

WHY CHRISTIAN MUSIC IN GHANA HAS NOT BROKEN THROUGH
A chat and full length interview with Ghana's true godfather of contemporary
gospel music, Tom Bright-Davies.

- *Amazing revelations on causes of problems with music in the church.*
- *Deep insights for music ministers*
- *Helpful information for those looking for a break in their music calling*
- *Read about what this man of God has been doing to bring major changes on the scene*

After staying with us through this interview with a man who has been a major driving force behind music ministry development in Ghana you would also begin to feel that a new wave of refreshing, mind blowing, innovative and spiritually uplifting gospel music is about to hit Ghana and the rest of the sub-region of West Africa beginning this 2007. For a man who has single handedly trained more people to be worship and music Pastors, instrumentalists, sound engineers, songwriters, choir directors, music producers and the like in the church, this optimism must be taken seriously.

This man has seen it all. He has proved skeptics wrong that the call to be a music minister is second rate. For those who thought music only came in to liven up the people for the preacher, Rev. Tom's ministry has opened their eyes to another level where they see the manifest presence of God in his ministry. Testimonies of physical, emotional and spiritual healing pour in after he ministers anywhere. His powerful teachings on worship and music have transformed many local churches. Even churches considered conservative when it comes to worship and music are beginning to respond as they see the proof of a genuine music ministry. Despite these enviable achievements the man doesn't seem satisfied. He believes the revival of worship and music is now about to break forth. God's army of music ministers who possess the skill, discipline and the anointing to turn the ears of the nations to hear God's voice is beginning to gather and get in shape.

"We are entering into a particular phase of prophetic manifestation where the hearts of certain men and women are being roused by the spirit of God to pay the price that goes with standing in their ranks to be used of God through music in a supernatural way" he prophesied. "God will cause these people to command wealth and resources to dominate the media front with an undeniable witness of the spirit and of power in their music. Beyond the musical skill, artistry and excellence they possess will be an anointing that will break yokes and send millions kneeling in prayer before their television sets. Many will experience unarguable and tangible manifestations of God's presence in their homes as they watch these people in the comfort of their homes or listen to them on radio or any available media. God will surely do this and it has already begun" he declared. "What is left for us to do is to get ready to be in the flow and to let the flow be in us" he said.

Music ministers from Ghana like Rev. Tom with music that have international appeal are very few while most of what has come to be seen as gospel music in Ghana are not making any serious impact even in the local churches let alone outside church walls or even beyond the shores of the country.

Apart from the very obvious low standards of singing which reveal basic vocal flaws like pitching, this brand of local gospel music done in Ghana is monotonously patterned after a singular reggae guitar strum or keyboard chords playing called “*reggae chops*” in production circles and a very old format bass line style. Only the primary or basic chords in a key are used for all sections of the songs melody whether they fit perfectly or not.

Why is this so? From the drum rhythms to bass lines, chord progressions and melody lines, it is easy to understand why no one is taking it seriously. It is very easy to see why local productions lack originality and can easily pass off as copied or stolen work. What seems to be more shameful regrettably is the newly acquired appetite of many local gospel musicians. Many now take secular songs, change the words to one of the native Ghanaian languages “*twi*” but do the same melody lines, do an extremely pale version of the original instrumentation and sometimes copy video clips shot by shot. In my chat with Rev. Tom these and more occupied us as we spoke and discussed issues.

Rev. Tom believes that the lack of responsibility, excellence and originality by many musicians and leaders in the church has contributed largely to the erosion of the respect, regard and honor that is supposed to come with kingdom music.

“The amazing thing about Ghana,” he says, “is that there is so much music ministry potential within the church but many of such people simply don’t show up due to the attitude of the church as a whole with regards to issues like excellence, finance, training, investment, encouragement and so on”.

“By reason of the work I am involved in, I come into contact frequently with the frustrations of very gifted and talented singers and musicians. It seems those the Lord refers to as the LIGHT OF THE WORLD and the SALT OF THE EARTH have shirked their responsibility and relinquished it to the people of the world. What happens is that the secular industry dictates the pace, trends, style, production approach, musical presentation, video concepts etc and then the church shamefully copies without any sense of embarrassment. When musicians in the church with true calling and ability step out its amazing how few people or no one stands with them. For this reason many musicians from the church are secretly looking at the possibilities of following the secular industry’s path just to get exposure and attention while risking the values they are supposed to stand for as believers”.

Piper’s Media can assure you that there are a lot of secular musicians who actually started out from the church in Ghana. This is a trend similar to what happened in the USA during the black gospel music boom from the 1930’s into the 40’s and 50’s. The church in the USA at that time made the same mistake the church in Ghana is making. People felt that because the gifts were from God there was no material or financial responsibility that went with it.

