

AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN INFLUENCES ON CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSIC

Abstract: The article deals with the development of Christian popular music (CPM). It reveals that the appearance of CPM was strongly influenced by African and Afro-American music from several directions. Musically CPM can be traced back to the Afro-American spiritual, from which gospel music grew, then blues and finally rock and roll, all of which can still be found among the subgenres of CPM. The article also shows how the direct influence of the African American background can also be found behind the folk masses of the 1960s that appeared in numerous parts of the Christian world parallel with the development of CPM. **Keywords:** Christian popular music, Afro-American religious music, African Christian music, Missa Luba

Three encounters

As a university student I often listened to recordings by *Kimnowak*, an alternative Hungarian rock group popular in the 1990s. The first track on their album *Fekete zaj* [Black Noise] begins with snatches of striking “Sanctus, sanctus” choral music, but I was unable to find out anything about it at the time. My next encounter with the melody was in Lindsay Anderson’s emblematic film *If...* made in 1968. If anything, the melody was even more powerful and catchy in the English New Wave film, a real earworm. Thanks to the spread of the internet in the meantime, I soon found out that the music was part of the Sanctus in the Missa Luba of Congolese origin composed in 1958, a “modern mass” based on traditional Congolese melodies. Out of curiosity I read through the comments on a popular file-sharing portal to find out what others thought of it and was surprised to see experiences very like my own, such as “Took me 10 years to find it.”, “i watched the film if in the early 70s and it has took me till now to find the name of the music

* MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture, H-6722 Szeged, Egyetem utca 2. Hungary. Email: povedakkinga@gmail.com

missa luba amazing sound, I discovered this when I was 16 years old (more than 45 years ago!). I re-discovered this one day ago. It's an emotion for me."¹

Since, at the time I watched the film I was working on a study analysing Christian popular music from the angle of changes in the field of religious music in Hungary, I felt that it was worth devoting a separate study to tracing the African thread.

The Afro-American roots of Christian popular music

When we begin to unravel the background of Christian contemporary music² (CPM) we come across four facts that may appear strange. Firstly, it may be surprising to some that the beginnings reach back not to the 1950s and the emergence of rock and roll, they go more than two centuries back to the late 18th century. Secondly, CPM hardly builds at all on the earlier church music practice,³ it stands on entirely new music foundations. Thirdly, the musical roots of CPM do not lie in European Christian culture, but in the musical culture of the Afro-American slaves. Fourthly, it is not only within religious culture that we can find the beginnings of CPM.

The spiritual

The most distant historical roots of Christian popular music reach back to the late 18th century in the United States.⁴ By the mid-18th century hundreds of thousands of African slaves were already living and working on the American continent. Conversion to the Christian faith soon began among them. The result was a distinctive syncretic popular religion in which African music tradition continued to be a firm presence in the Christian context. It is well known that the black slaves were not allowed to practice openly their religion of African origin, but

1 From the comments to the video: Missa Luba 1965: Sanctus. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlXEPYkXkU8> Accessed on 30. 08. 2017.

2 Christian popular music is used as an umbrella category for a sonically diverse repertoire of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century evangelical Protestant commercial popular music. As defined by Nekola, Mall and Ingalls, it encompasses several distinct subcategories based on musical genre, industrial context, or function including, but not limited to, Jesus Music, Contemporary Christian Music (CCM), Praise & Worship music, and Christian rock. INGALLS – MALL – NEKOLA 2013.

3 Although there are folk song arrangements, or Taizé songs based on the sound world of Gregorian chant, on the fringes of Christian popular music, they form only a tiny proportion of the now vast wealth of CPM songs.

