

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE

New World Records 80255

Mainstreams and Backwaters in American Psalmody

by Richard Crawford

Supply Belcher, William Billings, Amos Bull, Oliver Holden, Jacob Kimball, Daniel Read, Timothy Swan: The names of eighteenth-century New England composers ring resonantly down through the years. They fall comfortably into a list, suggesting a community of musical equals. Most of all, they conjure up an attractive picture--a powerful myth, not in the sense of something untrue but rather in the sense of a coherent, believable tale--of the rise and fall of early American music.

The myth centers on the composer who lived in New England between the seventeen-sixties and the eighteen-tens. He was Anglo-Celtic by lineage and Protestant (most likely Congregational) by religion. He was no professional musician, but a tradesman who practiced music in his spare time. He was untutored in the ways of orthodox musical grammar, his only training probably having been picked up in singing schools like the one's where he himself taught (see New World Records 80205-2, *White Spirituals from the Sacred Harp*, and 80294-2, *The Gospel Ship*). He also studied music by other composers like himself, and he probably looked at some British treatises. His medium was the four-part unaccompanied chorus; his performers were the semiskilled graduates of the singing school; his texts were metrical psalms and hymns, the standard popular poetry of the day. His way of composing was old-fashioned. Most likely he set down his tune and then added the other voices to it one by one. He probably played no keyboard instrument, so he had to rely on his eye, his ear, and his experience to tell him where the parts collided. He wasn't much concerned with chord connections, except at cadences, where dominants ought to lead to tonics. He strove for consonance, showing a tendency to write long notes--often open fifths, perhaps because fifths tune so well--at the beginnings and ends of phrases. He embodied the qualities of independence and democracy, central elements of the image that Americans most like to associate with the Spirit of '76. From the late seventeen-sixties into the nineties, working free from European conventions, he forged a music quite unlike any other, a music he invented and sang for the glory of God and, in true democratic fashion, for the enjoyment of his neighbor.

But trouble was in store for our worthy composer. Not long after the war, as urban Americans grew wealthier and hankered more after luxury, and as more and more European musicians took up residence in the cities of the Eastern seaboard, the word went out from new arbiters of taste that the Yankees' music couldn't hold a candle to the new "approved" tunes of the Europeans. That opinion spread, first in urban circles and eventually into the countryside, and many compilers and publishers supported it, gradually removing the American pieces from their tunebooks. By 1810 New Englanders' music was out of fashion throughout much of New England, although it continued to flourish in outlying areas to the west and south, in communities closer to the frontier and hence less likely to be influenced by urban standards of taste. Thus, the myth concludes, American music got off to a promising start in eighteenth-century New England but gradually lost its vitality as most musical taste makers turned their backs on the native composer and marched off under a foreign banner.

The myth outlined here is a twentieth-century one that has been nearly seventy years in the making. Historians who wrote about American music in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tended

to see William Billings and his "school" in a somewhat different way. Their interest stopped at the point where the myth relates that "he was untutored in the ways of orthodox musical grammar." From their vantage, that fact disqualified the Yankee composer from serious consideration, consigning him to the antiquarian past. In their view the central drama of American music was the transplanting of European music, its institutions and its styles, to this side of the Atlantic. Billings and his compatriots wore, for them, the look of unkempt pioneers--admirable, perhaps, in a certain limited way, and even necessary to prepare the way for better-equipped men like Thomas Hastings, Lowell Mason, Dudley Buck, and Horatio Parker, but surely not figures of real significance. The Yankees' historical place was safe in this analysis, but their music didn't amount to much.

Around 1930 Billings and his contemporaries began to emerge from the genteel oblivion of the historical record. Perhaps part of the reason was that the Depression helped bring about a fresh interest in American vernacular traditions. Or perhaps it was because the nineteenth-century belief in progress and in the orderly evolution of musical styles had been shaken by developments in the early twentieth century. Whatever the reason, the Thirties in America saw the rise of a new eclecticism, a heightened taste for music that appealed in sound, regardless of its significance in the so-called mainstream of stylistic development. With the publication of anthologies of eighteenth-century New England pieces collected by William Arms Fisher (1930) and Richard Franko Goldman (1943), of editions by choral directors like Clarence Dickinson (1940s), Robert Shaw and Alice Parker (1950s), and Leonard Van Camp (1970s) and musicologists like Hans T. David (1940s), Irving Lowens (1950s), and Lawrence Bennett, Gillian Anderson, and Hans Nathan (1970s), the music of eighteenth-century New England began to be sung by choruses and to ring once again in American ears. Recordings, such as those made by Lehman Engel in the Forties, by Robert Shaw and Gregg Smith later, and by countless groups as the Bicentennial approached, added to the reverberation. And all this interest was supported by scholarly activity: dissertations, articles, books, and more editions. Most striking was the involvement of composers. From Otto Luening, Ross Lee Finney, and Henry Cowell in the Forties to John Cage, whose Bicentennial commission piece quoted melodies from New England psalm tunes, American composers have paid homage to and have drawn on their eighteenth-century New England predecessors. Composers, performers, scholars, and listeners have concurred that the music is worth hearing and singing and studying on its own. As H. Wiley Hitchcock wrote in 1966, the music "has been revived by choral conductors, not as quaint old Americana but as a vital, viable music with its own kind of strength and beauty. . . . [It] is a music of apparently unquenchable vitality."¹ Most musicians would agree that if there is such a thing as true American music--Gilbert Chase has defined "important" American music on stylistic grounds as "music different from European music"²--it began in eighteenth-century New England.

Much has been written about New England's sacred music of the eighteenth century. The Selected Bibliography below lists accounts of more than routine reliability and interest, and there seems no point in retelling oft-told tales here. At the same time, the subject is by no means exhausted. The myth is powerful, useful, and mostly accurate. It offers a strong cultural symbol and a useful music perspective, but it is of little help in understanding the New England composers' creative achievement in its original context. That understanding requires a look at some of the forces that brought the music into being.

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When, in a sermon preached in the spring of 1721, the Reverend Cotton Mather of Boston wrote

that "outward Melody in Religious Singing is no small Help to inward Devotion,"³ he left a neat reminder of something that musicians are apt to forget: Sacred music is not an independent art but only part of the larger activity of public worship. Why sing psalms? Mather answered: "There is a natural Aptitude in Singing to compose and unite the Thoughts, to engage and fix the Attention." Singing also aided memory, he believed, because "the distinct and deliberate Warbling forth every Syllable" gave the singer "time for Recapitulation and . . . for the Mind to take faster Hold" of the words he sang. Moreover, singing sacred texts improved the worshiper's "Knowledge of sacred Truths; as it allow[ed] proper Pauses for Meditation and afford[ed] Leisure to take a fuller View of Things." Psalmody represented a proper way for the worshiper's senses to be engaged, Mather believed:

It is . . . a very moving and impressive Exercise, carries a most powerful Charm, and strangely reigns over the Affections and Passions. It is wonderfully fitted to brighten the Mind, and warm the Heart, to enliven and refresh all our Powers and cherish every holy Frame, to calm and silence our evil noisy Passions, to actuate and invigorate pious and devotional Affections.

Mather's statement is good evidence of his own strong attachment to psalm singing. Even readers tempted to think of eighteenth-century New Englanders as the crabbed spirits of H. L. Mencken's view of Puritanism ("the nagging fear that somebody, somewhere, may be happy") will discover in Mather's verbs--"brighten," "warm," "enliven," "refresh," "cherish," "calm," "silence," "invigorate"--a nature powerfully responsive to the sense experience of sacred singing.

Mather and his fellow ministers saw "outward Melody" as an avenue toward "inward Devotion." "The senses," he wrote, "do very strongly impress the superior Power of the Mind; especially the Ear and Eye do variously affect the Heart." As long as "outward Melody" served "inward Devotion," God's purpose was being fulfilled. But precisely because the senses could "impress" the mind strongly, musical experience constituted a threat to worship. If "outward Melody" lost its link with "inward Devotion," if it went its own way "without any regard to the spiritual Design" that had fostered it in the first place, then the music, no matter how sweetly it might strike the ear, would have lost its true function. Sacred music sung purely for musical enjoyment would be, in Mather's words, "but lifeless Mechanism, a mere Show and Shadow."

The conflict between sacred music as a subordinate part of worship and as an independent art is a classic fact of Christian church history. Reformed leaders sought to resolve the conflict by entrusting music entirely to the congregation. From John Calvin's time on, Reformed congregations did their singing unaccompanied and mostly unharmonized. Prohibiting organs--and indeed for a time any musical instruments--and choirs in public worship, the churches of New England adopted Calvinist practice and thus separated themselves from the professionalized musical traditions of the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, and the Anglicans. Following the Congregational mode of church discipline, individual congregations governed their affairs, which meant that each member of an ecclesiastical society had his right to speak and vote on all issues, including musical ones. In other Christian churches, as is now most common, a skilled musician usually supervised the making of music. Trained and experienced beyond the members of the congregation, such a musician might play the organ, organize and direct a choir, and seek to establish a suitable level of taste and performance. This arrangement gave music a certain status as a separate, complementary activity of

worship, requiring technical skill and governed by certain aesthetic and liturgical standards. By contrast, in the Congregational meetinghouses of early New England, "music" (which is to say congregational singing, since that was the only music in public worship) needed little attention. Singing was a part of worship in which all were expected to participate; it required no special skills--not even literacy in most congregations, in which tunes were "lined out" by a leader; and the aesthetics of congregational singing were a matter of concern to hardly anybody, so long as it was generally agreed that it glorified God.

