Leggi e ascolta.

Music in the USA

Reporter James Perton visits two very different musical events.

Gospel music

On a sunny Sunday morning in May, I sat in a Chicago Baptist church and listened to the choir. First, a young woman with a beautiful voice sang solo, and the rest of the choir moved slowly to the music. Then suddenly all the choir began to sing the chorus. Soon everyone in the church began to move and sing – this was gospel music at its best.

But where did this music come from? In the 1800s, black slaves from the Caribbean and Africa sang in groups as they worked on the farms of North America. The songs helped them to forget their difficult lives. These songs were often religious, and gospel music developed from them. It started in black Baptist churches in the late 1800s.
At first, people only sang gospel music in black churches. Later, musicians like Elvis Presley recorded gospel songs, so gospel music became popular all over America. Church gospel bands often use instruments like the organ, the piano and the bass guitar. The singers also use tambourines. But the most important instruments in gospel music are the beautiful voices of the choir.

Today you can listen to gospel music on the radio or in churches all over the USA. Gospel songs are easy to learn because you repeat the chorus. That morning in Chicago, the music filled the church. And when we left at the end, everybody was smiling.

Native American music and dance

Earlier this month, I visited a pow wow in Connecticut, on the east coast of the USA. A pow wow is a Native American ceremony, and it’s a great place to watch performances of traditional music and dancing. Native American communities all over the USA have pow wows in the summer. Pow wows are an important part of Native American culture and beliefs, but tourists and visitors are very welcome, too.
Native American music is thousands of years old. Each tribe has different musical traditions, but most Native American music uses flutes, rattles and drums. The music and the traditional dances tell the stories of the tribe and their beliefs. I was watching a group of dancers in beautiful costumes when the music suddenly stopped. A voice on the microphone announced ‘The next dance is a circle dance’. A lot of people were waiting for that moment – people all around me stood up and went to dance.

Most pow wow dances are difficult to learn, and they’re only for Native Americans. But everyone can do a circle dance. There is one simple rule. You have to enter the circle from the east – because the sun rises in the east, and the dancers always move in the same direction as the sun. I’m not a very good dancer, but I’ll never forget my circle dance!