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The Impact of American Gospel Music on Slovak Gospel Music

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Author: Ladislava Sebechlebská
Study subjects: English – Music
Supervisor: PhDr. Radek Vít, Ph.D.

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis is completely my own work and that no other sources were used in the preparation of the thesis than those listed on the works cited page.

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Abstract

This paper deals with the American gospel music, its roots and consequent impact on Slovak gospel scene. American gospel is known to have been the ancestor of Slovak gospel music, but the thesis interests deeply in the way it influenced and still is influencing the Slovak worship music, not only from the historical point of view, but it also looks at particular areas of contribution, such as melodies, lyrics or styles with the demonstration on several chosen songs.

The aim of the paper work is to introduce the gospel scene of these countries, compare them and point out the rate of inspiration of the Slovak gospel music by the American.

Key words: gospel music, history, lyrics, singers, comparison

Anotace

Tato práce se zabývá americkou gospelovou hudbou, jejími kořeny a následným vlivem na slovenskou gospelovou scénu. Americký gospel je považován za předchůdce slovenské gospelové hudby, ale toto téma se do detailu zaobírá způsobem, jakým ovlivnil a pořád ovlivňuje slovenský gospel. Popisuje nejenom historický vývoj, ale zabývá se také konkrétními oblastmi přínosu, jako například melodie, texty, nebo styly dokumentované na několika vybraných písničkách.

Cílem práce je představit gospelovou scénu v těchto zemích, srovnat je a poukázat na míru inspirace slovenské gospelové hudby americkou.

Klíčová slova: gospelová hudba, historie, texty, pěvci, porovnání

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1. Introduction

Music has been a faithful companion of the human race for ages, accompanying people's most important life events as well as highly emotional situations, as feelings are often rather hard to describe especially in words. It is comprehensible then, that humans in an effort to express their spirituality combines numerous sounds, rhythms, melodies and words, and turn them into devotional songs.

The thesis has an intention to be an explorer of such music, mainly of the last two centuries, with particular focus on the American and Slovak scenes. It is presumed that a wide range of the influence can be found, but the question remains, to what extent. To put it differently, the aim of the research is to understand in which directions have the mixed-up culture of Afro-Americans and erstwhile Europeans moved to the American continent modified and inspired the Slovak sphere of music played in churches and during religious happenings.

At the beginning, the theoretical part carefully looks at the historical inception of the sacred music connected with Christianity in Europe, the commencement of the music tradition in America, the changeover of traditional liturgical music to modern popular music, and the following influence on Slovak gospel music. It contains the opinions of distinct writers and their views on the topic.

The main body deals specifically with the comparison of American and Slovak gospel music in various areas. To be more precise, it demonstrates the impact of the first on the second on the specimens of different types, such as songs, musical instruments and music festivals. Firstly, it clarifies the musical situations in both countries separately, and after that it summarizes what has been figured out.

Hopefully included are comprehensive and adequate findings that can extend the factual knowledge of both, readers and the writer as well.

2. The Theoretical Part

The aim of the theoretical part is to introduce the sphere of spiritual music, gospel music and the historical background in Europe, the United States of America and Slovakia. It intends to prepare the readers to be able to understand the field of gospel music in broader, more complex sense.

2.1. An Overview of the Issue

The theme of the thesis indicates what is going to be examined – gospel music and the American culture spreading to the world, affecting the Slovak country as well. There are researches studying the theme of gospel music on both sides, with careful insight into its history, uniqueness and details. Some of the authors and their works concerning American overview of gospel music are Robert Darden and his *People Get Ready: A New History of Black Gospel Music*; Allan Moore with colleagues and their publication *The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music*, and from older books it is Paul Baker's *Contemporary Christian Music: Where It Came From, What It Is and Where It's Going*. On the other hand, Slovakia has its own authors interested in the field, namely Yvetta Kajanová with detailed work *Gospel Music na Slovensku* (Gospel Music in Slovakia, translated by L.S.). She has also supervised two students dealing with this phenomenon, Jana Ševčíková and Katarína Kasanová.

However, these examples monitor the music situations in Slovakia and the USA separately. Although Kajanová describes the history of gospel music in America and its coming to Slovakia, as well as later development and the inspiration by several foreign songs, but still her interest is in Slovak sphere, and later on she does not develop the role of American music in Slovakia. Then this work is unique in focusing on comparison.

2.2. The Division of Spiritual Music

Spiritual music represents the most general genre dealing with transcendence and mystery. There is no linear connection with rituals or religion. Practically, this kind of music can be written by an atheist as well as a believer. In 20th and 21st century, understanding of

spiritual music involves the whole range of sacred music from Gregorian chant to contemporary spiritual music. In music industry, the term gospel music is used from the 1960s indicating the whole area of spiritual music influenced by modern popular music. (Kajanová 9, translated by L.S.) Allan Moore, however, dates the label of the music genre already in the 1940s, adding that the term “gospel” is much older (Moore 6).

Gospel music, as Kajanová specifies, is derived from sacred music and relates to the 20th and 21st century (248), although Antony Heilbut thinks that the origins date already in the 18th century (Moore 6). The whole field covering spiritual music can be divided into four genre-style areas (Kajanová 9-15, translated by L.S.).

