**Braxton D. Shelley**

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# Academic Appointments

2021- (tenured) Associate Professor of Music, of Sacred Music, and of Divinity, Yale University

2017- Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Harvard University

Since summer ’19, affiliated faculty, the Committee on Degrees in American Studies

Since summer ’20, affiliated faculty, Department of African and African American Studies

2017- Stanley A. Marks and William H. Marks Assistant Professor, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University

# Education

2017 Ph.D. The University of Chicago, History and Theory of Music

Dissertation: “Sermons in Song: Richard Smallwood, the Vamp, and the Gospel Imagination”

Advisor: Steven M. Rings, Ph.D.

2017 M.Div. The University of Chicago

M.Div. Thesis: “Prisoners of Hope”: Rev. Dr. William Barber, Moral Mondays, and the Sound of Transcendence

Advisor: Dwight Hopkins, Ph.D.

2012 B.A. Duke University, Music (major) and History (minor), with highest distinction

**Awards**

2021 Honorable Mention, Emerging Scholar Article Award, Society for Music Theory(for “Analyzing Gospel”)

2020 Alfred Einstein Award, American Musicological Society (for “Analyzing Gospel”)

2020 Jaap Kunst Prize, Society for Ethnomusicology (for “Analyzing Gospel”)

2019 Adam Krims Award, Society for Music Theory, Popular Music Interest Group (for “Analyzing Gospel”)

2018 Dean’s Distinguished Dissertation Award, Division of the Humanities, The University of Chicago

2017 Frederick Buechner Writing Prize, Divinity School, The University of Chicago

2016 Paul A. Pisk Prize, American Musicological Society

2016 Cathy Heifetz Memorial Award, Department of Music, The University of Chicago

2016 Graduate Student Prize, Society for Christian Scholarship in Music

2015–17 Schloerb Entering Ministry Fellowship, The University of Chicago Divinity School

2013–16 Social Science Research Council Graduate Studies Enhancement Grant

2012–17 Graduate Aid Initiative Fellowship, The University of Chicago

2010–12 Mellon Mays Undergraduate Research Fellowship, Duke University

2008–12 Reginaldo Howard Memorial Scholarship, Duke University

2008–12 National Achievement Scholarship

**Manuscripts Contracted**

*An Eternal Pitch: Bishop G. E. Patterson and the Afterlives of Ecstasy* (under contract with the University of California Press for the series “Phono: Black Music and the Global Imagination”)

*Mattie Moss Clark: A Biography* (under contract with Yale University Press for the series “Black Lives”)

**Manuscripts in Preparation**

“Digital Antiphony”

*Digital Antiphony: Memes and the Musicality of Internet Culture*

“The Black Church,” in volume 4 of *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Christian Theology*

“Music and Religious Experience,” *The Oxford Handbook of the Phenomenology of Music*

“The Hammond Organ: Gospel Symphony,” *The Oxford Handbook of Orchestration Studies*

**Books**

*Healing for the Soul: Richard Smallwood, the Vamp, and the Gospel Imagination* Oxford University Press, AMS Studies in Music Series, 2021

**Journal Articles**

“‘To Speak As An Oracle of Christ’: Bishop G. E. Patterson and the Afterlives of Ecstasy,” *The*

*Journal of the Society for American Music* (May 2022)

“‘Play The Rain Down’: Bishop Paul Morton, Prince, and the Idea of Black Ecstasy, *Twentieth-century Music*, Spring 2022

“‘Higher Ground’: Rev. Dr. William Barber and the Political Content of Prophetic Firm,” special issue on Sound & Secularity in the *Yale Journal of Music and Religion* (April 2021)

“‘I Love It When You Play that Holy Ghost Chord’: Sounding Sacramentality in the Black Gospel Tradition,” Religions vol. 11, no. (9), summer 2020  <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11090452>

“Analyzing Gospel,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Spring 2019

2017

**Essays**

“Sounding Black, Acting White: Hearing Race and Racism in Gospel Performance,” in *U.S. Music in the 21st Century: Collaborative Perspectives*, edited by Charles Garrett and Carol Oja, 2021

“Sounding Belief: ‘Tuning Up’ and ‘the Gospel Imagination,’” in Exploring Christian Song, edited by

M. Jennifer Bloxam and Andrew D. Shelton. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017

2017 “‘This Must Be The Single’: Valuing The Live Recording in Contemporary Gospel Performance,” in *Living the Life I Sing*, edited by Alphonso Simpson, Jr. and Thomas A. Dorsey, III. San Diego, CA: Cognella Academic Publishing, 2016.

