



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
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# **THE EVOLUTION OF ZIMBABWEAN GOSPEL MUSIC 1980- 2007**

**BY**

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**PROMOTER: PROFESSOR MEKI NZEWI**

**2009**



**DECLARATION**

This is my original work and has not been presented for a degree requirement in any other university. No part of this thesis may be produced without the prior permission of the **author** and or **University of Pretoria**.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my late father Jonathan Mbengo Rukuni and my mother Anaty Ruramai Rukuni whose love and respect for education brought me this far.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores, traces, analyses and discusses the development and evolution of Zimbabwean gospel music from 1980 up to 2007. Gospel music in this study defines urban black music culture which is influenced by Christian religion as well as gender, foreign music cultures, indigenous music, the economic and political climate of the country.

A general overview of gospel music in Zimbabwe is given including the history of Zimbabwean gospel music and the gospel music industry. Relevant literature on gospel music is reviewed. Selected Zimbabwean gospel musicians and their music are discussed. Methods of collecting data are discussed and their strengths and weaknesses are outlined. Mainly the survey method is used and questionnaires, observation and document analysis are used as instruments of data collection.

Gender issues are discussed in relation to Zimbabwean gospel music and the impact of gender on music is also noted. The effects of foreign and indigenous music on Zimbabwean gospel music are explored and analyzed through transcription and analysis of selected songs but it is not the researcher's intention to go into deep musicological content in the analysis. Political and socio-economic influences on Zimbabwean gospel music are the main focus.

The history of the socio- economic and political development of Zimbabwe during 1980- 2007 is explored in relation to gospel music. Until about the mid 1980s, the general atmosphere in the newly-independent state of Zimbabwe was characterized by liberation euphoria and great optimism for the future. Equally so, local gospel music during this period was largely celebrative and conformist as far as the political and socio-economic dispensation was concerned. Socio-economic hardships crept in as a result of the government's implementation of neo-liberal economic reforms under the guidance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the early 1990s. The ruling party soon found itself confronted by a number of gospel musicians criticizing its policies and malpractices. The lyrics of various gospel artistes (song texts) are used as evidence.

This research is an addition to the study of gospel music and popular culture in Africa. It is also a multidisciplinary research, handling sociology, politics, religion and music by looking at music as an expression and reflection of a socio-economic situation. The research has offered a second level of development realizing the theoretical conceptualizations through the analysis of gospel music.

The research results presented, interpreted and analyzed provide implications on the future success of Zimbabwean gospel music. Recommendations on the development of Zimbabwean gospel music are also given.

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## DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

- (a) **binary:** a thematic gestalt presented in two sections. In this study it refers to melodic themes that have the lead (question) and the response (answer) lines.
- (b) **Christians:** Followers of Jesus Christ who believe in his teachings.
- (c) **creativity:** The ability to bring ideas together to form a new song or form a slightly different version of the original song using existing material (elements of music).
- (d) **cyclic:** It is a thematic statement that recurs with slight structural modifications.
- (e) **gospel artistes:** In this study it refers to three categories of musicians which are those who perform only gospel music, musicians who perform both gospel and secular music and those who were initially pop musicians but have since moved to gospel.
- (f) **gospel music:** In this study it refers to music performed by Zimbabwean gospel artists that has Christian themes referencing the Zimbabwean social and political space.