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tation, they did not succeed. Their significance lies in their efforts to reintroduce the art of singing by note, paving the way for our nation's first music teachers—those early singing masters who moved from town to town in New England practicing their trade in homes, meetinghouses, and even saloons. And in 1723 Symmes strongly urged the expansion of the singing school.

Would it not greatly tend to promote singing of psalms if singing schools were promoted? Would not this be conforming to the scripture pattern? Have we not as much need of them as God's people of old? Have we any reason to expect to be inspired with the gift of singing any more than of reading? Or to attain it without suitable means, any more than they of old, when miracles, inspirations, etc., were common. Where would be the difficulty or what the disadvantage, if people who want skill in singing would procure a skillful person to instruct them, and meet two or three evenings in the week, from five or six to eight, and spend the time in learning to sing? Would it not be proper for school masters in country parishes to teach their scholars? Would it not be very sensible in ministers to encourage their people to learn to sing? Are they not under some obligation by virtue of their office to do so? 1

The institution of the singing school was gaining in popularity. But before describing these schools in detail, we should meet two men whose contributions to the singing school were important.

CHAPTER II

The Singing School

JOHN TUTTS

In January 1721 an advertisement appeared in the Boston News Letter proclaiming that a new book had been published by Samuel Garish, bookseller near the Brick Church in Cornhill.

A Small Book containing 20 Psalm Tunes, with Directions how to Sing them, contrived in the most easy Method ever yet Invented, for the ease of Learners, whereby even Children, or People of the meanest Capacities, may come to Sing them by Rule, may serve as an Introduction to a more compleat Treatise of Singing, which will speedily be published.

John Tufts, a little-known, forty-two-year-old minister compiled a small volume of psalm tunes (published unharmonized in the first edition) in which a new system of note reading was introduced. The letters F S L M appeared on the staff each signifying a syllable of the four note gamut fa, sol, la, and mi. The lengths of notes were indicated by various signs of punctuation following one of the above letters: a period represented a half note; a colon represented a whole note; and no punctuation mark at all indicated a quarter note. Tufts's book included thirty-seven tunes printed on twelve pages, and it was the first book of music instruction to appear in Britain's North American colonies. The author's name was not given in the advertisements for the earlier editions perhaps because he was not widely enough known to have helped sales.

He was born in Medford, Massachusetts, on either February 26,
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learning to sing by rule and which showed an increasing affinity for the rigors and pleasures of the singing school. Copies of Tufts's book were used as late as 1881. As one church after another painfully gave up the old way of singing and adopted the new singing by rule, perhaps the little volume by Tufts not only helped to show that the accurate reading of notation could be learned, was not to be confused with popery, and was not a machination of the devil. The people's music was not yet, and the then as now, a hundred years would pass before such an alienation prevailed. Instead, a golden age of church singing came of age as new singers with music reading skills took their places in the church choirs of New England churches. But before examining this phase of America's music, we should review the life of another person active in the early reform period, the Reverend Thomas Walter.

THOMAS WALTER

One of the most influential figures of this period was the author of Grounds and Rules of Musick Explained. Thomas Walter's volume appeared the same year as Tufts's but Walter, although a young man, was already widely known and in the forefront of efforts to encourage the New England congregations to sing by rule. His powerful pen gave full expression to an incisive intellect that knew the benefits that the reading of notes would provide, a knowledge that had been preserved at Harvard College. In a published sermon, The Sweet Psalmist of Israel, Walter explains the neophyte the values of singing by note and describes a method by which such a skill may be attained. "They will instruct us in the right and true singing of the Tunes that are already in use in our Churches; which, when they first came out of the hands of the Composers of them, were sung according to the Scale of Musick, but are now miserably tortured and twisted, and quavered, in some Churches, into an horrid Medley of confused and disorderly voices." Oral tradition had resulted in a deterioration of tunes known to New England congregations. Both complex and stylistic factors played a part in this loss, and reformers of the tunes could not reasonably be expected to understand causes. Even today, the complex interplay of factors is open to interpretation by modern scholars.

or May 5, 1689, the son of Captain Peter Tufts and his second wife, Mercy. Tufts's mother, Mercy Cotton, was a direct descendant of the Reverend Seaborn Cotton and the Reverend John Cotton. His maternal grandmother was Dorothy Bradstreet, oldest daughter of Simon and Anne Bradstreet (the first female poet in America). The first record of his life was as a Harvard freshman. After his graduation in 1708, he spent a year as a schoolmaster in Woburn, Massachusetts, and then served as temporary pastor of the church at Medford. One year later he was offered a permanent position, but his response was evasive and the post was given to an Aaron Porter. In 1713 he was a candidate for the post of associate pastor of a church in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Of the three candidates Tufts received the least number of votes.

One year later he accepted the position of pastor of the Church of Newbury, Massachusetts. The post more nearly approximated that of assistant pastor as he was to receive the sum of eighty pounds while the old pastor was still living, but that amount was to be increased to eighty-four pounds with the death of the older man. Perhaps Tufts had complete responsibility for the church, but this is unclear. On June 30, 1714, Tufts was ordained at "Newbury's second parish" and that year he married Sarah Bradstreet, daughter of the town physician.

He remained in Newbury for over twenty years. On February 26, 1718, Tufts was charged by the council of ten ministers and twenty delegates with "indecent carriage" and "abusive and unchristian behavior." toward one or more women of West Newbury, and on March 2 and the church acted not to recommend Tufts as minister. Tufts had refused to cooperate with the council or to question witnesses called to testify against him. He had asked only that he be released from his duties as pastor, and his public pronouncements had alluded to the consequence of the unhappy differences prevailing in the parish. He moved to Amesbury, Massachusetts, where he set himself up as a shopkeeper, and he died there twelve years later.

John Tufts will be remembered for his Introduction to the Singing of Psalm Tunes. The book was popular from the beginning, and Samuel Garish, his publisher, did include Tufts's name in later advertisements for the book when the author's name could be recognized by a public which was more and more enthusiastic about
Walter makes the point that singing by rule will help add more tunes to psalm singing. "For the present we are confined to eight or ten tunes, and in some Congregations to little more than half that Number, which being so often sung over, are too apt if not to create a distaste, yet at least mightily to lessen the Relish of them." The number of tunes decreased, but the old and too familiar pieces were embellished, creating new versions with each performance. The result, to Walter, was discord but to the congregation this was music! "For much time is taken up in making these Turns and Quavers, and besides, no two Men in the Congregation quaver alike, or together; which sounds in the Ears of a good judge, like Five Hundred different Tunes roared out at the same time, where perpetual interferences with one another, perplexed, jars, and unmeasured Periods, would make a man wonder at the false Pleasure which then conceive in that which good Judges of Musick and Sounds cannot hear to hear." Walter was born in Boston, December 7, 1696, the son of Nehemiah Walter and Sarah Mather. He was the grandson of Increase Mather and Maria Cotton and the great-grandson of John Cotton who also had much to say about the singing of psalms. Walter was graduated from Harvard at the age of seventeen, evidently possessing a "retentive memory" and having learned much from conversations with his uncle Cotton Mather.

He was called to the Roxbury Church in 1717 when the church fathers agreed enthusiastically to having the younger Walter join his father as an assistant pastor. On May 13, 1717, the "town met to consider of a settlement of Mr. Walter. . . . [It] voted that there should be five hundred pounds raised for Mr. Walter, as encouragement for his settling among us." The call was accepted and Walter was ordained on October 29, 1718. On Christmas day of the same year he married Rebecca Belcher, daughter of the Reverend Joseph Belcher, of Dedham. Of those recommending his book we find the names of Joseph Belcher, his father-in-law; the Reverend Nehemiah Walter, his father; as well as Cotton and Increase Mather.

In a letter from the Reverend Dr. Chauncey to a Dr. Styles in 1768, forty-three years after Walter's untimely death (he died before he reached thirty), the abilities and talents of Thomas Walter were remembered in unusually glowing terms.

The Singing School

Dr. Jeremiah Dummer, Mr. John Bulkeley, and Mr. Thomas Walter I reckon the first three clergymen for exact and strength of genius and powers New England has yet produced. I was acquainted with the latter, and often had occasion to admire the superlative excellence of his natural and acquired accomplishments. His genius was universal, yet surprisingly strong. He seemed to have almost an intuitive knowledge of everything. There was no subject but he was acquainted with, and such was the power he had over his thoughts and words that he could readily and without any pain write or speak just what he would. 13

There can be no doubt that Walter was a young man of considerable talent.