Cotton Mather's 1721 sermon signaled that doubts about congregational singing had begun to arise. In the view of Mather and his clerical compatriots--among them Thomas Walter of Roxbury, Thomas Symmes of Bradford, and John Tufts of Medford--the singing of New England congregations no longer served "inward Devotion." The problem lay in the decline of musical skill. Singing, they believed, had fallen into so disorganized a state that it no longer resembled the custom prescribed by Scripture. The reverend gentlemen proposed a logical remedy: to teach people to sing together, and thereby to restore to psalmody the edifying role it had once possessed. By dealing with the manner of performing "outward Melody", they hoped to reestablish its link with "inward Devotion." Accordingly, singing schools were organized and tunebooks published. The schools were regular instructional meetings to teach the "rudiments of music" (presumably basic advice on how to sing and how to read notation); the books were collections of psalm tunes headed by an explanation of matters taught at singing school. The establishment of singing schools and the publication of tunebooks were seminal events in American musical history. They put the prestige, if not the full power, of the church for the first time on record as supporting the development of musical skill. It took half a century, but the skills first fostered at that time were to create the environment that produced the music recorded here.

If Cotton Mather and his colleagues had been able to see seventy-five years into the future, to glimpse the musical practice to which their efforts led, they would probably have had a mixed reaction. Surely they would have been gratified at some of the results of the singing schools' success: the spread of musical literacy, the greater availability of notated music. Perhaps they would also have taken pleasure in seeing that many Americans were now composing their own music. They might well have been taken aback, however, by some other developments. For example, congregational singing was once again in the doldrums. The problem was no longer a lack of capable singers, but rather that singers in many congregations were forming choirs that dominated the music of public worship. As some improved their skill in singing schools, others lost interest in singing at all, and in some communities choirs seem to have replaced congregational singing almost entirely. The new attention to "outward Melody" served to segregate one group of worshipers from another, discouraging many even as it encouraged some. The ideal of participatory psalm singing in the service of "inward Devotion" seemed to be losing force. The "sacred Truths" of the texts sung in public worship were no longer on everyone's lips, to be "warbled forth" syllable by syllable and meditated upon. Instead, emphasis had shifted to their presentation by a designated group of singers for a nonparticipating audience, almost as in a theater. More than a hint was present of a specialization that had caused early Reformed leaders to entrust music to the congregation in the first place.

Mather and his associates would probably have been even more alarmed at the music the choirs were singing--the kind of music sung on the present recording. Most of it is far more elaborate than

anything heard in the meetinghouses of the seventeen-twenties. Its tendency toward wide-ranging melodies, word repetitions, "fuging" (imitative voice overlapping), fast tempos, and expressive treatment of text removes it to a far different musical world from the one familiar to Mather and his friends. How did a tradition as restrictive as the standard Anglo-American psalmody of Mather's time come to admit this new degree of musical elaboration? What caused the change? Nobody has yet answered that question fully, and when somebody does, the answer will probably fill a book. In the meantime, it seems clear that the success of American singing schools had a lot to do with the change. So did developments in British parochial psalmody. And so did a more general factor: a change in the notion of how sacred words ought to be set to music.

The first two causes are simple enough to explain. New England singing schools of the seventeen-twenties apparently concentrated on "Regular Singing"--teaching people how to sing the standard psalm tunes the way they were written down. Their success in teaching people to read music is hard to measure until the seventeen-sixties. In that decade sacred tunebooks suddenly were available as never before: Booksellers advertised English collections, and American compilers brought out their own collections. The growing appetite for tunebooks is solid evidence that increasing numbers of Americans could read music and were busy expanding their repertoires. Just as had been true since the founding of the Colonies, England was still the source of almost all the sacred music published in the Colonies in the seventeen-sixties. But English tunebooks were no longer restricted to the traditional psalm tunes for congregational singing. Collections by English composers such as William Tans'ur, William Knapp, John Arnold, and Joseph Stephenson brought to America a music far more elaborate than anything previously sung in American churches. It was this new music that musically literate Americans were singing in the seventeen-sixties; and when Americans of the period began to compose, the music of the English psalmody served as their model.

At the heart of the English psalmody's musical elaborations lay a new relationship between words and music. In traditional Anglo-American psalmody, that of Cotton Mather's day and before, the word dominated the music. No better demonstration need be offered than the hymnbooks of the time. These devote hundreds of pages to the texts, which are all marked according to their "meters," or metrical structures. Then, tucked in at the back if present at all, and squeezed onto a few pages, come the tunes, probably textless but marked by meter so that they can be matched with texts that fit them. The number of tunes may range from about ten to as many as three or even four dozen. But it never approaches the number of texts, and it is customary for many texts to be sung to the same tune. In traditional Anglo-American psalmody, the psalm tune was nothing more than a means for delivering a text set in its own meter. The tune's essential property was not the quality or beauty of its musical invention but simply its formal structure. In Mather's day each of the poetic meters of psalmody was a fixed form.

During the eighteenth century, music was liberated from the back of the hymnbook. By the Eighties and Nineties most American tunebooks were oblong, designed to accommodate a whole four-voice tune on a single page or even in a single four-line system, so that the singer could read his part without having to turn pages or follow it from line to line. The wide acceptance of the oblong format signals that music had taken on a new importance beyond its mere formal structure, that between Cotton Mather's time and William Billings's the role of music expanded. In the new psalmody, text and music were no longer separate, inert entities, each with its own prescribed role. Now they were volatile, interacting forces. To borrow a metaphor from chemistry: In traditional

Anglo-American psalmody, text and music are thrown together to produce mixtures in which each ingredient keeps its properties; in the new psalmody, they fuse to produce compounds--new entities in which the earlier components lose their properties. At the heart of the new situation was the form-giving role of the text: originally a fixed form, it had come to be a variable form.

The full implications of text becoming a variable rather than a fixed form are obvious only after the power of metered text to shape music is understood. It has already been noted that Anglo-American psalmody is rooted in metrical poetry--rhymed psalms and hymns following certain poetic meters. In metrical poetry, poetic feet generate lines, and lines generate larger repetitive patterns, creating certain formal structures. These structures carry strong musical implications, shaping such basic elements as accent patterns and phrase lengths, and they even suggest harmonic destinations. Most psalm and hymn tunes are nothing more than musical renderings of poetic meters.

Billings's CHESTERFIELD (Track 2) is a case in point. It appeared in the composer's *New-England Psalm-Singer* (Boston, 1770), labeled "C.M." (Common Meter, a four-line structure alternating lines of eight and six syllables), but carrying no text. To Billings's contemporaries, the composer's intent was clear: his customers could sing any Common Meter text they liked to CHESTERFIELD. Had they been able to hear CHESTERFIELD, Cotton Mather and his associates might or might not have liked its sound; but they would not have disapproved of it on liturgical grounds. As a fixed form, governed by the meter of the text, providing a straightforward formula to which Common Meter texts can be sung, CHESTERFIELD is proof that the earlier tradition of Anglo-American psalmody persisted throughout the eighteenth century.

If CHESTERFIELD is a mixture governed by the fixed form of its text, the fusing tunes recorded here are compounds--fusions of text and music. (The fusing tune, a choral composition containing at least one section in which the voice parts enter successively with overlapping text, originated in Great Britain and came to be especially favored by New England composers in the seventeenth-eighties and nineties.) In most fusing tunes the text remains an important form-giving agent. Each stanza is sung to the same music, so that the text's strophic form determines the overall form of the piece. Moreover, most lines of the text govern the shape of the music to which they are set--except the line or lines that are fugued. Daniel Read's PROVIDENCE (Track 7) is an example. It begins with two lines that rather closely follow the accents and structure of the poetry. However, the third line is introduced by basses alone, followed by tenors, counters (altos), and trebles (sopranos) entering in turn with "Behold the rising billows roll." Each voice goes more or less its own way; all except the counter repeat that line of text at different times, and the counter sings the fourth line before the other voices, creating a brief verbal tangle. Not until the last three words of the fourth line of text do all four voices again sing the same words at the same time. In PROVIDENCE, Read follows the form of the first two lines of text; then in setting the next two he allows his invention freer rein and the different voice parts greater independence from each other. In other words, at a certain point in the piece the form-giving dominance of the text gives way to a musical flight of fancy, and only at the very end does the poetry reassert its sovereignty as a shaping force.