1. Liturgical music. It is a part of sacred music, that is, music connected with any religion. Liturgical music is linked to Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism.
2. Concert Spiritual Music. This genre commences in 17th century. The music is performed in churches, but it is not suitable to be a component of Mass or Liturgy. The epitome of such music is oratorio, with compelling work of composers like W. A. Mozart, L. van Beethoven, etc. A considerable number of concerts are nowadays performed on stage rather than at church.
3. Spiritual Music influenced by Modern Popular music. The roots of this musical style are in African-American folk music from the beginning of the 19th century. There are many music forms included in Afro-American inspiration – spiritual, jubilee, ring-shout, song-sermon, gospel song.
4. Contemporary Christian music, also called Sacropop. Gradual development of this subgenre from 1960s takes in a diverse range of music elements from various music styles, such as rock, jazz, blues, folk, and later in the 1980s even Hip Hop and white metal. In brief, it is an equivalent to profane popular music in sacral sphere. In many cases the only distinction between them is lyrics; the sacral being about God and showing off one’s feelings and emotions related to perceiving the relationship with divinity.

On the other hand, Don Cusic divides directly gospel music according to the listeners (Moore 60). He divides it to the music for “blacks” and music for “whites”; the white representing contemporary Christian music with artists releasing CDs, taking part in talk shows and radio broadcast. Meanwhile, black gospel music is less organized, and the Afro-

Americans tend to turn their backs to black performers who enter the world of white audience, as it smells of money.

2.3. The Brief History of Liturgical Music in Europe

Spiritual music is the mother of European music as it is known today, starting with the great history of initial Christian liturgical music in the representation of Gregorian chant sung exclusively for a thousand years during Christian masses. This type of singing is very peaceful, having no regular rhythm, and being composed of one melody. Meanwhile, profane music exists, but its role is not as significant as that of liturgical, although the majority of ordinary people might be in close touch rather with secular music, because only the selective number of the scholars living in the Middle Ages are literate, being typically connected to Church, which results in written record almost solely about sacred music and its development.

Later on from 11th to 15th century, with the arrival of minstrels and their popular songs, the situation of mere sacred music in churches gets increasingly complicated, as the secular songs start to permeate into church music. Not only the particular songs, but the whole composition as well – the arrangement of sacred music becomes gradually polyphonic, having more voices sounding simultaneously, in the contrary of past monophony. Even this tiny change had to be overcome during several centuries, as emotional pleasure included in polyphony is perceived to be evil and sinful, attracting human's attention away from God. It is not until 1614 that polyphony becomes officially permitted by Catholic Church, with the second edition of Gregorian chant called *Editio Medicea*.

A hundred years later, the new styles appear in church, with composers being deeply influenced by secular culture, especially opera. Polyphony is changed into homophony, which means that one melody is accompanied by chords. This is the time of great world-class composers like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven or Joseph Haydn. At that time, meritorious music tradition exists already in each nation.

2.4. The Beginnings of Gospel Music in America

For thousands of years, music has been a companion of every culture all the world round, as it performs various roles in the life of humans – entertaining, social, and religious.

Gospel music is, in comparison with the complete history of mankind, only a few decades old. The roots of this music genre were in the times of American slavery, when Africans were brought to the new continent, and presumably, their abstract luggage was African ritual music. Although there is no musical documentation of the first African slaves who reached the shore of America in 1619 (Jablonski 4), and in spite of the first settlers, the Puritans also called the Pilgrims, being said to be nonmusical, the assumption that music tradition is gradually expanding is reasonable. To testify the truth of the argument, Jablonski states the spiritual songs are brought either in the memories of the settlers or in their psalm books fetched from England (2). Nevertheless, Don Cusic claims that in fact, Spanish are the first to come to the new land, and their appertaining to the Christian Catholic Church contributes to the founding of Gregorian chant tradition (Moore 44). Anyhow, from then on, music of the heterogeneous newborn nation has its chance to blossom.

As it is mentioned above, one of the inspirations of gospel music is carried from Europe by Caucasians. They are the people who bring along their belief and inspire the native Africans to become Christians. The process of blending meek and ascetic European Christian and agile and energetic tribal person must be mirrored at some point. Truly it is, as the result of this unique combination is gospel music itself, with Christian lyrics and thrilling interpretation only African-Americans are capable of.

Little is documented from the following period, as masters are not interested in what their servants do in their lives, not to mention what they sing like. However, there are some known facts about pre-war period. In the time of the first settlers' arrival, Calvinist and English dissenter service music is played without musical instruments, while Lutheran music is accompanied by organ or other instruments (Moore 44). It is fascinating that lively gospel music comes to existence directly in this environment. One can only presume whether the extraordinary ability is hereditary since the antebellum times, when singing in the form of work songs and field hollers is the only means of communicating their deep sorrow and anguish at appalling slave life (Interview).

Several patterns may be originally represented in both cultures, such as call and response in African tradition and its counterpart in European heritage, antiphony. That is to say, when one person, usually song leader or preacher in church speaks his words or part of the song at first and subsequently the others reply or repeat the same. Thus it is no marvel that Afro-Americans, practicing call and response in tribes in West Africa for centuries, take over this habit observed during masses of their masters, as they are already thoroughly familiar with it (Stearns 10). This type of singing is usually concerned with Song sermon, which often

contains only two intervals – unison and fourth, the fourth being often blue, that is, slightly out of tune. As Kajanová indicates, this pattern is also used in later King's manifestation known as *I have a dream* (12-13, translated by L.S.).