In The Sweet Psalmist of Israel we learn much of the ideas and philosophy of this first reform American music. The sermon was preached at a "Lecture held in Boston, by the Society for promoting Regular & Good Singing. And for Reforming the Depravations and Debasements our Psalmody labors under, in order to introduce the proper and the Old Way of Singing." 14 Walter avered that America was not alone in the gradual deterioration of psalm singing. Most likely referring to England, Walter writes in his dedication, I am glad to hear of the attempts made in another Country in prosecution of the same noble Design, and that the Reverend Mr. Brown of Reading has justified and put Respect upon their Undertaking, by preaching a Sermon at a Singing Lecture there. 15

Music in the Churches of England

Singing in the churches of England during this period was in a similar state as that of New England. Around the middle of the sixteenth century, instruction for the singing of local music ceased to appear in England. At Windsor, the "Grandire of the Choristers" taught schoolboys ordinary subjects such as writing, reading, behavior, and religion from 6:00 to 8:00 A.M. and again from noon to 2:00 P.M. The music taught there was singing, psalms, descant, and "such as be apt to the instruments." 16

The early seventeenth-century parish churches, however, seem to have had little music. Organs had been commonplace in the fifteenth century and were common in English church music. 17

*Psalmody was learning to perform from written or printed music, while the study of descant was learning to improvise vocally and the eight of composition.
teenth and sixteenth centuries in the churches of England, but in Elizabeth’s reign there were fewer of them. The old organs had been destroyed and new instruments were not built to replace them. In Lancashire “all the orders of the church go down the wind, for they call the surplices the rap of Rome; they do it at Preston and at Manchester, and will suffer no organs, nor sign no children with the cross when they are christened.”

Not only was there little use of instruments, but singing suffered as choristers also worked at outside employment. In the Bristol cathedral, singing-men had extra employment as parish clerks or organists, and their extra responsibilities were such that the singing had to be given up altogether at the ten o’clock prayers on Sunday mornings. The Archbishop Laud wrote to the “dean and chapter of the Norwich cathedral to point out the poverty of their choir,” and articles of the 1650s pointed out that “choristers and singing men were chosen for friendship, rewards, or money, rather than for their “aptness, voices, and towardness in singing.”

Thomas Morley wrote that as to the expressing of the ditty, the matter is now come to that state that though a song be never so well made and never so aptly applied to the words yet shall you hardly find singers to express it as it ought to be, for most of our churchmen... will never study to sing better than they did the first day of their preference... [It] should seem that having attained the living which they sought for, they have little or no care at all either of their own credit, or with discharging of that duty whereby they have their maintenance.”

It is no wonder that in the colonies—where the fundamental Puritan beliefs forbade the use of instruments, where no professional singers were ever employed, and where congregations sang the Psalms as they were passed down in the families—the art of note reading had become unpracticed and singing became linked to the growing folk tradition. It is to this audience and tradition that Thomas Walter addressed himself, as did the other so-called reformers of the day.

At the turn of the nineteenth century there were many signs of vital and active music participation throughout New England. Timothy Dwight observed that “people of wealth, and many in moderate circumstances, have their children taught music; particularly on the piano-forte; and many of the young men play on the

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German Flute; violin, clarineton, etc. and that serenading is not infrequent.” At this time evidence of the universality of church choirs and of a growing interest in instrumental music existed throughout New England. The instrument most commonly used in the New England churches was the cello—often called the “bass-viol.” Later the flute, clarinet, trombone, and the violin were introduced, but not without controversy.

The church singer were taught at the now-ubiquitous singing schools. The function of the school was to supply the church choirs with an ever-increasing supply of singers who were well-versed in the vagaries of voice production and in the intricacies of reading according to the four note gamut. The singing school could meet almost anywhere: a room at the meeting house, a private home, a barn, even the local saloon. The usual place, however, was in an extra room in the meeting house. Wherever the schools were held, the singers brought their own candles and those who had them brought books. They often sat in semicircles around the singing master who taught them the clefs, syllables, keys, and note lengths. They also learned some of the niceties of voice production and the “proper” pronunciation of the vowels according to the custom of the day.

Few singing schools ran for more than twenty-four evenings. But two meetings per week for three months was not a short term by eighteenth-century standards as the common schools of the period were not ordinarily in session for longer periods. Following the term of the singing school, a “demonstration” or “singing lecture” took place. Such neutral names covered a host of public exhibitions of singing by choirs formed from the participants of the singing schools. The performed selections were often taken from the master’s own tune book, sold to the singing school students for the musical edification of the school and for the remuneration of the singing master. The tune books themselves, being the first texts used in American music education, are interesting and important source material for understanding the techniques of the singing school.

As our early Americans learned to sing primarily for the purpose of singing in church, the singing school and early religious customs cannot easily be separated. Like the church, the singing school was important in the social fabric of the towns and villages.
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In Bennington, Vermont, for example, between 1839 and 1837 at the Mr. Anthony Seminary
only the lower room of the old academy was used for school purposes, and in the upper room were held the prayer-meetings of the First Church. . . . Singing-schools and choir rehearsals were also held here, and how enjoyable they were, for the genial choirmaster, John Fay, had a happy way of diversifying his instruction with witty remarks, and an evening with him always passed quickly."

John Fay's voice was described as "no great marvel of range, no wonderful high notes, but what is called sympathetic, or as the French say, pleurs des Larmes—full of tears." A writer in the Bennington Banner describes his voice as one "to be remembered long after being heard. Few voices unite, as did his, such volume and power, with such richness and sweetness, and such adaptness for musical expression and eloquence.""

Records of the First Church of Christ at New London, Connecticut, in 1797 show "To one Quarter's Tuition of Singing School beginning 17th of July and ending 17th of October as per agreement with the Singing Committee $5.50." The sum was paid to George Harris, who taught for three years. During the same period it was voted that certain funds collected that year be appropriated "to the use of the Encouragement and Supporting of Singing.""

One of the most widely known singing masters was Moses Cheney, one of a large family of singing masters and musicians in New England. He was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts, December 15, 1796, and his family moved to Saxboroton, New Hampshire, when he was five years old. Though sickly in his youth, Cheney was able to apply himself to his library and his music. By the age of seventeen his health had improved sufficiently so that he was able to work on a farm. At twenty he learned a joister's trade, and the next year, he attended a school during the winter, kept by the Elder John Drew, as also to a singing school, by Mr. William Tenney of Gaffstown, New Hampshire. At the close of these two schools, his teachers gave him the credit of having done very well; and the latter, as was his custom, to his best scholar, at the close of a winter's school, gave Moses Cheney his pitch-pipe and singing book."

His voice was described as "pure tenor, and whether you heard him sing or preach, you could but feel that he possessed great vitality, and capability of most protracted vocal effort.""22 Cheney married and had five sons and four daughters, all of whom could sing when quite young. Four of the sons and one of the daughters became teachers of music. In time the loss of two children and the return of ill health influenced his decision to become a minister, but he never lost interest in music. Cheney moved to Derby, Vermont, in 1843 remaining there temporarily but returning to Sashboroton. But in 1845 he again moved to Vermont—this time to Sheffield, where he lived until his death on August 9, 1856.

Cheney's musical education was typical of his time in New England. Many in rural sections of New England found it difficult to provide themselves with a standard tune book. As a substitute, small books were used with blank pages on which various favorite tunes were carefully copied. Occasionally, these manuscript books included a printed theoretical introduction of several pages after which blank pages were provided for copying the tunes.

Cheney describes his first experiences at a singing school and indirectly comments on the state of common school education in rural New England in 1788. His observation concerning the use of a manuscript tune book by his teacher is also of interest as such books dating from this period are found more rarely today than the more common tune books.

And it came to pass when I was about twelve years of age, that a singing school was got up about two miles from my father's house. In much fear and trembling I went down with the rest of the boys in our town. I was told on the way to the first school that the master would try every voice alone to see if it was good. The thought of having my voice tried in that way, by a singing-master too, brought a heavy damp on my spirits. I said nothing, but traveled on to the place to see what a singing school might be.

When we came to the house, quite a number of young ladies and gentlemen had come, and were coming to the school. This was the first school which I attended of this kind, with very little exception. I did not pay much attention to the scholars, but I watched the master closely. We were soon paraded all around the room, standing up to the boards supported by old fashioned kitchen chairs. I being the youngest of the company managed to get the lowest seat, hoping thereby to be the last to have my voice tried. The master took his place inside the circle, took out of his pocket a paper manuscript, with rules and tunes all written with pen and
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Scholars attending singing school at this period read music by means of the four note gamut: mi, fa, sol, and la. The only note which was not repeated in the octave was the syllable mi. In order to understand the proper use of the syllables, the scholars had to find the position of mi on the staff. The rules recollected by Cheney are typical of the period and can be found in the theoretical introductions of numerous tune books from the early eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

I shall take the liberty now to call ladies and gentlemen, and things, just as they were called in that school. And I begin with the rules as they were called, first:

RULES
FLATS
The natural place for mi is in B
But if B be flat mi is in E
If B and E be flat mi is in A
If B, E, A, and D be flat mi is in G

SHARPS
But if F be sharp mi is in F
If F and C be sharp mi is in C
If F, C, and G be sharp mi is in G
If F, C, G, and D be sharp mi is in D.

The books in the hands of the scholars were somewhat unusual as most tune books of the period included all four parts. As Cheney's singing school teacher had a manuscript tune book, it was likely that the scholars themselves had books in this form and to copy one part would have been easier than four.

These rules, as then called were all that was presented in that school. The books contained only one part each, bass books, tenor books, counter books, and treble books. Such as sung bass had a bass book; he that sung

* A key could be quickly established by singing the seventh and the following tonic. If mi represented the seventh tone of the scale and was used only to determine the tonic, any given key could be quickly ascertained.