PROVIDENCE is a good example because it introduces an element crucial to the issue of word-music relationship. No one who hears PROVIDENCE can wonder why Read let music dominate the third line. The text describes a grieving Christ. The third line, "Behold the rising billows roll," suggests a pictorial image, and Read's music realizes it. Moving up from the lowest to the highest

voices, the setting reflects the ascent suggested by the text. Moreover, long-held notes and *melismata* (many notes on one syllable) reinforce the textual picture of rolling billows, and the predominance of "o" sounds ("behold," "billows," "roll") carries at least the hint of onomatopoeia. Read wrote his music not just to follow the form of the text but to underline and intensify certain ideas in it. PROVIDENCE demonstrates one of the important reasons text and music assumed a new relationship in eighteenth-century New England sacred music. Composers were beginning to react to the meaning of the text as well as to its form. They were beginning to find in psalmody an opportunity for musical expression.

Other pieces recorded here show different ways the new expressive tendencies were manifested. M. Kyes's set piece CRUCIFIXION (Track 4) is through-composed, not strophic, and in it Kyes seems intent on registering as forcibly as possible the contrasts in his text. The fugal section of Supply Belcher's HEROISM (Track 12), set to a martial text, has its accents and rests arranged to suggest the measured tread of troops going to battle. Billings's THE DYING CHRISTIAN'S LAST FAREWELL (Track 9) repeats the line "where pleasures dwell forevermore, and joys that never fade" almost interminably, apparently to suggest the long-term benefits of heaven. But listeners will hear these and similar details for themselves. They are common in our musical tradition, and they don't really need explaining. What does need to be understood is that before the middle of the eighteenth century such things had almost no place in Anglo-American psalmody. Only around that time, first in England and later in America, did words and music begin to interact to produce such moments.

The new psalmody was a natural outgrowth of the rise of evangelical religion and revivalism that swept Great Britain and America in the eighteenth century, fostering a new emphasis on emotional religious experience. (Two visible effects of that trend on sacred music are noteworthy. Isaac Watts's paraphrases of the Old Testament psalms, treating them wherever possible as Christian prophecy and invoking Jesus' name frequently, were substituted by many New England congregations for the earlier straightforward metrical translations. And nonscriptural hymns, formerly banned from public worship, came into increasing use as New Englanders found them closer than the psalms to their new religious sensibilities.) There is a crucial difference, however, between the transformation of eighteenth-century Protestant Christianity and the transformation of its music in New England: the former was effected by church leaders, the latter by musicians. The former stemmed from a pietistic movement that sought to revivify the worship of God and to spread His message to the heathens; the latter stemmed from no movement at all, just from a few musicians trying to find their artistic voices.

The musicians took over sacred music, originally under clerical control, not by the usual means of effecting change--defining an issue and debating it and deciding it by action of the clergy or congregation--but by gradual encroachment. Sacred music was transformed by musicians who, by following their artistic impulses, brought about in New England meetinghouses an atmosphere that invited the unrestrained play of artistic imagination. The Calvinists of New England, history's traditional art haters, had come to accept in their own worship a spontaneous musical art of considerable elaborateness and beauty. In such a climate William Billings could offer the public a personal "Encomium on Music," expressing confidence that in the psalmody of his age "outward Melody" stood united with "inward Devotion":

Great art thou O MUSIC! and with thee there is no competitor . . . Thou canst remove pain, and restore rest to the weary: Thou canst make stammering people pronounce distinctly, and without hesitation: Thou canst convert cowardise into Heroism, and inspire the pusillanimous with true magnanimity: Thou art celestial and thy birth divine; to what shall I liken thee? . . . O Extatic! I have found a simile:--Thou art like pure Love, and true friendship. But alas! The purest earthly love is imbittered with groundless jealousy, and the truest friendship is tainted with unjust suspicions. But in Heaven there is pure love without alloy, and true friendship without dissimulation: Therefore thou art like *Heaven* and Heaven is like *Thee*.⁴

The joy that Billings's "Encomium" expresses, and the approval of our own age--secular and accustomed to mining the past for its treasures without being much concerned about the processes that brought them into being--were not shared by the clergy of the seventeen-nineties. Once they had come to realize what had happened, reaction was swift and decisive. Musical elaboration, and especially the practice of fudging, was condemned, and the psalm tunes that had been favored in Cotton Mather's day found their way back into tunebooks. In the introduction to *Columbian and European Harmony* (Boston, 1802), Bartholomew Brown wrote:

None will object, that the Music is too dull and antiquated; for, after passing through all the grades of improvement, men will at last come to admire the old slow church Music; and will consider the use of *Old Hundred* and *Windsor*, as evidence of a correct taste.

William Cooper added in the introduction to *The Beauties of Church Music* (Boston, 1804): "It has become a general opinion among good singers, that the music in use before the revolution in 1775, is much better than that which has succeeded." And the canonization of the so-called ancient tunes reached a peak with Andrew Law's sanctimonious (and blatantly false) claim: "I have been informed, that Handel said, he would give all his oratorios, if he might be the author of *Old Hundred*."⁵ (OLD HUNDRED, the most frequently printed psalm tune of the period, is sung in many churches today as a doxology to the text "Praise God from whom all blessings flow.") Amid all this rhetoric, American composers and their musical skills came in for special attack. Their music was denounced as too fast, too "airy," too athletic, too crude. Their failure to measure up to European standards was noted. Especially prevalent was the charge that their music violated the proper spirit of worship, that in their hands "outward Melody" no longer served "inward Devotion." Thus began the musical reform of the seventeen-nineties that soon purged many American pieces from the tunebooks published in New England.

Scholars of American music have rightly seen that reform as a movement away from the native American musical style toward a borrowed European one. Equally important, and heavier in its impact at the time, was the reformers' belief that musicians had enjoyed far too much freedom and that church leaders should assert more control over music in public worship, just as the leaders of the early eighteenth century had sought to do. That was the way the matter was seen by the musician and historian N. D. Gould, who in the eighteen-fifties wrote a history of American sacred music. Calling the years 1770 to 1800 a "dark age . . . so far as real devotional music was concerned," Gould wrote:

Ministers and churches who ought to have had a voice, if not the direction, in this part

of public worship, suffered it to be wrested from them, and to be managed and executed generally by those who apparently had no higher object in view than to please, astonish and amuse. The music sung was so constructed that none but the choir could take part in its performance. Ministers, Christians, and all good men, and men of correct taste in regard to music, looked on, sometimes grieved and sometimes vexed. But they had let go their hold, and the multitude had the whole management of it, and sung *what* and *when* they pleased; until finally hearers had well-nigh given up all interest in the subject, and settled into indifference.⁶

The music recorded here comes from Gould's "dark age." To earlier generations it symbolized musical ignorance run wild; to our own it seems the healthy fruit of artistic energy unencumbered by self-consciousness. To be understood in the context of its own time, it needs to be considered from more than a purely musical perspective. It grew from a tradition rooted in religious ritual, but it has held the interest of later musicians for precisely the reasons that religious leaders objected to it in its own day: It transcended the ritual of public worship and came to flourish as an independent art.

By our usual way of measuring such things, the resources of the New England psalmodists seem modest: they could invent tunes, harmonize them, and write down their music. Their place in the history of American music is secure if small: in Euro-American music it is almost nonexistent. Yet, some two centuries after the psalmodists set down their tunes, American musicians and scholars are busy singing them and pondering their meaning--just as they are singing and playing and thinking about the music of the European masters. This may say more about us than about the New Englanders and their artistic achievement. At the same time, our interest in this untutored music of early New England may lead us to be filled with wonder at the power of musical notation. As commonplace as it may seem to musicians, notation really is an extraordinary code, simple but specific, holding the key to vivid slices of past experience. Give the key to a group of singers, and, almost as if a wand were waved, they raise their voices, releasing the sounds that the composer and his contemporaries reveled in. Repertoires of equal or greater musical sophistication are lost to us because they were never notated, while the music of Billings and his contemporaries lives on. Should we not question the standard that judges as "modest" the resources of a music that has survived two centuries?

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The history of New England psalmody in print attests to its musical and cultural vitality. Although declared unfashionable on its home ground as the eighteenth century drew to a close, its day was just beginning. Two different processes kept it before the nineteenth-century public: natural dissemination and conscious preservation. The first process saw the westward movement of the New England tradition of harmonized, unaccompanied choral music, composed by native musicians with no special professional training, printed in oblong tunebooks headed by pedagogical introductions, sung in meetinghouses and singing schools for worship and for fun. It pushed into western Pennsylvania and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia by the eighteen-tens, established itself in Tennessee, Missouri, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama well before 1850, and continues to be practiced in the South. Tunebooks reflecting this geographical move, the most famous of which is the *Original Sacred Harp*, have printed a changing repertory, including pieces by composers of each new locale. At the same time, most of the southern and western collections have maintained a core of New England favorites.