Similar to this example is the case of white and black spirituals, being named after the color of their creators, raising the chicken-and-egg question, which one is the first to appear. Spiritual song is a religious song with more personal feeling than hymns and psalms. These former religious songs arise gradually; psalms, appearing already in the times of the first settlers, having texts from the bible, inspire more personally-texted hymns, accepted later in the 18th century (Moore 45). Generally, the most accepted version is that black spiritual originates in white, for psalms come from the European culture (Jablonski), what Cusic agrees with (Moore 49, 51). Anyhow, both authors add a piece of information; Jablonski indicates: "In the light of the mingling of black and white at camp meetings it is more likely that each borrowed from the other," (93) and Cusic reminds the undeniably significant role of rhythm coming from black gospel (Moore 51). The camp meetings are religious gatherings during 18th and 19th centuries, trying to bring democratic attitude to American religion and revive belief in the continent (Jablonski 64). Moreover, Don Cusic explains that these meetings are the result of the settlers moving westward, and as they are living too far from each other, the best possibility is to ride their wagons to one particular place and provide improvised services (Moore 47). As people gathered in the open, or alternatively in tents, and presumably due to unofficial atmosphere, the meetings gave birth to folk-music feeling of songs in the form of spirituals (Jablonski 64, 93).

There are also other types of songs that are connected to Afro-American sacred culture. Besides spirituals, work and sermon songs exist jubilee, a joyful song, usually connected to texts of Old Testament, often occurring in conjunction with jazz (Kajanová 13, translated by L.S.).

The songs that are fundamentally different from European culture are inherent in the form of purely African customs – one of them being ring shout. Human voice and dance are believed to be immensely powerful in every African tribe. Moreover, dance is like a necessary part of worshipping, like a prayer. This style of praise is transformed from veneration of African gods to Christian God (Angell).

Finally, gospel song might be performed as a solo in comparison to spiritual, which is always sung in choir. The texts are coming from the New Testament, and authors are usually known, while in spiritual it is the opposite (Kajanová 13).

All these types of songs might sometimes overlap, but what they have definitely in common is that together they prepare the ground for American gospel music as it is known today.

The change comes with the Civil War in the 1860s, after abolishing the institution of slavery. The freedom of Afro-Americans leads to colossal modification and contribution to the musical treasure of the whole world. Finally being allowed to take part in musical scene, the first music book, *Slave Songs of the United States*, sees the light of day almost immediately after the war, in 1867 signifying that the African-American music tradition has been flourishing many years before (Jablonski 93, Moore 50).

Since the enslaved people are finally free, they start to be active in common events in society. That means broader participation in music industry as well, although there might be several cases when Afro-Americans take part in musical activities even in the times of slavery, such as is the case of the Moravians in 1730s and 1740s. As Jablonski describes them, they “were extremely musical and their music-making was not confined to vocal and religious music” (5). They originate in the Czech Republic, as their name indicates, and found a colony in Pennsylvania. The writer says they import many instruments and conduce to building a few organs. He mentions as well that between the settlers is one African-American, Andrew the Negro, and in several years another three move here. To be exact, their activities joined to music are not documented, but being in close touch with musical Moravians, one can hypothesize about their great music abilities too (Jablonski 5).

Be that as it may, one becomes undeniably musically important in the history of America – Richard Allen. As a founder and bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, he publishes *A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors by Richard Allen, African Minister* as early as 1801.

Several of the known musicians about the war period are Blind Tom (Jablonski 65), born as a sightless slave in 1849, being a prodigiously gifted piano player; A. J. R. Connor (65), composer and musician; and family group Lucases, touring in 1859 through Ohio (53), but unfortunately in the last case, still provoking and arousing animosity of conservatives towards the Afro-American people. The situation finally improves year by year after the Civil War.

2.5. Liturgical Music in Slovakia

When talking about Slovak situation, the main nationally acclaimed musical endeavor in the field Roman Catholic Church is *Jednotný katolícky spevník* (United Catholic hymnal, translated by L.S.) by Mikuláš Schneider Trnavský. Being published in 1937, it is truly unique in the sense of being used to these times, all over the country. Trnavský is a music composer dealing with Slovak folk songs and liturgical music for almost whole his life, that is, approximately from 1900 to 1958. These influences are directly reflected in the songs in the hymn book; particularly it can be noticed from tuneful melody and harmonic accompaniments. Not only does he borrow from already sung songs during liturgy, but he also contributes about two hundred his own compositions (Remiášová). With respect to almost a hundred years when they have been used during masses, it indicates the quality of the author's work and popularity between folk.

Similarly, Protestants and Baptists living in Slovakia have followed their own ways. Protestant Evangelical church follows its own hymnal called *Tranoscius*, containing about 1200 items already in the 19th century. A very important hymn books for creating the Slovak sphere of modern gospel music are *Piesne duchovné* and *Piesne Sionské* (Spiritual songs and Songs of Zion, translated by Kajanová, 250) the first of Baptist church being directly inspired by American white and black spirituals, the second of Evangelic church (Kajanová 21).

There are new tendencies in Slovak churches during last decades, when especially young believers play the guitars and sing, which are familiarly called youth masses, or particularly youth songs (Konečný). Kajanová designates another title for the same issue – The New Spiritual Song. It is a subgenre of gospel music. This incorporates liturgical music with elements of other music genres, for instance pop music and folk music. She states it has its own characteristic features, that is to say, it is known who the author is, with commonly oral tradition of spreading, occurring in many variants, since singers make songs suitable for their own arrangements, and typically, it is included in religious events, masses, and prayer meetings. The beginnings are still the matter in question. It is believed the starting point might be traced to the period of the 1960s, when the Second Vatican Council took place, but that can represent only the official permission of the Church for the realization of spiritual songs in churches. The fact is that the songs have often appeared in liturgies without priest's giving the green light (Kajanová 21, 248; Konečný).