As a result, most of America’s secular musicians today who are black are descendants of neglected gospel musicians who in their time had bitter experiences in the church. Even though some of them were so bitter that they corrupted the hearts and minds of their children with their bitterness by warning them not to sing for the church or risk becoming

as poor as they had become, others just kept their pain. These people had dreams for their gift and somehow hoped that one day they would sing all around the world the message of the cross and the power of the resurrection.

Unfortunately their hopes were fueled by self seeking leaders who wanted to use them to expand and build their churches. These wolves in sheep's clothing promised these singers what they perfectly knew they were not willing to give. Age caught up on a lot of them and they had to deal with unfulfilled dreams. They still kept the faith and stayed in church but could not fulfill their dreams. Their children who naturally were blessed with some of their parents' gifts just had to take one look at what church had done to their families and dreams.

They saw the poverty, the lack and the frustrations that came with doing music for the church and swore they would not follow the paths their parents took. They looked at the other side of the fence and saw the secular musicians own cars, buy mansions, build studios and sell records. For them if church and God meant poverty, deprivation and lack plus a security for heaven they did not want any part of it. They would still go to church on Sunday and sing for the devil from Monday to Saturday. As I listened to Rev. Tom share these facts of history in the USA I could not agree with him more that the same dangerous cycle was creeping into the church in Ghana. He told me statistics available to him today suggests that most of the musically talented folk in church don't join the choir.

They saw what happened to Brother Jason, the music director of their church. He was always in debt and drove a rickety second world war VW beetle that seemed to have a desire to break down especially on Sundays and so was late to service most times with his white shirt soiled with engine oil. Brother Jason was a good guy. He loved the Lord and was faithful in church. He made sure he attended all the meetings and choir rehearsals. You could see his glow when he sung or played the piano in any church meeting. It was wonderful but he was poor. The church paid him so low he could not even pay his bills let alone get his kid to a decent school. His wife always wore a face you could hardly describe. Saved, happy, poor, frustrated and afraid of the future. She certainly wasn't a happy wife but she still loved her husband. What a twist. Just look at what we men have done, I mean we the people of the church. So long as he could provide ministry to the church, nobody cared about Jason.

The strange thing about a truly God-gifted musician is that there is a passion and a love for what you do such that you tend to forget that the calling is a holistic one. At the onset of ministry one is just glad to sing and play for the Lord. You see people blessed by your ministry and nothing else matters. You get everyone testifying how much your gift is blessing them and you feel fulfilled. Now you feel like moving to another level. Your desire is to record your music, do serious concerts, get yourself some equipment and maybe some decent clothes and shoes to look presentable because more and more people are responding to your ministry. It begins to dawn on you slowly but surely that the financial and material dimensions of ministry are as real as real. You reach out to friends and church folk who seemed appreciative of your ministry and the excuses pour in. Life and the future begins to feel cold and you realize you are alone on this journey.

People don't love you to the point of sharing your material and financial burden. The obvious feeling that people want what you have, but are not willing to exchange it for what they have begins to hit you in the face. No one wants to invest in or support your ministry. No better time for Satan to strike. At this point you are so vulnerable and look ready to be diverted from your path.

Trouble begins here. You find yourself receiving some interest and attention from the movers and shakers of the secular music industry. They offer you what the church will not offer in probably a 1000 years. Here is a great contract which provides for all the material securities of life. You begin to remember the many times you have ministered to God's people and gone home not just empty handed but unappreciated. If you got a sandwich and a glass of soda or juice after ministering anywhere it probably would mean that God had gone to great extents and trouble to move the cold and insensitive hearts of your hosts. You can for once see yourself owning your own car, a house, a thriving career, money and the opportunity to do things that have been in your heart to do for many years.

Now you can see for once that you can get properly married and provide for your family, parents, siblings and also help people in need.

The thing here is WHAT'S THE CATCH? Bebe and Cece Winans who were multi-Grammy award winners went through a bitter lesson and experience when they signed up a secular production contract. Today Cece Winans in particular passionately admonishes music ministers to be extremely careful how they sign up on contracts in the industry. "I am doing all I can as God gives me grace to open the eyes of church leadership to how their neglect can open the doors for Satan to raid the house of God" Rev. Tom said. Next week we bring you the interview proper with Rev. Tom. Tell some friends to log on this site. Piper's Media can tell you factually that the interview was mind blowing as well as fun. If what you have read so far stuns you just wait till you read what is coming. Don't ya miss it. See you then.