The second process that kept the New England repertory in print was the collecting of "antique" psalmody by nineteenth-century compilers in New England and the publishing of such earlier favorites in their original versions. As the prevailing taste in psalmody had grown Europeanized, the few tunes from the post-Revolutionary age that had survived the reform-inspired purge had been "so altered and modified, that they are hardly to be recognized," complained the introduction to *The Stoughton Collection* (Boston, 1829), the earliest "antique" collection I have discovered. Claiming that "the call for this kind of work seems to be general," *The Stoughton Collection* set "natural" taste above "scientific," contradicting the prevailing musical ideology of the urban North:

It is an unreasonable demand upon our natural tastes, to be pleased with musical composition merely on account of its *scientific* arrangement, or to discard tunes which fill the soul with a spirit of devotional pleasure, for the reason, that they do not bear the strictest scrutiny of *scientific* investigation. We see no good reason why the lovers of American music should be denied the exercise of their undoubted privilege in choosing what pleases them best.

While it is difficult to judge the impact of the "antique" collections, a stream of them did appear in the North, from *The Stoughton Collection* and *The Billings and Holden Collection* (Boston, 1836) to S. P. Cheney's *The American Singing Book* (Boston, 1879).

The southern compilers and the northern preservationists provide a link between the early New England composers and those who admire and perform their music today. As unprepossessing as the music's origins may be, and as different as today's world is from the world that brought it into being, it is surely remarkable that some New England pieces have been so widely accepted that they have never gone out of print since the day they were published.

All the pieces recorded here were composed by Americans. The earliest is CHESTERFIELD, first printed in 1770; the latest is NEW JORDAN, of which I have found no version before 1817. The record represents a cross section of New England sacred music. Each of the characteristic forms is heard: the anthem (through-composed setting of prose), the set piece (through-composed setting of verse), the fusing tune (psalm or hymn tune with a fusing section involving text overlap), the tune with extension (psalm or hymn tune in which text is somewhere stretched, repeated, or otherwise extended), and plain tune (psalm or hymn tune in which the music closely follows the meter of the text). The styles range from composers reflecting up-to-date European influence (Kimball, Holden), through mainstream New Englanders whose styles are the most familiar to present-day musicians (Billings, Read, Swan), to the more primitive efforts of a virtual unknown (Wetmore), whose style seems archaic even within the context of New England psalmody.

Judging from their printing histories, some of the pieces recorded here were among the most popular of their time, some were moderate favorites, some were printed only once, and one never even made it to the printshop. In the years before 1810, MIDDLETOWN and MONTAGUE were particular favorites. Appearing first in New England tunebooks, they swiftly were established as part of a core repertory that moved from collection to collection there, and they also found their way southward, enjoying a similar status in tunebooks published in Philadelphia. Other pieces, like NEWBURGH, INVITATION, WASHINGTON, and RICHMOND, circulated widely but were

published less frequently than favorites like MIDDLETOWN and MONTAGUE. Some, including AN ANTHEM OF PRAISE, THE DYING CHRISTIAN'S LAST FAREWELL, SUNDERLAND, HEROISM, and ODE ON MARTYRDOM, appeared in only one tunebook. And SUMMONS has never been published.

After 1810, information on the printing histories of tunes is incomplete. But it is still possible to get some idea how the tunes on our recording fared. A quick glance at later collections indicates that MIDDLETOWN maintained its position, that MONTAGUE became less popular, that INVITATION and NEWBURGH became standard favorites, that WASHINGTON and NEW JORDAN--both hard pieces to sing--stayed in print in the South, and that the rest sank into oblivion.

Thus the record surveys New England's sacred music in its heyday (1770-1820) and presents a cross section of composers from the well known to the unknown, forms from the most complex to the simplest, styles from the cosmopolitan to the provincial, and pieces from the most characteristic and popular to the least.

A Note on Spelling and Titles

In the early Fifties Irving Lowens wrote an article, "The Origins of the American Fuging-Tune" (printed in his *Music and Musicians in Early America*), that proposed changing the spelling from the then customary "fuguig tune." Lowens's spelling follows eighteenth-century British and American practice. It also helps distinguish the "fuging" of Anglo-American psalm tunes from the conventional European fugue: the latter is a composition based on imitative counterpoint, while "fuging" describes only a section of a piece in which the voices enter successively with the same text. Most scholars of American music have adopted Lowens's spelling.

A second point that may need clarifying is that, because texts and tunes frequently led separate lives, tunes bear titles of their own. Many of the titles are proper names, and to make their function clear they are printed in a special way--in large and small capital letters--here and in other scholarly sources.

Fashions in tune titles changed with fashions in text setting. Naming a tune after a locale, like Middletown in Connecticut, Newburgh in New York, Providence in Rhode Island, or Chesterfield, Montague, Richmond, and Sunderland in Massachusetts, was standard practice in England and America. But once composers began to set particular texts to dramatize their meanings, tune titles came to reflect the closer word-music relationship. The titles of CRUCIFIXION, INVITATION, HEROISM, ODE ON MARTYRDOM, and SUMMONS reveal the subjects of their texts. NEW JORDAN, which gives a glimpse of the Promised Land, does the same. (It apparently bears the adjective to warn singers not to expect Billings's JORDAN, one of the most popular New England psalm tunes of the eighteenth century.) WASHINGTON, first printed in 1778, must have been named after the general, though the text link is not explicit. MACEDONIA could have been named for a tiny town near central Connecticut's westernmost border, or for the Greek city in which the apostle Paul preached his first European sermon. It was not even rare to find titled anthems, like AN ANTHEM OF PRAISE or THE DYING CHRISTIAN'S LAST FAREWELL, though earlier custom had given only the sources of their texts.

A Note on Performance

When, as is true for New England psalmody, the performance tradition of a music does not stretch unbroken from the time of its origin to the present, the performer who approaches it has to make a choice. Either he can treat the score according to the stylistic conventions of his own tradition of choral singing--the tone quality, diction, phrasing, dynamics, and articulation that his training, experience, and taste have led him to accept as standards--or he can approach it as a special object with its own special conventions that need somehow to be reconciled with his own customary approach.

If he chooses the latter course, the performer of New England psalmody has two primary resources to consider. First, he ought to investigate the many available recordings of the Southern tradition of choral sacred music. One may not be able to prove that Sacred Harp singers in contemporary Georgia preserve the singing style of eighteenth-century New England choirs, but both groups sing many of the same pieces, and the place of the music in rural Southern culture of the present bears a strong resemblance to its place in eighteenth-century New England. By observing how the Southern performers treat the score, the modern-day choral director can detect certain performance conventions that will help him with New England music. Together with Southern performance customs he has a second resource: the written statements of the New Englanders themselves, which appear in the introductions to their tunebooks. Modern scholars have reprinted and interpreted some of these statements and made them accessible to the performing musician.

Some conventions from Southern singers and from New England sources have been observed in the performances recorded here. A vocal tone free of vibrato has been employed in the interests of better tuning. Octave doublings of certain vocal parts are also appropriate: since the melody appears in the tenor in New England scores, performers frequently double the tenor line at the upper octave with some trebles (sopranos), while at some places a few tenors also sing the treble part an octave lower. The result is a textural richness that has been a traditional mark of American psalmody.

One of the trickiest issues in vocal performance practice is articulation. The score determines the pitches that make up the sounds, and the conventions of tone production and voice doubling define the sounds even more precisely. But how are the sounds to be connected? This question must have been important to New England compilers, for they gave it much attention in their statements about accent and pronunciation. Most compilers insist that the strong and weak beats in the measure be marked by different kinds of accents. Notes on strong beats are to be emphasized; notes on weak beats can be sloughed over. (Anyone who tries to sing that way will soon learn that it goes against current practice. Interpretative traditions inherited from the nineteenth century hold that all beats are essentially equal in stress--in fact that all portions of the beat are to be treated equally. This approach emphasizes forward rhythmic drive and long, arching lines at the expense of dance-like lilt and smaller-scale gestures.) Pronunciation comes into play here because it is the singer's chief means of articulation. The important words will normally fall on the strong beats and hence receive the accents they demand. However, the composer may not always write such coincidences into his music, and if he does not, the Connecticut compiler Asahel Benham gives singers the following advice in his *Federal Harmony* (New Haven, 1790):

The accent of music ought always to coincide with the accent of the words, and not the words with the music. To accent a note which falls to an unemphatical word or unaccented syllable, because it stands in the accented part of a bar, is making the words conform to the music, which destroys the sense of the words and renders the music displeasing.