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tenor had a tenor book; he who sung counter, had a counter book and the gals, as then called, had treble books, I had no book.

Manuscript tune books were common during this period. Perhaps a revealing insight into the cultural habits of eighteenth-century America can be found in Joseph Tenny's manuscript tune book which was complete with a theoretical introduction. Tenny called his book The Gamut or Scale of Music. He advertised it as a "conceit and comprehensive Gamut Or Scale of Music Together with about 10 pages of blank lines for writing in tunes, all bound together—the design of it is to supply schools, without the cost of buying books which contain a large number of tunes, and but few of them such as they want to learn. And also, those who have books may have blank lines ready at their hand, to write in such tunes as they wish to collect from other books, Windor, June 1st, 1795." Even in Thomas Attwill's New York and Vermont Collection of Sacred Harmony, five manuscript pages were reserved in the front of the book, presumably for the above purposes.

Pennsylvania singing schools made good use of such copybooks. Such books were oblong, about five-by-seven inches, and filled with blank pages. Students would draw their own lines with quill and ink, mixed by the teacher, and then copy material given by the "master." Examples in the Bucks County Historical Society begin with the gamut showing the letter names for the lines and spaces using either a great or single staff.

The scholars in Moses Cheney's school were accustomed to the appearance of manuscript tune books. After the class was started with a theoretical introduction to the reading of music, Cheney's teacher was quick to test the voices and to proceed with the singing of a tune.

With all these things before the school, the good master began "Come boys, you must rise and fall the notes first and then the gals must try." So he began with the oldest, who stood at the head, "Now follow me right up and down; sound." So he sounded; then the boy sounded, and followed the master up and down as it was called. Some more than one half could follow the master. Others would go up two or three notes, and then fall back lower than the first note. My feelings grew acute. To see some of the large boys, full twenty years old, make such dreadful work, what could I do! Great fits of laughing, both with boys and gals, would often occur. This scared me, and I was at my wit's end. Now my eyes were
fixed on the Master's mouth, if possible to learn the names of the notes before he came to me. I saw all that was needed was to make just the same sound that he made; and it came to my mind that I could mimic every beast, and bird, and thing, that I had ever heard make any noise, and it was no more to mimic my master than it was anything else. And then I had a firm belief I could do it. And I had only time to draw a long breath, and blow out the flutter of my heart, when the master came to me. "Well my lad, will you try?" "Yes sir." I looked him in the mouth, and as he spoke a note, so did I, bot up and down. I did not wait for him to call the note first. I spoke with him. Now by watching him so closely, and observing how he spoke the notes, but would come so as to speak with him. The master turned away, saying, "this boy will make a singer." I felt well enough.

Then the gals had their turn to rise and fall the notes. "Come gals, now see if you can beat the boys." So when he had gone through the gals' side of the school, he seemed to think the gals had done rather the best.

Now the rules were left for tunes. Old "Russia" was brought on first. The master sang it over several times, first with the bass, then with the tenor, then with the counter, and then with the treble. Such as had notes looked on, such as had none, listened to the rest. In this way, the school went on through the winter. A good number of tunes were learned in this school, and were sung well as we thought; but as to the science of music very little was gained.

There is some controversy in the literature regarding the efficacy of the singing school education and the degree of skill acquired by the teaching methods employed and the use of the four note gamut. The theoretical introductions to the tune books of the period are concerned with the rudiments of the staff and notation, strongly suggesting that the scholars memorize the keys, staff, and note values before they begin to sing. Cheney's singing master only gave lip-service to this long-held pedagogy. As detailed descriptions of procedures followed in singing schools are rare, one can only conjecture whether the techniques that Cheney describes represent a typical approach for his time. One might suspect that American eclecticism and pragmatic outlook took precedence over any one theory of teaching, just as they do today. Cheney's singing master saw a need to encourage his class to sing. Cheney attended other singing schools with other teachers and reported that the theoretical gaps in his musical education were made up in other schools. His observations show a reasonable variation in procedure and not a clear indication of a common method.

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Modern writers seem quick to pass judgment on the efficacy of the singing school and the four note gamut then in vogue. Used in England about the time of Queen Elizabeth, the four note gamut remained popular through the eighteenth century and was displaced only during the first third of the nineteenth century. George Pullen Jackson reports that the syllables were sung "part by part and time after time" until the parts were thoroughly learned. The scholars were then allowed to sing the words. Allen Britton observes that any apparent success that the early school vocal teachers had was not exclusively based on the universal use of the solmization system. Alan Buechner notes that Hans Gram, as early as 1791, recommended no particular system believing none to be very effective. And Hamilton C. MacDougall reports, no doubt with exaggeration, that the four note gamut "must have muddled weak brains and done the singing master's business no harm." It would appear that the music reading of that day was at least as good as that of the present time. It seems reasonable to suppose that scholars with a good ear could and did learn pieces by note instead of mastering the syllables. At the same time the four note gamut was indeed a workable system, and some apparently gained much skill through its use.

At the close of the school, and after singing the last night, we made a settlement with the master. He agreed to keep, as then called, for one shilling and sixpence a night, and to take his pay in Indian corn at three shillings a bushel. A true dividend was made of the cost among the boys (the gals found candles for their part), and it amounted to thirteen quarters and one pint of corn apiece. After the master had made some good wishes on us all, we were dismissed, and all went hence in harmony and good union.

In the eyes of singers at this time, with the advance of the science of music for half a century past, this school must appear very insignificant indeed. But suffice me to try to express some of my feelings at this time. To me the whole movement of the school was of the brightest cast, carrying with it, all through, from first to last, the most striking and affecting realities that I had ever been made witness before, and I expected it was all that could be done in regard to the glorious work of singing for ages to come. A school! A Singing School! O those words! Every other word vanished at the sound.

Think for a moment. A little boy of twelve years of age, growing up in the shade of the deep and condensed forests of the mountains of N. H., seldom out of sight of his mother, or the hearing of her voice, never saw a
singing master or musical note, seldom ever heard the voice of any human being except his own domestic circle, by the fireside of his father's humble hearth.

Think again; now he is a member of a school; more, a Singing School! Singing tunes by note! Singing the "We Live Above"! Carrying any part all in the same high boy's voice. O, that Winter's work! The Foundation of many many happy days for more than fifty years past. The bright blue sparkling eyes, his sweet angelic voice, his manifest care and love to his pupils, everything combined to make him one of a thousand."

Sixty-seven years after the publication of the first instruction books in this country by Tufts and by Walter, rural New England was only beginning to sing by rule.

Not long after this school was closed, I heard there were plenty of printed singing books in Boston; and that our storekeeper would have some to sell before the next winter. It was my whole concern to be ready by the time they came up to buy one. I would persuade my father to give me a stadium, or to hoe by myself, to gain time to peal red oak bark, burn it, and save the ashes for the purpose of buying a printed singing book. When the books came I was ready to pay in ashes. This I did, and then I owned a singing book.

I looked at the rules with astonishment. I do not remember the name of the book, or the author's name; but this I perfectly remember, it was a Singing Book. In my new book, I had possessed myself of not far from a hundred new tunes. This was more than I ever expected to see. Now I could read but very poorly indeed, must spell all large words, and had it not been for singing, I should not have been able to read at all. Singing did more for me by far, in learning me to read than every other way of teaching. So on I went, studying my new book, and when I came to a hard name, or word, I would go to my mother, and in this way I made some progress.

In my book I found that notes had another name, Semibreve, Minim, Crotchets, Quaver, Semiquaver, and Demisemiquaver. I learned also that the semibreve was the longest note in singing and that it was as long as two minimis, four crotchets, eight quavers, sixteen semi-quavers, or thirty-two demisemiquavers. This put one link more into the chain of my understanding.

My new book taught me likewise more modes of time than one. In my school without a book, I had only learned to beat up and down; but now I saw different ways, some two down beats and one up, another two down and two up. Some were slow, and some fast. This swelled my mind a little larger still. So I went on, committing from memory all that came in my way, until I had eaten that book up."
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evenings were reserved for the older students. Some former students of Elisha West recorded their impressions of his singing master.

As a teacher West was a careful drill-master. He gave most patient attention to the rudiments, and those who still remember his instructions speak of him in this particular with high respect. Above all things there was in his school the most rigid observance of the laws of time, and even certain bad habits of his were not allowed to interfere with the order and discipline he considered needful to have the school a success.11

About the year 1801 he published a collection of tunes and anthems containing many original pieces. The collection was printed at Northampton, Massachusetts, by Andrew Wright, for Elisha West and Benjamin Billings, Jr.

Woodstock had the advantage of several singing masters who followed West. Captain John Durkee presided over the musical affairs of his town in 1806. His church choir numbered forty or fifty, most of whom were treble and bass singers. Following Captain Durkee, came James Currier, a law student in the village who conducted his choir and singing school in a peculiarly idiosyncratic manner; he marked the time with a "downward left foot." But one day his scholars were to have their revenge.

