

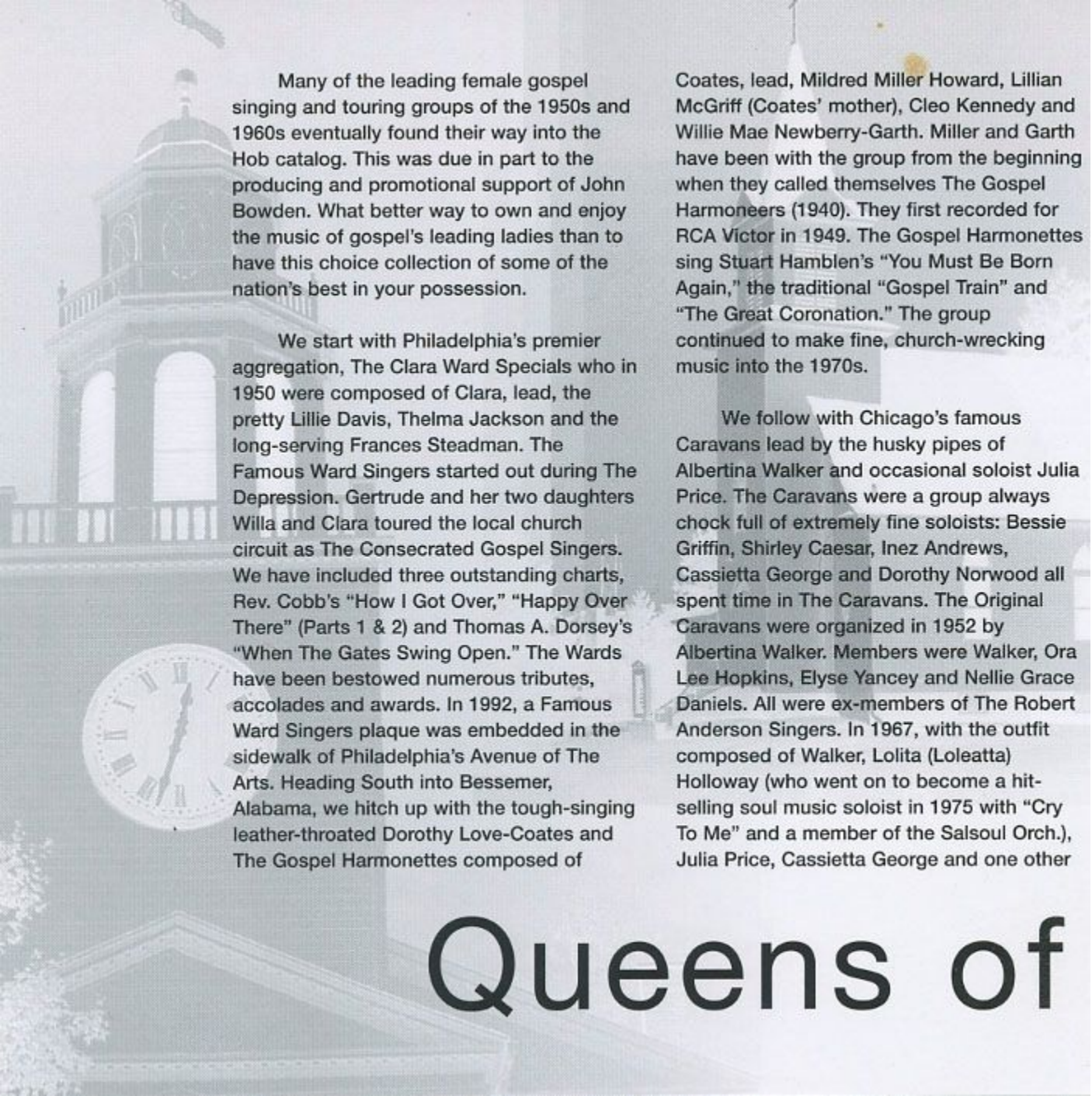
# Queens of Gospel



An Uplifting Collection of 15 Gospel Greats

*Hallelujah*





Many of the leading female gospel singing and touring groups of the 1950s and 1960s eventually found their way into the Hob catalog. This was due in part to the producing and promotional support of John Bowden. What better way to own and enjoy the music of gospel's leading ladies than to have this choice collection of some of the nation's best in your possession.

We start with Philadelphia's premier aggregation, The Clara Ward Specials who in 1950 were composed of Clara, lead, the pretty Lillie Davis, Thelma Jackson and the long-serving Frances Steadman. The Famous Ward Singers started out during The Depression. Gertrude and her two daughters Willa and Clara toured the local church circuit as The Consecrated Gospel Singers. We have included three outstanding charts, Rev. Cobb's "How I Got Over," "Happy Over There" (Parts 1 & 2) and Thomas A. Dorsey's "When The Gates Swing Open." The Wards have been bestowed numerous tributes, accolades and awards. In 1992, a Famous Ward Singers plaque was embedded in the sidewalk of Philadelphia's Avenue of The Arts. Heading South into Bessemer, Alabama, we hitch up with the tough-singing leather-throated Dorothy Love-Coates and The Gospel Harmonettes composed of

Coates, lead, Mildred Miller Howard, Lillian McGriff (Coates' mother), Cleo Kennedy and Willie Mae Newberry-Garth. Miller and Garth have been with the group from the beginning when they called themselves The Gospel Harmonettes (1940). They first recorded for RCA Victor in 1949. The Gospel Harmonettes sing Stuart Hamblen's "You Must Be Born Again," the traditional "Gospel Train" and "The Great Coronation." The group continued to make fine, church-wrecking music into the 1970s.