Benham's comments show that he was not advocating a mechanical pattern of accents but something more flexible and graceful. Moreover, they emphasize something that modern musicians ought not to forget: New England psalmody gave top priority not to purely musical matters but to the proper delivery of a sacred text. According to Truman S. Wetmore:

Many singers, indeed I may say many young teachers are so biggoted in favour of accenting the first and third crotchets in a bar of common time (without paying any regard to the word) that they entirely destroy the design of accenting, and make their singing go like a person with one leg shorter than the other. . . . The chief intention of accent is to mark emphatical words more sensibly, and to express the passions more feelingly.⁷

The present record has been made with some of these matters in mind. Conductors and singers interested in the repertory ought to investigate both the Southern and the New England traditions. They may also benefit from considering the issues raised by recent recordings of eighteenth-century European music, in which performers like the *Concentus Musicus* of Vienna and the Leonhardt Consort, using instruments of the time and vocal styles appropriate to them, have opened a fresh perspective on performing the music of the past.

1. "William Billings and the Yankee Tunesmiths," *Hi Fi/Stereo Review*, XVI/2, February 1966, p. 65.

2. *America's Music*; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955, p. xix.

3. David P. McKay, "Cotton Mather's Unpublished Singing Sermon," *New England Quarterly*, XLVIII, September 1975, p. 420. The quotations from Mather's sermon below are taken from pp. 416-22.

4. William Billings, *The Singing Master's Assistant*; 3rd ed.; Boston, 1781, pp. 31-32.

5. *Essays on Music*, No. 3; Hartford, 1821, p. 26; quoted in Richard Crawford, *Andrew Law, American Psalmist*; Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968, p. 244.

6. *Church Music in America*; Boston, 1853, p. 59; quoted in David P. McKay and Richard Crawford, *William Billings of Boston*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975, pp. 26-27.

7. Quoted in David Warren Steel, "Truman S. Wetmore (1774-1861): Connecticut Psalmist" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Michigan, 1976), p. 63.

Editor's Note: The texts of the hymns appear as performed on the record. Repeats are indicated for whole musical sections, not for words, phrases, or lines.

1 *An Anthem of Praise* (Supply Belcher)

Supply Belcher (1752-1836), born and raised in Stoughton, Massachusetts, moved northward to Hallowell (1785) and finally to Farmington (1791), both in the district of Maine, then still part of Massachusetts. In Farmington he established himself as Squire Belcher, schoolmaster, town representative to the legislature, and leader of the choir. Belcher's music never circulated through

New England tunebooks to anywhere near the degree of Billings's or Read's, but that may have been because his one full-size tunebook, *The Harmony of Maine* (Boston, 1794), was protected by federal copyright, and other compilers were reluctant to borrow from it. Nevertheless, Belcher's place in the folklore of American music stands secure, partly because his name is arresting and partly because he earned an unforgettable nickname. Francis Gould Butler's *History of Farmington* (Farmington, Maine, 1885, p. 379) reports:

When Hallowell Academy gave a public exhibition, near the close of its first year, in 1796, Squire Belcher was called from Farmington to conduct the music upon the occasion. In the language of *The Tocsin*, a paper then published at Hallowell, "the exercises were enlivened by vocal and instrumental music under the direction of Mr. Belcher, the 'Handel of Maine.'"

Belcher's AN ANTHEM OF PRAISE, published in *The Harmony of Maine*, sets the prose version of Psalm 100 plus the lesser doxology. The text projects a mood of controlled joy, which Belcher's setting aptly supports. At the same time, the composer seeks to maintain interest through musical contrast. Taking his text verse by verse, Belcher provides different music for each section. Incisive block chords at the beginning give way to passages for one or two voices, which are followed by fusing sections. From a start in C major, the work modulates to G, returns to C, and flirts with A minor before returning again to C. Duple time gives way to triple and then, at "And his truth will endure," to compound duple before reestablishing itself. Yet, with all these contrasts, the piece conveys a sense of tidy unity. Belcher's euphonious little anthem bears the stamp of a composer leaning toward harmonic orthodoxy and with a gift for straightforward text delivery.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.
Serve the Lord with gladness:
Come before his presence with singing.
(Repeat)

Know ye that the Lord he is God,
It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves:
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
(Repeat last line)

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise:
Be thankful unto him, and bless his name,
For Jehovah is full of goodness, and his mercy
is everlasting,
And his truth will endure to all generations.

Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible,
the only wise God, be honor and glory,
Thro' Jesus Christ, both now and ever, amen.

2 *Chesterfield* (William Billings)

William Billings (1746-1800), a native and lifelong resident of Boston, is certainly the most famous New England composer of his day. He was a tanner by trade but taught singing schools through most of his life, and more than three hundred surviving compositions testify to his creative vitality. More than that of any of his contemporaries, Billings's personality comes down through the ages, keeping his memory green. His idiosyncratic way of writing, preserved chiefly in the introductions to his tunebooks, alternates passages of fervid devotion to God and to music, practical advice to other musicians, ironic self-deprecation, and outright parody. The mixture is unmistakably Billings. Coupled with the vigor and beauty of his music and a well-known description of his misshapen, unkempt physical presence, Billings's writings help make him an unforgettable multidimensional figure.

CHESTERFIELD testifies to Billings' fondness for "choosing notes"--additional notes written to be sung at the singers' option. In the treble (soprano), two notes are provided on most beats, and three at the end. The counter (alto) is written in three voices most of the way. The bass is everywhere doubled at the lower octave (the lower voice supported here by a cello, as was common in the so-called gallery orchestras of New England meetinghouses from around 1790 on). Only the tenor is free of choosing notes, but custom calls for it to be doubled at the upper octave by trebles. So for much of the piece as many as nine different notes are being sung at once. The resulting density is intensified by the piece's static quality: nearly four-fifths of CHESTERFIELD (thirty-four of forty-three beats) consists of a D-minor triad.

In the introduction to his second tunebook, *The Singing Master's Assistant* (Boston, 1778), Billings repudiated much of the music in *The New-England Psalm-Singer*, alleging that "many of the pieces in that Book were never worth my printing, or your inspection." Since he never reprinted CHESTERFIELD (nor did any other compilers borrow it for their collections), it can be surmised that this boulder-like drone of a piece did not please the composer's mature taste.

With earnest longings of the mind,
My God to thee I look;
So pants the hunted hart to find
And taste the cooling brook!

When shall I see thy courts of grace,
And meet my God again?
So long an absence from thy face
My heart endures with pain.

Hope in the Lord, whose mighty hand
Can all thy woes remove;
For I shall yet before him stand,
And sing restoring love.

3 *Newburgh* (Amos Munson)

A family of Munsons from Connecticut, including Reuben, Wait, and Joel, was active in music

during the seventeen-nineties, but it is not known whether Amos Munson, the composer of NEWBURGH, was one of the clan. Daniel Read, who first published NEWBURGH in a supplement to his *Columbian Harmonist* No. 2 (New Haven, 1798), wrote a letter to Amos Munson in July of that year. Although he did not list the composer's place of residence on his draft, the content of the letter, together with the title of the tune, suggests that Munson was living in New York State at the time.

NEWBURGH is sung here first as published in Joseph Doll's *Der Leichte Unterricht* (Harrisburg, 1810--a spinoff from the popular *Easy Instructor* by Little and Smith), and then as first printed by Read. The German version, set to a text whose source I have not traced, omits the counter (alto) part, which explains why the English version, which restores it, sounds fuller. The latter is set to two stanzas of Watt's Psalm 148. The first is treated as a typical fugal tune; the second, in which the choir sings about the sun, the moon, and the stars, seems pictorially inspired. For a tune that was not published until its style was supposedly falling from fashion, NEWBURGH enjoyed a remarkable vogue: It was printed nearly forty times in the dozen years that followed its first appearance in print. Together with a small number of other New England tunes, it even found its way into favor with the Pennsylvania Germans.

(German-language text with literal translation)

*Auf, auf mein Herz und Sing,
Und habe guten Muth,
Dein Gott der Ursprung aller Ding
Ist selbst und bleibt dein Gut.*

*Er ist dein Erb und Theil,
Dein Glantz und Freuden Licht,
Dein Schirm und Schild, dein Hülf and Heyl,
Schafft Rath und lässt dich nicht.
(Repeat)*

*Was krankst du dich im Sinn,
Und grämst dich Tag und Nacht,
Nimm deine Sorg und wirf sie hin,
Auf den der dich gemacht.*

*Ey nun so lass ihn thun,
Und red ihm nichts darein,
So wirst du hier im Friede ruhn,
Und ewig seelig seyn.
(Repeat)*

Up, up, my heart, and sing,
And be of good cheer;
Your God, the Creator of all things,
Is here and is your blessing.

He is your birthright,
Your radiance and your light of joy,
Your shelter and shield, your help and health,
Gives succor and leaves you not.

(Repeat)

Why sicken in mind,
And grieve day and night?
Take your sorrow and throw it away
To Him who made you.

Now let him be,
And with Him don't meddle,
So will you rest here in peace
And be forever blessed.

(Repeat)

(English text)

Let ev'ry creature join
To praise th' eternal God.
Ye heav'nly hosts the song begin
And sound his name abroad.

Thou sun with golden beams,
And moon with paler rays,
Ye starry lights, ye twinkling flames,
Shine to your maker's praise.

