

Historic Brentwood Benson Music announces sudden closing

by [Mark Wingfield](#) in the [January 12, 2022](#) issue



(Image from Google Maps)

The owner of the world’s largest Christian music publishing catalog has closed its business, citing the effects of COVID-19.

Brentwood Benson Music—a storied business based in Nashville that reportedly owned some 60,000 copyrights—announced on its website that it would cease operations by the end of 2021.

“As we have all experienced over the past 2 years, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been extraordinary. The challenges presented to those of us charged with developing resources for church choirs and orchestras resulted in market realities that have become unmanageable,” the statement read.

As a publishing group, Brentwood Benson produced and marketed consumer print and choral music as well as hymnals and songbooks for the church market. Its roots go back to one of the oldest music companies in Nashville, and its history parallels the rise of southern gospel and then contemporary Christian music.

The company was founded in 1902 and, in time, it also became a record label and a publisher of sheet music.

Early artists signed with the label included the Speer Family, J. D. Sumner and the Stamps, the Singing Rambos, the Oak Ridge Boys, the Lewis Family, the Hemphills, and the Imperials.

As contemporary Christian music burst on the scene in the 1970s, Benson signed songwriters Michael W. Smith, Gary Chapman, Brown Bannister, and Gary McSpadden. It also signed recording artists such as DeGarmo and Key, Sandi Patty, dc Talk, Yolanda Adams, Larnelle Harris, Bob Carlisle, Dallas Holm, and Carman.

Benson also marketed albums by the Bill Gaither Trio, 4Him, the Archers, and the Cathedrals.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Benson Company went through several acquisitions. Other big-name companies were involved: Paragon, Zondervan, HarperCollins, the Music Entertainment Group, and the Zomba Music Group.

When Benson Music Group became a part of Provident Music Group (owned by Zomba) in 1997, it was established as Provident's music publishing arm.

By 2001, the Benson record labels had folded but the song-publishing arm merged with Brentwood Music to become Brentwood Benson Music, specializing in printed music for worship use. Its catalog included the historic Stamps-Baxter Music and Singspiration Music.

And it seems Benson may not be totally finished yet. The closure notice ended with this explanation: "Stay tuned for more updates as we shift our focus to . . . working with other print music publishers to create extraordinary church resources."

—Baptist News Global