

Ethnomusicology class

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



due: Ethnomusicology Roberta Martin was an American gospel singer who also made her mark as a composer, pianist, arranger and choral organizer. Also, she contributed significantly to the launch of the careers of many other gospel artists through her music group, Roberta Martin Singers. The group had a theme song titled Only A Look, which was always sung at the opening of all their concerts, including their anniversary Program in Chicago. The song was initially recorded under the Apollo label with Delois Barrett and Bessie Folk as the lead vocalists. It was later recorded under the Savoy label with Delois Barrett taking the role of lead vocalist. The group was unique in that it was the first to include male and female voices in a music group. Martin preferred smooth harmonies and a delicate rhythmic, dynamic where her singers were almost imperceptible behind the beat. Slower songs featured lead singers against a quiet background provided by the other members of the group. On shout material and Jubilee, Martin used a more energetic call-and-response technique characteristic of Holiness churches. Martin urged her singers to retain their personalities, rather than to blend them to form a single choral sound. It enabled the audience to distinguish each of the singers' voices in the background. Throughout her lifetime, Martin composed almost seventy songs, arranged and published 280 gospel songs, and inspired thousands of listeners through her music. Some of her compilations include Let It Be (1950), Just Jesus and Me (1966), God Is Still on the Throne and He Knows Just How Much We Can Bear (1959). She earned six Gold Records while her group sang at the Gian-Carlo Menottis Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, in 1963. Martin's great contribution to the history of gospel music was through her unique style of music,

combining a distinctive gospel piano style with the special sound of the group. She was also the first to integrate men and women into a single group during the mid-40s (Darden 190).

The Roberta Martin Singers was a group of African-Americans based in the United States. It was formed 1933 by Roberta Martin who had become acquainted with the new trend of gospel music, which was different from the traditional spirituals popular at the time. Martin met Theodore Frye and Thomas A. Dorsey, who were directing a junior team at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Chicago. She joined the team as an accompanist, and she later selected six of the young men to form a group. The six consisted of Norsalus McKissick, Eugene Smith, Robert Anderson, James Lawrence, Willie Webb, and W. C. Herman (who was killed in World War II). The group was named the Martin and Frye Singers until 1936 when they adopted the name Roberta Martin Singers. They were famous for their unique music which lacked the conventional bass, but had a dark treble sound, with an elasticity that was crucial to the new kind of music.

Thank you for teaching the Ethnomusicology class. I have gained knowledge on how to sing in a group. Also, I had a great time taking this class for the quarter. The concert at Schoenberg Auditorium is an unforgettable memory to me. I was not confident singing by myself, but through the class, I have gathered confidence. I took the role of soprano, so I got to know the music well, and a variety of African-American music style.

Work cited

Darden, Robert. *People Get Ready!: A New History of Black Gospel Music*. New York, NY[u. a.: Continuum, 2005. Print.

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