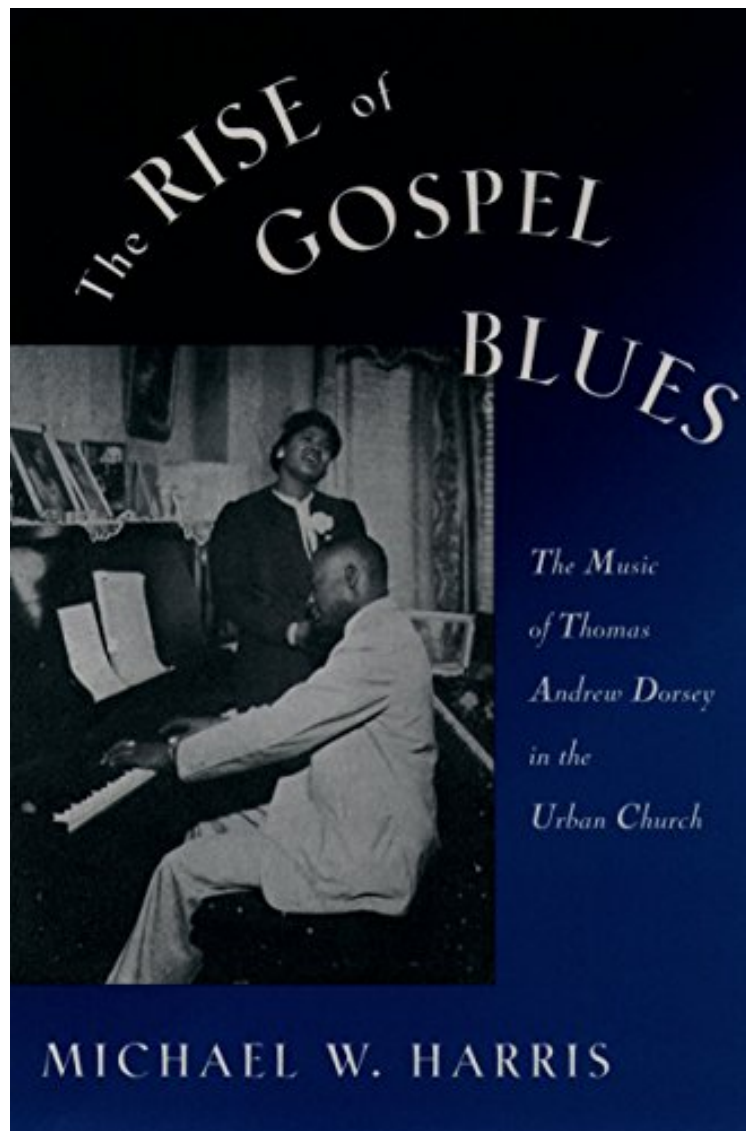


[Library ebook] The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church

The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church

Michael W. Harris

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Michael W. Harris : The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great item! Ships fast! By Jonathan K. Cook
Great item! Ships fast! 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Important beyond Dorsey and Gospel
By Tony Thomas
This book belongs on every bookshelf of anyone who is seriously concerned with African American folk and popular music,