As he was thus zealously occupied one evening, a mischievous boy named Curtis came behind him and caught his foot while suspended in air, causing him to fall forward on the floor. The joke, though a rough one, only produced general merriment in the school, in which Currier himself heartily joined.12

As was the case with so many singing school teachers for whom music was supposed to be an avocation, Currier regarded music as more important to him than law. His classes must have been popular as his pupils were said to have numbered ninety in his combined classes. In addition to his singing school activities, he organized a six-piece band, which appeared in public regularly.

1800 and Reform

Around the turn of the nineteenth century the style of the hymn tune in New England was again undergoing a reform. The old fugue-tune was falling from favor, and the folk-harmonizations which were popular in the eighteenth century gradually gave way to a harmonic practice consistent with the European tradition. The old "fuges," which were popularized by William Billings and which delighted New Englanders, were nothing more than imitative sections usually in the middle of the old tunes. But all enjoyed singing them, and contemporary records abound with reports of congregations lifting their voices to the old fuges.

This unique American folk music was originally derived from an English sacred choir tradition of the eighteenth century. It was allied with certain native folk idioms, such as a natural affinity for the minor mode, an irregularity of phrase, and a pronounced rhythmic vitality. The style can be traced from William Tans'ur's A New Musical Grammar, and "New Introduction to the Grounds of Music," or American Chorister.13 Tans'ur opened the door to parallel fifths and octaves in the harmonization of psalm tunes, and William Billings carried on the tradition and set an example to be followed by other composers and compilers of sacred music of the time. Tans'ur decreed that "two Fifths, or two Eights (when it cannot be well avoided) be used rather than spoil the air."14 As a result of such a modest admonition, Billings's compositions are heavily endowed with parallels.

Music in the latter part of the eighteenth century was contrapuntally conceived, and chords often lacked a third, particularly the opening and closing chords. Billings, himself, admonished that all parts should conform to the tenor. The style was based on the folk song of the day, and the harmonic idiom seemed to demonstrate an ignorance of the conventional European part-writing procedures. Charles Seeger believes that the conception of three voices sounding simultaneously was not necessarily thought of as being a chord. Each added voice was independent. Thus the pieces show a definite contrapuntal style.15

During the last third of the eighteenth century, certain changes in style slowly appeared with the importation of William Tans'ur's Royal Melody Compleat16 and Aaron Williams's Universal Psalmist.17 These collections were reprinted in America between 1767 and 1774 by Daniel Bayley of Newburyport, Massachusetts. Bayley issued them in a composite edition entitled The American Harmony. The work provided New England with its first introduction to canons, fuguing tunes, anthems, and occasional pieces. Among

*London: 1775, 1790, 1794, 1798
*London: 1785, 1794, 1795, 1797
its many influences the collection tended to stimulate the develop-
ment of choirs in American churches.

The fugue-tune was adapted from English sources, and it was prob-
ably Joseph Stephenson who gave New England one of its
first fuguing tunes around 1755. Irving Lowens believes it likely that
Stephenson's "fuguing psalm tunes" acted as prototypes for Bill-
ing's work and perhaps as that of other American composers as well.28 Fuguing music evidently became immediately popular among
the congregations of New England, a phenomenon that was first
noticed by Jocelyn and Doolittle in 1782.

It is very obvious that Psalmody hath undergone a considerable revolu-
tion, in most of our religious assemblies, within the course of a few years,
not only the tunes formerly in common use are now generally laid aside,
instead of which, those of the more lively and airy tune are substituted.
And though many improvements have been made in Church Music, yet
there appears a danger of error, by introducing, in public worship, light
and trifling airs, more becoming the theatre or Shepherd's Pipe; a liberty
(as we apprehend) by no means admissible in the solemnities of Divine
Service.29

Harriet Beecher Stowe described the singing of fuguing music as "a
grand wild freedom, an energy of motion, . . . that well expressed
the heart of a people courageous in combat and unshaken in en-
durance." Governor Frederick Holbrook of Vermont described this
early fugue music and his church choir "composed of thirty or forty
members." He remembered that the music was rendered "with
unction." Holbrook also suggested that "the congregation quite
generally joined in singing the old fugue-tunes in their pews to the
hymns announced."30 The governor himself was the leader of a
church choir, a fact which lends more credence to his descriptions.

In an article by the Reverend E. H. Sears in Dwight's Journal of
Music, Sears describes the sounds created by the fuguing tune and
hints that acoustical idiosyncrasies of some of the old churches
could create some interesting and unusual effects.

To those who were seated downstairs facing the pulpit the sound ap-
peared to come from three different directions: from behind, from the
right, and from the left.31

And in Pawlet, Vermont, Hiel Hollister vividly describes the power
of the "fugue" on the villagers of his day:

The Singing School

The revolution which stirred the souls of men developed a new style of
music, which was styled fugue music. This was in sympathy with the
crash and excitement of the day. . . . The parts falling in one after an-
other, each part singing different words at the same time, are thought to
represent the clanger and confusion of the battle field.32

Composer Asahel Benham gave sound directions for singing the
fugue in the theoretical introduction to his Federal Harmony.

A solo should generally be sung soft; and peculiarly graceful. When the
music fugues the strength of voice should increase on the engaged part or
parts, which the others are falling in with spirit; in which case the pro-
cunciation ought to be peculiarly distinct and emphatic. When words
or music are repeated the sound should increase together with the
emphasis.33

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, musical styles in the
churches of New England were beginning to change. The growing
influence of European-trained musicians stimulated the dissolu-
tion of the fugue tune, the reliance on the minor mode, and the mel-
ody in the tenor voice. But before we can observe the composi-
tional practices that are familiar to musicians of today, we will
look at some of the practices used in this folk art of the eighteen-
teenth century.
CHAPTER III

Tune Books and Performance Practice

THE ONLY text available to the singing school teacher was the tune book. A theoretical introduction to the reading and performance of music occupied the first few pages of the hundreds of tune books that swept the country between 1721 and the middle of the nineteenth century. Were these suggestions followed by the singing masters? We must guess that, for the most part, they were. The authors of the tune books were themselves singing school masters, and a brisk sale of their books helped reinforce a precarious livelihood. A similar approach is evidenced in the various books showing a common acquaintance with a musical culture. But as the theoretical introductions are studied, the modern reader must always assume that the teachers, then as now, bent orthodox procedures to accommodate a particular class.

The basic rules for "finding mi"—as indicated previously in Cheney's memoir—are universally in evidence. Most masters followed this scheme for finding mi. Others, such as Jacob Kimball, substituted complete charts showing the actual transposition of mi on the staves. But the excessive difficulties of the charts apparently discouraged beginners, and the charts were abandoned. The four note gamut mitigated against finding the key note or "do" according to the seven note solmization. Fa represented two scale tones, both the first and fourth notes of a major scale. Only mi appeared once in the scale representing the leading tone; hence such an identification could determine the key.

Tune Books

Eighteenth-century tune books supplied little material for practice. The examples used were for intellectual purposes and were abstract. Thomas Walter used the following scale in his theoretical introduction:

No attempt was made to write a major scale. Walter and others like him were only writing notes on a staff to be considered intellectually. With no sharps or flats in the key signature, the "natural place of mi is B." When this had been determined, the remaining syllables could easily have been supplied. Walter's book was the first book in America to use regular notes. It was the sole American-made book of this type in use in the American colonies for forty years after its publication. The diamond-shaped notes were typical of those used in Europe during the eighteenth century.

There appeared to be no concern whether the student understood the concept, only whether the rules could be correctly recited. The concept would have to come later. Andrew Law, one of America's most influential music masters in the early years of the eighteenth century, demonstrated a confusion over the purpose of syllables believing their function to be the beautification of the vowel sounds when singing syllables. The singing master complained about the seven note system of Andrew Adgate and defends the four note gamut.

Syllables, in music, are not the signs of particular sounds ... A single syllable is sufficient to express the whole variety of musical sounds. Does it then become a question why four syllables are used instead of one? The answer is easy. To consult conveniency by means of variety. Were it not tiresome to repeat one syllable continually, there would be no need of more than one. But constant experience proves, that it is tiresome, and that more than one are necessary. By the use of four syllables, mi, fa, sol, law, the variety is found to be sufficient; and these syllables sung according to the directions, which I have given, are admirably calculated for the purpose to which they are appropriated. For tho' they cannot as-
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sist us in attaining sounds, yet, they may, and do assist in forming the organs of sound into a position for making more open and smooth sounds."

Such a state of affairs helps to demonstrate that the singing master’s success was not based entirely upon the universal success of the solmization system.

Minor scales were sung using the same syllables as those of the major scale. Only toward the end of the eighteenth century were the sixth and seventh scale steps revised. Correctly sung harmonic or melodic minor scales could be navigated only by ear, as the syllables were useless for that purpose. Rarely could there be found any mention of the revised organization of syllables for treatment of chromatic alterations. Andrew Adgate demonstrated such a concern in his Rudiments of Music. He admonishes the scholars that if a sharp comes before any particular note, that is not found in the scale, we change its vowel into E, and give it the sound of E in me, as long as the sound is affected by the accidental sharp. The same alteration taken place when a note that is flat at the flat scale has a natural set before it. Sometimes after the beginning of a tune, and when me has an accidental flat or natural set before it, we may change E into A, sounded as in halt. [For example:]

```
fe se be de
da so la ba do &c.
```

Chromatic alterations were rare, modulations scarce, and chromatic nonharmonic tones were almost nonexistent, causing most compilers of eighteenth-century tune books to ignore the problems of chromaticism.