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**Book Reviews**

2016

Review of Claudrena Harold, *When Sunday Comes: Gospel Music in the Soul and Hip-Hop Eras*, Journal of African American History

Review of Ashon Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* for *The Yale Journal of Music & Religion*

Review of Jason C. Bivins, *Spirits Rejoicing: Jazz and American Religion* for *The Journal of Jazz Studies*

2015 Review of Robert Marovich, *A City Called Heaven: Chicago and the Birth of Gospel Music* in *The Journal of Folklore Research*

**Recordings**

2018 *Sermons in Song*, Braxton D. Shelley & TESTIMONY (independent)

Major review: <http://journalofgospelmusic.com/gospel/braxton-d-shelley-testimony-sermons-in-song/>

Project included on major gospel critic’s *Best of 2018* list—the only independent CD to make the “rest of the best” category.

# Selected Research Presentations

2021 “Model Composition in the Gospel Classroom,” Plenary, Society for Music Theory, November 2021

2021 “An Eternal Pitch: Bishop G. E. Patterson and the Afterlives of Ecstasy,” Department of Music, Duke University

2020 “An Eternal Flame: Bishop G. E. Patterson and the Afterlives of Ecstasy,” Departments of Music, Religion, and the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, Columbia University

2020 “An Eternal Flame: Bishop G. E. Patterson and the Afterlives of Ecstasy,” Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University

2020 “Digital Antiphony: Memes and the Musicality of Internet Culture,” Department of Music, Yale University

2020 “Digital Antiphony: Memes and the Musicality of Internet Culture,” Department of Music, University of California-Berkeley

2020 “Digital Antiphony: Memes and the Musicality of Internet Culture,” Department of Music, Michigan State University

2020 “‘I Had to Flip This One’: Music, Memes, and Digital Antiphony,” Fellowship Presentation, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study

2020 “‘Tuning Up’ and ‘The Gospel Imagination,’” University of California-Los Angeles, School of Music

2019 “Musical Ontology in the Gospel Imagination,” American Musicological Society

2019 “Prophetic Possibility and the Unlikely Collective,” *Sound and Secularity*, SUNY Stony Brook

2019 “Putting the Breath Back In: Twinkie Clark, Antiphony, and the Hammond Organ’s Vocality,” *Antiphony, Otherwise: A Symposium*, Yale University, Institute of Sacred Music

2019 “‘Tuning Up’ and ‘The Gospel Imagination,’” Wheaton College, Department of Music

2019 “‘Tuning Up’ and ‘The Gospel Imagination,’” Brandeis University, Department of Music

2018 “‘Tuning Up’ and ‘The Gospel Imagination,’” New Faculty Talk, Mahindra Humanities Center

2018 “Toward A Formal Theory of the Gospel Vamp,” American Musicological Society/Society for Music Theory Joint Meeting

2018 “‘Take Me Higher’: ‘Tuning Up’ and the Gospel Imagination,” Columbia University, Center for Ethnomusicology

2018 “‘Take Me Higher’: ‘Tuning Up’ and the Gospel Imagination,” Northeastern University, Department of Music, Leading Voices Speakers Series

2018 “‘Take Me Higher’: ‘Tuning Up’ and the Gospel Imagination,” Yale Institute of Sacred Music

2018 “Singing in the Spirit: Gospel Song, Materiality, and Transcendence,” Yale Liturgy Conference

2018 “Analyzing Gospel,” University of Massachusetts at Amherst

2018 “How Shall They Hear? Towards A Musicology of Gospel Preaching,” National Festival of the Academy of Preachers

2017 “The Presence of the Lord Is Here”: The Gospel Vamp as Sonic Sacrament, Tufts University

2017 “’Sounding Belief: ‘Tuning Up’ and The Gospel Imagination,” Duke University

2017 “The Presence of the Lord Is Here”: The Gospel Vamp as Sonic Sacrament, Amherst College

