

Kennedy, Willie Mae



Gospel Singer

While performing with the Gospelrettes (Mertis Redden, Vermeda Fisher, Lillian Baptiste, and Sarah LaCaze), Willie Mae Kennedy traveled throughout the ArklaTex area, with special performances at the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival. She retired from the group after fifty years, but continues to sing African American gospel in various venues.

Kennedy began singing at age eight in church with her aunts and grandmother. She has sung with many groups over the past sixty years, and her specialty has always been a *capella* music. She still uses hand claps and foot stomping in order to keep the beat in her songs though musicians who play the keyboard, drums, and guitar accompany her in some of her songs. She now performs as a solo act or with family members at churches and other events.

Kennedy believes that the Lord has given her a gift. More than one listener has told her at the end of a performance that he or she has been healed through the songs or has felt the call of Jesus. Kennedy feels this is her anointed ministry, and that is what motivates her to sing.

In 2006, Willie Mae Kennedy was inducted into the Louisiana Folklife Center's Hall of Master Folk Artists.

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