(Repeat)

4 *Crucifixion* (M. Kyes)

Nothing has been discovered about M. Kyes except that a few tunes by him appeared in Connecticut tunebooks during the seventeen-nineties. His set piece CRUCIFIXION, printed in Benham's *Social Harmony* (New Haven[?], 1798), is quite impressive. Kyes sets a four-stanza text by Samuel Wesley, the first portion in moderate triple time and in minor, establishing a contemplative mood. At "while nature shakes" he abruptly shifts to duple time, and a brief agitated flurry supports the rending of the temple veil. As the text describes Christ's final suffering the music gradually loses energy: The melodic line dips lower, voices drop out, the motion slows. Jesus' death is announced in bare open fifths and octaves. But Wesley's text ends with an anticipation of the drama's final act, the Resurrection. So the composer sails into an exuberant fusing section in major mode to wind things up. In a piece lasting barely three minutes, an enormous expressive range has been covered. The contrasts in the text have been brought out with great force. Just as in the madrigal of Renaissance Italy and England, the meaning, not just the structure, of the text has determined the musical material and structure.

Behold the Savior of mankind,
Nail'd to the shameful tree.
How vast the love that him inclin'd
To bleed and die for thee.

Hark how he groans, while nature shakes
And earth's strong pillars bend,
The temple's veil in sunder breaks,
The solid marbles rend.

'Tis done, the precious ransom's paid,
Receive my soul, he cries.
See where he bows his sacred head,
He bows his head and dies.

But soon he'll break death's envious chains
And in full glory shine.
O Lamb of God, was ever pain,
Was ever love like thine?
(Repeat)

5 *Invitation* (Jacob Kimball)

Jacob Kimball (1761-1826), born in Topsfield, Massachusetts, was fifer and drummer in the Topsfield militia, which fought at Lexington and then at the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775. He graduated from Harvard in 1780, taught school off and on in his home town, probably practiced law briefly, and conducted singing schools in several Essex County towns. Kimball's compositions appeared in many tunebooks, but especially in his own *Rural Harmony* (Boston, 1793) and *Essex Harmony* (Salem, 1800). In addition, the Essex Institute in Salem owns a manuscript collection of unpublished music by Kimball, dated May 26, 1808, at Malden, Massachusetts. He is reputed to have been a heavy drinker and to have died in poverty.

INVITATION, first published in Daniel Bayley's *Select Harmony* (Newburyport, 1784), is the most popular of Kimball's pieces. It is a setting of a Watts text (*Hymns*, Book I, No. 78, verse 7), a paraphrase of the Song of Solomon, 8:14. Kimball's compositional style is what might be expected of a college man. The harmony has the smoothly orthodox flow of a European piece. Triads connect with each other according to the standard formulas, and a couple of secondary dominants are thrown in for good measure. Moreover, the harmony moves in full triads, not the open-fifth-saturated sounds of many Yankee contemporaries. INVITATION, a fugal tune, declaims the full text in block chords, then repeats the final two lines in the fugal section.

Come, my beloved, haste away,
Cut short the hours of thy delay,
Fly like a youthful hart or roe,
Over the hills where spices grow.

Fly like a youthful hart or roe,
Over the hills where spices grow.
(Repeat)

6 *Montague* (Timothy Swan)

The life of Timothy Swan (1758-1842) is better documented than the lives of most of his musical contemporaries. He was a native of Worcester, Massachusetts. He began to compose after attending singing school for three weeks when he was sixteen. After serving as a fifer during the Revolution, he settled first in Suffield, Connecticut (1783-1807), then in Northfield, Massachusetts, where he spent the rest of his life. A hatter by trade, Swan also taught singing schools. He was a gifted composer and something of a poet as well, who wrote and published both secular and sacred music.

Together with a small collection of personal papers, Swan's own copy of the only tunebook he ever published, *New England Harmony* (Northampton, 1801), is owned by the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester. It carries a note in Swan's hand identifying MONTAGUE as his "oldest tune," dating from 1777, though it was not published until John Stickney included it in *The Gentleman and Lady's Musical Companion* (Newburyport, [1783]). This is a reminder that, although New England compositions survive today chiefly in print, many tunes circulated in hand copies before they were published. MONTAGUE, a vigorous and widely popular fugal tune, has one noteworthy old-fashioned trait. It sets a joyous text by Philip Doddridge to minor-mode music, a combination that would not likely have taken place from the seventeenth-nineties on, when the musical ethos would have demanded either a major-mode setting or more solemn words.

Ye sons of men with Joy record
The various Wonders of the Lord,
And let his pow'r and Goodness sound
Thro' all the tribes the World around.

Let the high Heav'ns your songs invite,
Those spacious Fields of Brilliant light,
Where Sun and Moon and Planets roll,
And stars yet glow from Pole to Pole.
(Repeat)

7 *Providence* (Daniel Read)

Daniel Read (1757-1836) was a native of Attleborough, Massachusetts, but spent most of his life in New Haven, Connecticut. He was a less prolific composer than Billings, but many of his tunes won a central place in the eighteenth-century New England repertory. A storekeeper and comb maker by trade, a compiler and publisher of sacred music, and a singing master in his spare time, Read pursued his fascination for music from the seventeen-seventies until the end of his long and productive life. A large collection of personal papers at the New Haven Colony Historical Society includes some one thousand letters and also manuscript tunebooks from the beginning and the end of his life. As an older man, Read studied European harmony, mastered its conventions, sought to

elevate the taste of other musicians, and even "corrected" the harmony of his own earlier music.

Read's PROVIDENCE, first published in the Supplement to his *American Singing Book* (New Haven, 1787), is not one of his more widely printed pieces. It is an excellent example of the kind of fusing tune that flourished among Connecticut composers in the Eighties and Nineties. Two lines of text set in block chords are followed by a fusing section that leads to a chordal conclusion. For a more detailed discussion, see the introductory article above.

Deep in our hearts let us record
The deeper sorrows of the Lord:
Behold the rising billows roll,
To overwhelm his holy soul.

The pangs of our expiring Lord
The honours of thy law restor'd:
His sorrows made thy justice known,
And paid for follies not his own.

Oh! for his sake our guilt forgive,
And let the mourning sinner live;
The Lord will hear us in his name,
Nor shall our hope be turned to shame.

8 *New Jordan* (Unknown)

Some sources attribute New Jordan to one Shumway, no doubt Nehemiah Shumway (1761-1843), a Massachusetts man who attended Brown University (class of 1790), served as principal of Freedhold Academy in New Jersey, compiled a sacred tunebook, *The American Harmony* (Philadelphia, 1793, 1801), then later lived in Schenectady, Albany, and Jefferson County, New York, where he farmed. Other sources assign the tune to no composer. Whoever wrote NEW JORDAN, it is a very striking piece. Set to two stanzas of a hymn by Samuel Stennet, NEW JORDAN treats the first in block chords and fuses the second. Although it is the latest tune to appear in print--I have found no version before Little and Smith's *The Easy Instructor* (Albany, 1817)--it shows a special preference for old-fashioned harmony: for open fifths and octaves instead of triads, for root movement by feel rather than formula, for lowered leading tones. The fusing section is especially noteworthy. Entries ascending from bass to treble at the octave and unison begin the fuge; entries descending from treble to bass at the fourth and fifth, over a bass pedal point, continue it; and a powerful declamatory statement leading to the only dominant-tonic cadence in the piece concludes it.

On Jordan's rugged banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.

Oh, the transporting, rapturous scene
That rises to my sight!

Sweet fields array'd in living green,
And rivers of delight.
(Repeat)

There gen'rous fruits that never fail
On trees immortal grow;
There rocks and hills and brooks and vales
With milk and honey flow.

All o'er those wide extended plains
Shines one eternal day!
There God the Son forever reigns,
And scatters night away.
(Repeat)

9 *The Dying Christian's Last Farewell* (William Billings)

Billings's THE DYING CHRISTIAN'S LAST FAREWELL, an anthem, sets a prose text that I have been unable to trace. The work appeared only in Billings's last tunebook, *The Continental Harmony* (Boston, 1794); a better-known setting of the same text by Jacob French had been published in that composer's *New American Melody* (Boston, 1789).

Since the text is prose, Billings had to proceed without the comforting rhythms of metrical verse. He ended by shaping the work into two main sections. Both begin with a solo statement by the tenor and a response from the other voices, one at a time. Both continue with a choral plea, "And God grant we may meet . . .," set to the same music. At the center of the piece stands Billings's setting of "Where pleasures dwell forevermore, and joys that never fade." For thirty-odd measures of unbroken four-voice texture in free counterpoint, the voices ruminate over this line, with special emphasis on "never, never." Thus the composer suggests eternity, and he proposes to double it by repeating the whole section--an invitation declined on the present recording. After the luxuriant redundant complexity of this section, the conclusion, set for only three voices in block chords (the tenor has apparently gone to his reward), underscores with special effectiveness the stark event of death.