2.6. Gospel Music in America in the 20th Century

Gospel music as it is known today comes to the fore at the beginning of the 20th century with publishing first African-American music. There are several famous names related to the first recordings and publishing of black music, namely the Fisk Jubilee Singers and C. Albert Tindley (Moore 52, Jablonski 131-132).

One of the first notable authors is also Thomas A. Dorsey, known as Georgia Tom (Jablonski 224, Moore 53). He has a finger in every musical pie of the period, since his interests range from jazz through soul to gospel. He contributes hundreds own songs to the last mentioned style, e.g. Precious Lord, Take My Hand and There'll Be Peace in the Valley (both sung later also by Elvis Presley – on his Christmas Album). Moreover, thanks to Dorsey, Baptists officially accepted two of his songs to be performed in churches, since it is not allowed to play the new modern jazzy-soul music there before the 1930s, and this subsequently lays the foundations of what has been perceived as black gospel music to these days (Moore 52).

There are two important movements that trigger black and white separation within churches, and have impact on lively and innovative realizations of church music. The first is the Holiness movement, named after the holiness church, which spreads during 19th century (Buseck); the second Pentacostal movement is younger, having roots at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, dealing with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, as people believe to receive the gift of speaking in tongues. Being highly emotional and irrational (Williams), the movements alter also the music (Moore 54). Especially the Holiness opens the door of black congregations and produces solely Afro-American music, derived from itself, no longer from white songs (Moore 54). On the other hand, the Pentacostal development is the starting line for white singing in more personal way. One of the singers who are influenced by these changes is Elvis Presley, an early rock and roll artist, transferring his gospel music experience from his childhood to secular culture (Moore 54-55, Trickey).

The 20th century has a fertile gospel land, from which germinate flowers like Mahalia Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Sam Cooke and James Cleveland. All of them are nourished with church music from the very beginning of their lives (Moore 55-58, 113, “Mahalia Jackson”). However, they vary in the years they stay faithful to the genre, since the great fame waits for those who take part in pop music. This seductive power often wins, as it does capturing Sam Cooke, for instance. The musician spends most of his life singing to God's people, but the last decade of his life is dedicated to pop and rhythm & blues (Moore 57-58).

The rising popularity of the genre is proven when the first Grammy Award in the newly-introduced category Best Gospel Or Other Religious Performance goes to Mahalia Jackson in 1961. It is globally but the fourth awarding (“Past Winners Search: 1961”).

There may raise a question why almost exclusively African-American music has been mentioned. Of course, music has existed in both cultures and their religions since the European and African arrival to the New World; still it is Afro-American blood which turns the spotlight on gospel music so that it starts to reach the pop charts. The white gospel musicianship finds its way to ardent fans, or vice versa, and becomes a crowd-puller only in the last decades, with broad genre-style ambit which today’s gospel music reaches (Moore 171). Naturally, this is not relevant only to the music of Caucasians. The contemporary gospel music is embraced in several categories, which Gospel Music Association honors annually with Dove Awards since 1969 (“Nominees”). These categories include genres and styles like Rock, Pop/Contemporary Music, Praise & Worship, Traditional Gospel, Country, Bluegrass and Rap/Hip Hop (“Voting Process”).

2.7. The Appearance of Gospel Music in Slovakia

Kajanová expresses: “We need to bear in mind that the original European spiritual chants and psalms, hymnic songs and other song formations are re-entering Europe in a transformed form coming from the USA” (250). In other words, European spiritual music travels through centuries over the Pacific Ocean, enriches itself of new inspirations, forms and ideas, and then returns in a new disguise to Europe. Then the expression “appearance” is understood rather as comeback.

As it has been stated above, Baptists play an important role in the process of naturalization American-origin gospel songs in Slovakia, that time still Czechoslovakia (until the formation of two separate nations in 1993). Baptist choirs in the USA are the basis for the inception of spirituals and rhythmical gospel songs with blue notes. These new trends arise in the hymnal *Piesne duchovné* (Spiritual Songs) in 1947, called “American” because of American and Canadian choirs who take part in its formation (Kajanová 92). What is typical of the songs is their four-part arrangement with the support of organ. By this hymn book is an early contribution *Piesne Sionské* (Songs of Zion) produced by Roy sisters at the beginning of the 20th century (Kajanová 250). Although it is still ranked as old spiritual song, that is, not

being influenced by popular music, it contains the focus on personal testimony, which happens to be the rock of latter gospel songs and the New Spiritual Song (Kajanová 59).

The period of 20th century being in its second half communist, a great repression is enforced in the religious area. With this in mind it is interesting that in such a hostile environment gospel music starts to settle down. Obviously, the chance to fully develop comes only after 1989 with the fall of communism. Nonetheless, it does not mean that any religious gatherings are not happening; as a matter of fact there is an underground Christian movement, which creates a novice in the field of Slovak gospel music – the first representatives of the New Spiritual Song are formed. To exemplify, between the years 1949 to 1966 songs like *Mlad' Bohu verná* get to Slovak consciousness (Youth Faithful to God, Kajanová 250).

3. The Main Body

As the history has been introduced, the following part is designed to show the concrete examples of similarities and differences between the two countries in a few music fields. Furthermore, it draws general conclusions and indicates the rate of inspiration of Slovakia by the USA.

