note sounds.

Timbre - the unique sound or tone quality of an instrument or voice – what makes them sound different.

Dynamics - How loudly or softly the music is played

Tempo - How fast or slow the music is played

Staccato - notes that are short and detached.

Legato - notes that are played smoothly and connected.

Harmony - the sound of two or more notes sung or played together



Gospel music is a style of Christian music rooted in African American spirituals and hymns that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries. Characterized by powerful, dominant vocals, rich harmonies, and strong rhythms, its lyrics focus on delivering a message of faith, hope, and the "good news" of Jesus Christ.

Key features

Call-and-response: A rhythmic and interactive exchange between a lead singer and a chorus or congregation.

Vocal improvisation: Singers often add their own embellishments and variations to melodies.

Strong rhythms: Driving beats are often created through hand-clapping, foot-stomping, and syncopation.

Instrumentation: While traditional forms were often a cappella, modern gospel frequently features piano, Hammond organ, drums, bass, and electric guitar.

Origin and influence

Gospel developed from the religious songs and oral traditions of African Americans during slavery, incorporating elements from African rhythms and traditional spirituals.