4 For more details, see WILSON–DICKSON 1998. 210–232.

their conversion to Christianity was not unequivocal either because many 18th century Christian theologians were of the opinion that Africans were creatures of a lower order and so the Scriptures were not suitable for them. Others argued that if they were converted to Christianity their slavery could not be justified and it would damage the very institution of slavery.⁵ In the end conversions nevertheless began, but not with the same impetus for the various denominations.⁶ The emotionalism and preaching of the Methodists and Baptists had a greater influence on the slaves than any other denomination.⁷ A factor contributing to the success of the Baptists was that they allowed the Afro-Americans to take part in conducting the services and they began quite early to “appoint” black ministers and deacons. In addition, in most West African religions the river spirits were held to be among the most powerful gods and so they found baptism by full immersion especially attractive.⁸

Besides showing characteristics of the folk religion of newly converted slaves, the content and texts of the first Afro-American Christian songs reflected their social situation and their longing for advancement and liberation. Consequently their imagery is full of references to the sufferings and hope of the oppressed Jews of the Bible and identification with them: *Go Down Moses, I'm Marching to Zion, Walk Into Jerusalem Just Like John*.⁹

This kind of Afro-Christian music is a good illustration of how syncretism works. The new teachings spread behind the old musical forms, adapted to the original African melodies, rhythms and forms of movement (shuffling dance). Later the Afro-American music became so predominant that it also influenced the forms of representation of the denominations converting the greatest numbers of Afro-Americans. In this way the host organisation also changed with syncretism. Bornemann stressed that

“the Methodist revival movement began to address itself directly to the slaves, but ended up not by converting the Africans to a Christian ritual, but by converting itself to an African ritual.”¹⁰

From the 1770s the slaves were allowed to form their own congregations. Their first prayer houses and churches became the centres of their social life where they were free from the everyday oppression of slavery and where they could give free

5 JONES 2007. 62.

6 The Second Great Awakening that began in the early 19th century was basically shaped by two different movements but one trend spread in the urban environment beginning mainly from what was then the North-east, while the other began with “camp meetings” along what was then the southern border region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, West Virginia). For more details on the musical aspect of American religious trends, see NEKOLA 2009.

7 JONES 2007. 64.

8 JONES 2007. 64–65.

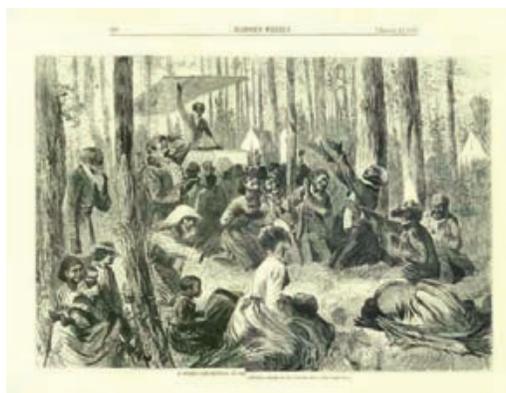
9 JONES 2007. 68. The political message behind Christian music is not unique. A similar political content could be observed during the communist dictatorship in Hungary. See the following chapter of the article.

10 BORNEMANN 1959. 21.

rein to their emotions and express themselves. In these processes music was not only a means of expression but also a catalyst, as also indicated by the African saying *The spirit will not descend without a song*.¹¹ At such ceremonies they sang

“[...] the body of the song and clapping their hands together or on the knees. Song and dance alike are extremely energetic and often, when the shout lasts into the middle of the night, monotonous thud, thud of the feet prevents sleep within half a mile of the praise house.”¹²

Their first hymn book appeared in 1801 and has gone through countless revised editions over the past two centuries. These clearly show that the initial songs of a folk character were soon transformed into the later continuously used spirituals. Their music spread not only among the black population: whites also joined in at the giant open-air *camp meetings*.¹³ Nekola notes that the collective congregational songs formed the central part of the camp meetings; they strengthened the emotional side and played a major role in giving expression to the religious experience and, beyond that they also conveyed a message to those who had not yet converted.¹⁴ Their songs were short, easy to learn, with little information and a clear message. By their nature they appealed basically to the emotions and were less suited to didactic purposes. “White” spirituals soon appeared beside the “black” spirituals.