3.1. Comparison of Songs

The following chosen examples of Slovak gospel songs taken from American versions show to what extent music becomes attractive for other nation.

Song No. 1 – Oh Happy Day

The first of all examples is a well-liked song, Oh Happy Day. The English lyrics go like this.

Oh happy day When Jesus washed My sins away He taught me how to watch Fight and pray And live rejoicing every day
--

The modern adaptation, a makeover of an 18th century hymn, is a success of Edwin Hawkins, since it happens to be “the first gospel song to climb the mainstream charts”, and the triumph continues when it gains him a Grammy Award in 1970 (Brown). The revival of the song comes with the movie *Sister in Act II: Back in the Habit*, where Oh Happy Day appears in the arrangement of a school choir. The catchy rhythm, joyful message and singable melody often attracts everybody to sing his or her heart out. Being explained previously, the pattern call and response is used in the verses (although English version has only one verse repeated more times, only with subtle rhythmical and feeling alterations), that is, a leader preents followed by a choir, and refrain is sung together – the soloist plus the choir. This version occurs in a Slovak equivalent *Ó Šťastný Deň*, but as it is taken from the English

version, there exists several variants sung during religious ceremonies. However, the fame of Happy Day spreads even outside the gospel ambit – for instance, the Slovak a capella group Fragile have involved it in their first album, Voice Mail (“Albumy: Voice Mail”), in original English shape. Still, the conformed versions can be heard in the temples lying below the Tatras. To demonstrate, here follows two of them:

Ó šťastný deň	Oh happy day
Keď príde Pán	When Jesus comes
Bude šťastný deň	It will be happy day
Prinesie nám	He will bring us
Lásku len	Only love
Keď príde Pán	When Jesus comes
(bude) šťastný deň	It will be happy day
	(translated by L.S.)

The lyrics are subtly different. In the case of Slovak version, they are adjusted to suit the melody. As it is displayed in the translation of the Slovak version, the reason of cheerfulness is altered in comparison to the original. The jolly expression of the atonement with God changes slightly into the joy of meeting God. Nonetheless, the encounter can be possibly understood as the reunion, so the meaning in such case could be essentially the same.

Ó šťastný deň	Oh happy day
Keď vyhral Boh	When God won
Zdá sa nám že odišiel	It seems to us like he is gone
Volá ma tam	He calls me there
Vyššie k nebesiam	Higher to heavens
Som tak rád	I am so glad
Tak poďte s nami	So come with us
Všetci, každý deň	Everybody, every day
	(Translated by L.S.)

In this second example, the refrain is filled with more extensive text. As opposed to the first version when the lines are repeated several times within verses and refrains, this realization adds still new lyrics. To be more specific, it can appear in five verses (“Šťastný deň”), which are united by the repetition of the motif Ó šťastný deň. The meaning here is altered to a great degree, and even some lines do not seem to fit the melody, as the words or syllables need to be altered – prolonged to sound for several notes or the opposite, sung quicker so that it conforms with meter. The development could be explained by efforts of young people to create an honest personal confession, rather than musically professional performance. As long as they feel it this way, it can be considered acceptable, because it is message what matters in gospel music.

As regards the music instruments that play accompaniment to voices, the most typical is a piano, in particular, because of the church possibilities, a keyboard. Other devices adding rhythmical background are mostly percussion instruments, such as tambourine, claves and egg-shaker.

This is therefore an example when the emulation is taken from an old church song which is transformed to a modern makeover, and having become famous it returns again to churches. The Slovak versions are influenced melodically, musically, partly by the lyrics and the style of accompaniment.

Song no. 2 – Awesome God

When he rolls up his sleeves He ain't just putting on the ritz There's thunder in his footsteps And lightning in his fists And the Lord wasn't joking When he kicked 'em out of Eden It wasn't for no reason That he shed his blood His return is very close And so you better be believing That our God is an awesome God
--

<p>Our God is an awesome God He reigns from heaven above With wisdom, power, and love Our God is an awesome God</p>
--

The contemporary Christian song written by Rich Mullins, released in 1989 (Allender), is a widely-known piece of music, adopted by many singers from gospel field of interest, for instance Michael W. Smith and Australian group Hillsong United. As it can be seen, the popularity has passed across the oceans and reached Slovakia as well. It has resulted in the same melody and customized words.

<p>Náš Pán on je kráľov kráľ Jeho trón bude naveky stáť On má všetku vládu a moc Náš Pán on je kráľov kráľ (Kajanová 84-85)</p>	<p>Our God is the king of kings His throne will stand forever He has all reign and power Our God is the king of kings (Translated by L.S.)</p>
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However, there is a substantial difference between English and Slovak realization – in the second case the version is completely missing, and it is only the refrain what remains. That means repeating only the four lines for several times. Since this example is a piece of concert production, the effect is often aimed at captivating the audience, and so it does not need to introduce repeatedly new words or a melody because the listeners are absorbed by the atmosphere of the performance. Furthermore, spectators can participate with singing even though they might not have been familiar with the song at the beginning of the event. Having discussed the structure, the following step is focusing on the musical accompaniment. It is quite similar in both American and Slovak arrangements – the stage version basically requires electric guitars, drums, vocals, and keyboard. Other instruments can be added, such as violin, percussions and brass instruments.

The meaning of the translation is not absolutely the same, yet not much different, as the thoughts are conveyed in principle. Equally they praise sovereignty of God, his reign, power, and by expression “our God” they indicate ranking singers among his nation. Then it is another illustration of succumbing to the oozing charm of American music.

