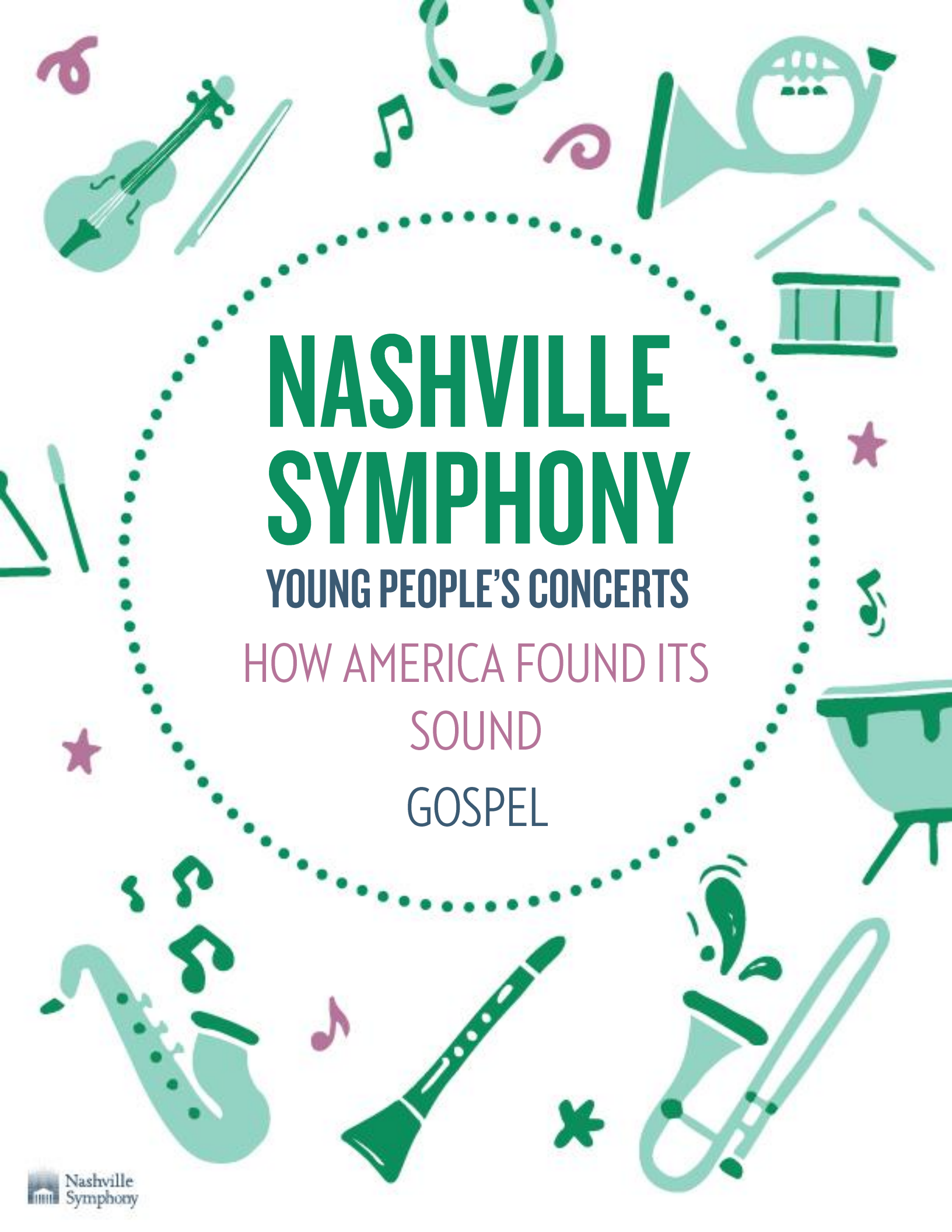




NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERTS

HOW AMERICA FOUND ITS
SOUND
GOSPEL

HOW AMERICA FOUND ITS SOUND

GOSPEL

Grades 5 - 8

STANDARDS

5.GM.P1.B, 5.GM.P2.A, 5.GM.Cr3.A, 5.GM.R1.A, 6.GM.Cn1.A, 6.GM.R1.C, 6.GM.R1.A, 7.GM.Cn1.A, 7.GM.Cn2.A, 7.GM.R3.A, 8.GM.Cn2.A, 8.GM.Cn1.A, 8.GM.R1.C

OBJECTIVES

Students will explain how gospel music communicates meaningful messages.

Students will describe gospel music's influence on American musical genres.

Students will explore how gospel music has evolved over time.

TIME NEEDED

30 - 40 minutes

MATERIALS

- Video: [It's a Highway to Heaven](#)
- Video: [Kirk Franklin: Tiny Desk \(Home\) Concert](#)
- Video: [CeCe Winans: Tiny Desk Concert](#)
- Chart Paper
- Markers

GENRE OVERVIEW

Gospel music grew from the traditions of spirituals and the blues in the early 1900s. It carried messages of faith, hope, and perseverance found in spirituals while adding rhythms, harmonies, and musical styles influenced by the blues. Thomas A. Dorsey helped shape modern gospel by blending sacred lyrics with blues-inspired music, creating a style that was heard and echoed in churches across the nation. Today, artists like Kirk Franklin and Jeffery Ames continue to build on this tradition by combining gospel with orchestral and even contemporary sounds such as R&B, hip-hop, and pop, introducing gospel music to new generations while keeping its message of faith at the center.

Library of Congress. (n.d.). *African American gospel*. The Library of Congress.
<https://www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/ritual-and-worship/african-american-gospel/>

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PROCEDURES:

1. Hook: *Display large chart paper in three different areas of your room (or use your interactive board divided into three sections). Label one with “What does it Look like,” one with “What does it Sound like,” and one with “What does it Feel like.”*

2. Say: Today we are going to explore Gospel music and how it has evolved over time. This is a listening activity where you will be describing what you hear based on the three prompts.

- How does the music make you **feel**?
- What does the music **look like**?
- What does it **sound like**?

Ask students to aim for descriptive words (ex: powerful, calm, anxious, excited etc.)

3. Listen: Video: [It's a Highway to Heaven by Thomas Dorsey](#)

- After listening, share some of the student's observations

4. Say: Are there any other artists that you can think of that also exhibit similar qualities? This is because the musical artists we often hear or experience have an influence on the music we like or even create.

5. Activity: Building an Influencer Map

Display the “influencer map” Ask students to start thinking about who has influenced them to do what they love most. (This does not have to be music related) Have students begin to build their own influencer map with simple searches, using a student friendly search engine.

- **Alternate Activity:** This could be done through conversation as a class, versus individually, particularly when technology that is not accessible. Consider doing this in the style of a family tree.

6. Listen:

- Video: [CeCe Winans: Tiny Desk Concert](#)
- Video: [Kirk Franklin: Tiny Desk \(Home\) Concert](#)

7. Say: This is known as contemporary Gospel music, what do you notice that is the same between “It’s a Highway to Heaven” and one of these selections?

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