“Religious camp meeting”. They gathered in the woods to praise God and to sing gospel hymns.

Shaded by a cloth canopy, the pastor with open book, preaches to men, women, children and babies among the trees. Harper’s Weekly, August 10, 1872. Source: <http://www.littleafrica.com/incredibleart/57.htm>

11 JONES 2007. 69–70.

12 KREHBIEL 1914. 33.

13 The camp meetings were events lasting several days, where thousands of people camped together, spent whole nights in prayer, and there were immediate mass conversions and healings. Historians researching the subject date the first camp meeting to 1801, in Cane Ridge (Kentucky). See NEKOLA 2009. 91–95.

14 NEKOLA 2009. 92.

Drawing on African music traditions the singing of spirituals took the form of question and answer, with a simple melody that was easy to learn and improvisative solo singing, while the texts were drawn almost exclusively from parts of the Bible that spoke of liberation or in cases from well known English hymns. The camp meetings and the songs sung there appealed mainly to the popular masses with a lower level of education and schooling. Their direct influence can be felt largely in the further development of ecstatic praise imbued with the influence of popular or folk music. Debates that began in the 1830s in the universities of what was then Northeast America attempted to find a way of incorporating the practice into the religious teachings of the different denominations.¹⁵ As Nekola has pointed out,

“While the frontier camp meeting may have established a long-standing practice of ecstatic worship, marked by the inclusion of popular music that was used to achieve religious transcendence, the theological and ideological discussions happening in colleges and churches in the Northeast in the 1830s and 1840s wrestled with how these new practices fit into systems of belief.”¹⁶

Gospel

From the end of the 19th century – following the emancipation of the slaves – the number of former slaves greatly increased in the towns too, as industrial development created a big demand for labour. They took their spirituals with them to the cities where they were transformed together with the new political and social environment. But the mass gatherings remained – in football stadiums, giant tents, meeting halls, railway storehouses – and were attended by both blacks and whites. The liturgical/evangelising/praise song that grew out of the spirituals in the new environment was first called gospel in 1873. This was when Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey formed the first preacher-musician evangelism group, who – as their name shows – preached and sang the gospel (godspell – gospel). Of the two it was Moody who led the evangelism with his powers of persuasion, but he also needed the songs of Sankey to draw in the masses. At their gatherings the gospel songs conveyed the simplest Christian messages to the masses, making use of the emotional impact of music. The rites began with Sankey’s songs, then Moody preached, and the meeting came to an end with another Sankey song.¹⁷ As a contemporary journalist noted

15 NEKOLA 2009. 95.

16 NEKOLA 2009. 96.

17 CUSIC 2012. 106.

“although they were written to religious texts, various secular tricks were used to make them more attractive [...] Circus march, negro sentimental ballad, choral piece for students and hymn were all combined in them.”¹⁸



Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899) and Ira D. Sankey (1840–1908) Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Moody_and_Sankey.jpg

It was really Sankey who made the gospel hymns popular songs by adopting the verse-refrain-verse form giving the songs emotional charge and making them easy to remember. As Cusic notes, Sankey used the attraction of the popular songs and in practice made them a tool that could be used to persuade and convert people. While the hymns of the camp meetings still had characteristics of true folklore, that is, they were anonymous, learnt by ear, and in addition spoke mainly to rural Afro-Americans, in contrast the gospel songs were written for the urban masses and their composers were known and remembered.¹⁹ The songs' typically American characteristics (optimistic or requesting nature, melodious, easily memorised) made them easy to receive for the masses. Gospel songs became just as important and essential a part of religious services as the sermons themselves.²⁰

Then in the 20th century the stylistic features of new, fashionable popular music trends – first ragtime, then jazz – also appeared in gospel. It is important to stress that after spirituals and gospel, ragtime and jazz were also musical inventions of

¹⁸ WILSON–Dickson 1998. 219.

¹⁹ CUSIC 2012. 107.