Song No. 3 – Were You There

See Appendix 1 (English version)

There must be a pattern that helps people to easily remember melodies in the times of settling the New World, the times when people carry their whole possessions to the unknown lands and in many areas, particularly cultural, have only the oral form of transmission. Such a device can be heard in spirituals, says Cusic, in which a part of the melody is often repeated so that everybody can join the song, even without knowing the whole thing (Moore 49). An example of the kind is Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord). There are only several changes in lyrics during four strophes, so that everyone can participate, as it is mentioned above. The spiritual is sung at Easter, when the Crucifixion and Resurrection are commemorated.

Following this example, the Slovak version (Appendix 2) closely resembles the original. In the first place, the lyrics of the first strophe have the same meaning in both languages, apart from one line that follows below. Not only does this line differ in lyrics, but also has its own melody in English and in Slovak. Anyhow, the theme and the repetitive principle are the same.

<u>English version</u>	<u>Slovak version</u>
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble	Nezabudni v ťažkej chvíli, že ho všetci opustili (Do not forget at a difficult moment that everybody left him Translated by L.S.)

Being about the Crucifixion, the Slovak variant is adapted to suit the Stations of the Cross, and it is performed when especially young worshipers recall the story of Jesus' death. As there are fourteen stations remembered during his way, such as Jesus meets his mother or Jesus falls the third time, there is one strophe per each, plus one strophe which introduces and closes all of them – that is the one shown in Appendix 2.

The next verses follow the example of the original; there is exchanged only the small part of the strophe.

Bol si tam	Were you there
ked' bol odsúdený Pán	when Lord was condemned to death
Nezabudni v každej chvíli že ho všetci	Do not forget at a difficult moment that
opustili	everybody left him
Bol si tam	Were you there
ked' bol odsúdený Pán	when Lord was condemned to death
	(Translated by L.S.)

Everything remains the same but “when Lord was condemned to death”. According to this instance, which is the second strophe of the song, there follow all the others. The resemblance to the ancestor is then remarkable, still taking the altered passage into consideration.

Nevertheless, what is dissimilar is the rendering of voices. The source document is written in four parts, while the common accompaniment for Slovak youth is only a guitar and a simple one-part voice.

To sum up, these three samples have proved the trespassing of American music to Slovak hearts of believers to be welcomed. Sometimes the songs keep pace with the melody, whereas the meaning falls behind because of individual lyrics, although, as it is with the last example, it can be the opposite. In other cases these two components may be balanced, pointing at Amazing God. Notwithstanding distinct accompaniments, the realizations have still in common some patterns, repetitions and structures when compared and consequently, the influence cannot be denied.

3.2. Gospel Music Festivals

Music festival is a popular form of enjoying music icons live, especially during summer. The historical view reaches the year 1954, when the Newport Jazz Festival takes place in Newport, Rhode Island, believed to be the first jazz festival which is held from then on every year (Meyers).

Following this example, through years there have developed hundreds of music festivals, all over the world, and of all distinct styles and genres. Contemporary Christian music is not exception, and provides a broad range of festivals in the USA as well as Europe.

This can denote another mother-and-child relationship between American and Slovak inspiration, although the impact might have been transferred through geographically closer countries, such as England, hosting the first music fest of the kind in 1974 (“About: History”).

Because of the great number of these festivals taking place in the US, there are listed only some of them, ranked by importance and popularity, according to the visitors they annually welcome.

- Alive – It is a festival with a twenty-six year tradition. Its aim is to bring Christians from various denominations and churches together, strengthen their faith and let people enjoy music (Graening).
- Creation Northeast and Creation Northwest – The festival Creation Northeast begins its history in 1979, and in 1998 expands to the second festival, offering people living in the west coast of the country to enjoy an event of the kind as well. Northeast, being the largest Christian music festival in the USA, takes place in Mount Union, PA and provides, for more than sixty performers every year, several stages – main, with the most famous names in this genre, fringe stage for rockers and rappers and between others also kid’s stage. (Jones)
- Spirit West Coast – It is a double music festival as well, divided into Del Mar and Monterey. Being one of the biggest Christian festivals in the US, it also supplies, apart from concerts, sport and relaxation activities (“What Is SWC?”).

The population of Slovakia reaching about five point four million inhabitants in 2013 (“Population on 31 December 2013”) and the US having approximately sixty times more inhabitants (“U.S. and World Population Clock”), the capacity of music festivals cannot really be compared equally. Still, there is at least one Slovak Christian music festival worth mentioning, as it hosts internationally popular stars every year.

- CampFest – This is an open-air music festival set in the heart of Slovak pride – the Tatra Mountains, particularly in Kráľ’ova Lehota with a fifteen year tradition. There are about four to six thousand visitors coming every year to enjoy the four day event. Besides concerts other concurrent activities have their place too, namely seminars, games, discussions and sport contests. The performers include not only singers and music bands, but religious speakers as well. It is the biggest gospel music festival in Slovakia, trying to renew individual relationships with God and cooperate local Christian communities (“CampFest – Open Air Festival”).

Festivals are therefore the possibility to share emotions with friends and strangers, locals and foreigners. The difference in comparison to other music genres is that these events often include specifically religious actions, like baptism, masses, prayer meetings, and lectures on the spiritual issues as well as personal testimonies and life-changing experiences associated with spirituality. Music and dance are perceived as worshipping instruments; devices exchanged for words when believers express their deepest feelings.

