

The Radical Origins and Mission of the National Black Music Caucus: The First Twenty-Five Years—1972–1997

Journal of Historical Research
in Music Education

2022, Vol. 43(2) 248–272

© The Author(s) 2022


Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/15366006221082256

journals.sagepub.com/home/jhr



Loneka Wilkinson Battiste¹, William T. McDaniel², and Rosita M. Sands³ 

Abstract

In 1972, more than two hundred Black music educators convened an impromptu, offsite protest meeting during the 23rd Convention of the Music Educators National Conference in response to the dearth of Black music and musicians represented on the program and the near exclusion of Black musicians on the Jazz Night program. The unprecedented and impactful meeting, held on the campus of Morehouse College on the last day of the Convention, led to the formation of the National Black Music Caucus (NBMC). This article chronicles the birth of the NBMC and its subsequent growth over the next 25 years, focusing on the historical relationship between Black music educators and MENC, the importance of Atlanta to the organization's founding, the motivation for the initial meeting, goals of the organization, and its key accomplishments. This story is told through the use of primary sources, including conference programs and organizational documents, while centering the voices of those who were instrumental in leading NBMC throughout its first 25 years.

¹University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, USA

²The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

³School of Fine and Performing Arts, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

Corresponding Author:

Rosita M. Sands, School of Fine and Performing Arts, Columbia College Chicago, 600 South Michigan Avenue, Ste 907, Chicago, IL 60605, USA.

Email: rsands@colum.edu

Keywords

National Black Music Caucus, NASPAAM, protest, African American music education, African American music educators, MENC, twentieth century

Introduction and Context

In the wake of great sociopolitical change, likeminded people often feel empowered to coalesce and activate toward their own impetus for change. Such was the case in 1972, when more than two hundred Black music educators convened an impromptu, offsite meeting during the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) Convention and formed the Black Music Caucus, later called the National Black Music Caucus (NBMC). This article addresses the void that exists in mainstream historical accounts of American music education particularly related to African American music education. The purpose of this study is to chronicle the birth of NBMC and its subsequent growth over the next 25 years by addressing the following research questions: 1. What societal forces led to the organization's development? 2. What was the motivation for the initial meeting? 3. What action plans were initiated following the initial meeting? 4. What were the key accomplishments of the organization during this period?

The primary sources used for this study include the 1972 MENC Convention Program Booklet (see [Figure 1](#)) and the organizational documents of the National Black Music Caucus, which was formally renamed the National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music (NASPAAM) in 1997. The organizational documents were made available by William T. McDaniel, one of the founding members and former president of the organization, and also co-author of this article. These documents include the Board of Directors Handbook, NBMC conference and concert programs, retreat reports, and the organization's newsletter, *Con Brio*. Secondary sources include published accounts of the organization appearing in academic papers, journals, and dissertations.¹ Finally, this article has been informed by oral history reflections from founding board members, former officers, individuals present at the 1972 MENC National Conference and other members, as well as the examination of source documents that include personal letters, interviews, newspaper articles, photographs, and conference artifacts. Information gleaned from individual interviews was cross-referenced with statements from others who were first-hand witnesses and past administrators of the organization. This evidence was compared with information documented within a host of primary and secondary source materials available to the authors. The data were presented in a manner that incorporated quotes from interviews with informants to preserve the authentic voice and, importantly, the sentiments of individuals who were present at the 1972 protest meeting as well as those serving key roles during the period examined in this article. The discussion was presented largely in

¹Camille C. Taylor, "The First Decade of the Black Music Caucus of the Music Educators National Conference" (EdD diss., Columbia University Teachers College, 1984).

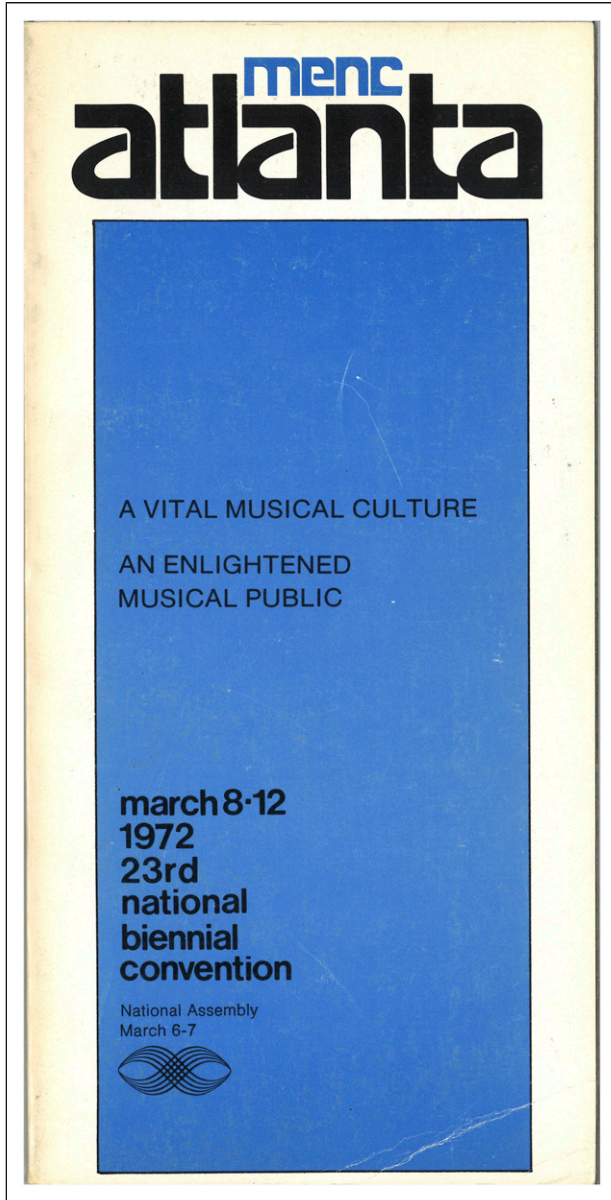


Figure 1. Cover, Convention Program Booklet of the Music Educators National Conference (MENC), 23rd National Biennial, 1972. Source: National Association for Music Education Historical Center, Special Collections in Performing Arts, University of Maryland Libraries.

a chronological manner from the genesis of the organization through its first 25 years of existence in order to assist the readers in following the sequence of events.

It was the post-Civil Rights Era of the 1970s that provided the socio-cultural backdrop for the genesis of a bold, new music organization that arose in response to one particular event and the particular circumstances surrounding that event—the marginalization and dearth of Black musicians and Black music from the conference programming of the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) at its 23rd National Biennial Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, March 8–12, 1972.