²⁰ “A march-like movement was typical and the device of letting the lower parts echo rhythmically a line announced by the sopranos in a fuguing form became a mannerism. Sankey preferred a small reed organ to accompany his singing. He did not like a professional quartet, or putting the singers behind a screen in back of a minister, preferring a choir of the best singers placed in front of the congregation, near the minister. Part of this desire stemmed from his own view that the singing was as important as the preaching and that he was as important as the evangelist, a view supported by the popularity of the hymns he sang.” CUSIC 2012. 108.

the Afro-American population and emerged at practically the same time as blues, the third type of black secular music. However it was generally not possible to separate gospel and blues musicians from each other. The first blues were real folk songs that the Afro-American workers performed on the basis of traditions but they no longer used the traditional African instruments, or not only those. The early performers most often accompanied their songs on a mouth organ, banjo or guitar. In its last, late revival in the 1940s-1960s Black gospel already carried the seeds of the 1960s-1970s. The two decades regarded in the literature as the *Golden age for Black Gospel* are associated mainly with the name of Mahalia Jackson who achieved outstanding fame and success in the United States from the 1940s. Mahalia at first sang the songs of Thomas Dorsey (*Father of Black Gospel*) in a distinctive style: she changed their melodies and tempo, lengthened the song, making it appear simultaneously inspired and attractive.²¹ In 1950 Mahalia gave her first concert in Carnegie Hall, in 1952 she won the French Academy's Grand Prix du Disque for her song *I can put my trust in Jesus*, then toured Europe. In America from 1954 she had her own radio and TV show. Her recordings were issued by Columbia Records with giant nation-wide campaigns, winning her a large fan following not only among Afro-Americans but also in the White population. She increased her popularity when, from 1956 she became one of the emblematic figures of the civil rights movement, at the same time also spreading the world of Black gospel.²² Two other factors also contributed to the popularity of Black gospel. One is that after the World War II. a large number of radio and television stations were set up in the United States and the other the internal migration processes involving vast masses of Afro-Americans, as a result of which millions of people moved from rural areas to big cities.²³ Hard gospel performers popular in the Pentecostal churches in the 1950s, like Dorothy Love Coates, Shirley Caesar or the most popular Soul Stirrers, Pilgrim Travelers and Dixie Hummingbirds were regarded as important not only in religious culture, they also had a big influence on the singers of rhythm&blues that was becoming secular music.



Thomas Dorsey accompanies Mahalia Jackson.
Photo courtesy George Nierenberg. Source:
<http://georgiamusic.org/dr-thomas-a-dorsey/>

21 CUSIC 2012. 205.

22 CUSIC 2012. 215.

23 CUSIC 2012. 207.

Jazz, blues, rock and roll

The same intertwining can be found from the early 1910s in jazz music, from the 1930s in rhythm&blues, and then from the 1950s also in the case of rock and roll: even at the beginning of rock and roll in the early 1950s it is difficult to determine which groups and performers had ties to Christian contemporary music and which were regarded as secular. It is well known that Chuck Berry (the son of a Baptist minister) and Buddy Holly were practising Baptists.²⁴ Ray Charles, Sam Cooke and Aretha Franklin began their careers in church choirs or as gospel singers. The song *I got a woman* that Ray Charles recorded in 1948 at the age of 18 and made a hit in 1953 was still played as traditional gospel music. In 1954 Roy Hamilton earned big success with the gospel song *You'll never walk alone*. The music of James Brown and Little Richard was also strongly influenced by the gospel style. Among the biggest rock and roll stars, Sam Cooke was famous for a long while "only" as a gospel singer. Cooke's²⁵ father served as a minister in the Chicago *Church of Christ Holiness*, where Sam, with his two sisters and elder brother was a member of the *The Singing Children* group. Later he sang in the *Soul Stirrers* then at their peak and took the first steps towards his later self. One of his first successes was *Jesus gave me water* in 1951. At their concerts the charismatic Sam Cooke who had the looks of a film star became a sex symbol among young people. For a long while he planned to pursue his career in both musical scenes, but he was unable to achieve this and gospel was forced into the background of his life.²⁶ Nevertheless, his success in black gospel is significant because it practically opened the way for Afro-American musicians and singers who became stars later.