3.3. Gospel Accompaniments

The research carried out in 2012 proved seventy-three percent Americans to be Christian. With that number, a great variety of congregations exists, almost fifty percent being Protestant (“Nones on the Rise”). Each of them have distinct tradition in music, but talking about music influenced by modern popular music, Baptists, belonging to Protestantism, should be definitely mentioned. Their gospel music in American churches is energetic, soulful, and highly emotional. As it has been stated before, the inspiration from Afro-American culture brings particular patterns that are used within services, such as call and response and usage of blue notes, which adds a flavor of heartfelt insistence. Beside these patterns, there are also other typical signs making their music distinguishing. One can consider such feature to be also the sound of songs, not directly human voice, but what is hidden behind.

Musical instruments required in this field are routinely rhythmical and they underpin the harmony. Although these are not functioning as a rule, at any rate, they are fairly common (Balle):

- Organ – The footing for gospel music is definitely an organ. The sound is produced by air going through the pipes. As aforementioned, Moravians and others have built several of them as early as the first half of the 18th century.
- Tambourine – Being a hand instrument supporting rhythm, it is usually held and played by a choir member.
- Piano – Alongside the organ, a piano is used with slow songs, especially to accompany solos.
- Drums – Drumming helps in keeping the beat. The origin of drums goes back to African times, when tribal ceremonies required their usage.

- Bass guitar – A guitar providing very low notes, insinuating harmonic line is called bass guitar. It is mainly indispensable to gospel's brother, that is, soul.

On the other hand, Slovak instruments for church purposes may be different. The liturgical music is influenced by other streams of popular music, especially rock and folk (Kajanová 25).

- Guitar – The typical 6-string instrument belongs to the standard music instruments. The musician plays chords and adjusts style to the character of songs. The next instrument used to a great degree is keyboard.
- Keyboard – It is a substitute for the organ or piano. With many registers of sound patterns and rhythmical background, it represents an effective means to support singing.
- Violin, flute, percussions – Each of these instruments is usually additional, outside the basic accompaniment, but still being used to an extent. Many church choirs enrich the elementary assembly, that is a guitar or a piano, or both at once, of percussions similar to those mentioned before within Baptist music; only adding at least one, a cajon.

In temples, the sound is then rather acoustic, whereas Contemporary Christian music is noted for the opposite. The electronic sound is present in many forms, especially in variety of styles. Some of them might be electronic dance music, hip hop, rock, rock & roll, even metal. The word of God is no more hidden behind the walls of churches; it is spread to world in the form of pop music. So as to musical instruments, it is not simple to define what is typical, because there would have to be mentioned each music style separately, that is, rock alignment contains electric guitars, keyboards and drums; electronic music requires amplifier, mixer, speaker system (although these are not directly musical instruments, rather equipments), and so on.

3.4. A Comparison Based on Artists

With regard to a variety of Christian music styles and genres when Slovakia and the USA are contrasted, it is disproportional to compare profane pop music, not to mention this specific sphere. It is possible to list almost all Slovak groups and singers who release CDs and take part in Christian contemporary concerts, whereas it is dissimilar in America. A great

population calls for a wide diversity, also in the taste of music. Looking closer, there are all music genres represented in American Contemporary Christian music, while only several on Slovak scene.

For example, there is an American rapper called Lecrae, a Grammy-awarded artist in the category Best Gospel Album in 2011 (“Bio” Lecrae), putting on this music genre a high value. On the other hand, Slovakia has but a few Christian hip hop representatives, quite marginal, not mainstream artists.

What dominates Slovak Christian stages is praise & worship (“CampFest – Open Air Festival, “Worship Festival”). To be more specific, it is a form rather than a music style. Obviously, the point of gospel music is always to worship, to share testimonies and deliver divine message to the listeners, whether in a “shouting” of a rock singer or rapped rhymes, but the praise & worship is aimed exclusively at this purpose (“O nás”), with no particular interest in background music and telling stories. People just meet in order to thank and praise God, what may look more like a prayer than like a concert.

There are a few groups which must be noticed by each attendant of such events, as they frequently appear on stages in front of believers from the whole country. So when somebody wants to come for the first time, he has a high chance to meet at least one of them.

- Espé is the first to be mentioned, which is a music group put together in 2003. They are mainly the members of a regular religious meeting for young believers held in Sliach, and the music group is only its offspring. Anyhow, they present many activities and projects, some members undertake evangelizing missions called Godzone, trying to allure young generations. All the events are supported by their music (“Rozhovor s Espé”). They have managed to release five CDs yet.
- Lámačské chvály (Breaking praise, translated by L.S.) is an older formation, starting to meet in 1994 in the capital, Bratislava. The history of the beginning is similar to the previously mentioned, as they have arisen from the youth meetings by the church, too. With its five members it has published one CD; the next is being prepared in these days (“Lámačské Chvály (SK Worship Music”).
- Tretí deň (The third day, translated by L.S.) is a music band from Košice. Their repertoire is not strictly praise & worship; the songs sound more like rock or pop, although there might be found a considerable number of peaceful items. Having released their new album in June, the band can be commended for the collection of several albums and the twenty-two year existence.

What is typical of all these three is the sound, being produced by electric guitars, drums and lead singers, who are communally male. The singers are also often in the position of a speaker, encouraging the audience to let themselves be overwhelmed by the atmosphere. Except the stated bands, there are no less significant groups such as Timothy, Christallinus, BCC worship (“CampFest – Open Air Festival”). All of them can be characterized as rock bands, with the above-mentioned musical instrumentation. An exception within the Slovak sphere is Heaven’s Shore (Kajanová 174-175), with a higher number of drums and Celtic-like sound. Although the majority of the concert production is represented by bands, there are several significant individuals – Richard Čanaky, Ľudka Koščová, Miriam Kajserová and Felice (“CampFest – Open Air Festival, Kajanová 171-176, “Spočítané”).