Andrew Adgate introduced the function of syllables when he introduced a seven note gamut in 1788. Adgate’s solution was the following: fa, so, la, ba, do, ma, me. This singing master recognized the value of not repeating syllables within a scale. Hans Gram criticized the fasolado system and explained the French, German, and Italian systems but endorsed none of them.

No well-developed system emphasizing a feeling for the tonic was in evidence. The four note gamut provided no unambiguous syllable for the first note of the scale. The seventh note or leading tone was sought as the “key.” Whether the scholars either imagined or actually sang the tonic after finding mi can only be conjectured.

Walter’s rules for identifying major and minor were typical. “If the Two Notes above the last note of your Tune he whole Notes [steps], it is upon a sharp Key; [major key] but if the Two Notes above, be one an whole Note, and the other an half Note, then it is a flat Key [minor key].” But Walter does suggest that listening and hearing do, after all, have a place in learning to sing. “And when you have learned to raise and fall the Notes, the Difference of the Sound will be perceptible by the Ear.”

Does Walter really mean what he implies, that after the student has learned to “raise and fall” the notes he will then be able to perceive the “difference of sounds”? Perhaps he means that an improvement in the student’s perception will take place. The theoretical introduction discusses scale-like intervals. Perhaps Walter means that the accuracy of the scale-like intervals will be improved with practice. Or does he imply that students were unable to perceive intervalic differences of half-steps in the early years of the eighteenth century? If the latter was indeed the case, then the harsh judgment of the early reformers was well founded.

**Performance Practices**

From bits and pieces of evidence it is possible to reconstruct certain aspects of performance practice as it existed in New England in the eighteenth century. Contemporary European practices can be seriously considered in such a discussion as American singing and instruction did not occur in isolation. Cultural and economic intercourse thrived between America and Europe as sailing ships crossed the Atlantic bringing musical instruments, books, and people from England. Travelers brought with them the gradually changing styles and performance practices which transformed the notes and rules into a living, breathing art. A few were professionals, but most were amateurs quavering variously and pursuing Terpsichore with a happy but serious abandon.

The theoretical introductions to the eighteenth-century tune books give us some evidence that, true to the eighteenth-century European performance tradition, the notes on the page were expected to be used only as a starting place. The custom of including
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a theoretical introduction in the tune books began in 1708 in the sixth edition of W. L. Already A Supplement to the New Version of the Psalms. Many writers of tune books were critical of the mistaken zeal of church singers, many of whom became excessively enamored with their powers of embellishing a line of music, and continually importuned dilettantes to cease and desist. More often, however, the writers simply admonished the singers to allow the singing master to give instruction, as such enterprises as improvisation and embellishment required examples and a good ear. The postulations of the printed page did have limitations.

But the modern reader must look to the theoretical introductions for guidance. A careful reading, perhaps some judicious jumping to conclusions, and a little reading between the lines should bring us closer not only to some performance practices of eighteenth-century psalmody and hymnody but also to the instructional practices of the ubiquitous New England singing school.

Jeremiah Ingalls tantalizes us with the "conclusion" to his theoretical introduction to Christian Harmony. "The Trills, Transitions and Accents, have not been attended to in the preceeding rules, they are learnt principally from their teachers and had better be omitted than attempted by young singers." As a musician of taste, at least in the rural and frontier community of Newbury, Vermont, Ingalls preferred to encourage his younger, less experienced scholars to recognize that "the best graces and ornaments in music, are to sing with ease and freedom not very loud nor very soft, (except when directed) but sing with animation, pronouncing the words distinctly, so that the audience be edified, the glory of God, and the praise of our redeemer exalted."

Ingalls is quite clear when he discusses the proper tempo indications for his music. A pendulum can be made using a small right cord and connected to a leaden ball. As it swings, so the tempo of the various meters may be determined. A pendulum of forty inches allowed to swing freely will establish the tempo for 64 time.

The Second Mode has likewise two beats in a bar, which contains six Quavers, or other notes to that amount, and is beat in the same meter as

Rhythm

The beating of time assumed an importance in the instruction and performance of music during this period. Asahel Benham describes the appropriate manner of beating time in the 1790s.

A perfect understanding of this is of so much importance, that without it, "It is impossible to perform accurately especially in a concert; hence arises the necessity of a motion of the hand (called the beating of time) in order to give every particular note and rest their due measure. The two first modes of common time have four beats in each bar and may be beat in the following manner, viz. First strike the ends of the fingers on the thing beat upon; secondly, bring down the heel of the hand; thirdly, raise the hand a little and fourthly, raise it still higher, which completes the bar. Let it be observed that the hand is not to rest in any position while beating time but to be constantly in motion."

Thomas Atwill suggested that "young singers should be industrious in acquiring a graceful manner of standing and beating time." He admonished that "beating time with the feet is highly unbecoming in church music, and ought to be carefully avoided." Joel Harmon also proclaimed, in 1809, that "in all moods of time, the hand must fall at the beginning, and rise at the close of every single bar." Though Harmon opines that pendulum lengths be used to determine tempi, he carefully counsels disregard for a strict interpretation of rule of weight and string. "Many teachers have been governed by the Pendulum, notwithstanding the variety of the subjects. But this is a gross error, and discovers want of taste. Whatever the operating of time may be, the subject ought to govern the time."

Meter signatures not only indicated the number of beats in a measure but foretold the tempo of the performance. The well-known meter signature of "C" proclaimed four beats per measure as well as four seconds of time. The alla breve designation meant not only two beats per measure but that those two beats should be performed in three seconds. The less familiar symbol □ indicated
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one semibreve (\(\infty\)) and two beats to a measure but at a speed of two seconds for the measure. The following chart explains the remaining signatures:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{2/4 contained} & \quad \infty \quad \text{and each measure performed in 1 1/2 seconds} \\
\text{3/4 contained} & \quad \infty \quad \text{and each measure performed in 2 seconds} \\
\text{3/8 contained} & \quad \infty \quad \text{and each measure performed in 1 1/2 seconds} \\
\text{6/4 contained} & \quad \infty \quad \text{and each measure performed in 2 seconds} \\
\text{6/8 contained} & \quad \infty \quad \text{and each measure performed in 1 1/2 seconds}
\end{align*}
\]

Allen Britton gives the following modern metronome equivalents:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{C} & = \text{M. M.} \quad 60 \\
\text{C} & = \text{M. M.} \quad 90 \\
\text{E} & = \text{M. M.} \quad 120
\end{align*}
\]

Terms such as breve, semibreve, and minum were used in this country until the nineteenth century. Gram was the first to use numerical terms based upon proportional relationships. The introduction is believed to have been written by Gram. The numerical terms were of German origin.

In the time before instruments were accepted into the New England churches, the setting of the pitch often lead to unsettling problems for the church choirs and congregations. An early pitchpipe was often used before the invention of the tuning fork (in 1713). The pitchpipe came equipped with an adjustable stopper which by pushing in or pulling out the notes could be raised or lowered. Graduated marks on the pipe gave some indication to the singing master of the position of the correct pitch. But these artificially produced degrees were inordinately inaccurate. Temperature, moisture of breaths, and force of blowing affected the pitch. It is not surprising that around the turn of the nineteenth century instruments (usually the bass-viol) began to be introduced gradually into the choicemats of rural New England.

**Pitch and Key Note**

Information concerning the manner in which a key note was sounded is difficult to uncover. Few tune books touch upon this subject. But in

Tune Books

William Norman's *Federal Harmony* of 1794, there are "directions for pitching the tune by a concert pitch pipe." The pitch was to be given to each part separately. Frequently the singers would use the phrase "Praise Ye the Lord," as each took his pitch. Billings is often credited with having introduced the pitchpipe to America. In his *New England Psalm Singer* of 1770 he included a diagram of a pitchpipe, but a diagram cannot be said to have been responsible for the introduction of that instrument. Judging by the paucity of documentary evidence, the correct pitching of a tune seems not to have been a matter of overriding urgency. Only here and there a comment calls the problem to our attention. Samuel Sewell wrote on October 25, 1641, that at an evening exercise the singer "was not sure he had the tune till 2d line." Again, in 1705, he wrote of going into "a Key much too high and of wandering from Wisdom into High Dutch."
of instruction. It must be assumed that, although some students learned to read effectively, others were obliged to learn the music by note in the time-honored fashion of those who are never quite able to decipher the apparent intricacies of the demi- and semiquavers.

With the emphasis on the reading of notes, the singing masters were still concerned with the sanctity and intelligibility of the words. Andrew Law suggests that "the music ought to lead to the words, not the words to the music."10 In J. W. Moore's Vocal and Instrumental Self-Instructor, we find the admonition that the "words should not be lost."11

Instruction was atomistic. Little provision was made for review, and each part in the instruction was required to be learned before the next was begun. Instruction began with the gamut followed by proportional note values and rests. Rules were given pertaining to the finding of mi. The scholars were taught to identify the last note in the bass to find the tonic or key. It was either major or minor depending on the key signature. There was almost no variation in the content or order of presentation.