It is well known that Elvis Presley who marked the beginning of rock and roll, inherited a Pentecostal family background from his mother. The deeply religious Elvis naturally began to be drawn to gospel music. He was a member of at least one gospel group, although according to urban legend he was the leader of *The Songfellows* quartet, Jim Hamill did not include Elvis in his group because of his weak vocal skills.²⁷ Presley's first gospel album was the 1956 *His hand in mine*, which contained basically traditional gospel songs arranged in a more rhythmic style. Throughout his career he always looked on gospel as his personal heritage – a childhood memory with ties to his mother – that was too deeply integrated into his personality for him to ignore and he also drew spiritual strength from it.²⁸

All these processes, of course, occurred in a cultural environment where and when the separation of religious and profane popular culture, secularisation in the broader sense was not as strong as it was in the socialist countries at that time.

24 Of course, the personal religious faith of performers does not mean that their songs can be automatically classified as religious music. On the definition of Christian popular music, see INGALLS – MALL – NEKOLA 2013 or POVEDÁK 2016b. 7–21.

25 He was born in 1931 as Sam Cook.

26 CUSIC 2012. 212–213, 215.

27 CUSIC 2012. 225.

28 CUSIC 2012. 223–226.

In the western plural democracies religiosity did not represent any kind of disadvantage in the individual life career, indeed the public acknowledgement of a personal religious life was an accepted, everyday phenomenon. This was one of the factors contributing to the fluidity and constant interchange between the profane and sacral arts, as was also the case in earlier centuries in the course of world history. Richard Stanislaw even states that rock was first Christian music and was only later taken over by popular culture. However, this is not entirely true because while in a certain sense rock and roll shifted away from Christianity, it must be pointed out that the hippy movement of the 1960s-1970s did not become entirely secular as right from the outset the main motivational factor was not only the renewal of music. Musicality was the most striking form of manifestation of the cultural revolution that emerged in the 1960s; it was capable of expressing the feelings of that generation and opposition to the conformist values of their parents based on status and hierarchy. In the words of Sebók:

“because of its prominent role rock was never just music for the young generations, it was always also a way of expressing a lifestyle, a feeling, rebellion, a distancing or separation: a confession of faith, behaviour form, lifestyle, world view.”²⁹

However rebellion and opposition did not result in atheism, but in a spiritual awakening, an awakening openness in the spirit of liberalism towards previously unknown and therefore attractive exotic Eastern philosophies and religions. Rousseau’s “back to nature” concept was embraced by the hippy movement as a quasi-religious new ideology, communes based on a utopian equality sprang up and there was a general rejection of consumer civilisation. Eastern religions and cults appeared, in many cases popularised by the musicians themselves. Nevertheless, a content linked to Christianity can also be found in the songs of many performers; it certainly cannot be said that the period unequivocally turned away from Christianity.

Direct African influences in the birth of Christian popular music

Christian popular music arose from this musical background in the 1960s and in its style bore the characteristics described above as well as features of the popular music trends fashionable from that time.³⁰ However, a return to traditional local

²⁹ SEBÓK 2002. 372.

³⁰ It is quite obvious that in its musicality the religious music revolution of the 1960s built on the fashionable music styles of the period, at first hallmarked by the name of Bob Dylan, the trend inspired by American folk music that also carried a political message, and then from the 1970s the other trends of rock and roll.

roots and authentic folk culture was characteristic not only of American Christian music culture in that period. Among others renewal from popular culture was a widespread phenomenon in practically all parts of the world in the course of the 20th century history of modern Christian music. The incorporation of style features of local musical tradition was present in Christian music long before the spread of world music. Gospel was one such trend, others were the inclusion of elements of folk music such as the folk mass movement based on pol-beat,³¹ that was highly popular for a short while in the United States in the 1960s, the masses drawing on folk hymns in Hungary, and also the French chanson-type songs of Aimé Duval from the 1950s.³² We must also include here the Missa Luba based on authentic Congolese melodies that has become popular and inspiring around the world.³³

