

Joyful Noise

TROMBONIST CEDRIC MANGUM DISCUSSES
THE MEANING BEHIND THE MUSIC OF GOSPEL SHOUT!

BY MICHAEL J. SOLENDER

Gospel Shout! — the raucous, joyous, bright and brassy annual Charlotte concert showcasing “the Lord’s Trombones” — shifts from fall to spring this year as part of the citywide Charlotte SHOUT! celebration, which runs April 29 through May 11.

This cultural favorite, now in its 16th year, joins a lineup of 75 concerts, performances and installations at the two-week event organized by Charlotte Center City Partners in partnership with Blumenthal Performing Arts.

Thundering, exuberant, soulful sounds, exaltations and dance define shout bands, and the music is an integral part of worship at the United House of Prayer For All People. This urban Pentecostal denomination is concentrated in the southeastern U.S., and Charlotte’s UHOP is one of the largest in the nation.

Cedric Mangum, a local barber who is a musical director at UHOP, served as bandleader of the Clouds of Heaven shout band for 35 years. Mangum shares the serendipity behind how the public concerts started, the joy behind the music and what it means to welcome the community into UHOP.

HOW DID GOSPEL SHOUT! COME ABOUT?

Years back, one of my [barbershop] customers took his little girl to the Levine Museum of the New South. He told me, “Cedric, they’re playing your music over there in the exhibit (Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers: Reinventing Charlotte and the Carolina Piedmont in the New South).” I said, “Well, let me go over there and check it out.”

There, I met with Tom Hanchett (then staff historian at the Levine and curator of the award-winning exhibit). He took me through the entire exhibit



and sure enough, they took music from a recording we did for a CD produced by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings titled “Saints’ Paradise.”

Shortly after that, Tom and I got together and held our first Gospel Shout! concert at the First Ward United House of Prayer. The crowd was so large, we moved to the mother house on Beatties Ford Road after that.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SHOUT MUSIC AND YOUR WORSHIP?

The way we worship, the music gives us the timing for dance. We call it a “shout,” but people are dancing in the spirit, giving God praise. We give Him praise in the dance. I say the music is my salvation, and what I mean by that is it helps me in my spiritual realm, the spirituality of my life.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOUR CONGREGATION WHEN YOU OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY AND GET SUCH A LARGE TURNOUT?

It means a lot to us. It means that our gospel is being put out and is reaching the

people. We have more than 1,000 people attend. It’s special.

THERE IS SO MUCH JOY IN YOUR MUSIC. WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

It’s based on the spirit ... the spirituality. If I enjoy the song that I’m playing, the people who are hearing it are going to receive that same joy.

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE AT YOUR CONCERTS?

The brass, of course. Clouds of Heaven — the band is almost 50 years-old — is performing, as is our a capella choir, The Golden Angels, led by my wife, Gigi. I want people to come with an open mind and an open heart and let the spirit take hold.

WANT TO GO?

WHAT: GOSPEL SHOUT!
WHEN: TUE. MAY 7, 7:30 P.M. SOUL-FOOD DINNERS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE ON-SITE FROM 6 P.M.
WHERE: UNITED HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE, 2321 BEATTIES FORD ROAD
COST: FREE SP