At the time, MENC was the leading professional organization for music education with a comprehensive and broad focus on the teaching and learning of music in American schools from kindergarten through college. Its reach was unparalleled in the profession with a membership of some 60,000 members as noted in the 1972 MENC Conference program booklet.² One should not underestimate the authoritative role that MENC maintained in shaping the ideals and values of its core constituency of music teachers and administrators and in impacting indirectly the musical preferences and understandings of school-age children. MENC assumed considerable authority by virtue of its ability to promote what music was deemed “good music,” what music was worthy of being studied and performed, and, most importantly, what music deserved a place in the curriculum of the nation’s schools. This positioned MENC as the dominant influential voice for the sanctioning of music curricula, instructional methodologies, school music repertoires, and the design and creation of pedagogical standards. It also assumed a key role in support of the professional development of pre-service and in-service music educators. In short, MENC wielded a great deal of power, and its program of national conventions, which typically attracted an audience of between 5000–8000 music teachers and musicians, was a key component of its reach. Because of its stature, an invitation to present or perform at a MENC conference was highly regarded, particularly among the academic music and music education establishment. Generally, it was perceived as a prestigious opportunity that had the potential of boosting one’s career, adding prestige to a resumé or curriculum vitae, or providing authoritative evidence of a level of professional accomplishment that was often rewarded by promotions, merit pay, or professional development credits useful for recertification of teaching credentials or state licensure.

Music Educators National Conference, Atlanta, 1972

The 1972 National Biennial Convention was held in Atlanta, Georgia for the first time in its 65 year history of offering national conferences.³ The February 1972 issue of *Music Educators Journal* (*MEJ*) articulated the purpose of the Convention as a time to

²Music Educators National Conference (MENC), 23rd National Biennial Convention Program Booklet, March 8-12, 1972. Source: Private collection of William T. McDaniel.

³“NAfME National Conference History,” National Association for Music Education, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://nafme.org/about/history/nafme-national-conference-history/>

put the ideals of the “Goals and Objectives Project” into action.⁴ Interestingly, the article stated that particular attention would be given to the Contemporary Music Project, youth music, electronic music, ethnic music, performances from professional and school ensembles, and “music in Black America.”⁵

An analysis of “Abstracts of Research Reports from MENC National Convention, March 1972,” was published in the *Journal of Research in Music Education*.⁶ It revealed a range of topics including musical creativity, twentieth-century aesthetic theories, music instructional methods, programmed or computerized music instruction and testing, and musical performance rating scales. There were two reports on assessment of music education students’ “nonperformance musical behaviors” and the identification of “those students most likely to complete an undergraduate degree in music or music education.”⁷ One study investigated the relationship of musical aptitude/ability to a range of factors including “family and student activity in music, student interest in music, IQ, and socioeconomic status among culturally advantaged and disadvantaged Caucasian and Negro students.”⁸ This was the only mention of race across the 16 research reports presented at the conference, and there were no research reports that specifically addressed topics related to Black music or the pedagogy of Black music.

While presumably successful according to MENC’s goals, the 1972 MENC Convention was not without controversy, particularly in the views of the Black music educators who were in attendance. Many of the Black attendees were disappointed that there was so little presence of Black musicians and Black music on the convention program, considering the location of the convention in a city known for its burgeoning population of Black professionals. Atlanta was not just the site of Georgia’s state capital, it was the largest multiracial metropolis in the southeast with a percentage of African Americans that was over 50%.⁹ Colloquially, it was often referred to as a “chocolate city” and it was commonly dubbed the “Black Mecca,” a reference to its position and location as a destination of choice for young Black professionals.¹⁰ Atlanta

⁴The Goals and Objectives Project was a set of thirty-five objectives established to realize the vision of the Tanglewood Symposium, which was a gathering of music educators and representatives of business, industry, and government organized in 1967 to plan the future of music education. Michael Mark, “MENC: From Tanglewood to the Present,” in *Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education*, ed. Clifford Madsen (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020). Originally published in 2000, this citation refers to the Reprint Edition of the text, published in 2020.

⁵“MENC Atlanta,” *Music Educators Journal* 58, no. 6 (1972): 26.

⁶Robert W. John, “Abstracts of Research Reports from MENC National Convention, March 1972,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 20, no. 2 (July 1972): 212–32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3344088>

⁷*Ibid.*, 219.

⁸*Ibid.*, 228.

⁹Monica Waugh-Benton, “Strike Fever: Labor Unrest, Civil Rights and the Left in Atlanta 1972” (Masters Thesis, Georgia State University, 2006), 13.

¹⁰In 1971, *Ebony* magazine declared Atlanta, Georgia, the “Black Mecca of the South.”; Chandra Thomas Whitfield, “Is Atlanta in Danger of Losing Its ‘Black Mecca’ Status?” Last modified April 22, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/atlanta-danger-losing-its-black-mecca-status-n825996>

was the birthplace of Rev. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, and the home of many other giants of the Civil Rights Movement, including Ralph Abernathy, C. T. Vivian, and Andrew Young. It was also the site of much activity during the Civil Rights Movement, and it was home to the largest consortium of historically Black, private higher education institutions in the world—Morehouse College, Spelman College, Clark College, Morris Brown College, Atlanta University, The Interdenominational Theological Center,¹¹ and the Morehouse School of Medicine. Atlanta, in 1973, only months after the MENC Convention and the establishment of the National Black Music Caucus, elected the south's first Black mayor, Maynard Jackson, whose name is now permanently enshrined at the largest airport in the world, the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Atlanta, as an indicator of its political strength inside the Black community, subsequently has elected additional Black mayors whose terms in office have spanned over four decades, including Andrew Young, Maynard Jackson (second term), Bill Campbell, Shirley Franklin, Kasim Reed, and in 2021, Keisha Lance Bottoms.

In 1972, the city's culture was undoubtedly influenced by the music of Black performers in settings such as the Black church and the numerous secular venues that populate the city. Music had always been a highly valued cultural expression in Black communities, and Atlanta had no shortage of outstanding Black musicians performing the traditional genres and styles of jazz, rhythm and blues, spirituals, gospel, and choral traditions, as well as European classical music. In short, Atlanta was a significant cultural hub for the performance of a broad range and scope of musical practices by Black musicians.

Over two hundred Black musicians attending the biennial meeting of the MENC gathered at Morehouse College on March 11, 1972, one day before the conclusion of the conference, to protest the lack of representation of Black musicians from the ranks of clinicians, conductors, ensembles, performances, presentations, and programs at the MENC convention, as well as the paucity of sessions that dealt with the various styles and genres of the Black music tradition, and to strategize toward an appropriate response. This initial meeting led to the creation of the Black Music Caucus (BMC)—an organization founded with the primary mission of promoting, preserving, and advancing the worldwide, rich tradition and legacy of African American music through education.¹²

Historical Relationship between Black Music Educators and MENC

MENC had long been aware of strong music programs in Black schools. As early as 1931, there was a report of “glee clubs from negro schools, Memphis”¹³ performing at the MENC Southern Conference with Booker T. Washington Negro High School's

¹¹The Interdenominational Theological Center, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://digitalexhibits.auctr.edu/exhibits/show/ourstory/itc>. As described on the institution's website, the ITC is “the world's only graduate theology program with [a] unique model that is exclusively African American but inclusive to all.”

¹²The organization was subsequently named the National Black Music Caucus and in 1997, its name was changed to the National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music.