The earlier tune books had a longer, more elaborate theoretical introduction. These elaborations could have been directed toward the less well-trained singing master as well as toward the students. The later tune book included less instructional material, depending more upon the singing master's more complete training and skill.

The styles of the tunes themselves were varied, but the harmonies were kept to a small selection of chords. There was little inversion, and modulation was at a minimum. The harmonic practices came from William Tan'tur who influenced Billings. Tan'tur decreed that "two Fifths, or two Eighths (when it cannot be well avoided) may be used rather than spoil the Air." From these vaporous declarations, Billings produced 357 psalm tunes and 47 anthems with the greatest measure containing parallel fifths and octaves.

Billings dealt somewhat with the rules of composition. He believed that the tenor should be written first followed by the remaining parts which must conform to that of the tenor. The parts show a contrapuntal arrangement, a style consistent with the folk song idiom of the day and ignorant of the European harmonic practices of the latter part of the eighteenth century. Suspensions were not written, but the effect may have been exercised in the ubiquitous ornamentation of the period. Thirds were not regularly included in every chord while the fourth could be either a consonance or dissonance depending upon one's point of view.

Such was the folk style of New England until around 1800 when, again, reformers would make their influence felt. Another painful musical convulsion would ensue, leaving the votaries of good taste firmly in charge and the singing school masters packing their wagons and moving west and south.

In the last years of the eighteenth century, the beginnings of reform were glimpsed in the contributions of Andrew Law, Samuel Holyoke, and others. Admonitions against the use of parallel fifths and octaves appeared as well as the stricture against giving the melodic line to the tenor part. Unison, fifth, octave "perfect cords" fifths and octaves are not allowed to move together, ascending or descending.12

ORNAMENTATION IN THE TUNE BOOKS

The ornamentation of the psalms and hymns was common practice in eighteenth-century America and Europe. The mention of ornamentation is all but universal in eighteenth-century tune books, although most compilers leave the details to the individual singing masters. As a result, what little we know of these details must be gleaned from a few sources, who amplified the general remarks with details.

Most writers cautioned the student to be chary of ornaments and were concerned that the untrained singer would indulge in an excess of embellishment. The available evidence shows that the practice was widespread and many writers chose simply not to comment upon it. But we of the modern era, where all intricate and detailed markings on the page are surrounded by a sanctity of a holy writ, must attempt to return to the day when cadences were instinctively embellished and slow melodic skips of consecutive thirds were quavered with passing quarter notes (grace of transission).

The major influence on American practices was British. Secondary to this was the influence of American writers on each other. We have already noted that the more rhythmically and melodically complex tunes of the early masters were replaced by simpler and slower melodies. With the expanded note values New England
congregations supplied what must have been a free and improvisatory kind of ornamentation. The reformers of the early eighteenth century succeeded in inhibiting the congregations from these excesses as the singing schools developed more and more the singing by rule. Congregational singing gave way to the church choir whose members were graduates of the singing school. Often fifty or sixty strong, the choirs no doubt added quality as well as an increased quantity of tunes to the repertory.

But ornamentation did not die. The practice was too well entrenched in standard European practice, and its execution was only modified to conform to what was considered good taste.

Robert Donington tells us of difficulties in trying to understand the performance of ornamentation in the eighteenth century. While Donington was discussing European practices, it seems reasonable to assume that his sentiments would also apply to the ornamentation of psalms and hymns.

The consistency on which the chief utility of this system should have depended never remotely approached being realized in practice. With the exception of certain conscientious Frenchmen, and a few imitators of whom C. P. E. Bach was the most influential, confusion reigned virtually universal. . . . one sign may serve for a half dozen ornaments; one ornament may be served by a half a dozen signs, but we cannot rely on them.

Only recorded examples would be reliable, an avenue unfortunately closed to us. We can only investigate the written instructions for the best answers, try to imagine what the music sounded like, and attempt an appreciation of the enthusiasm that enveloped the singers in both the singing schools and choir lofts.

Ornamentation was an integral part of music during the late colonial period, 1760 to 1800, first appearing in American tune books in 1761. It is reasonable to suspect, however, that ornamentation existed long before this in the colonies. Thomas Attwill tells us that “many notes may be varied from their true sounds, with very great advantage, but it must be done with judgment.” He criticized the gracing of tunes by fixed rules complaining that such a condition “is frequently attended with very evil consequences.” Jeremiah Ingalls admonished the readers of his Christian Harmony that the “Trills, Transitions and Accents, have not been attended to in the preceding rules; they are learnt principally from their teachers.”

Ornamentation came to colonial America from British sources, and all American tune books were indebted to these sources in one way or another. Except for the manner of presentation none of the ornaments presented in American tune books was original. American ornamentation, a mixture of English and Continental practices, was about fifty years behind Europe. The ornamentation described by Leopold Mozart, K. P. E. Bach, and Johann Quantz between 1760 and 1800 was not reflected in American tune books until the works of Gram (1795), Holyoke (1802), and Kimball (1791).

William Tansur’s work, A Compleat Melody (1738), had more information on ornamentation than any other British or American tune book. But we can assume that the practice of ornamentation must have been popular in English churches during the early eighteenth century not only because of the above sources but also because of the satires that appeared in British humor magazines of the day.

The American tradition had its roots in the American oral or folk tradition as well as in the British tradition. American tune books gave more attention to expressive means than did the British, and the Americans had a greater variety of ornaments, particularly the “ornaments of expressions.” American writers made much of the swell, hold, accent, propriety of expression, and the mark of distinction. But the only English source to include all these ornaments was Aaron Williams’s Universal Psalmist. American graces represented a variety of styles and methods including the accent, mark of distinction, staccato, swell, and hold which at the time were considered ornaments but now are not. Other ornaments included the turned shake, the trill, the forefall (sympathetically with backfall and appoggiature), the grace of transition, the turn, and the beat.

In general, accents were described in a manner with which we are already familiar, that is, accents appeared naturally on the first beat of a measure and the first and third beats in 4/4 time. Only Samuel Holyoke suggested something different and that was an accent on the first and third beats in triple meter. As this practice was described by Billings and Holyoke’s counsel is repeated by no

* The influence on British ornamentation were Continental in general and Italian in particular.
other compiler, one can only guess at Holyoke's reasons for his suggestion. But Tans'ur's description of the accent varies somewhat from our own and places it clearly within the province of ornamentation. The accent was "a Sort of wavering or quavering of the Voice, or Instrument, on certain Notes, with a Stronger or weaker Tone than the rest, and to express the Passion thereof: which renders Munick (especially vocal) so very agreeable to the Ear, it being chiefly intended to move and affect." 78 Tans'ur was obviously concerned with the aesthetic renderings and expressions of music which not only are subtle principles in themselves but relate in vocal music to textual considerations as well. Important words and accented syllables of the text always received the accent. While composers tried to make this agree with the music, conflicts were usually resolved in favor of the words. Andrew Law was concerned about this principle, however, and admonished the singers to accent the strong heat. Holyoke suggested no variation in strength between accented and unaccented notes. The accent, believed Holyoke, must come through pronunciation of accented and unaccented syllables giving a far more subtle nature to the concept of ornamentation. 77

The mark of distinction was synonymous with staccato with the former term used almost exclusively until near the end of the eighteenth century. Its use differed little from one tune book to another and was indicated by marks over the notes denoting a "distinct and emphatic" rendition. 82

But a "distinct and emphatic" rendition did not necessarily result in a shorter note as does the concept of staccato. One may assume, however, that the usual result was a shorter note. Holyoke did make a distinction between staccato and the mark of distinction indicating that the latter be performed short and the staccato be performed somewhat smoother. Hans Engelke tells us that this concept is in keeping with Controversial practices of the latter eighteenth century. Billings was concerned lest we combine the grace of transition (passing tones) with the mark of transition leading toward an unintended triplet pattern. 86

Again the absence of much discussion of the function of the hold may indicate that much choral music of this period did not lend itself to improvised cadenzas of this type. Yet in those few American sources where the hold is discussed we are led to believe that its use was common. Oliver Holden gives us a more conventional description of the hold in his Union Harmony. The hold
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"gives the performer liberty to continue the sound of the note, to which it refers, beyond its common length. . . . Whenever it occurs, the school or choir should discontinue beating time, dwelling sweetly on the sound, until the master resumes the time in its proper order." Obviously no cadenza is implied here, and we can now balance our interpretation of this practice: first, that cadenzas were occasionally improvised at appropriate places, second, that the swell was undoubtedly used in such situations, and third, that the held note was merely held with or without a swell depending upon the fancy of the performer.

Simon Jocelyn considered the trill or shake to be the most difficult to execute properly and describes its performance in some detail.

The trill, or common Shake: which is the shaking of two distinct notes upon one syllable as long as the time allows, always beginning with the upper, and ending on the lower note; and may be used on descending pointed crotchets, and before a close:—also on descending sharp'd notes, and semi-tones, but none shorter than a crotchet. Of this there are two sorts, called open, or close; if the next note above the note to be shaken be a whole tone, it is an open shake. n.b. This is reckoned the capital Grace; and requires considerable practice to gain the perfection of it.