2017 “Can I Be a Preacher for A Minute?”: Sounding Transcendence in Public Protest, Harvard University Graduate Music Forum

2016 2016 “‘Tuning Up’ in Contemporary Gospel Performance” at the American Musicological Society

2016 2016 “A Sacred Symbol: The Gospel Vamp’s Divine Choreography” at Ethnoise! The Ethnomusicology Workshop, the University of Chicago

2016 2016 “‘Tuning Up’: Towards A Gospel Aesthetic” at the Society for Christian Scholarship in Music, Boston University

2015 2015 “A Sacred Symbol: The Gospel Vamp’s Divine Choreography” at Duke University’s Entertainment, Media & Arts Network Weekend

2015 2015 “‘We’ve Come to Have Church in Jesus’ Name’: Towards a Theory of The Vamp in Contemporary Gospel Performance” at Music Theory Midwest

2015 2015 “Sermons in Song: Richard Smallwood’s Gospel Music,” lecture/discussion as a part of The Richard Smallwood Experience in Memphis, TN

2015 2015 “‘We’ve Come to Have Church in Jesus’ Name’: Towards a Theory of The Vamp in Contemporary Gospel Performance” at Northwestern University Music Theory and Cognition Workshop

2015 2015 “‘This Must Be the Single’: Valuing the Live Recording in Contemporary Gospel Performance” at Harvard University Department of Music Graduate Music Forum

2014 “Lift Him Up: Process(ing) Contemporary Gospel Music at the University of Chicago, Symposium: *Far Calls. Coming, Far: Ritual, Sound, Music*

# Selected Guest Lectures

2021 Lecture/DEIB Residency, Eastman School of Music

2021 Lecture/DEIB Curriculum Consult, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

2021 Lecture/Concert (with my recording choir TESTIMONY), Westminster Choir College

2020 “Hooks and the Gospel Vamp,” The Inner-Workings of Pop and World Music: Listening to Rhythm and Form, Prof. K. E. Goldschmitt, Wellesley College

2020 “The Emergence of the Gospel Blues,” Introduction to Music History, Prof. Delia Casadei, University of California-Berkeley

2020 “Gospel Communities,” Music in the Community, Prof. Mark Katz, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

2020 “Bishop G. E. Patterson’s Digital Afterlife,” Musical Afterlives, Prof. Shana Redmond, University of California-Los Angeles

2018 “Spirituals,” Zora Neale Hurston and the Anthropology of Race, Prof. Marla Frederick, Harvard University

**Major Performances**

2021 Lecture and Concert, Westminster Choir College

2019 Nightly Showcase, Gospel Music Workshop of America

New Music Seminar, Gospel Music Workshop of America

2019 Hampton University Minister’s Conference and Choir Directors’/Organists’ Guild Workshop

2018 New Music Seminar, Gospel Music Workshop of America

2017 National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses

# Departmental and University Service

2021- Faculty Director, Interdisciplinary Program in Music and the Black Church

(I’m not sure how to divide these: ‘21-‘22 committees:)

2021- Marquand Chapel Advisory Committee

2021- Sacred Music Studies, Search Committee

2021 Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Search Committee

2021- Assistant/Associate Prof of Choral Conducting, Adjunct, ISM/School of Music, Search Committee

2021- William Barber, Professor of the Practice, Appointment Committee

2022- Todne Thomas, Tenure/Appointment/Promotion committee

2020-21 Faculty Liaison for Inclusive Excellence, Division of Arts and Humanities, Harvard University

2020-21 Chair, Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging Committee, Department of Music, Harvard University

2017-9 Technology Committee, Department of Music, Harvard University

2018 Organizer, Richard Smallwood: Music, Activism, Well-being

This event brought legendary gospel composer Richard Smallwood to campus. He conducted a masterclass with students in Music 195; the students had written original gospel compositions as a part of the course work. That evening, Smallwood and I had a public discussion, which was punctuated by performances of his compositions by Harvard’s Kuumba Singers and the gospel choirs from Boston University and Tufts University. The latter event, which took place in Sanders Theater, was attended by several hundred members of the Harvard community and citizens from the Greater Boston area.