¹³J. Henry Francis, ed., “Southern Conference,” *Musical Educators Journal* 17, no. 3 (February 1931): 50.

ensemble, under the direction of Mary Corpal, being identified by name.¹⁴ Further evidence of this is found in recollections of the Douglass High School Chorus of Baltimore, Maryland appearing at the 1951 meeting of the MENC Eastern Division, and the Huntington High School Choir of Newport News, VA appearing at the 1952 biennial convention.¹⁵ Since 1919, Black music educators had found a home in the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM) and other organizations of Black music educators such as the Florida Association of Band Directors,¹⁶ but in the late 1960s, Black music educators began to attend the biennial conventions of MENC in larger numbers.

Topics relating to Black students and Black music were also gaining attention in MENC publications shortly before and after the conference. In 1967, the Tanglewood Declaration asserted that “the musical repertory should be expanded to include ... currently popular music and avant-garde music, American folk music, and music of other cultures” and that the profession “must contribute its skills, proficiencies, and insights toward assisting in the solution of urgent social problems such as in the ‘inner city’.”¹⁷ In response, the January 1970 issue of the *Music Educators Journal* (MEJ) was a special issue, entitled “Facing the Music in Urban Education” and featured articles by James Standifer and William Grant Still. The perspectives of an inner city principal and insights from students and effective teachers of students in inner city schools were also represented in this issue, among them Brazeal Dennard, famed arranger and director of the Brazeal Dennard Chorale, and Marsha Kindall-Smith, current president of the National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music (formerly NBMC). The special issue also featured an article by Barbara Reeder dedicated to Black music and entitled, “Afro Music: As Tough as a Mozart Quartet.”¹⁸ The same year, an excerpt from *Black Music in Our Culture: Curricular Ideas on the Subjects, Materials, and Problems* (1970),¹⁹ was published in the *MEJ*.²⁰ Dominique-René de Lerma, editor of the book, made a solid case for the inclusion of Black music in curricula. A special issue on “Music in World Cultures” in the October 1972 issue included articles on African and American music—“Music of Africa South of the Sahara” by Leonard Goines, “Getting Involved in Shaping the Sounds of Black Music”

¹⁴Grace P. Woodman, “Southern Conference,” *Music Educators Journal* 17, no. 4 (March 1931): 33.

¹⁵R. Hayes Strider, “The Negro’s Contribution to Music Education,” *Music Educators Journal* 39, no. 4 (February-March 1953): 27–28.

¹⁶This is the organization that represented African American band directors from 1941 to 1966 when it merged with the Florida Bandmasters Association, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florida_Association_of_Band_Directors

¹⁷Mark, “MENC: From Tanglewood to the Present,” in *Vision 2020*, 7.

¹⁸Charles B. Fowler, ed., “Facing the Music in Urban Education,” special issue, *Music Educators Journal* 59, no. 2 (1970).

¹⁹Dominique-René de Lerma, Editor, *Black Music in Our Culture: Curricular Ideas on the Subjects, Materials, and Problems* (The Kent State University Press, 1970).

²⁰Dominique-René de Lerma, “Black Music Now!” *Music Educators Journal* 57, no. 3 (November 1970): 25–29.

by Barbara Reeder, and one entitled “Impressions of Music Education in East Africa” by Phyllis Klotman and Robert H. Klotman.²¹

The 1972 national convention was held in Atlanta, Georgia for the first time in its 65 year history of offering national conferences and its sociopolitical climate presented an important historical context for the founding of the Black Music Caucus.²² Nine years prior to 1972, Atlanta had seen a relatively smooth transition to school integration and was held up as an exemplar by President John F. Kennedy.²³ However, as was common in large cities faced with the federal mandate of school integration, a frequent reaction to integration was large numbers of white families choosing to move to the suburbs. Around the same time, the city of Atlanta saw a large influx of Blacks resulting in the fact that by 1972, the Black population of Atlanta reached a level of 54% of the city’s total population.²⁴ This change in demographics affected all aspects of the lives of the Black citizens of Atlanta, and certainly, politics became one of the areas where this impact could be seen, manifested through the exercising of greater political influence and the mobilization of new activist groups such as the Georgia Tenants Association, the Black United Front, the Atlanta Black Workers Congress, the International Institute for Labor Studies, the Atlanta Peace Action Coalition, and the Atlanta Coordinating Committee. Tired of lower wages and workplace racism, Black workers led labor protests that began in January and would continue throughout 1972.²⁵

In addition, music in institutions of higher education was alive and thriving in 1972 Atlanta. Across the aforementioned Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) were music programs that boasted outstanding performing ensembles led by highly respected conductors. Upon graduation, many of these well-prepared musicians and music educators served the greater Atlanta area. Although mutterings of discontent with the lack of Black participation in the planning and on the program of the MENC biennial meetings had been heard among Black members for several years, the post-Civil Rights climate and the setting of Atlanta led to a sense of anticipation and excitement among the Black membership. This excitement would turn to disbelief, consternation, and organizing, resulting in radical, immediate action.

Black Music and Black Music Educator Presence at the MENC Convention

The metropolis of Atlanta was well-known for its significant presence of Black music performers and teachers of various styles and genres of Black music as well as of European classical music. Additionally, there was a host of nationally recognized music

²¹Malcolm E. Bessom, ed. “Music in World Cultures,” special issue, *Music Educators Journal* 56, no. 5 (1972): 46–51, 80–84, 105–106.

²²“NAfME National Conference History,” National Association for Music Education, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://nafme.org/about/history/nafme-national-conference-history/>

²³Waugh-Benton, “Strike Fever,” 13.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

professors and highly regarded music programs at four HBCU in Atlanta, as well as a significant core of Black music educators in the public and private schools throughout the state of Georgia.²⁶ Despite this reality, there was a disappointingly sparse presence of Black music content or Black music performance on the MENC Convention programming. It is important to note, however, that as part of MENC's planning to ensure some Black presence at the convention, a "Black Music Committee" was appointed by MENC and assigned the task of planning a specific number of sessions to focus on Black music and selecting Black performers, clinicians, presenters, and ensembles to appear on the convention programming. The Chairs selected by MENC to lead the Black Music Committee were two well-known African American musicians and music educators—Thomas Jefferson (T. J.) Anderson, who at the time was serving as the first African American Composer-in-Residence with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and also as a Distinguished Visiting Professor of Music at Morehouse College; and John Lawhorn, a musician, music educator, and an administrator with the Georgia Department of Education.²⁷

The three sessions organized by the Black Music Committee are shown below.