TENORS My friends, I am going a long journey, never to return. Farewell.

ALTOS Fare you well,

SOPRANOS Fare you well.

TENORS Fare you well, my friends.

ALL And God grant we may meet in that land of harmony where the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary are at rest.

(Repeat)
Where pleasures dwell forevermore, and joys that never fade.

TENORS My friends, I am summon'd to appear at the great tribunal.

SOPRANOS Fare you well, my friend,

BASSES Fare you well, my friend,

ALTOS Fare you well, my friend.

TENORS Fare you well, my friends.

ALL And God grant we may meet in that land of harmony where the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary are at rest.

(Repeat)

SOPRANOS, ALTOS, BASSES Farewell, farewell, farewell.

10 *Washington* (William Billings)

Billings's WASHINGTON, set to a Watts text (a paraphrase of Psalm 68:17-18) that pictures the royal majesty of the ascended Christ, is one of the most elaborate of eighteenth-century American fusing tunes that achieved general circulation. It must have pushed the singers of Billings's time close to their technical limits. Both treble and tenor parts lie high, the words come fast, and the vocal leaps are tricky. The fusing section is unusually long, setting two lines of text instead of the usual one. Its effect is one of energetic splendor: rapid-fire declamation of "Those heav'nly guards around thee wait" is overlaid with melismatic flourishes as celestial "chariots" zip across the landscape. WASHINGTON is sung here as it appears in Billings's *The Singing Master's Assistant*. It is printed in the *Original Sacred Harp* under the title BEAR CREEK.

Lord, when thou didst ascend on high,
Ten thousand angels fill'd the sky;
Those heav'nly guards around thee wait
Like chariots that attend thy state.

(Repeat last two lines)

Not Sinai's mountain could appear
More glorious when the Lord was there;
While he pronounc'd his dreadful law,
And struck the chosen tribes with awe.

(Repeat last two lines)

11 *Sunderland* (Joseph [?] Strong)

In its only appearance in print, SUNDERLAND was attributed to one Strong, very possibly the Reverend Joseph Strong (1729-1803). He was a member of Yale's class of 1749 and served from 1752 to 1779 as pastor of the church at Simsbury, Connecticut, home of Oliver Brownson, in whose

Select Harmony SUNDERLAND was published. Between 1781 and 1803 Strong was minister in Williamsburg, Massachusetts. Strong's interest in music is documented. When the Simsbury church introduced regular singing into public worship, he preached a sermon, published as *The Duty of Singing* (New Haven, 1773), supporting the move. And the New Haven Colony Historical Society is reported to own a manuscript volume of music by a Joseph Strong, perhaps the same man.

SUNDERLAND, a fugal tune, begins strikingly. The three lower voices first declaim the opening words, then the trebles enter, and the overlap produces five measures of melisma on "O." The piece also ends strikingly, with two imitative points in the fugal section. SUNDERLAND makes a worthy addition to the large family of musical settings of Psalm 51, which in Latin is the *Miserere*, prominently featured in the solemn music for Holy Week.

Show pity, Lord, O Lord, forgive,
Let a repenting Rebel live;
Are not thy Mercies large and free?
May not a sinner trust in thee?

My crimes are great but can't surpass
The pow'r and glory of thy grace;
Great God, thy nature hath no bound,
So let thy pard'ning love be found.

12 *Heroism* (Supply Belcher)

HEROISM, published in Belcher's *Harmony of Maine*, is the only setting of American verse on this record. The text, written by Nathaniel Niles just after the outbreak of the Revolution, runs to fifteen stanzas, four of which are sung here. The verse is in the unusual "Sapphic meter"--three lines of eleven syllables and one of five--and was most often sung to the tune BUNKER HILL, usually attributed to Andrew Law, who first published it, but is more likely by Sylvanus Ripley or some other New England composer. Belcher's powerful setting, a fugal tune, sacrifices melodic beauty for rhythm. Its emphasis on repeated pounding dactyls drives home the text's gory picture of the heartless destruction of war.

Why should vain mortals tremble at the sight of
Death and destruction in the field of battle,
Where blood and carnage clothe the ground in
 crimson,
Sounding with death groans.
(Repeat last two lines)

Now, Mars, I dare thee, clad in smoky Pillars,
Bursting from Bombshells, roaring from the
 Cannon,
Rattling in Grape Shot like a storm of Hail-
 stones,
Torturing Aether.

(Repeat last two lines)

While all their Hearts quick palpitate for
Havock,
Let slip your Blood Hounds, nam'd the British
Lyons.
Dauntless in Death stares; nimble as the
Whirlwind;
Dreadful as Demons.

(Repeat last two lines)

Life for my Country and the cause of Freedom
Is but a trifle for a worm to part with.
And if preserved in so great a Contest,
Life is redoubled.

(Repeat last two lines)

13 *Richmond* (William Billings)

Billings's RICHMOND, first published in his *Singing Master's Assistant*, may have been the kind of piece that Simeon Jocelin was thinking of when he warned in the introduction to his *Chorister's Companion* (New Haven, 1782) that "there appears a danger of erring, by introducing, in public worship, light and trifling airs, more becoming the theatre or shepherd's pipe; a liberty . . . by no means admissible in the solemnities of Divine Service." James Relly's text, inspired by the Song of Solomon, breathes a highly personal, almost erotic atmosphere, which Billings's setting supports. Written in the unusual compound duple meter of 6/4, RICHMOND achieves a lilt and lightness foreshadowing some of the pieces in the composer's later *Suffolk Harmony* (Boston, 1786), which seem closer to delicate part songs than to the standard hearty psalm tunes. Surely the most artful feature of RICHMOND is the graceful, arresting shift to simple duple time for the refrain.

My Beloved! haste away;
Sick of Love, for thee I languish;
Fails my soul at thy Delay,
Feels a dying Lover's Anguish:

Refrain

Quickly, quickly, Jesus, come,
Oh, make my Breast thy native Home.
(Repeat)

Ev'ry Moment seems an age,
'Til thy Presence shall relieve me,
'Til thy Smiles my Woes assuage,
And thine absence no more grieve me:

(Refrain)

O'er the spicy Mountains fly
Hart and Roe, yea Winds outstripping;
Whilst thou tarry'st, Love, I die,
Sighing, longing, loving, weeping.

(Refrain)

14 *Macedonia* (Oliver Holden)

Oliver Holden (1765-1844) was born in Shirley, Massachusetts, and in the late Eighties settled in Charlestown, Massachusetts, where he spent the rest of his life. A carpenter, Holden also kept a store, held municipal posts, served in the Massachusetts legislature for fifteen years, and was an active and successful composer and compiler. As a musician Holden took his stand with the reformers. He joined Hans Gram and Samuel Holyoke in bringing out *The Massachusetts Compiler* (Boston, 1795), which carried excerpts from European treatises on thorough bass and composition. And he was hired by the successful Boston firm of Thomas and Andrews to supervise several editions of their popular *Worcester Collection*. MACEDONIA is sung here from the version printed in the sixth (Boston, 1797).

MACEDONIA, which sets a Watts hymn (Book I, No. 83) paraphrasing Job 5:6-8, is a good example of a tune with extension. The first three lines of text are set in meter, just as in a plain tune. Then, as one would anticipate from a fugging tune, the texture lightens. Here, however, no fugging sets in. Rather, counters (altos) and basses sing the fourth line, and then all voices join in to repeat it. MACEDONIA thus provides textural variety and text repetition without text overlap, an approach that came more into favor as the fugging tune, with its occasional verbal confusion, was tagged by reformers the preferred form of bumpkins.

Not from the dust afflictions grow,
Nor troubles rise by chance,
But we are born to cares and woe,
A sad inheritance.

As sparks break out from burning coals,
And still are upwards born,
So grief is rooted in our souls,
And man grows up to mourn.

Yet with my God I leave my cause,
And trust his promis'd grace;
He rules me by his well-known laws
Of love and righteousness.

15 *Ode on Martyrdom* (Oliver [?] King)

ODE ON MARTYRDOM appeared in Stephen Jenks's *Delights of Harmony* (Dedham, Mass., 1805),

where it was ascribed to "O. King, Esq." The composer can tentatively be identified as Oliver King (1748-1818) of Bolton, Connecticut. Little is known about King: He taught singing schools in Connecticut in the early Seventies; two months before the battles of Lexington and Concord, he advertised for subscribers for *The Universal Harmony*, a collection he planned but never printed; he apparently composed SUFFIELD, one of the most popular American tunes of the period.

ODE ON MARTYRDOM takes its text not from the standard psalm and hymn collections but from Watt's *Divine Poems*. The martyr is St. Ardalion, an actor who lived around 300 A.D. Butler's *Lives of the Saints* relates Ardalion's story:

One day he had been personating with great spirit a Christian who had refused to renounce his faith and was about to be executed. The excellence of his acting aroused the enthusiasm of his audience but, as he stood to receive the applause, he was suddenly convinced of the truth of Christianity. Addressing the people he cried out in a loud voice that he was himself a Christian. Brought before the judge, he adhered to his confession, and was burnt alive in some eastern city. . . .