Missa Luba: the renewing power of local traditions

The appearance of African traditional music within the frames of Christian (primarily Roman Catholic) liturgy cannot be seen as a one-way process, in which African melodies have a fertile influence on Christian culture; this was a two-way influence. Accordingly, liturgical music of African origin is basically a sign of African culture adapting to “European” Christian culture. Without conversion to Christianity there would have been little chance of anyone producing mass compositions based on Congolese melodies. As O. E. Axelsson notes

“There is no doubt that, ‘The influence of the Christian church in Africa has produced some of the most accomplished examples of modern African music. In recent years composers of African church music have increasingly used traditional elements in their music, and some of the most exciting experiments in neo-traditional music have been carried out in the church.’”³⁴

Although the appearance of African music in the world of Christian song coincided with the movement of radical cultural and religious revival in western culture from the 1950s-1960s, in reality there is no connection between the two. The appearance of African music was much more closely related to the political transformation, the desire for self-determination that began on the continent after

31 For more detail on the folk mass movement, see: POVEDÁK 2016a.

32 For more detail on Duval and his influence, see POVEDÁK 2016b. 68–71.

33 They are the most prominent trends/figures encouraging the phenomenon. Naturally, figures not mentioned in this article may have appeared in Europe and other parts of the world. The reason they are not included here is that there is practically almost no literature on the subject in other regions.

34 AXELSSON 1974. 90. Citing A. Euba, “Music adapts to a changed world”, *Africa Research*, 1970, C 251.

the World War II. This was manifested in religious culture as the demand to supplement the hymnody of exclusively European origin with melodies from local culture. According to Axelsson two different approaches seem to have prevailed.

“On the one hand there is the recommendation of a complete break with the old tradition of Western hymnody and liturgical music, and a creation of new music within those fields, written and composed by Africans. Although such an idea was presented rather early in the debate, there were no practical results of it until the 1960s, at least in the area of Southern Africa. On the other hand there was a more cautious approach with recommendations of (a) adaptation of African indigenous tunes of a secular kind and with no connection with African religion and worship; (b) construction of ‘African chants’, based on the model of Gregorian chants and fairly often recommended to be in parts instead of in unison (either in parallel two-part harmony or according to proper Western four-part functionality principles), and using what was termed ‘African free rhythm’. Of these recommendations, the adaptation method and the construction of ‘African chants’ are the ones that have been most followed.”³⁵

The use of African tribal melodies for religious purposes in the mid-20th century can be associated mainly with the name of Joseph Kiwele (1912–1961), politician, composer and university educator in what was then the Belgian Congo. He was considered one of the greatest African composers of his time. Kiwele’s most famous work was certainly the “Missa Katanga” (1949), the first African Mass in history. Another of Kiwele’s pieces, “Te Deum bantou” was an arrangement of Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus for choir, organ, and African musical instruments.³⁶

Missa Luba too was composed years before the liturgical changes in 1958, although it displays the openness of the II Vatican Council to local culture. Consequently, it throws an interesting light on the appearance in a religious guise of demands for African renewal: it was still written in Latin, but drew on traditional local musical elements. The idea of Missa Luba first came to the Belgian Franciscan father Guido Haazen when on a missionary trip in the Belgian Congo.³⁷ Through the close co-operation between a gifted African musician, Joachim Ngoi and Fr Guido Haazen, the whole Mass, built according to adaptation principles, became a blend of Western influence and African indigenous musical elements. All sections of the Mass are derived from traditional Congolese folk-music but elaborated by Ngoi and Haazen, and this has resulted in a rather ingenious

35 AXELSSON 1974. 93.

36 Dictionary of African Christian Bibliography <https://dacb.org/stories/democratic-republic-of-congo/kiwele-joseph/> Accessed on: 5 January, 2018.