- "The Music of Black America," a panel moderated by T. J. Anderson with panelists, Benjamin Patterson, Manager of the Symphony of the New World and Advisory Committee Member, National Endowment for the Arts; Dominique-René de Lerma, Director of the Black Music Center, Indiana University; and Wendell Whalum, Professor, Music Department, Morehouse College.
- "Performance and the Black Tradition," featuring the Morehouse College Glee Club, with Wendell Whalum, conductor, in a performance of music by Black composers/arrangers Ulysses Kay, T.J. Anderson, William Dawson, John W. Work, Wendell Whalum, and Babatunde Olatunji.
- "Effective Ways of Including the Music of the Black Man in Existing Curricula," a panel moderated by John Lawhorn with panelists Edna Edet, Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York; Albert J. McNeill, University of California, Davis; Sister Marie Therese O'Neill, Roosevelt University; and James Standifer, University of Michigan.²⁸

There were other Black participants on the convention program, including sessions organized by MENC committees and associate or affiliate organizations. These included:

- Nathan Carter, conductor, and the Morgan State College Choir in a Concert of Sacred Music in Classical/Jazz/Rock/Gospel, sponsored by National Association of Jazz Educators (NAJE);

²⁶See related article in this Special Issue, Roy M. Ligette, "Here Am I, Send Me: The Life, Career and Legacy of Mary Frances Early."

²⁷1972 MENC Convention Booklet, 5.

²⁸1972 MENC Convention Booklet, 45, 72, and 87.

- Mary Frances Early, Atlanta Public Schools, and the Coan Middle School Guitar Ensemble as a demonstration group for a session on Computer Assistance for the Elementary and Middle School Music Specialist, co-sponsored by the Committee on Music for the Elementary/Middle School and the National Commission on Instruction.
- Ted McDaniel, Morehouse College, and The Jazz/Rock Rhythm Section with Roy Burns, percussion; Dan Haerle, piano; Mundell Lowe, guitar; and Anderson White, bass, sponsored by NAJE.
- Hortense Reid, President, North Carolina Music Educators Association, and the McGavock Senior High School Wind Ensemble, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools; Reid also served as a panelist on “Senior High School Enrichment Courses.”
- James Standifer, clinician, for Junior High School General Music, sponsored by the Committee on Music for the Elementary/Middle School.
- Alfred D. Wyatt, guest conductor, “Sempre Fidelis March,” performed by the Georgia High School Band on the Greater Atlanta Host Night Concert.²⁹

According to first-hand accounts from individuals present at the convention, these sessions were well received and viewed to be of excellent quality. However, they essentially constituted an overwhelming majority of the representations of the Black music tradition on the conference program. The conference lasted 5 days, consisted of almost 140 presentations, sessions, and performances, yet fell short of the expectations of the Black attendees.

The Protest Meeting and the Creation of the National Black Music Caucus

There was quite a buzz among Black music educators attending the convention who expressed their dissatisfaction that there was not a greater presence of Black music or a larger representation of Black persons on the convention program serving as performers and clinicians. The concert that precipitated the greatest reaction was the “Jazz Night” at the Civic Center Auditorium. Sponsored by the National Association of Jazz Educators (NAJE), the concert featured the University of Miami Jazz Ensemble, led by Jerry Coker; the Eastman Studio Orchestra, Rochester, NY, Rayburn Wright, conductor; the Eastman Jazz Ensemble, Chuck Mangione, conductor; and a closing set by the Eastman Studio Orchestra, with Oliver Nelson, an outstanding African American jazz saxophonist as featured soloist.³⁰

²⁹Ibid, 32, 42, 54, 59, 76, 85.

³⁰Ironically, T. Marshall Jones, the only Black member of the Oklahoma University Trombone Ensemble, which performed at the 1972 MENC Convention, remembers the paucity of Black musicians on the convention program. He later became a member of NBMC and has served on the Board of Directors for many years. T. Marshall Jones, interview by William T. McDaniel, March 15, 2021.

Black music educators, along with educators of other ethnicities, expressed displeasure and disappointment that MENC allowed jazz, a music of African American origin, to be represented by an almost exclusively White ensemble in a marquee setting at the Civic Center Auditorium. Despite the inclusion of saxophonist Oliver Nelson, it was not sufficient to stem the tide of resentment and hurt felt by Black music educators in the audience. The prevailing sentiment during the evening, as expressed in several first-hand accounts, was that if there was ever a time during the Convention to showcase Black musical talent, a concert featuring jazz would be a given. To many in the audience, MENC's "Jazz Night" felt like a "slap in the face."

The "Jazz Night" event inspired conversation about the need to address this issue with MENC in a timely fashion which led to the planning of a meeting to protest what was perceived by some to be a deliberate effort on the part of MENC to limit and marginalize the presence of Black music and Black musicians on its convention programming. Several Black MENC members met to plan the protest meeting, which was held on the Morehouse College campus, a venue secured by William T. McDaniel. Flyers announcing the meeting were disseminated by volunteers, and all were encouraged to spread the word to other MENC convention attendees.

More than two hundred Black musicians attending the 1972 Biennial Convention of MENC met on the campus of Morehouse College on March 11, 1972, to protest the near exclusion of Black music and musicians from the programming of sessions at the MENC Convention. According to George Allen, one of the attendees, it was the first time some of them had been in the presence of such a large number of Black music educators.³¹ The outcome of this historic meeting, chaired by T. J. Anderson, resulted in the formation of what became the Black Music Caucus.

T. J. Anderson—celebrated composer, master teacher, and eloquent speaker—was the perfect person to lead the protest meeting and his deft leadership style led to him being elected the first National Chairman. In a recent interview, Anderson graciously acknowledged the role of others in this collaborative endeavor, noting that Eddie Meadows was elected Vice President and Warrick Carter was elected Treasurer and that "the work that each provided in their roles was pivotal in the success of the organization." Anderson also acknowledged the key role of Georgia Ryder as the author of the organization's first constitution.³²

The protest meeting began with numerous expressions of incredulity, disappointment, anger, disbelief, and outrage toward MENC. Yvonne Cheek Johnson, an early leader of NBMC, in reflecting on the meeting shared this sentiment: "We were tired of being quasi-invisible and we were angry enough to pour our irritation into action. We were ready to be full participants."³³ Some attendees were shocked that MENC leadership seemed not to know about the breadth of Black talent in Atlanta or, perhaps, chose to simply ignore it. Several seemed not surprised by this, but thought, rather, that

³¹George Allen, interview by Loneka Wilkerson Battiste, March 29, 2021.

³²T. J. Anderson, interview by William T. McDaniel, March 27, 2021.

³³Yvonne C. Johnson, interview by William T. McDaniel, March 16, 2021.

the programming would have included more Black representation by mere virtue of the fact that the Convention was held in Atlanta. Some found it disappointingly sad that the abundance of Black music produced within the academic institutions of the HBCU in Atlanta and other places seemed to be overlooked and disregarded, leading to a consensus that MENC in 1972 was certainly not the progressive bastion of music education equity for all that one might have envisioned.

