



The Triumph of the Soul: Cultural and Psychological Aspects of African American Music

Ferdinand Jones, Arthur C. Jones

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Music is a central element of African American culture. It is part of the oral tradition that began before Africans were enslaved and brought to North America, and it continues in the bicultural synthesis that is the African American experience. All black American music therefore represents the history, expressive styles, and important values of African America. Inherent in this consideration of culture is the psychology that has evolved from the historical experience of African Americans, particularly those mental dispositions and processes that have enhanced psychological self-preservation in the face of oppression. This essay collection elucidates the distinctive behavioral, emotional, and attitudinal modes as well as the values that are reflected in all types of African American music.

Although there are and have been historically a variety of forms and styles of black music, spirituals, blues, ragtime, jazz, rhythm and blues, rap, for example, there is a core African American cultural fabric that is found in all of the historical and contemporary forms. Accordingly, the contributors affirm the perspective that African American music is one root genre with several branches. They analyze the distinctive cultural and psychological features of several of these, from the psychological utility of the spirituals to the vibrancy of current day rap music, while demonstrating the persistent competency of their artists. Scholars, researchers, and lay readers concerned with African American cultural analysis and music will find this collection of particular interest.

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