Many authors give examples. Daniel Read in his New Haven Collection of Sacred Music gives the following: 17

\[ \text{Example of a trill} \]

Jacob Kimball gives his readers the following:

\[ \text{Example of a trill} \]

And he describes it as "a quick and alternate repetition of the note over which it is placed, and the note immediately above it (from which the trill begins), so long as the time will allow." As beginners or less-experienced singers would have trouble with this ornament, Kimball suggested a simpler version. "The trill is a very beautiful grace, but as it is difficult to be acquired, it may not be amiss to propose the following substitute for it, till it can be perfectly learned." 18

Tune Books

There appears to be a rather universal understanding of the conventional practice of trilling since few compilers thought to describe its application. Of Italian origin, the trill was introduced to the New World in about 1730 via the English tune books and soon became the most frequently used ornament.

The terms trill and turn were often used interchangeably. Billings and Read both show the following examples of the trill: 19

\[ \text{Example of a trill} \]

But Engelke tells us that only William Norman's Federal Harmony and Boston Collection utilize these graces.

As the most popular ornament, the trill was abused. Billings particularly complained that singers took "great license from these Trills, and without confining themselves to any rule, they shake all notes promiscuously." Notes should be trilled only when so marked, believed Billings, and only then according to rule "which may be easily learned under a good master." That few tune books included trill markings forces us to conclude that trills were performed by rule, and the rules were learned in the singing schools. In Howe's Worshipper's Assistant the author advises his students not to trill at random and "without the mark," yet Howe's work had no trill sign. Josiah Flagg in A Collection of the Best Psalm Tunes includes many trill signs, a rarity in these New England collections, but, paradoxically, he violates the usual rules for his time. An examination of Flagg's book reveals that trills were sung primarily in tenor and treble parts, less often in the counter, and almost never in the bass.

It was perhaps no wonder that the usual rules were noted more for their violations than for their acceptance. If Flagg made exceptions to the rules, so may have others. One can logically assume that the rules were generally used as a point of departure rather than as fixed law. But what were these rules for the tasteful performance of trills? Jocelyn supplies them in his theoretical introduction to his Chorister's Companion. Here is where the trill may be appropriate: 20
Daniel Bayley describes the use of the trill similarly:

The trill, or shake, may be used in all descending pricked notes, and always before a close; also on all descending sharp’d notes, and all descending semitones; but none shorter than crochets.14

The turn enjoyed a degree of flexibility in its performance. Often used interchangeably with the trill, it invited a variety of interpretations, as the contemporary examples show. James Lyon’s Urania gives several examples of possible performance practices while Daniel Read shows a new version of the trill, but the result is merely a turn.15

Lyon’s suggestions concerning the turn are as follows:

The turn may be used on a note that sinks a semitone below two notes on the same line or space, always beginning with the first; and also at the end of the strain, when the last note is grace’d.16

A last interesting example of a turned shake appears in Holyoke’s Columbian Repository:

It is obvious that to sing these graces, no little skill was required to achieve the desired musical effect. It is no wonder that Böning and others were reluctant to teach the average singer indulges himself in the trills and turns that might have sounded like an eighteenth-century musical rollercoaster. But such a carnival was a source of popular enjoyment that unfortunately became stunted when the styles began to change.

Tune Books

The beat, whose sign approximates that of a mordant, was variously interpreted in the New England tune books. It can be found in Christopher Simpson’s Division Violist or an Introduction to the Playing upon a Ground:17

It reappeared in Aaron William’s Universal Psalmist and was later reproduced in Jocelyn and Doolittle’s Chorister’s Companion. Only James Lyon and Samuel Holyoke mentioned the beat, and Jocelyn and Doolittle saw no difference between the beat and the shake. Holyoke believed the beat and the turn to be ornament of the same nature, but his illustration is similar to that of Jocelyn and Doolittle.18

The grace of transition was the second most popular ornament. There was no designated sign in the music making, yet practical reconstruction a challenge. We know that all melodic intervals of thirds and fourths could be so ornamented as most American writers have agreed to the concept. In practice this grace was seldom used in intervals of a fourth. Jocelyn and Doolittle allow it on descending fourths if “in a flat key,” but nothing mentioned in relation to an ascending fourth. Read gives an example of the grace of transition used in an interval of an ascending fourth:19

But Kimball’s interpretation of this grace shows confusion. One cannot help but notice the lack of precision in the use of the terminology. Kimball’s examples are obviously not graces of transition or passing tones in the modern vernacular.20
Billings gives us good examples of the proper execution of the Grace of Transition."

Billings tells us that only half notes should be so graced, but Engelke says that such an admonition appears only in Billings. Billings attempted to clarify the interpretation. "You must not . . . lean on the intermediate Note in thirds, where the notes are but a half beat in length; for that makes them sound like notes tied together in thirds; but you must strike such notes as distinctly and emphatically as possible." 10 Billings believed that the grace of transition added an increased vigor to his tunes as well as acting to keep the singers on pitch during skips in the vocal line.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, ornamentation gradually came under criticism. The proponents of "better taste" were always those people of New England coastal cities who were closer to the accepted European practices. Trends then entered the rural areas, gaining against the well-rooted sensibilities of the populace. Always in touch with the best European practice, Benjamin Franklin scoffed at the process of ornamentation in his description of Scotch tunes. "Scotch tunes have lived so long and will probably live forever (if they escape being stifled in modern affected ornament)." 11 Times were changing and Franklin had difficulty appreciating the contrapuntally complex writings of no less than a George Frederick Handel! Baroque and classical practices were not as well delineated in the practice of church music as in the mainstream of European secular music. And the staid simplicity of church hymns and anthems which came to be accepted during the nineteenth century was resisted fiercely by those whose comfort and security were challenged by the new way.

Tune Books

Books with unorthodox notation occurred from the beginning of music texts in America with John Tufts's Introduction to the Singing of Psalm Tunes. Each innovator sought to simplify the reading of notation in the hope that the learner could find a shortcut to the difficult art of reading music by note and that the author would sell large quantities of books. The use of unorthodox notation, beginning early in the nineteenth century, was clearly aimed at the singing-school market. But as these singing schools were replaced by other institutions for music teaching, only the then-current European practices were used.

By far the most popular of the various systems of notation was the shape note system. An individual character for each note identifies the syllable. While modulatory systems require that the shapes be placed in different positions on the staff, the interpretation of the syllable by the singer mitigates against difficulties of performance.

There were several systems of four-character notation in the early nineteenth century, but the most important were by William Little and William Smith in The Easy Instructor, and by Andrew Law in his The Art of Singing."

The Easy Instructor, published in 1798, was probably the first book to use shape notes; its system was perfectly orthodox except for the shape note heads. Fa was represented by a triangular shaped note, sol by a regular round note, la by a square note, and mi by a diamond shaped note. The reception of this volume and of the system of music reading that it espoused was immediate and enthusiastic. A flood of editions followed, and copies from the printers between 1805 and 1831 and thousands of copies were sold. While the earlier editions adhered firmly to concepts and tenants of hymnody that made parallel intervals and fuge singing a hallmark of New England folk culture, later editions were nonetheless indistinguishable from the reform movements which came to be accepted during the nineteenth century.
As the so-called better music people drove the singing school masters southward and westward from their positions in the churches and meeting-houses of New England, the shape note adherents formed their own encampments in those regions and remained there even into the present century. Between 1815 and 1835, southern tune books appeared using the shape note system and aimed at the revival market; the Kentucky Harmony in Harrisonburg, Virginia; the Columbian Harmony from Wilson County, Tennessee; the Missouri Harmony from Saint Louis, Missouri, and many, many more. The Civil War marked the end of the expansion of shape notation and the famous fasola system, and no new compilations came out after 1865. But William Walker’s famous Southern Harmony, published in 1835, continued in use for over fifty years after its appearance.6

About the same time that Little and Smith were inventing their shape note system, Andrew Law was pursuing a similar system, but with the shapes in a somewhat different order. In Law’s system the diamond is mi; the square is faw; and round note is sol; and the quarter of a diamond is law. The two systems differ in the representation of faw and law. Also Law’s system did not put the notes on the staff.

In 1780 the first edition of Law’s Musical Primer was published in New Haven, Connecticut. This edition was printed in round notes, but in Law’s fourth edition, printed in 1805 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, by W. Hillard, there appears for the first time in his works the introduction of shape notes. Law had been a teacher of music for over twenty years. Like so many teachers, Law strongly felt the need to develop a system whereby the student might learn the art of music reading more easily. There is every evidence that Law was influenced by the work of Little and Smith since the latter’s work was published four years in advance of the Musical Primer. But Law’s system never did achieve the popularity of The Easy Instructor.