The tenor of the meeting changed with a serious attempt to organize and to strategize ways to gain a real seat at the MENC table where it was felt that meaningful difference could be made. A Steering Committee was formed, and a position paper articulating six goals of the new organization was generated. These goals were:

- To serve as a voice for the concerns of Black music educators throughout the United States.
- To serve as a data bank of information on Black scholars in all areas of music.
- To expand the involvement of Blacks into the total activities of MENC and/or its associated organizations.
- To encourage Blacks to participate at all levels of MENC's and its associated organizations' activities: state, regional and national.
- To increase MENC's and its associated organizations' awareness of specific problems facing Black music teachers and students as well as helping to provide some solutions for same.
- To further the interests of the BMC by:
 - Appointing commissions to study problems in the area of Black music;
 - Broadening the scope of musical understanding between all groups;
 - Fostering ethnic studies as a vehicle for humanism; and
 - Encouraging the music potential of Black youth.³⁴

Perhaps the words of a founding member, Carlesta Henderson, who served as NBMC President from 1984-86, best sum up the feelings of many at the convention and certainly those who attended the protest meeting:

The National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music (NASPAAM), formerly National Black Music Caucus (NBMC), is an organization which was born out of anger, dismay, amazement, and a sense of urgency. At that time, we did not think of a long-ranged opportunity to become the voice of disenfranchised music educators. At that time, we only felt a need to speak out against a system which by its act of omission had ignored the members whose music has been such an integral part of this country....³⁵

³⁴“BMC’ 72” Position Paper (November 1972), quoted in Taylor, “The First Decade,” 2.

³⁵Carlesta Henderson, unpublished letter to Chairman of the Board of Directors, The Recording Academy, Grants Program, September 28, 1999. Source: In the possession of William T. McDaniel.

The Quest to Fulfill NBMC's Mission Through MENC

During the early years, 1972–1979, the organization was known as the Black Music Caucus. Once a formal relationship with MENC was established through affiliate organization status, the decision was made to append MENC to its name, i.e., the Black Music Caucus of the Music Educators National Conference. In the late 1970s, the name was changed to the National Black Music Caucus (NBMC), eliminating the reference to MENC, likely as a result of a growing sentiment toward the need for independence.³⁶ In 1997, the 25th Anniversary of The National Black Music Caucus, the organization changed its name to “The National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music” (NASPAAM). Table 1 below documents the roster of individuals who served in the top leadership role of the organization during its first 25 years.³⁷

Despite evolving names, the organization had one common, evolutionary thread from 1972 until 1989: The National Black Music Caucus, in effect, was dependent on the permission, approval, support, and implementation of MENC to realize its goals and vision. In other words, in order for NBMC to be a part of an MENC Conference, it had to seek permission from MENC for space on the program. According to former NBMC President, Frederick Taylor (2002–2004), the organization had more success in gaining leadership positions and promoting Black music at state and regional conferences.³⁸ At the national level, MENC provided few slots on its conference programming specifically for NBMC, despite repeated requests to increase the presence of Black musicians and Black music in the programming of MENC national conferences.

Evidence of the quest and plea by NBMC to be a significant part of MENC continued throughout the decade of the 1970s and well into the 1980s. The BMC '72 Constitution listed the following among its goals and objectives: “To promote the advancement of Black music through The Music Educators National Conference” (Article II, Section D) and “All the meetings of BMC '72 shall be held concurrently with the meetings of The Music Educators National Conference” (Article IV, Section I).³⁹ Even the MENC Black Music Advisory Committee that was established by the NBMC issued a statement to MENC and to the press on behalf of its constituency:

The Black Caucus of 1972 seeks to include itself in the total architecture of MENC as a valid and significant resource of music education:

³⁶“BMC” and “NBMC” were used interchangeably in written and oral communication in the early years. For consistency, we will refer to the organization as “NBMC” throughout. The name change to NBMC was among a list of recommendations made at the Chicago meeting in 1978. The title of the *Newsletter* changed from BMC to NBMC in 1979.

³⁷The actual title for this leadership position changed over time and while it was not possible to document precisely when the change occurred, it appears that by 1978, President was the official title used by the organization.

³⁸Frederick Taylor, interview by Loneka Wilkinson Battiste, March 31, 2021.

³⁹*BMC '72 Constitution*, quoted in Taylor, “The First Decade,” 21.

Table I. NBMC Past Chairs/Presidents (1972–1998).

Chair/President	Years of Service
Dr. T. J. Anderson	1972–74
Dr. Eddie Meadows	1974–78
Dr. Michael Gordon	1978–81
Dr. Yvonne Cheek	1981–84
Dr. Carlesta Henderson	1984–86
Dr. Alexandria Holloway	1986–88
Dr. William T. McDaniel	1988–90
Dr. Hortense R. Kerr	1990–92
Dr. George E. Allen	1992–94
Dr. René Boyer-White	1994–96
Dr. Effie Gardner	1996–98

1. MENC should be active in seeking participation of Black music educators.
2. Blacks must be better represented in policy and decision-making positions in MENC.
3. Blacks must be included in the planning and implementation of program's [*sic*] objectives.⁴⁰

After the 1972 convention, the work of NBMC continued as the organization made clear its intent to realize its goals through MENC, while monitoring MENC to determine if progress was being made. At the 1974 convention in Anaheim, California, future president of NBMC, Alexandria Holloway, recalled that the organization “had a sense of purpose and the purpose was to bring all of the Black attendees to the MENC into the fold for the National Black Music Caucus.”⁴¹ At the NBMC business meeting at the Convention that same year, Chairman Anderson reported that despite some progress following the 1972 Convention, MENC still had programming issues that were problematic. These issues included:

1. Almost no Blacks manning exhibitions as part of the Music industry.
2. No Blacks at Registration desk.
3. Conflicts in scheduling. Three or four parallel sessions on Black music scheduled at the same time.
4. Not enough diversity in choral and instrumental performances.
5. Lack of Black participation in research, jazz and administration areas.⁴²

⁴⁰Ibid., 22.

⁴¹Alexandria Holloway, interview by Loneka W. Battiste, March 30, 2021.

⁴²T. J. Anderson, “Chairman’s Report,” (delivered orally, BMC Protest Meeting, Morehouse College, 1972), quoted in Taylor, “The First Decade,” 27.

Eddie Meadows, the second NBMC Chairman, in his assessment of the 1976 Atlantic City (NJ) MENC Convention in the Spring 1976 *BMC Newsletter* stated that "... we are making progress with Black involvement in the gamut of MENC activities. Although quite improved from previous years, we have by no means attained an acceptable level of Black involvement in MENC. We should begin to plan for regionals and the next convention."⁴³ Yvonne C. Johnson, a member of NBMC's Steering Committee from the Southern Division, echoed the remarks of NBMC Chairman Meadows, when she conveyed the following concerns about the 1976 Atlantic City MENC National Convention in the Spring 1976 *BMC Newsletter*. At the NBMC General Assembly meeting during the convention, the following issues were expressed from members of regional divisions:

1. There was not enough Black Music at the Convention.
2. There was no Black Art Music.
3. Does MENC have an Affirmative Action Program?
4. Why were no Jazz musicians from New York and Philadelphia included on the program?
5. Some Blacks in MENC are overworked while other qualified persons are ignored.
6. The Black Caucus should have input in selecting Minority Groups to assure quality.
7. Each state should have a Minority concerns appointee.
8. More communication is needed from the BMC headquarters.
9. Lecture-demonstrations were presented mostly by Whites.
10. Every BMC member should work to increase membership.
11. BMC should have input in selecting persons for planning sessions and other aspects of the Conference.
12. The Black Data Bank should be compiled immediately so that convention planners will know that persons are qualified and available.⁴⁴

The January 1978 *BMC Newsletter* applauded the fact that Black participation was noticeably higher at the 1978 Chicago MENC National Convention. A list of 37 Black music educators appointed to committees for the Chicago convention was widely circulated, as evidence that progress had been made regarding a higher degree of Black music educator participation in MENC programming at the convention.⁴⁵

Associate Member Status for NBMC in 1979

While early in its history, the National Black Music Caucus achieved an "affiliate" status with MENC, it is not surprising that the relationship between NBMC and MENC

⁴³*BMC Newsletter* (Spring 1976), quoted in Taylor, "The First Decade," 35.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 35, 36.

