

**THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC, MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY,
MURFREESBORO, TN**

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SOUTHERN GOSPEL CONVENTION SINGING COLLECTION

06-018

Sound recordings and papers

OPEN COLLECTION

NOTE: This collection is currently in process. Please contact the archivist for access or information.

Creator:

Type of Material:

Physical Description:

Sound recordings: CDs, mini discs

Papers, books

Performance documents

Dates:

2006 -

Abstract (Descriptive Summary):

RESTRICTIONS:

Provenance and Acquisition Information:

Subject/Index Terms:

Agency History/Biographical Sketch:

In order to enhance the study and scholarship of the gospel convention-singing tradition and resurgence, the Center for Popular Music and Dr. Stephen Shearon of the MTSU School of Music decided to embark on this project to document singing conventions in the South.

“Southern gospel” describes the multifaceted genres of vernacular sacred music that have evolved among white Southerners since the late 1800s. Southern gospel convention singing is an amateur American musical tradition in which practitioners train at singing schools and gather at monthly and annual singings to sing and play from upright, or octavo, "new books" containing southern gospel songs in seven-shape notation. Historically it follows the four-shape tradition (*Southern Harmony*, *Sacred Harp*, etc.) and has been led primarily by publishers such as Ruebush-Kieffer, Anthony J. Showalter, James D. Vaughan, Stamps-Baxter, Hartford, and others. These publishers also sponsored the largest and best-known singing schools from the 1870s through the early 1960s. Emphasizing new songs in the gospel style, as opposed to the

four-shape tradition's more conservative bent, the southern gospel convention tradition also embraces the use of instruments, most particularly piano, to accompany the singers. In addition, this amateur tradition and the publishing and educational industry that accompanies it have been the fertile ground from which has come many well-known songs, and from which has emerged the world of professional southern gospel.

Scope and Content:

In November of 2006 the CPM partnered with Dr. Steve Shearon to undertake an ongoing field recording project to document the vanishing art of Southern Gospel Convention style piano accompaniment. During 2006 and 2007 a team comprised of Dr. Shearon and CPM Manager of Recorded Media Collections, Martin Fisher, traveled to record the National Southern Gospel Singing Convention in Lawrenceburg, TN., the New Years Eve singing in New England, GA. and a private session in the home of Joe and Ruth Stewart in Clarkesville, GA. Mr. Fisher recorded the performances on a Tascam DA-P1 DAT recorder and later transferred them to CD-Rs. To date these endeavors have yielded an estimated 25 hours of unique material.

Dr. Shearon has also donated 23 Mini discs containing approximately 40 hours of field notes, interviews and on site field recordings to the Center. A project is underway to convert all of these to a more accessible format.

Series Description:

Series A: 71st National Gospel Singing Convention (13 CDs)

The 71st National Gospel Singing Convention occurred November 17 and 18, 2006 in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee. Martin Fisher and Steve Shearon attended and Fisher recorded the sessions. Convention participants include the Leoma Music Company, Leoma, Tennessee, Cumberland Valley School of Gospel Music Company in Knoxville, Tennessee, the Gospel Heritage Music Company in Cleveland, Tennessee, the Texas Legendary Music Company in Fort Worth, Texas, and the Jeffress/Phillips Music Company in Corrssett, Arkansas. The typical performance sequence consists of the pianist playing the introduction and first verse of the song, the electric keyboardist plays the second verse introduction, alternating with subsequent verses, and both play during the singing.

Groups and singers from Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi performed during the two-day singing. Pianists and keyboardists were Faye Marston, Martha Ham, Linda Hight, Jeremy McKissack, Ruth Taylor Stewart, Bobbie Glassco, Marty Phillips. Eugene McCammon, Jana Keith, Robert Clark, Byron L. Reid, Tracey Phillilps, Joyce Pevey, Paul E. Wallace, Bobby Bradley.

Includes two name tags and ribbons worn by attendees and an obituary of pianist Harvey Day Shelton of Shawnee, Oklahoma. Flyers and advertisements for upcoming singing events, namely the James D. Vaughan Homecoming Singing Convention in Lawrenceburg, the Tri-city Gospel Music Camp in Kingsport, Cumberland Valley School of Gospel Music, Inc. in Knoxville,

Leoma School of Gospel Music in Leoma. A quarterly newsletter for convention singers from the Jeffress/Phillips Music company *What's Happening?!* also included.

Series B: New Years Eve Singing

Series C: Joe and Ruth Stewart Singing

Series D: Dr. Steve Shearon Interviews and Field Notes

Collection Contents (Folder/Box List):

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Description</u>
Box 1	Folder 1	71st National Gospel Singing Convention

Materials Cataloged Separately:

Arrangement:

Location:

Audio tapes and transcripts of interviews are located in the manuscript collection, searchable by accession number and are filed chronologically and by format. Performance documents have been retained in the collection. These can be searched by accession number in the Center's InMagic database. Compact discs are filed with manuscript sound recordings, searchable by accession number.

Related Materials:

The Center has secondary sources related to Southern gospel music convention singing available in the Reading Room and searchable in Voyager. Gospel song books may be found in the rare book collection searchable through the InMagic database. Additional manuscript materials related to gospel music may be found in the Archives database.

MARC:

EAD:

LPC February 2008 [History of Southern gospel written by Steve Shearon.]