It is nothing special to see previous gospel singers passing the line to pop music. Many of the contemporary musicians start in church choirs and bands, gaining their first public experience there (Kajanová 7-8). Lately it is the case of Sima Martausová, the 2009 winner of Gospeltalent organized by Richard Čanaky (“Bio: Dobrý Deň To Som Ja”), as she releases her CD in 2013 with the debut *Normálny život* (A Normal Life, translated by L.S.). Her folk-soul style and touching lyrics, which are influenced by the singer’s belief, gained her thousands of fans.

Having briefly mapped the Slovak republic from this point of view, it is adequate to compare it to the America and deduce the results. When considering all the categories the Dove Awards offer, one must realize that they mirror the impressive variety, which the American gospel music embraces. These genres and styles have each hundreds of representatives, soloists and bands, musicians and singers. To illustrate, the following artists are some of the last winners of the 46th awarding in 2013 (“Current Winners”).

- Skillet – This is a real hard rock group, using what hard rock requires – screaming, electric guitars and drums. The group is build up from three members, a boy and two girls (“Community”).
- Devin McGlamery – Devin is quite a contrasting figure to the previously mentioned, being an adorer of country music.
- Chris Tomlin – The last one is a singer revealing his heart in praise & worship.

As it is shown, they provide music which is hardly similar. Then, trying to find out whether there is a relationship between the two nations in connection with artists, the similar styles should be taken into consideration. Praise & worship is richly performed in the United

States as well. Chris Tomlin is but one of them, heading the line with singers and bands like Gungor, Kristian Stanfill and Big Daddy Weave (“Nominees”). What they have in common with Slovak representatives is the typical sound, usually peaceful pulsating rhythm and graduating monumental sound to the end of the song. It is also interesting that in both countries dominate male singers.

There is one style which comes solely from the USA – hip hop (Randel). Although it has not yet been developed to a substantial degree in Slovak gospel, as it has been mentioned previously, there have appeared several names like Regiment (“Regiment”) and Úzka cesta (A narrow street, translated by L.S.; “CampFest – Open Air Festival”). Then the American rappers clearly must have inspired, directly or indirectly through Slovak mainstream rap, the Slovak believers. However, the impact in this area seems to be rather marginal.

4. Conclusion

After the trip into history meeting Afro-Americans, old Europeans, the musicians singing old and newly modified spiritual songs; after the transformations of perceiving the effects and purposes of music in churches, and finally after decades of years of penetrating the newly created, modern and catching gospel music into Slovak music life, it is time to sum up what has been discovered and achieved.

As it is stated in the introduction, the assumption that American gospel music has an impact on Slovak equivalent has been right. There are several aspects in which a trace of this kind of music can be found.

The first explored area concerns particular songs. The repertoire of the genre in Slovakia has adapted an inordinate number of American songs, which results in similar or identical melodies, translations of lyrics that more or less try to convey the original meaning, musical patterns and repetitions within the songs. Sometimes the copies are adjusted to suit the melody or they develop the theme to a greater extent; in other cases it might be the opposite and the songs are shortened. Still the fact that gospel songs sung in English come to Slovakia and find their followers is conspicuous.

The next part, taking into consideration music festivals, proves that, to some extent, a similarity finds again its way to Slovak music industry. Not only does a music festival originate in the USA and has the chance to influence others, but also the manner of organizing gospel festivals is very similar in many countries, with accompanying activities connected to religion and belief.

Having summarized the two music areas, the following includes musical instruments. Being a double issue, as there are church bands and Christian pop counterparts, it also differs in its results. What is similar for both cultures in churches is a piano or keyboard and percussions, and regarding the Christian contemporary music, the instruments depend on the genre and style they play, so they are quite the same. But thinking mainly about the American impact, it would be definitely worth mentioning bringing drums into church.

Finally, the last part explores the signs of resemblance and influence of human factor, that is, of singers and music groups. Although a direct impact has not been approved, the connection exists through music styles. What initiates in the USA comes slowly to Slovakia as well, as it is with rap or popular praise and worship.

Apart from the historical development which connects these two nations in the field of old church music, it is now clear that America and Slovakia have still many things in common. Separated by thousands of kilometers and even by the ocean, they are still accessible for musical wings. The USA, a great nation with miscellaneous music industry, has a large amount of music treasures which is a pity not to be interested in. Then it is only enrichment of the Slovak republic that it is influenced by the majestic songs and styles of Afro-Americans combined with European culture.

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6.2. Appendix 2 – Bol si tam (Were You There, Slovak version)

Bol si tam (Were You There)

Chord progression: Eb, Ab, Bb, Eb, G

Chord progression: f, Bb, Eb, Eb7, Ab

Chord progression: a b, Eb, Ab, Bb, Eb

Voice: Bol si tam keď bol u - mu - če - ný Pán Bol si tam keď bol

Vo. 6: u - mu - če - ný Pán Ne - za - bud - ni v'áž - kej chví - li že ho všet - ci

Vo. 12: o - pus - ti - li Bol si tam keď bol u - mu - če - ný Pán

Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Pedagogická fakulta

M. D. Rettigové 4, 116 39 Praha 1

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