37 The Belgian Congo won independence in 1960, from 1971 it was known as Zaire, today it is the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

rhythmic, harmonic and polyphonic texture.³⁸ Haazen and Ngoi composed the songs through improvisation with students from the Baluba tribe in Katanga province, following the pattern of traditional songs. As Haazen wrote in his introduction to the issue of the LP in 1964:

“the music of the Missa Luba is mainly the product of a collective improvisation. What is recorded (and published) is simply and solely a reproduction of the concrete improvisation that took place during the recording.”³⁹

In a musicological study of Missa Luba written in 1973 Doris Anna McDaniel notes that both the pure African style and Western influence appear in the work.⁴⁰



Guido Haazen O.F.M. Franciscan Friar from Belgium. He settled in the Belgian Congo in 1953. In 1954 he founded Les Troubadours Du Roi Baudouin. Source: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/1252927-P%C3%A8re-Guido-Haazen>

The Kyrie is in the style of a kasala, a Luba song of mourning. The Gloria is improvised in the Kiluba style characteristic of Katanga. The Credo, the longest section of the Mass, is based on five different folk songs linked by improvisations. The text of the Credo refers to the crucifixion of Christ and the vocal part in the Missa Luba is preceded by the customary announcement of death, first on the kyondo (log drum), then on the kikumvi (tom-tom). There follows a kilio (elegy) without percussion accompaniment, sung by the solo voice. The Sanctus and the Benedictus were inspired by a Bantu farewell song. The Hosannah is a rhythmic dance of Kasai, and the Agnus Dei is a typical Bena Luluwa song, such as might be heard around Kananga.⁴¹ The first performance was given with a choir called

38 AXELSSON 1974. 94.

39 STRIMPLE 2002. 194.

40 MCDANIEL 1973.

41 FOSTER 2013.

Les Troubadours du Roi Baudouin in 1958. They then gave concerts in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. Missa Luba was not notated until 1964, by which time there was such a demand for it from various choirs around the world that Haazel was forced to do so.⁴² It is an indication of its rapid spread and popularity that already in the mid-1960s journals in Hungary behind the Iron Curtain were also writing about Missa Luba.

“... a tape of the Ba-luba tribe’s ‘Missa Luba’ with a jazz beat reached Hungary too. Together with many others I listened to the liturgical ceremony of the Negro tribe [...] This music was deeply moving even at first hearing, it touched the heart and remained fixed in the memory: we would like to hear it again and again.”⁴³



The original LP cover of Missa Luba. Source: <https://twicemodern.wordpress.com/2013/11/13/studsterkel-and-african-music/>

Missa Luba was the most successful of many world music Masses created in the 1950s and 1960s. It eclipsed the earlier *Messe des Savanes* (1956) arranged by Abbé Robert Wedraogho in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) and gave rise to several imitations, including the *Misa Criolla* (1964)⁴⁴ arranged by Ariel Ramírez and the *Misa Flamenca* (1966) arranged by Ricardo Fernández de Latorre and José Torregrosa. Finally in this series we can mention Robert Ray’s Gospel Mass. The genre – as its name indicates – wished to combine Afro-American gospel music with Catholicism. It was first promoted by Clarence Rivers, the first African-American to be ordained in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, who was also himself a musician. The piece was first performed in 1979 at the University of Illinois-Urbana by a

⁴² McDANIEL 1973.

⁴³ POSSONYI 1965, 633–634.

