

Analysis of african american music development

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



Just about everything we have access to and know about now in modern times originated from something used hundreds of years ago. Over the years, things have changed and updated so of course not that much is exactly the same but there are some similarities. African American music is an example of something used in modern times it's just been altered to fit the popularity of the citizens now. Early African American music began as early as the 1600s as said in African American studies, but some researchers have a later date. Music for the blacks was a way for them to express themselves, send a message, to keep up their energy to complete a job, and sometimes as a form of entertainment for those more fortunate. Some early records of music in Africa shows its role in entertainment when Kings would host a huge ceremony and hire professional musicians to come and play for the occasion. For some African Americans in the early times, slavery was their life. They worked day in and day out to ensure their jobs is complete and to go home to their family with money to provide for them. Since many days were spent in the field and on the plantations, they had to find ways to entertain themselves.

Work songs played a huge role in slavery. The slaves would spend endless amount of time on the plantation so, they found ways to make beats, lyrics that motivated them, and flows that kept them going. A good example of a work song would be " Hammer, Ring." This song's lyrics accompanies the jobs their doing. Many work songs lyrics are based off the task their doing right then, or from the motivation they have to finish. Everyone singing along keeps everyone working at the same pace, energizing the slower workers to speed up and lifting those who are having a worse day than usual. Boat

songs are also like work songs just sung when on a boat and are more about the passengers, or just random factors in life. Sometimes they could be a little more dull in the lyrics, like about abuse, the yearning for freedom, or separation from loved ones. It didn't always take the most upbeat or loudest song to keep them moving, every so often it could just be the feeling of expressing what's going on in everyone's life and how it makes them feel. Integrating music into the daily lives of African Americans is an important tradition, like work and boat songs.

Music also played a role in different forms of celebrations and ceremonies. In Georgia, African Americans would celebrate the end of planting and cultivating season on the Fourth of July. After rounding up all the tools from the field that they used and putting them away together, they start off their celebration with music, food, dancing, and singing. On this day many plantations would be celebrating, and the music and voices would be so loud the tunes could be heard from plantation to plantation. They couldn't all get together as one but in their sub groups they would party so loud it was a form of communication for them. Being able to use the music they've created and appreciate the hard work they've done, being able to celebrate being done for the moment was important for black Americans. This type of happiness wasn't common in their everyday lives. Not all tasks are miserable work task, when creating items like braided baskets, grinding hominy in to grits or just preparing food for a meal would be followed by a lovely tune.

During slavery, there wasn't much time for African Americans to do much else, because they were working so much. There wasn't time to worry and

relax, the problems families dealt with had to be handle in a persons free personal time. Singing is a task that doesn't take the use of anything but your voice, therefore it could be done anywhere and at any time it is allowed. Music became very popular in everyday life because it was used as a way to express what African Americans were feeling as a whole and personally. Not every song was created to express what a group of people were feeling, some solos are sung like during individual jobs or personal time. Many of those songs don't consist much of loud or fast tempos, they're usually softer like lullabies.

Religion and spirituals also played an important role in music. Some people were more religious than others as to where they only sung sacred music and nothing else. Spirituals are the earliest form of religious music known to African Americans. Spirituals differed from the other form known as hymns and psalms introduced to slaves by European missionaries. The known type of spirituals was the call-response pattern, known in the regions of West and Central Africa from where part of the slave population originated. Other than singing the spirituals, they also express their Christianity through body movements, hand clapping, and other displays of religious bliss. In a world of no freedom, the spirituals represented a spirit of freedom for them. Through their spirituals they can speak of themselves as people living in a land far away from home and definitely different. Blacks didn't worship freely and openly so Churches weren't known of. There is such a thing known as the Invisible Church where they secretly gather and worship in places where people wouldn't suspect, in case of defiance in laws. African Americans viciously protected their privacy of their religion not of fear but because it

was the only one way at a point in time to express themselves as these other people they desire to be. Blacks didn't have the freedom to worship outside of the eyes of the white folks, and when they didn't they were to not be seen, and sit in the back of the church. So when there was time when the white folks were occupied the blacks would slip away off to somewhere where they could pray, testify, sing, and worship. When African Americans did worship you could see the authenticity in their feelings expressed through their prayer, singing, and testifying and sometimes preaching. The group participated together verbally and musically. The songs involved the participation of everyone as one, followed by joint hand clapping, body movement, and sometimes shouting if the spirit was in the room.

African American music has a lot of its own roots when it comes to music it created and the names it was given. Some of those are Ragtime, Blues, Jazz, Gospel, R&B, and Soul. Each of these genres of music has their own different things about it that make it uniquely different from other types of music. A lot of the music types were being represented and the people just didn't know that was the type of music they were making or dancing they were doing. Ragtime was so diversely described and used, African Americans version of ragtime was cakewalk and "coon songs." Coon songs weren't the most positive type of music but it was popular in the public mind. These two types of songs weren't meant for the black people, many of the whites used these songs to mock and make fun of stereotype blacks or make them dance the way they feel they should and then judge them.

The Blues was different compared to the other types of music from earlier on in the twentieth century. The characteristics, topics, and attitudes of the music were expressed in the lyrics but in a new way. Blues started to grow in the Midwest and Deep South more than anywhere else, this is where it started to grow its roots around the 1890s. Many of the genres that were emerged from African Americans were all starting to develop around the same century. While black Americans had this wave of new music, there was also a significant amount of developments in arts in general as well as religious and Black political life. How the Blacks used their skills to use instruments and sometimes group of instruments to play a certain role and create a certain sound. Within the blues, the instrument and the voices themselves create a connection, a dialogue. The instrument is like a second voice, even though it's a solo song. American music already had its own form of music and music notes, tones, tempos, sounds, etc. African American music put a bit of a spin on the music notes, when the blues emerged. The blues introduced the "blue note" into the already know music notes. The blue note was note that took place in between two adjacent notes in the standard Western division of the octave. These notes can sound like neutral pitches and can be notated by an upward or downward-pointing arrow. The "blue note" isn't known in all American music making it a special musical factor of African Americans. Blue notes can be easily sung but when trying to play it on an instrument may be a little harder due to it being a new note. There are a few special techniques created in order to obtain this sound on an instrument. One of those techniques is to "bend" notes, for example where the musician pushes the strings on the neck of a guitar, or making a

special sound with a woodwind, or a tongue trick while playing the harmonica. Sometimes a musician may even slide a glass neck from a bottle or piece of metal across the strings. These techniques were emerged from African Americans music and it added and improved what we listen to as music today.

Another factor that makes African American music so unique is the instruments and styles used and the attitudes they pursue when playing music. Some of the instruments they use are handmade or altered from a different instrument to be better or to do something different in style and sounds. Instrument making included non-musical items, modifying existing instruments, learning new highly specialized ways of using the instrument, and pairing them with other instruments to create some unique sounds. The body was also a form of instrument, when dancing like beatboxing, tap dancing, step dancing, and of course the known hand clapping. The first identification of this was with Henry Bibb, born in Kentucky in 1815 to a slave mother, who would dance, patt ' juber', sing, and play the banjo under the request of the master. African Americans had to build their own independency since they weren't given any and show their freedom in their own personal, sometimes secretly since it was forbidden for an African American to basically to do anything without being told. Music was a way of expressing, feeling, talking, believing, and tons of other things African American weren't open to. The musical combinations of hand clapping, dancing, instrument improvisation, singing, and everything else music related is documented in Africa as early as 1621. This is when the early

African Americans began building those music roots and creating incredible aspects along the way.