⁴⁵*BMC Newsletter* (January 1978), quoted in Taylor, "The First Decade," 36–38.

had at times been strained. In the minds of NBMC members, MENC was moving too slowly in meeting the requests and demands that would satisfy NBMC's quest to have a more representative and visible presence of Black musicians on MENC's programs. It did not go unnoticed that "associate" organizations, such as American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and National Association of Jazz Educators (NAJE), seemed to have been well-represented on programs and sessions at MENC conventions, unlike NBMC, which was an "affiliate" organization. Nevertheless, NBMC, even as it continued to negotiate for more support for its mission, remained loyal to MENC. More importantly, NBMC made steady progress throughout the decade of the 1970s as its infrastructure improved, resulting in a stronger organization. NBMC continued to grow in size with a committed membership and excellent leadership.

As the composing demands for T. J. Anderson increased significantly, he decided not to stand for re-election, and Eddie Meadows was elected NBMC's second National Chairman in 1974. Meadows continued to lead the organization's efforts to change from affiliate to associate status with MENC. This exploration had begun with committee work under the administrations of several National Chairs that spanned much of the decade of the 1970s. One of Meadows' exchanges with then-MENC President Robert Klotman was printed in the NBMC *Newsletter* in 1976. To the question about the pros and cons of NBMC becoming an associate member of MENC, Klotman replied:

The advantage, of course, is that you automatically are assured some identity and opportunities in division and national meetings. The bone of contention seems to be the degree of visibility. Actually, the Associate organizations have everything to gain and very little to lose by this affiliation. They become members of the National Council and are given opportunities to express themselves in National Council meetings. Outside the family of Associated Organizations, you function independently and MENC has no commitment to provide for you as an organization.⁴⁶

Similarly, Warrick Carter, NBMC National Secretary, and Yvonne Cheek met with then-MENC President James Mason in 1978 to further advance NBMC's cause to gain associate status. There were numerous other officers and Steering Committee members who played significant roles in the efforts to acquire associate status during this period. During Michael Gordon's administration, efforts were made toward infrastructure improvements through structural and constitutional revisions to BMC offices to reflect similar offices in other MENC-affiliated organizations. The focus of the BMC read: "For the Study, Creation and Promotion of Black Derived Music in Education" and the official pursuit via application to MENC for associate status was begun. A letter dated December 12, 1979 from Donald Dillon, MENC Executive Director, to Michael Gordon, NBMC President, communicating that the application for associate

⁴⁶Eddie Meadows, "BMC Associate Member Status," *BMC Newsletter* (Fall 1976), quoted in Taylor, "The First Decade," 52.

membership by the Black Music Caucus was approved by the MENC Executive Board during its November 10, 1979 meeting. The name of the organization was changed to the National Black Music Caucus of The Music Educators National Conference and the organization joined the roster of other associate member organizations. In 1979, this roster was comprised of nine organizations, including the ACDA, NAJE, and the National School Orchestra Association (NSOA).

The 1979 and 1980 NBMC Seminars in Black Music

While the change of NBMC from affiliate to associate membership status might have improved relationships between NBMC and MENC, providing, theoretically, a seat at the MENC table with the same rights and privileges enjoyed by the other associated member organizations, NBMC found itself still needing to go to MENC to seek additional space on the program for Black music and musicians. According to Eddie Meadows, a co-founder and the second President, NBMC took a major stride toward independence that expanded its mission to present more Black music programming with the sponsorship of the 1979 and 1980 “NBMC Summer Seminars in Black Music” in collaboration with Indiana University’s School of Music and Afro-American Arts Institute.⁴⁷ Under the leadership of Michael Gordon, NBMC President from 1978-81 and Professor of Music Education at Indiana University, the 5-day and 12-day summer seminars were offered with academic credit. The performances, papers, reports, and discussions presented focused primarily on Black music and musicians and the various institutions and practices derived from the African diaspora.⁴⁸

NBMC-sponsored National Professional Conferences: A Historical Turning Point

Motivated by the successful ventures of the “NBMC Summer Seminars in Black Music” in August 1979 and 1980 at Indiana University, and inspired and influenced by the impact and success of the “Black American Music Symposium” held at the University of Michigan in August 1985, led by Willis Patterson (Executive Secretary of NBMC), the infrastructure and Board of Directors of NBMC were strengthened and became more determined that NBMC would fully realize its mission to promote Black music and Black musicians.

Even after NBMC advanced from affiliate to associate status within MENC and began to enjoy a few more “perks” during the first half of the 1980s, the frustration with MENC continued and the push by NBMC for more representation at MENC conventions began to grow louder throughout the administration of Carlesta Henderson, NBMC President from 1984–86, according to board members Alexandria Holloway

⁴⁷See Shawn Royer’s article in this Special Issue, “David Baker: The Nexus of Jazz Curriculum and the Civil Rights Movement at Indiana University.”

⁴⁸Eddie Meadows, interview by William T. McDaniel, December 5, 2020.

and George Allen.^{49,50} Through much of the 1980s, NBMC continued to have meetings at MENC conventions, both nationally and at regional or divisional meetings, reminiscent of the practice from its inception, when NBMC only had meetings when MENC was in session. A common practice increased, however, where NBMC would sponsor a Business Meeting session and/or an Achievement Awards event, which ranged at times from a breakfast, lunch or banquet, during an MENC convention, even when the request for more regular session times was not granted.

NBMC's commitment to serve as a voice for Black music educators and to see its mission come to fruition continued during the mid-to-late 1980s with the administration of Carlesta Henderson and Alexandria Holloway, NBMC President from 1986–88 (see Figure 2).