⁴⁴ MITCHELL 2008.

choir of Ray's students. It subsequently became known and popular around the world.⁴⁵

It also shows the importance of Missa Luba that

“owing to the indigenous musical activities which took place here and there within the Roman Catholic Church, and which as a whole gave significant and positive results, Pope Pius XII sanctioned them more clearly by the Papal Instruction ‘Musicae Sacrae Disciplina’ of 1955, which was the first of its kind; in dealing with the Catholic mission areas, the Instruction made clear that there was no longer merely a wish for adaptation of secular African tunes, but a desire for a new music similar to the indigenous music. In other words, Africans should be encouraged to compose new music containing an African idiom, and this certainly leaves room for an accultural process. This trend was confirmed and accepted in the II Vatican Council.”⁴⁶

Summing up

It can be clearly seen that melodies of African origin have had a multiple influence on the shaping of Christian contemporary music. On one hand, musical genres arising from Afro-American folk culture contributed directly to the renewal of secular and religious music that was still intertwined at that time. On the other hand, throughout the world the African masses encouraged a return to the store of local folk melodies. In the light of all this it can be stated with confidence that Afro-American and African musical influences were the most significant in the emergence of CPM. Of course, we must not forget that the appearance of CPM can be attributed not only to musical factors, social, political and cultural processes also played a part. Thus an analysis of early CPM and its immediate forerunners allows us to throw light also on mental and emotional processes taking place in popular culture.

45 <http://www.chron.com/life/houston-belief/article/Gospel-Mass-grew-its-audience-over-time-1750099.php> (Accessed on 14 December 2015.)

46 AXELSSON 1974. 95.

LITERATURE

AXELSSON, Olof E.

1974 Historical Notes on Neo-African Church Music. *Zambezia* 3(2) 89–102.

BORNEMANN, Ernest

1959 The Roots of Jazz. In: HENTOFF, Nat and McCARTHY, Albert J. (eds.): *Jazz*. Rinehart, New York, 1–20.

CUSIC, Don

2012 *Saved by Song. History of Gospel and Christian Music*. University Press of Mississippi.

INGALLS, Monique – MALL, Andrew – NEKOLA, Anna

2013 Christian Popular Music, USA. In: WATSON, J.R. – HORNBY, E. (eds.): *Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*. Canterbury Press, Norwich. Available online: <http://www.hymnology.co.uk/c/Christian-popular-music,-usa> (accessed 12 December, 2017)

JONES, Leroi

2007 *A blues népe. Néger zene a fehér Amerikában. [Blues People. Negro Music in White America.]* Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest.

KREHBIEL, Henry Edward

1914 *Afro-American Folksongs*. G. Schirmer, New York.

MITCHELL, Aaron

2008 Folk Elements in Ariel Ramírez's Misa Criolla. *Choral Journal*, 49 (4) 10–26.

POSSONYI, László

1965 Jazz-zene a szentmisén. [Jazz Music in the Mass.] *Vigilia* 1965 (10) 633–634.

POVEDÁK, Kinga

2016a Times are a'changing. The Folk Mass Movement of the 1960s in the United States. In: TÓKE, Márton (ed.): *In God We Trust? America and Religion*. Department of American Studies, Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, Szeged, 45–55.

SEBŐK, János

2002 *Rock a vasfüggöny mögött. [Rock behind the Iron Curtain.]* GM és Társai Kiadó, Budapest.

STRIMPLE, Nick

2002 *Choral Music in the Twentieth Century*. Amadeus Press, New Jersey.

WILSON-DICKSON, Andrew

1998 *Fejezetek a kereszténység zenéjéből. [The Story of Christian Music.]* Gemini Budapest Kiadó, Budapest.

MANUSCRIPTS

FOSTER, Marc Ashley

2005 *Missa Luba: A New Edition and Conductor's Analysis.* Doctor of Music Arts Thesis, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

McDANIEL, Doris Anna

1973 *Analysis of the Missa Luba.* Manuscript.

NEKOLA, Anna

2009 *Between this World and the Next: The Musical "Worship Wars" and Evangelical Ideology in the United States, 1960-2005.* PhD Dissertation. University of Wisconsin – Madison

POVEDÁK, Kinga

2016b *Rockapostolok. A keresztény könnyűzene vallástudományi vizsgálata. [Rock Apostles. A religious studies investigation of Christian light music.]* PhD dissertation, Szeged.