This account does not quite square with Watts's poem, which has the saint submitting to death not by fire but by "the martyring ax." King's composition, a brief set piece, bears an unusual number of expressive markings in not always correctly spelled Italian, including "Andante," "Maestuso," "Lamentatone," and "Spirituoso." Together with the somewhat exotic text source and subject, and the "Esq." following the attribution in Jenks's work, these suggest a provincial composer striving for elegance.

Ardalion jeers, and in his comic strains
The myst'ries of our bleeding God profanes,
While his loud laughter shakes the painted
scenes.

Heaven heard, and strait around the smoking
throne
The kindling lightning in thick flashes shone,
And vengeful thunder murmur'd to be gone.

Mercy stood near and with a smiling brow
Calm'd the loud thunder: "There's no need of
you;
Grace shall descend and the weak man subdue."

Grace leaves the skies, and he the stage forsakes;
He bows his head down to the martyring ax,
And as he bows this gentle, gentle farewell
speaks:

"So goes the comedy of life away:
Vain earth, adieu; heaven will applaud today.

Strike, courteous tyrant, and conclude the
play."

16 *Summons* (Truman S. Wetmore)

Truman S. Wetmore (1774-1861) was a native of Winchester, a tiny village in western Connecticut. He spent almost his entire life there, active as a physician, a justice of the peace, and a leader of the local Masonic lodge--in general a pillar of the community. Several of Wetmore's psalm tunes were published in Connecticut tunebooks between 1798 and 1810, and AMERICA and FLORIDA came to be special favorites. Sometime between 1804 and 1808 Wetmore compiled a collection of his own, *The Republican Harmony*, containing tunes by him and other composers, mostly from around Winchester. The work was never printed, but the manuscript survives in the Newberry Library in Chicago. SUMMONS, Wetmore's setting of Watts's Psalm 50, Part II, appears in *The Republican Harmony*.

SUMMONS exemplifies two very different elements of Wetmore's composing style. His harmonic vocabulary makes Billings or Read seem almost genteel. Cross relations involving the leading tone repeatedly jolt the ear. Several times a G on one beat is followed by G sharp on the next, and no fewer than four times G and G sharp occur simultaneously. SUMMONS emphasizes sustained consonances--often open fifths or octaves--on the tonic, mediant, and dominant pitches, at the expense of formulas that might link these consonances together. On the other hand, although Wetmore seems to be struggling with the harmony, SUMMONS shows his considerable skill at setting a text. Designed to follow the rather unusual textual meter, the tune provides several pleasing expressive touches. A performance emphasizing the natural accents of the words rather than the metrical accents of the music can achieve what Wetmore's biographer, Warren Steel, calls "a powerful and subtle projection of the text which avoids the rhythmic monotony to which such unusually long stanzas . . . are often vulnerable."*

The God of glory sends his summons forth,
Calls the south nations and awakes the north;
From east to west the sov'reign orders spread,
Through distant worlds and regions of the dead.
The trumpet sounds; Hell trembles, Heav'n
rejoices;
Lift up your heads, ye saints, with cheerful
voices.

No more shall atheists mock his long delay;
His vengeance sleeps no more! Behold the day!
Behold, the judge descends; his guards are nigh;
Tempest and fire attend him down the sky:
When God appears, all nature shall adore him;
While sinners tremble, saints rejoice before him.

"I am the Savior, I the almighty God;
I am the judge; ye heav'ns proclaim abroad

My just eternal sentence, and declare
Those awful truths, that sinners dread to hear."
When God appears, all nature shall adore him;
While sinners tremble, saints rejoice before him.

*Quoted in David Warren Steel, "Truman S. Wetmore (1774-1861): Connecticut Psalmist" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Michigan, 1976), p.76.

17 *Middletown* (Amos Bull)

Amos Bull (c. 1741-1825) was apparently a Connecticut native. In 1766 he advertised in New Haven for subscribers to the *New Universal Psalmist*, a tunebook he proposed to compile but which seems never to have been published. In 1774-75, having "for many years taught psalmody in several parts of New England," he advertised singing schools in New York City newspapers. By the time his lone tunebook, *The Responsary* (Worcester, 1795), came out, Bull had settled in Hartford, where he kept a store and worked as a schoolmaster. There he spent at least the last thirty-five years of his life.

First published in Andrew Law's *Select Harmony* (Cheshire, Connecticut, 1779), Bull's MIDDLETOWN was one of the earliest New England hymn tunes to achieve general circulation. MIDDLETOWN sets a buoyant resurrection hymn by Charles Wesley and is cast in the musical style favored by British Methodist hymnodists of the mid-eighteenth century. Its lightly ornamented melody, its vocal dialogue--a line sung by women, then one sung by men--and its repetition of the final section for emphasis identify it as a consciously "modern" piece for its time and place of origin. The generally orthodox bass line and the propensity for triads rather than open fifths support that impression, perhaps reflecting what Amos Bull learned during his stay in New York City.

Hail the day that saw him rise,
Ravished from our wishful eyes;
Christ, awhile to mortals giv'n,
Reascends his native heav'n:
There the pompous triumph waits;
Lift your heads, eternal gates!
Wide unfold the radiant scene,
Take the king of glory in!
(Repeat last two lines)

Circled round with Angel pow'rs,
Their triumphant Lord and ours,
Conqu'ror o'er death, Hell, and sin,
Take the king of glory in.
Him though highest Heav'n receives,
Still he loves the earth he leaves;
Though returning to his throne,
Still he call mankind his own.
(Repeat last two lines)

Ever upwards let us move,
 Wafted on the wings of love,
 Looking when our Lord shall come,
 Longing, gasping after Home.
 There we shall with thee remain,
 Partners of thine endless reign;
 There thy face unclouded see,
 Find our heav'n of heav'ns in thee.
(Repeat last two lines)

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Music:

So much music by eighteenth-century New Englanders has been published in octavo form for choirs that it would be impossible to list even a representative sampling here. Some of the differing editorial principles can be seen in series by Gillian Anderson (C. T. Wagner), Lawrence Bennett (Broude Brothers), Oliver Daniel (Peters), and Leonard Van Camp (Concordia). A few notable anthologies:

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- Vermont Harmony*. University of Vermont Choral Union, directed by James Chapman. Philo 1000. Includes the complete published works of Justin Morgan (1747-1798) and assorted pieces by other Vermont composers of the period.
- Vermont Harmony 2*. University of Vermont Choral Union, directed by James Chapman. Philo 1038. One side is devoted to music of Jeremiah Ingalls, the other to Hezekiah Moors.
- White Spirituals from the Sacred Harp*. Alabama Sacred Harp Convention, 1959. New World 80205-2 (cd). Includes many New England favorites.

The majority of the members of the *Oregon State University Choir* were not music majors but students pursuing such studies as agriculture, physics, engineering, and education.

In 1978 Ron Jeffers was assistant professor of music and director of choral activities at Oregon State University. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan (theory and composition) and Occidental College (choral conducting program under Dr. Howard Swan). Mr. Jeffers has also directed choirs at the University of California, San Diego, the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, and the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

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Ron Jeffers, *conductor*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Arthur C. Morgan, Senior Minister, and Viv Ellsworth, Secretary, First Christian Church, Corvallis, Oregon, for their generous and gracious assistance.

Producer: Elizabeth Ostrow

Recording engineer: Lindsey McGill, Spectrum Studios, Inc., Portland, Oregon

Assistant engineer: Jeff Mestler, Spectrum Studios, Inc., Portland, Oregon

Tape editor and mixing engineer: Arthur Kendy

Digital mastering: Paul Zinman, SoundByte Productions, Inc., NYC

Program consultant: Richard Crawford

Recorded at First Christian Church, Corvallis, Oregon

Cover design: Bob Defrin Design, Inc., NYC

Library of Congress Card No. 78-750521

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The original recording was made possible with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

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Mainstreams and Backwaters of American Psalmody 1770-1840

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- 2 *Chesterfield* (William Billings) 2:28
- 3 *Newburgh* (Amos Munson) [in German and English] 3:07
- 4 *Crucifixion* (M. Kyes) 3:11
- 5 *Invitation* (Jacob Kimball) 1:13
- 6 *Montague* (Timothy Swan) 1:09
- 7 *Providence* (Daniel Read) 2:39

- 8 *New Jordan* (unknown) 2:36
- 9 *The Dying Christian's Last Farewell* (William Billings) 4:32
- 10 *Washington* (William Billings) 2:14
- 11 *Sunderland* (Joseph [?] Strong) 2:17
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- 13 *Richmond* (William Billings) 2:18
- 14 *Macedonia* (Oliver Holden) 1:48
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Ron Jeffers, conductor

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