

Aretha Franklin influenced sacred and secular music

Franklin, who died at 76, embodied “the connection between the African-American spiritual, the blues, R & B, rock and roll.”

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Aretha Franklin singing "My Country 'Tis Of Thee" at the 56th presidential inauguration in Washington, D.C., on January 20, 2009.

Aretha Franklin, who began her singing career with gospel music and was later crowned the Queen of Soul, died August 16 at age 76. She had pancreatic cancer.

Franklin got her start in the Detroit church of her pastor father, C. L. Franklin. She was first recorded at his New Bethel Baptist Church on the album *Spirituals* at age 14. Her 1972 gospel album *Amazing Grace* is still her best seller to date, according to *Billboard*.

She received many honors, including induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland in 1987 and the 2005 Presidential Medal of Freedom. Franklin performed at Barack Obama's presidential inauguration in 2009.

"Nobody embodies more fully the connection between the African-American spiritual, the blues, R & B, rock and roll—the way that hardship and sorrow were transformed into something full of beauty and vitality and hope," President Obama told the *New Yorker* magazine.

Bil Carpenter, author of *Uncloudy Days: The Gospel Music Encyclopedia*, noted that Franklin, a lifelong Baptist, influenced a range of gospel artists as well as secular musicians in several genres.

"It's the sheer power of her voice and the unique phrasing that distinguish her from her peers," Carpenter said. "Whether she was singing a Broadway tune, a jazz standard, or an R & B song, she always brought that authentic black gospel flavor to it."

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