In addition to holding MENC membership, NBMC's Board of Directors typically held membership in one or more other associated member organizations of MENC. As NBMC board members began to seriously consider the need to decrease its reliance on MENC for increasing Black presence at its conferences, and with the realization that self-determination would be the best way forward, NBMC began to shift strategies and embrace an idea that had been espoused by board member and one of NBMC's founders, William T. McDaniel, during the Henderson administration, and advanced by him during the Holloway administration, when he became President-Elect. The idea, which seemed a bit radical to some NBMC board members at the time, was that NBMC should design and sponsor its own conferences to fulfill its own mission. He further argued that a fundamental difference between NBMC and the other associate member organizations of MENC, like ACDA and NAJE, was that the others sponsored their own conferences to reach their goals and define their mission. McDaniel, who, like many board members, had grown tired of protesting MENC's responses to NBMC's requests for more Black presenters and clinicians, more Black topics, and more Black music at MENC conventions and conferences, led the campaign on the board for NBMC to sponsor its own conference. He successfully convinced the board to approve the recommendation to move forward with the sponsorship of the first NBMC Professional Conference and to allow him to be the Conference Chair, since he would become NBMC President from 1988-90. The vote to go forward and plan its own major conference was history-making and served as a significant turning point in NBMC's activities and legacy. The organizational infrastructure was strengthened during this period as well and the NBMC Board of Directors created a new statement in 1992—the NBMC Mission Statement and Goals—that expanded, revised, and refined its original mission and goals. The new Mission Statement, which was included in the Board of Directors Handbook, read as follows:

The National Black Music Caucus is an organization whose purpose is to further the development and dissemination of African America [sic] Music through advocacy,

⁴⁹Alexandria Holloway, interview by William T. McDaniel, November 6, 2020.

⁵⁰George Allen, interview by William T. McDaniel, November 7, 2020.



Figure 2. NBMC Leadership circa 1985. (From left to right) Warrick Carter, Hortense Kerr, George Allen, Alexandria Holloway, William T. McDaniel, Willis Patterson, and Carlesta Henderson. From the private collection of William T. McDaniel.

education and performance. The organization is committed to providing leadership and motivation for music educators, musicians and others interested in fostering the inclusion of African and African American music in education and in society. This organization serves its membership and others by increasing the awareness of black music and its contribution to the Arts.⁵¹

The expanded goals listed in the Handbook were:

- To promote, preserve and advance the tradition of African American music throughout the world;
- To serve as an advocate for African American music education throughout the United States;
- To ensure the inclusion of African American music from preschool through the University level;
- To foster recognition of the importance, significance and contribution of African American music to American culture;

⁵¹National Black Music Caucus, Handbook for Board of Directors, 1st ed., Hortense R. Kerr (Editor and Past President), 1992, p. 1. Private collection of William T. McDaniel.

- To generate support for the development of quality music education programs and the music potential of black youth;
- To continue the development of African American music educators, performers and audiences of music;
- To voice concerns of Black music educators throughout the United States;⁵²

With the decision by the Board of Directors to sponsor NBMC conferences, the organization shed its dependency on MENC and truly became a “national” organization. Its conferences presented Black performers, conductors, presenters, clinicians, composers, choral and instrumental ensembles and soloists from elementary and secondary through collegiate and professional ranks, solo and small chamber groups. Also included were provocative topics about the Black music tradition, teaching methodologies, and lots of Black music. The conferences became the primary vehicle to present the music of Black America and the African Diaspora. More importantly, sponsoring its own conferences became the most effective way for NBMC to realize its mission and goals. The decision led to five successful conferences during this time period, each chaired by William T. McDaniel. The sites for the conferences were in: Atlanta 1989, Charlotte 1991, Nashville 1993, Philadelphia 1995, and back to Atlanta in 1997 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of NBMC. The presentation of NBMC Conferences served as a watershed moment in the storied history of The National Black Music Caucus.

The theme for the inaugural conference in 1989 was “Black Music: Our National Treasure.” The decision was made to hold it in Atlanta, where the organization was founded 17 years earlier. The conference presented 27 performing ensembles and 22 panels, roundtables, presenters and clinicians. Michael Lomax, Arts Leader and Director of Cultural Affairs for the City of Atlanta, was the Keynote Speaker, and Hale Smith, composer, was the speaker at the NBMC Achievement Awards Banquet.⁵³

Reusing the theme of “Black Music: Our National Treasure,” the 1991 Conference was held in Charlotte, North Carolina and featured 28 performing ensembles along with 33 workshops, panels, and presentations. Among the highlights of the conference was the performance of the Jazz Ambassadors of the United States Army Field Band of Washington, DC and Keynote addresses by The Honorable Harvey B. Gantt, Architect and Former Mayor of Charlotte NC, and by George Butler, Senior Vice President and Executive Producer, CBS Records.⁵⁴

The 1993 Conference, with a theme of “Rejuvenation Through African American Music,” was held in Nashville, Tennessee. The program featured 24 performing groups and soloists, and 36 panels, workshops and presentations. Two highlights of the conference were the performance of the first NBMC Intercollegiate Symphonic Band comprised of students selected from 17 HBCU, with guest conductor Lt. George N.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³1989 Atlanta NBMC Professional Conference Bulletin, unpublished program document.

⁵⁴1991 Charlotte NBMC Conference Bulletin, unpublished program document.

Thompson of the U. S. Navy Band, and the *Hand in Hand* special collaboration between NBMC and the Nashville Symphony Orchestra (see Figure 3).⁵⁵

“A Declaration of Interdependence Through African-American Music,” was the theme of the 1995 Conference in Philadelphia, featuring 28 performing ensembles and 33 panels, workshops, and presentations. Two of the conference highlights were a production by Phil Hurtt titled “A Soulful Journey Through Time,” which traced the roots of Black music and illustrated the innovations, influences, and contributions of Philadelphia musicians to the music industry. The session on “The African-American Experience with the Philadelphia Orchestra” featured the four African American members of the Philadelphia Orchestra: Andre Smith, Associate Conductor; Henry Scott, double bass; Renard Edwards, viola; and Booker Rowe, violin.⁵⁶

The 1997 Conference was held in observance of the 25th Anniversary of the National Black Music Caucus (see Figure 4).

With a theme of “A Celebration of African American Music!”, 30 performing ensembles and 33 panels, workshops, and presentations contributed to the celebration. While recognizing past presidents from 1972–1997 was a meaningful part of the programming, the most significant highlight was a *Tribute to T. J. Anderson*, the Founding President (Chairman) of the NBMC. Two concerts of music compositions by T. J. Anderson were performed by students and professional artists and guest speaker Dwight Andrews, Director of the National Black Arts Festival and the Quincy Jones Professor of Music at Harvard University, gave the address. The Achievement Awards Banquet recognized two national honorees, Warrick L. Carter, a Founding Member and the First National Secretary of NBMC and T. J. Anderson, composer. (see Figure 4 and 5)⁵⁷


The Significance and Impact of the National Black Music Caucus

The first 25 years of the National Black Music Caucus reveal an inspiring story characterized by purpose, tenacity, and triumph. It is the narrative of an organization with a radical, revolutionary origin comprised of principled, committed individuals who worked tirelessly and resolutely toward a singular mission that they themselves defined—to promote, preserve, and advance the rich tradition and legacy of African American music throughout the world through education. NBMC’s accomplishments are even more remarkable with the realization that the organization produced professional conferences and symposia, a newsletter, and a journal, and provided professional development opportunities for music educators and music students across the

⁵⁵1993 Nashville NBMC Professional Conference Bulletin, unpublished program document.

