

EXCERPT

ivp  
Academic

## **A Supreme Love**

*The Music of Jazz and the Hope of the Gospel*

July 26, 2022 | \$24, 224 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0066-3

*"For many years, Bill Edgar has been a leading figure in the music and theology world. Here he shows how deeply intertwined jazz is with the Christian gospel. But not only does he have an impressive grasp of his subject, he is a practitioner par excellence. This double qualification means that anything he writes deserves to be listened to with special care."*

Jeremy Begbie, Duke University

# The Connections Between Jazz and the Gospel

It has been my privilege to grow up with jazz, to study it, and to perform it. I am not a headliner, but I'm a decent amateur. Once, at a fundraising concert in New York City, I had the privilege of being in a quartet with the great John Patitucci on bass, an extraordinary saxophone player, Joe Salzano, and the irrepressible vocalist Ruth Naomi Floyd. After listening to the recording, my friend Monty Alexander said, "Wow, you kept up with big guys." That's as high a compliment as I've ever received, and from one of the greatest pianists on the planet.

Not everyone can be an aficionado. But it is my conviction that jazz is one of the most enjoyable and meaningful kinds of music there is.

This music comes from the African American experience. Jazz is America's original music. Born out of slavery, it was nurtured in the invisible and visible churches where spirituals were generated, in the cotton fields with their inhuman working conditions, in the night spots across the country, and in funeral processions where dirges were followed by jubilation. Much of it has great depth, often the tragic sounds of suffering, but also of great jubilation. Because of its compelling beauty it has become popular all over the world. Thus, a style of music generated in relatively obscure circumstances has made it to stages all around the globe.

The locals in New Orleans called it a "funeral with music." That's because the more popular label "the jazz funeral" doesn't tell the whole story. The term jazz did not even appear in print until 1919, although it was likely used orally before then. Jazz music was often heard in these New Orleans funeral processions, but originally they included more than jazz—there was European "classical" music, African ritual sounds, the church's spiritual songs, and much more. Typically the parade was led by a soldier holding a sword, then a few ministers, followed by the coffin, with pall-bearers, then a brass band, and finally family and friends.

As they processed toward the cemetery, which was on the edge of town, the music was slow and mournful. Frequent tunes included *Hark from the Tomb* or *We're a Marching to the Grave*. Then, when the body was interred, the band would light up with a joyful sound. They might play *When the Saints* or the slightly irreverent *Didn't He Ramble*. The great pianist and pioneer of jazz Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton once explained, "Rejoice at the death and cry at the birth: New Orleans sticks close to the Scriptures."

Defining jazz is not as simple as it may seem. When asked to offer his definition, Louis Armstrong, the extraordinary New Orleans trumpet player, famously quipped (perhaps unkindly), "Man, if you gotta ask, you'll never know."

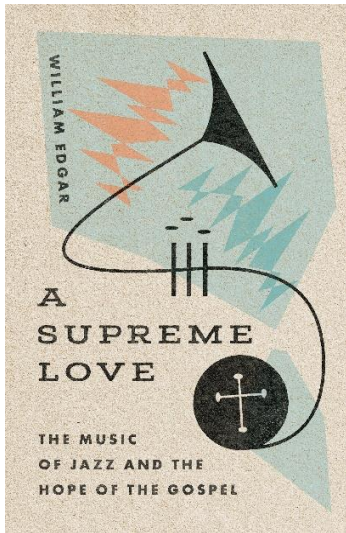
Jazz is not a single style, frozen in time. It evolved from various kinds of folk music, together with more structured compositions, such as ragtime, and the composite became a truly unique art form. This synthesis occurred in the early years of the twentieth century. It is in fact one of the "miracles" of the history of music. From the barrel houses and churches to the concert stage, jazz moved from local expressions to become a world-renowned genre. It varies from disparate performances to sophisticated compositions, and even masterpieces. Jazz, with all its variety, has become a universally recognized family.



Karin DeHaven, academic publicist  
800.843.4587 ext. 4096 or [kdehaven@ivpress.com](mailto:kdehaven@ivpress.com)

ivp

[ivpress.com/media](http://ivpress.com/media)



EXCERPT

ivp  
Academic

**A Supreme Love**  
*The Music of Jazz and the Hope of the Gospel*

July 26, 2022 | \$24, 224 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0066-3

*"For many years, Bill Edgar has been a leading figure in the music and theology world. Here he shows how deeply intertwined jazz is with the Christian gospel. But not only does he have an impressive grasp of his subject, he is a practitioner par excellence. This double qualification means that anything he writes deserves to be listened to with special care."*

**Jeremy Begbie**, Duke University

It is my conviction that if we are going to understand the deeper significance of jazz, including seminal works like Duke Ellington's "Take the A Train," Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World," or John Coltrane's album *A Love Supreme*, then we need to attend to its relation to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which moves from the deep pain and sorrow of the crucifixion to the joy of the resurrection. By knowing the historical roots of jazz and by being better listeners, I believe that we will hear something that is deeply embedded in jazz: a supreme love—the love of God.

—Adapted from the introduction, "Jazz and the Gospel"



---

Karin DeHaven, academic publicist  
800.843.4587 ext. 4096 or [kdehaven@ivpress.com](mailto:kdehaven@ivpress.com)

ivp

[ivpress.com/media](http://ivpress.com/media)



BIO



### ***A Supreme Love***

#### *The Music of Jazz and the Hope of the Gospel*

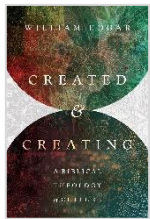
July 26, 2022 | \$24, 224 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0066-3

Theologian and jazz pianist William Edgar places jazz within the context of the African American experience and explores the work of musicians like Miles Davis and Ella Fitzgerald, arguing that jazz, which moves from deep lament to inextinguishable joy, deeply resonates with the hope that is ultimately found in the good news of Jesus Christ.

## Jazz and the Christian Faith

**William Edgar** (DThéol, Université de Genève) is professor of apologetics and coordinator of the apologetics department at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia as well as professeur associé at the Faculté Jean Calvin in Aix-en-Provence, France. He is the author of several books, including *Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture*; *Reasons of the Heart: Recovering Christian Persuasion*; *Does Christianity Really Work?*; *The Christian Mind: Escaping Futility*; *A Transforming Vision: The Lord's Prayer as a Lens for Life*; *Francis Schaeffer on the Christian Life*; and *Christian Apologetics Past and Present*.

Also by William Edgar:



### ***Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture***

December 1, 2016 | \$28, 262 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5152-2

Culture plays an undeniable role in the Christian's vocational calling in the world. How might we engage our culture with discernment and faithfulness? Exploring Scripture and gleanings from a variety of theologians, William Edgar offers a biblical defense of the cultural mandate, arguing that we are most faithful to our calling when we participate in creating culture.



Karin DeHaven, academic publicity  
800.846.4587 ext. 4096 or [kdehaven@ivpress.com](mailto:kdehaven@ivpress.com)



[ivpress.com/media](http://ivpress.com/media)