We follow with Chicago's famous Caravans lead by the husky pipes of Albertina Walker and occasional soloist Julia Price. The Caravans were a group always chock full of extremely fine soloists: Bessie Griffin, Shirley Caesar, Inez Andrews, Cassietta George and Dorothy Norwood all spent time in The Caravans. The Original Caravans were organized in 1952 by Albertina Walker. Members were Walker, Ora Lee Hopkins, Elyse Yancey and Nellie Grace Daniels. All were ex-members of The Robert Anderson Singers. In 1967, with the outfit composed of Walker, Lolita (Loleatta) Holloway (who went on to become a hit-selling soul music soloist in 1975 with "Cry To Me" and a member of the Salsoul Orch.), Julia Price, Cassietta George and one other

# Queens of




recorded the unforgettable "Jesus Will Fix It," "It's Jesus In Me" and "To Whom Shall I Turn." All the songs were penned and made widely popular by Walker, the gals and Willie James McPhatter, the group's pianist. The Stars of Faith came about through a rift in The Ward Singers in 1958. Marion Williams, Frances Steadman, Kitty Parham and Esther Ford had all been Ward Singers stalwarts. Williams accused Gertrude Ward of withholding royalties and cutting the group short. Ward fired the group, and they became The Stars of Faith with the addition of Henrietta Waddy who had sung in The Wards during the early 1950s.

By 1966 Marie Dozier Belk had replaced Ford and Elaine Murph had been added. During a period of ever-changing personnel The Stars of Faith cut exciting renditions of "I've Got Shoes," Lucy Smith's "Get Away Jordan" and "We Shall Be Changed," lead by the smoldering pipes of Frances Steadman, the fiery Kitty Parham and the impressive Henrietta Waddy. The present-day Stars of Faith headed by Kitty Parham continue to tour Europe at least once a year and are more popular in France and Germany than they are in the United States.

# Gospel

Our last church-wrecking group is The Meditation Singers of Detroit lead by the awesome Earnestine Rundless and the silky voice of the sultry soul-diva Laura Lee who crossed into secular and enjoyed fifteen charted soul music hits between the years 1967 and 1976. The Meditations were founded by Earnestine Rundless, wife of original Soul Stirrer E.A. Rundless, in Detroit in 1947. The Meditations soon became rivals of The Davis Sisters in Philadelphia. Founding alumni included Rundless, her daughter, Laura Lee, Della Reece, her sister Marie Waters, and Lillian Mitchell. Della sung in The Roberta Martin and Ward Singers. In 1954 she crossed over into jazz and popular music and became an extremely successful cabaret singer. In 1961 The Meditations recorded stand-out versions of Leroy Crume's "Jesus Be A Fence Around Me," James Cleveland's "One More River To Cross" and "Get Ready." Cleveland had himself served in The Meditations off and on as the group's pianist and arranger. The Hob Meditations line-up included Earnestine,



Laura Lee, Waters, Verline Rodgers, Donna Hammond and Cassietta George who had sung in The Caravans. The group recorded for Chess during the 1960s and has since retired from the road. The Stars of Faith are perhaps the only regularly active female group in our collection. The trend today is away from the female singing unit and into the female soloist. Singers like Dottie Peoples, Yolanda Adams, Shirley Caesar and Cissy Houston dominate the female best sellers category. Gospel has finally become part of the mainstream. Five distinct categories have emerged: Traditional, currently described as lyrically denoting the message of Jesus Christ, Contemporary Gospel outlined as "good news" music utilizing secular influences, Urban Contemporary, incorporating street beats and urban trends with groups like Gospel Gangstaze, Panzie and Trin-I-tee, Contemporary Christian, pop-influenced "Christian" music, and New Traditional Gospel, using yesterday's songs and mixing them with today's synthetic technology.

Our strictly traditional gospel CD centers around five principal female aggregations from four parts of the country, singers who made it possible for all gal trouper groups like Virtue, Witness and The Williams Sisters to grow and thrive in today's burgeoning spiritual environment.

*Opal Louis Nations*

*Opal Nations, born in Brighton, England, is a music producer, writer of both fiction and music articles, and vocalist with 1960s groups Alexis Korner Band, The Frays, and The Ram Holder Group, as well as former KPFA (Berkeley) deejay.*



**Also Available:  
Kings of Gospel  
50093**



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The Clara Ward Specials  
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2. **You Must Be Born Again**  
The Gospel Harmonettes  
*(Trad./Arr. The Gospel Harmonettes)*
3. **Jesus Will Fix It**  
The Caravans  
*(Trad./Arr. The Caravans)*
4. **I've Got Shoes**  
The Stars Of Faith  
*(Trad./Arr. The Stars Of Faith)*
5. **Jesus Be A Fence Around Me**  
The Meditation Singers  
*(Trad./Arr. The Meditation Singers)*
6. **Happy Over There (Parts 1 & 2)**  
The Clara Ward Specials  
*(Trad./Arr. The Clara Ward Specials)*
7. **Gospel Train**  
The Gospel Harmonettes  
*(Trad./Arr. The Gospel Harmonettes)*
8. **It's Jesus In Me**  
The Caravans  
*(Trad./Arr. The Caravans)*
9. **Get Away Jordan**  
The Stars Of Faith  
*(Trad./Arr. The Stars Of Faith)*
10. **One More River To Cross**  
The Meditation Singers  
*(Trad./Arr. The Meditation Singers)*
11. **When The Gates Swing Open**  
The Clara Ward Specials  
*(Trad./Arr. The Clara Ward Specials)*
12. **The Great Coronation**  
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13. **To Whom Shall I Turn**  
The Caravans  
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14. **We Shall Be Changed**  
The Stars Of Faith  
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15. **Get Ready**  
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