Timeline of the Development of Gospel Music

1619 — First 20 Africans arrive at Port Comfort, Virginia; bring their music & dance of syncopated rhythms, "call and response", & ring shouts in which worshippers move in a circle shuffling and stomping their feet and clapping their hands.

1674 — Dr. Isaac Watts, composer of more than 750 hymns, is born in England. His hymns become so popular among African-Americans they are called "an old Dr. Watts".

1730s — The "Great Awakening" - first widespread effort to Christianize enslaved Africans.

1777 — First African Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia established; oldest black church in America.

1780 — John Wesley's hymnal quickly becomes standard in African-American sacred music.

1787 — Start of African Methodist Episcopal—first independent A-A Christian denomination based on race, not theological differences.

1820 — Drumming is prohibited so A-A music accompanied by hand clapping and foot tapping. Tunes use altered major scales with both flatted and normal seventh tones.

1800s — Black churches began sponsoring Sacred Music Concerts.

1801 — Publication of Richard Allen's Hymnal.

1800s — "Negro spirituals", shouts, lined hymns, and anthems emerge sung a cappella.

1865 — Slavery abolished.

1874 — 1st published use of term "gospel song" in songbook by Philip Bliss.

1901 — Rev. Dr. Charles Albert Tindley starts publishing hymns; some still in use.

1906 — Azusa Street Revival gives rise to modern day Pentecostalism; brings back the energy of the shouts prior to emancipation, a key event in the development of gospel music.

1921 — Sister Rosetta Tharpe scores 1st million selling gospel record with "This Train".

1931 — Theodore Frye and Thomas A. Dorsey create 1st gospel choir.

1938 — National Baptist Convention publishes "Gospel Pearls" - 1st hymnal including music which would become known as gospel.

1920s — Recording companies start to produce records featuring "gospel blues" & "holy blues".

1945-65 — Golden Age of Gospel with soloists like Mahalia Jackson and groups like the Clara Ward Singers, the Original Gospel Harmonettes, the Caravans, and the Silvertones.

1960s to Present — Variants of Gospel develop including gospel blues, Southern gospel, Progressive Southern gospel, Christian country, bluegrass gospel, British black gospel, Celtic gospel, urban contemporary gospel, praise and worship music.

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