secular and religious. Harris does a good job describing not only the details of Dorsey's life, but setting him in the musical worlds he inhabited in the early 20th Century. My current research work does not include religious music, and I have been doing a lot of work on ragtime and the origins of the Blues as they related to the five string banjo. This book provided new insights on the nature of the Blues, on the relationship between the vaudeville Blues, Downhome Blues, and jazz in the 1920s that recent reading on Jelly Roll Morton, and the origins of Jazz and the Blues did not. At the same time, the book provides broad and objective coverage of major trends in the Black church especially the National Baptist Convention in the first thirty years of the 20th Century. Besides that he speaks of Dorsey and the origin of Blues Gospel. Put shortly, Black religious music in the early 20th century was dominated by forces who wanted to squelch African originated forms of religion and worship and impose European and European American models for services and music. In the Chicago of the 1920s, the major churches were dominated by music and choir directors who had been trained in Europe to produce superb classical religious music and any kind of African American singing and praise and testifying was often banned from the church as a whole or from the Sunday service. The pressure of Black migration from the South placed a demand on conservative churches to hold onto their congregations. After a career as a mediocre Blues pianist, more successful arranger and band leader for Ma Rainey, while enjoying success in the Blues as George Tom, well known for his dirty songs, Dorsey crafted gospel songs and more importantly gospel performance patterns modeled after the music and the acts put on by successful Blues singers. He first worked with a former preacher singing his songs and walking in rhythm around churches. When they were first able to perform this way, Dorsey--always the accompanist--would stand up at the piano, while this preacher danced and strutted as he sang his song. The congregation got wild. Dorsey's goal seemed to be advancing his music publishing business by popularizing his songs with soloists. It was almost an after thought that in accepting a lucrative position as music director at a major Chicago Baptist church that he set up a gospel chorus, a move that was copied and duplicated as the blues-gospel movement swept the country. The blues gospel approach provided a compromise. The old line preachers were fundamentally against African forms of congregational worship, singing by the whole church, the old church rock songs, testifying and other African aspects of religion. Gospel offered the music in a contained form, not done by the whole congregation, but performed by a contained gospel soloist or gospel choir, and presenting a limited period in which shouting, testifying, and praising in the old way was possible without transforming the service. Throughout, Dorsey was not shy in judging his success as a commercial venture. He speaks about success in the number of employees and the amount of space he had shipping out sheet music. Since his aims were to give religious music the music feel and performance style of blues entertainment, it is hardly surprising that Blues Gospel especially in the person of Dorsey's great protegee Mahalia Jackson became first an informal form of entertainment within the Black church world, and then a form that could be found in night clubs, variety shows, and jazz concert. A lot of thought should be given to the importance of the gospel blues. Post WWII Black popular music began with waning swing singers and older Blues singers leading off R B. However, the generations of Black R B singers since the late 1940s have almost exclusively come out of the gospel music industry on the top or the bottom. Soul music beginning with Ray Charles' break into his own voice in the 1950s is not much more than adding the techniques and approaches of the gospel of the 1950s and 1960s to secular music. In this sense it returns to secular music what the religious music had received from Dorsey's Blues. However, if Dorsey had not figured out how to legitimate Blues music style with the establish Black church, the opening to perform this kind of Black music by the religious authorities was important to keeping the music going. One should remember the degree to which Black churches outside the holiness churches, particularly in the South, forbade or condemned secular music and Blues. Now, I believe whether Dorsey or some other individual had done it, African religious and music traditions would have fought their way back into Black churches. Yet, if there hadn't been a Thomas Dorsey, it might have been harder, and more distance might have been made between Black religious and secular music.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Loved learning more about Uncle TAD By G. Frye When I married my wife I learned that she was the great niece of Thomas Andrew Dorsey. When I saw this book I knew I had to get this book for her. She devoured this book in no time. If Gospel music is your love. I suggest you read where the beginning came from.

Most observers believe that gospel music has been sung in African-American churches since their organization in the late 1800s. Yet nothing could be further from the truth, as Michael W. Harris's history of gospel blues reveals. Tracing the rise of gospel blues as seen through the career of its founding figure, Thomas Andrew Dorsey, Harris tells the story of the most prominent person in the advent of gospel blues. Also known as "Georgia Tom," Dorsey had considerable success in the 1920s as a pianist, composer, and arranger for prominent blues singers including Ma Rainey. In the 1930s he became involved in Chicago's African-American, old-line Protestant churches, where his background in the blues greatly influenced his composing and singing. Following much controversy during the 1930s and the eventual overwhelming response that Dorsey's new form of music received, the gospel blues became a major force in African-American churches and religion. His more than 400 gospel songs and recent Grammy Award indicate that he is still today the most prolific composer/publisher in the movement. Delving into the life of the central figure of gospel blues, Harris illuminates not only the evolution of this popular musical form, but also the thought and social forces that

forged the culture in which this music was shaped.