⁵⁶1995 Philadelphia NBMC Professional Conference Bulletin.

⁵⁷1997 Atlanta *NBMC 25!* Professional Conference Bulletin.



THE NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

KENNETH D. SCHERMERHORN, MUSIC DIRECTOR/CONDUCTOR
KAREN L. DEAL, ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

1992-1993 Season
Special Event
Hand in Hand


Thursday evening, March 4, 1993 - 8:00 pm *War Memorial Auditorium*

Karen L. Deal, Conducting
Kay George Roberts, Guest Conductor


J. ROSAMOND JOHNSON	"Lift Every Voice"
BEETHOVEN	Egmont Overture
ADOLPHUS HAILSTORK	Epitaph in Memorium to Martin Luther King, Jr.
MICHAEL ABELS	Global Warming
	INTERMISSION
GEORGE WALKER	Lyric for Strings *
JOHN WESLEY WORK, JR.	Yenvalou - Suite for String Orchestra
	I. Allegro
	II. Allegretto con grazione
	III. Moderato ma marcato
WM. GRANT STILL	Afro-American Symphony
	I. Moderato assai; Allegro
	II. Adagio
	III. Animato
	IV. Lento; Vivace

Sponsored by:

**THE DANNER
FOUNDATION**



and



This event has been made possible through the financial assistance of the Tennessee Arts Commission and the National Endowment For The Arts, the State and Federal agencies which encourage and support the arts.
 The use of video and/or flash cameras or recording equipment is strictly prohibited.

Figure 3. Concert Program for *Hand in Hand*, a collaboration with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. Kay George Roberts, guest conductor, in a concert celebrating African American music. From the private collection of William T. McDaniel.

nation, with no staff, no office space, a volunteer board of directors, and non-salaried officers, or in the words of former President Carlesta Henderson, “no money, no thought of personal gain, but only a mission. . . .”⁵⁸

⁵⁸Henderson, *Letter to Chairman*, 1999.

1997 NBMC 25 ATLANTA CONFERENCE COMMITTEE		
Ted McDaniel, <i>Conference Chairperson</i>		
George Edwards, <i>Treasurer</i>		
Gwendolyn Carroll		
Effie T. Gardner		
Walter E. Massey, <i>President of Morehouse College</i> <i>and Honorary Chair of NBMC 25</i>		
ATLANTA CONFERENCE HOST COMMITTEE		
	Frederick Taylor, <i>Chair</i>	
John Bradley	Mary Frances Early	James Patterson
James Camp	Calvin Grimes	John T. Peek
Curtis Byrdsong	Bernice Hall	Tommy Ross
Carlos Cody	Joyce Finch Johnson	Cynthia Terry
Melva Costen	T. Marshall Jones	James Witherspoon
Claude Dunson	Malinda Logan	Alfred Wyatt

Figure 4. NBMC 25! 25th Anniversary of the National Black Music Caucus, Conference Program. From the private collection of William T. McDaniel.

<p>1997 NBMC Professional Conference NBMC 25: A Celebration of African-American Music! Sheraton Colony Square Hotel Atlanta, Georgia**March 6-9, 1997</p> <p>Highlighting the NBMC 25th Anniversary Celebration Conference was the General Session Tribute and Concert to Thomas Jefferson Anderson, composer, founder, and first president.</p> <p>A Tribute to T. J. Anderson Effie T. Gardner, NBMC President, presiding</p>
--

Figure 5. NBMC 25! 25th Anniversary of the National Black Music Caucus, Conference Program. From the private collection of William T. McDaniel.

Long before NBMC began to sponsor its own conferences in 1989, the organization began to sponsor its own Achievement Awards programs during biennial MENC conventions. NBMC officers and board members realized that the Achievement Awards programs were another opportunity to advance the Black music tradition by recognizing the admirable accomplishments of deserving music teachers and arts leaders. Additionally, holding the awards program during MENC Conventions not only served to promote the organization but, more importantly, it brought well-deserved recognition and honor to individuals who might never have been otherwise recognized by music educator peers and other organizations. The Achievement Awards programs were also an effective means of recruiting new members and facilitating networking opportunities among an audience of predominantly, although not exclusively Black music educators.

This statement from the Board of Director's Handbook illustrates the NBMC's sense of purpose and solemn commitment to its goals.

Until the day comes when the scholarship, compositions, and people of African American descent and/or culture find their way into mainstream textbooks, performances, staffing of performing groups, offices, and universities in quantities commensurate with the contributions, there will be a role in musical America for the National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music and other groups devoted to the perpetuation of African American music in the fabric of life in our country.⁵⁹

Former presidents and leaders of NBMC offered thoughts on the purpose, mission, and impact of the organization. Reflecting on his legacy and contributions toward achieving the NBMC goals and mission, Dr T. J. Anderson noted:

I was particularly interested in us reaching out to young public school performers and their ensembles and providing a platform for their performances at our conventions. An extra component which I was never able to develop, was a research consortium that would document current aspects of the history of Black music. I would hope my legacy would be a continuation of emphasis of Black Music in Public Schools.⁶⁰

T. Marshall Jones, a long-serving member of the NBMC Board of Directors, summed up succinctly what he perceives as the ongoing need for the organization: "NBMC is more needed now, more than ever before. We must preserve the art of our heritage."⁶¹

René Boyer, NBMC Past President, shared these thoughts:

My life has been filled with innumerable and heartwarming experiences as a clinician, teacher, composer/arranger, author and the recipient of a few honors. None of this part of my journey would have happened without the teachings, philosophies and cultural understanding that were instilled in me by NBMC. My place in this organization has been firmly rooted in my continued goal to ensure that all of our teachers are sensitive to the need for diverse music curricula in our schools and communities.⁶²

Gwendolyn Carroll, NBMC Past President, offered these words:

NBMC/NASPAAM has been my life's journey. I pledged long ago to give of myself in helping to grow this organization that I love. I take its mission seriously because there is so much work to be done in bringing our music to full circle. We cannot rest on our laurels without making certain our young understand fully the value of our culture and the contributions made by our people to American music.⁶³

⁵⁹Handbook, National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music, Handbook for Board of Directors, second ed., Hortense R. Kerr, Editor and Past President, n.d., p. 1.

⁶⁰Anderson, interview.

⁶¹Jones, interview.

⁶²René Boyer, interview by William T. McDaniel, March 12, 2021.

⁶³Gwendolyn Carroll, interview by William T. McDaniel, March 8, 2021.

Because of principled leadership and the commitment of dedicated music educators who volunteered their time and talents, the organization met the challenge of evolving into a full-fledged professional organization despite the fact that it had little financial support typically required for an organization to accomplish the goals and garner the respect that the NBMC earned. NBMC changed its name after 25 years to NASPAAM, the National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music. Its mission, however, remained the same and in 2022, the organization will celebrate 50 years of advancing the worldwide, rich tradition and legacy of African American music through education.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Rosita M. Sands  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5072-8401>