**Service to the Field**

2021-2 Performance Committee, American Musicological Society

2021-2 Program Committee, Society for Ethnomusicology

2021-2 Mark Tucker Award Committee, Society for American Music

2021 Program Committee, Society for American Music

2021- Jaap Kunst Prize Committee, Society for Ethnomusicology

2020- Woody Guthrie Award Committee, International Association for the Study of Popular Music-US Branch

2020 Adam Krims Award Committee, Society of Music Theory, Popular Music Interest Group

2020 Panelist, American Academy of Religion, Music and Religion Section

2020 Session Chair, American Musicological Society

2018-9 Program Committee, Music Theory Society of New York State

2018 Respondent, Perspectives on Critical Race Theory and Music, American Musicological Society

2018 Panelist, Diversifying Music Academia: Strengthening the Pipeline

2017- Howard Mayer Brown Fellowship Committee, American Musicological Society

2017 Session Chair, Society for Ethnomusicology

2017- Article Referee, Journal of the Society for American Music

**Dissertation Committees**

Committee member for Clifton Boyd (Music Theory), Ian Copeland (Ethnomusicology), Alexander Cowan (Historical Musicology), John Dilworth (Historical Musicology), Felipe Ledesma (Historical Musicology), Jacob Sunshine (Ethnomusicology), Rajna Swaminathan (Creative Practice and Critical Inquiry)

**Teaching**

Spring 2022 MUSI 087: First Year Seminar—Music, Memes, and Digital Culture

Spring 2022 REL 943/MUSI 483: The Gospel Imagination

Fall 2021 REl 913: Broadcast Religion

Spring 2021 Music 194r: Aretha Franklin

Spring 2021 Music 183r: The Gospel Imagination

Fall 2020 Music 241: Music and Digital Culture

Spring 2019 Music 97T: Critical Thinking (Sound in/as/and Context)

Fall 2018 Music 241r: Genre

Fall 2018 Music 195: The Gospel Imagination

Spring 2018 Music 97T: Critical Thinking (Sound in/as/and Context)

Fall 2017 Music 218rs: Groove, Harvard University

Fall 2015 Music 32-1621: Introduction to Black Music (online offering), Columbia College Chicago

**Public Engagement**

Selected Church Music Workshops

2019 First Baptist Church-Highland Avenue, Winston Salem, NC

2019 Calvary Baptist Church, Haverhill, MA

2019 Hymn Lovers’ Conference, Tampa, FL

2018 Community Congregational Church, Montgomery, Alabama

2018 First Baptist Church-Highland Avenue, Winston Salem, NC

2018 Calvary Baptist Church, Haverhill, MA

2018 Cary First Christian Church, Cary, NC

Selected Sermons

2021 Opening Convocation, Yale Divinity School

2021 Marquand Chapel, Music and the Black Church

2020 Mt. Level Missionary Baptist Church, Durham, NC

2020 The Memorial Church of Harvard University

2020 Columbus Avenue AME Zion, Boston, MA

2019 The Memorial Church of Harvard University

2019 Mt. Level Missionary Baptist Church, Durham, NC

2019 Martin Temple AME Zion Church, Chicago, IL

2019 First Missionary Baptist Church, Smithfield, NC

2018 The Church of the Open Door-Baptist, Rocky Mount, NC

2018 Black Student Ministries, The Memorial Church, Harvard University

2018 Union Baptist Church, Cambridge, MA

2018 First Baptist Church-Highland Avenue, Winston Salem, NC

2018 Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Chicago, IL

2018 Martin Temple AME Zion Church, Chicago, IL

2018 Mt. Level Missionary Baptist Church, Durham, NC

2018 New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, Battleboro, NC

2017 Centennial AME Zion Church, Buffalo, NY

2017 Jerusalem Baptist Church, Washington DC

2017 Blackwell Israel Samuel AME Zion Church, Chicago, IL

2017 Union Baptist Church, Cambridge, MA

2017 Mt. Level Missionary Baptist Church, Durham, NC

2017 New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, Battleboro, NC

**Affiliations/Memberships**

American Academy of Religion

American Musicological Society

Society for American Music

Society for Ethnomusicology

Society for Music Theory