.com Although gospel music has been a taproot for soul, jazz, and rock-and-roll, it remains a fairly insulated art, with its own venues, audience, and mythology. A good place to start investigating this revelatory music is Michael Harris's *The Rise of the Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church*. Dorsey (1899-1993), the inventor of modern gospel, began playing the piano in small-town Georgia bordellos at the age of 12. As a young man he wrote more than 2,000 blues songs, including such naughty novelties as "Tight Like That." In the mid-1920s, however, Dorsey began producing a string of sacred-and-profane hybrids, many of which became building blocks of the gospel repertoire. Harris has written a smart, scholarly portrait of a musical giant who continued to perform right through the late 1980s--and who made his feature-film debut at age 84, in the delightful *Say Amen, Somebody*. "Without doubt, this is the most scholarly book written on the subject of African American gospel music to date....Harris has written the first and only book on Thomas Andrew Dorsey, who brought African American gospel from the sanctified church, through the Baptist church, and into the world. This is not only a good book; it is an important one."--*Ethnomusicology*"In *The Rise of Gospel Blues*, we are afforded deeper insights into the relationship between religion and art in African American culture. Indeed, we gain a keener sense of black churches as fountainheads of culture."--*Church History*"The fact that Harris transgresses the repressive orthodoxy of the church and reveals the human contribution to gospel music to be 'the blues' makes this book one of the few nonfictional pieces placeable in Ralph Ellison's 'blues school of literature.'"--*Georgia Historical Quarterly*"This is a highly detailed study of the music of Thomas A. Dorsey....It's a thoroughly scholarly study, well annotated and indexed...and must be recommended to anyone with a really serious interest in the genre."--*Storyville*"This book has its own duality; it is at once a compelling analysis of an important African-American cultural expression and an insightful account of the first forty years of Dorsey's life....Harris cleverly weaves together his biographical and cultural analysis."--*American Historical* "The *Rise of the Gospel Blues* is a complex and provocative work, providing a solid foundation for exploring the role of gospel music in the twentieth-century African-American church."--*Institute for Studies in American Music Newsletter*"Harris...skillfully demonstrates the ways that music can serve ideology, whether as "survival texts" or as an emblem of class warfare. He also captures the union of piety and commerce inherent in American fundamentalism."--*New York Times Book* "Harris cleverly weaves together his biographical and cultural analysis....He has written a fine book from which historians, even the tone deaf among them, will profit."--*American Historical* "Harris carefully portrays Dorsey as the personification of the tension between the assimilationist and indigenous African-American traditions....This is no mere academic anatomizing imposed on a music of folkish popular culture....The fact that Harris transgresses the repressive orthodoxy of the church and reveals the human contribution to gospel music to be "the blues" makes his book one of the few nonfictional pieces placeable in Ralph Ellison's "blues school of literature."--*Georgia Historical Quarterly*"Harris's exploration of the 'bluesman' and preacher as 'cultural analogues of one another' is fascinating and important....Harris provides an admirably detailed chronicle of Dorsey's struggles and triumphs....Harris's thoroughly researched explanation of the emergence of gospel blues will reward the attention of both enthusiasts and historians. I expect that this account will become a standard work."--*The Journal of American History*

From the Back Cover Most observers believe that gospel music has been sung in African American churches since their organization in the late 1800s. Yet nothing could be further from the truth, as Michael W. Harris's history reveals. Working through the blues and gospel movement, Harris reconstructs the rise of gospel blues within the context of early twentieth century African American cultural history. After a nervous breakdown and a subsequent religious conversion in 1928, Dorsey began to write gospel songs with blues accompaniments. His introduction of these "goals" into Chicago's Afro-Baptist churches during the 1930s stirred clashes between recently arrived southern migrants who felt comforted by the new spirituals and old-line members who dismissed the songs as sacrilegious echoes of the slave past. After years of writing and publishing hundreds of "songs with a message"-- such as "Take My Hand", "Precious Lord", and "There Will Be Peace in the Valley"-- and training gospel singers such as Mahalia Jackson, Dorsey had earned the title of "father" of gospel blues by the early 1940s. Delving into the life of the most prominent person in the advent of the gospel song movement, Harris illuminates not only the evolution of this popular musical form, but also the thought and social forces that forged the culture in which this music was shaped.