Law’s early years were spent with an uncertainty as to whether he would go into the ministry or embrace music as a career. He enrolled in Rhode Island College (renamed Brown in 1804) when the student population was less than forty. He seemed to settle for a religious vocation. His sacretotal piety earned him the name of “Domine” among his fellow students. He came under the influence of William Billings as the composer and singing master taught a singing school at Providence in 1774. Crawford tells us that there is no record that Law and Billings met.7 But six tunes by Billings appear in Law’s Select Harmony of 1779. Law was a practicing musician during his four years at college and acted as a singing master. In 1776 the New London Association of Ministers granted him a license to preach the gospel. While his formal education was directed toward a ministerial career, his love and practice of music soon convinced Law to devote his time exclusively to music. The year 1777 represented Law’s earliest appearance in the pulpits and also the beginning of his career as a compiler of tune books. As no further references can be found concerning his career as a minister, Law’s choice is self-evident.

His musical career spanned fifty years. He established singing schools in eleven states, devised an original notation, became the first American musician to become actively interested in copyright legislation, and was the most prolific compiler of tune books of his generation.

The standards and tastes in music had begun to change. Good taste meant correct composition and in this, Samuel Holyoke, Oliver Holden, and Andrew Law were in the forefront in the decade before the nineteenth century. In 1793 Andrew Law wrote in his The Art of Singing, Part I, that “correct composers of modern date for the most part make use of the Treble, as the leading part, or else.” After this date Law scored his melodies on the top staff. In addition reformers used more major tunes than the compilers writing in the folk tradition.8

In an analysis of the works of Oliver Holden, Daniel Wilfred McCoomick succinctly outlines the theoretical and stylistic traits of this composer and, by so doing, acquaints the reader with the basic tenets of “reform” or of what came to be known as “good taste” in music. Holden wrote 236 hymn tunes and anthem-like pieces. In these works duets occur twice as often as fugues, which occurred twice as often in the composer’s earlier pieces. Three voice tunes account for one-third of the total. Two-thirds are in major keys while the “third mood of common time” is used in 70 percent of his pieces. Holden’s melodic characteristics incorporate triadic construction and long scale lines.9

Samuel Gilman’s vivid and often humorous description of pres-
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Tune Books

congregation, into which had been introduced a new and purer taste for sacred music than generally prevailed through the rest of the country. In that choir, as he informed me, no tunes of American origin were ever permitted to entrance. Fuges there were a loathing and detestation. None but the slow, grand, and simple airs which our forefathers sang, found any indulgence. Mr. Forehead assured me that no other music was worth hearing, and what seemed to weigh particularly with him was the circumstance that the slow music in question was beginning to be in the fashion.

In the course of a month, Mr. Forehead's argument, persuasion, and example, wrought in a large portion of the choir a very considerable change of taste on this subject. There were some, who loved novelty; there were others, who yielded to the stranger's assurances respecting the fashionableness of the thing; and there was a third description, who were really convinced of the better adaption of the ancient tunes to the purposes of worship, and had a taste to enjoy their solemn and beautiful strains. All these classes composed perhaps about a moiety of the choir, and were eager for the introduction of the good old music. The other half were extremely obstinate and almost bigoted in their opposition to this measure, and in their attachment to the existing catalogue of tunes. Most of us took sides on the question with an inexorable warmth, and without any attempt at compromise. . . .

And now for several weeks was the full-breathing triumph of the lovers of crotchets and quavers over the vocations of minim and semibreves. The latter faction sullenly absented themselves from the singing pew, and generally from worship, while the former revelled amid the labyrinths of figuration, believing to their own happiness, certainly, the order of consecutive parts to be the sweetest of melodies, and the recurrence of consecutive fifths the most delightful of harmonies. . . .

The terms of reconciliation and union were settled in the following manner. As our performances were required regularly five times on a Sabbath, it was agreed that the arrangement of tunes throughout the day should be two fugues, two of the slow ancient airs, and one of a different description from either. Neither party could well object to airs of a rapid and animated movement, in which all the parts continued uninterruptedly to the close, as in the case with Wells, Windham, Virginia, and many others."

The Decline of the Singing School

The days of the singing school were numbered. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century a change in life-style was
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brought about by easier modes of transportation, a newly rekindled interest in the improvement of the common school systems, and the wider dissemination of traveling entertainers. The Boston Handel and Haydn Society, founded in 1815, always aimed toward the improvement of taste in music. The publications of the society extended its influence. Many people came to Boston to hear concerts of the society and would, in turn, try these works at home with their choirs. So the word was carried. In time, the various societies turned people from their own folk traditions and toward the correctly harmonized European renditions. The Boston Musical Gazette, a reform publication edited by Bartholomew Brown, one of the founders of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society, took every opportunity to ridicule the ancient psalmody.12

The barrier of Puritanism was breached by the theatre which brought a concert life that flourished after the War of 1812. The reformed sacred music was virtually indistinguishable from the secular songs of the day. Immediately after the turn of the century the writers seemed to have found "good taste" in earnest. It meant correctly harmonized compositions (according to the best European practices) but it also represented a reaction to the fugue-tune. European secular song became acceptable to Americans and with this acceptance came European-trained musicians. With some notable exceptions, most American musicians who were trained in singing schools could not conform to the dictates of the changing tastes and values. When Lowell Mason came on the scene in the second decade of the century, the stage had already been set by such men as Holyoke, Law, and Holden, along with Read and Gram. In Holden's Union Harmony of 1795, twelve anthems were composed conspicuously without fuguing passages. Representing a reaction to the baroque polyphony that had already moved into the classical period in Europe, Holden, in his Union Harmony, was concerned lest the words be unintelligible in fugue passages. In 1790 the problem of stylistic transitions was disclosed to the American public.

In the present age we are many times more surprised at the attempts and extravagance of execution, than pleased by neatness; the simplicity of air has often spoiled, by the redundancy of variations and graces; nature is outraged, in imitations, and the ear is perplexed, if not lost, in a crowd of harmony, or tired with everlasting repetitions of the subject.13

Slowly the minor tunes which were so prominent in the early collections give way to an emphasis on major. The fourth edition of Daniel Read's American Singing Book, published in 1793, included 29 major tunes and 18 minor, while Elias Mann's Massachusetts's Collection of 1807 includes 110 major tunes but only 52 minor. Hans Gram, along with George K. Jackson, that memorable musician from England who settled in Boston, deprecated the native American school and were joined eventually by Andrew Law and Samuel Holyoke who, though products of the American singing school, took exception to it. Andrew Law delivered his attacks upon American music in 1793 recommending its replacement with European music. The reform was slowly taken up by other musicians and clergymen. Twenty years later the reform was an accomplished fact in New England. Daniel Read lived to repudiate in old age that style which he had helped develop. Even the better American composers seemed self-conscious about their own compositions. As early as the 1790s American composers looked toward Europe for guidance. Anthems collections after 1812 showed an increasingly European orientation in such collections as A Volume of Sacred Musick Containing Thirty Anthems Selected from the Works of Handel, Partee (sic), Croft and other eminent European Authors (Newburyport: E. Little & Co., 1814) and the Old Century Collection, Vol. I (1818), which included pieces by Mozart and Beethoven.14

The Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia was organized in 1820 with the help of the fine English musicians Raynor Taylor and Benjamin Carr. A rapid development of American instrument manufacturing, especially pianos, took place in the first half of the nineteenth century. Serious American students of music began their pilgrimages to Europe to study, a trend that has diminished only in recent years. European teachers were coming to America and plying the only trade they knew, not the rudiments of a singing school but the best European tradition. The study of instrumental music became increasingly popular about this time, particularly of the piano and the cabinet organ.

The use of organs in churches increased dramatically during these years, and in the words of George Pullin Jackson, "became
monarchs, reducing to musical serfdom all attempts at vocal harmonizing. There was much to disturb the status quo, and mass immigrations of comparatively urban Germans into almost all areas of the country brought their more advanced practices of instrumental and vocal music. Family concertizers poured through urban and rural America, singing, bell-ringing, and creating audiences for secular music which would not have been countenanced a generation earlier.

The early nineteenth century saw a significant improvement in the country’s systems of transportation. Fulton’s Clermont proved the value of the steamboat in 1807. In 1825 the Erie Canal opened, which was to reduce travel between Albany and Buffalo from twenty to ten days. Other canals were planned. The first railroad tracks were laid in 1830.

Singing schools were less and less required. Americans could learn their songs by ear without the trouble of a singing school and without the required diligence. The best European practices required that the melody be placed in the top voice. No longer were fuge-tunes tolerated as creative embellishment, and in the churches ornamentation was now considered poor taste. The people saw their own music taken from them, with a corresponding diminution in the size and quality of church choirs and the exodus of the singing school master to the west and to the south.

By the time Lowell Mason had published his enormously successful Boston Handel and Haydn Collection of Church Music in 1822, there was a public ready and eager to embrace the standards of good taste preached by Mason, Isaac Woodbury, William Bradbury, and so many others. As so often happens in America, the arbiters of good taste looked across the Atlantic for their models and scorned that which was home-grown. And such was their influence, then as now, that an uncertain population, striving for cultural respectability, embraced the common practice of European art music. Those who studied in Europe or in the European mold cultivated a social superiority. The democratic tradition of the singing school began its decline. But these arbiters of taste from Boston did not represent the mean of the population. Their influence left the congregation without a music to which they could identify. An interest in church singing waned, giving way to the quartet choir. New England would not again hear the stimulating strains of the fuge-tune coming from all parts of the sanctuary.