I, Molly K Cronin, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Music

in Music History

It is entitled:

American Fuging Tunes in The Sacred Harp

Student Signature: Molly K Cronin

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee Chair: bruce mcclung, PhD
Melinda Boyd, PhD
Edward Nowacki, PhD

bruce mcclung, PhD
Melinda Boyd, PhD
Edward Nowacki, PhD
American Fuging Tunes in *The Sacred Harp*

A thesis submitted to the

Graduate School

of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Music

in the Division of Composition, Musicology, and Theory

of the College-Conservatory of Music

by

Molly K. Cronin

B.A., Lipscomb University

May 2005

Committee Chair: bruce d. mcclung, Ph.D.
Abstract

Although originally from Great Britain, the fuging tune gained such popularity in eighteenth-century America that scholars now associate it with the First New England School of composers. Despite this form’s popularity, Lowell Mason discouraged its use, along with the salient characteristics of eighteenth-century American composition, during his nineteenth-century better music movement. Mason succeeded in cutting off this distinctly American style in New England urban centers and Midwestern cities. However, the eighteenth-century singing school practice and compositional style continued in rural areas and eventually took root in the South. The singing school practice in the nineteenth-century Southern tradition continued using the eighteenth-century New England repertory and adapted the practice of singing shape-notes as a pedagogical tool. Singers participated in small regional singings and large-scale conventions in which they sang from these shape-note tunebooks singing first the syllables, then the text to the songs. In 1844, Benjamin Franklin White published The Sacred Harp in Georgia. Editors revised the songbook numerous times updating the collection according to the popularity of individual numbers and including songs composed by current participants in the singing tradition. The editors of the most recent revision in 1991 retained songs dating from the eighteenth century in addition to ones composed by participants throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a result, The Sacred Harp remains an important source for eighteenth-century hymnody in general and the fuging tune in particular, as singers continue to compose fuging tunes in this tradition.

This study includes analyses of fuging tunes from the most significant revisions of The Sacred Harp in order to discern different stylistic trends throughout the significant editions of The Sacred Harp. Chapter 1 takes New England fuging tunes as a starting point in order to
establish the form and style of the genre, and for comparison with subsequent tunes. The fuging tunes analyzed in Chapter 1 have survived periodic revisions of *The Sacred Harp*, and editors continued to publish these eighteenth-century pieces alongside later compositions. The nineteenth-century fuging tunes examined in Chapter 2 are associated with the original compiler/composer of *The Sacred Harp*, Benjamin Franklin White. Composers in the second half of the nineteenth century drew on other musical sources, such as folk hymns, which are also found in Southern tunebooks. These fuging tunes represent the first examples by Southern composers. Chapter 3 examines popular fuging tunes from the early twentieth century that demonstrate the lasting influence of eighteenth-century fuging tunes, folk hymns, and even the first generation of Southern composers from the 1840s. The most recent revision of *The Sacred Harp* in 1991, considered in Chapter 4, illustrates how the Sacred Harp singing practice has been disseminated to the Northeast and Midwest. For the first time in its publication *The Sacred Harp* contained music composed by participants from regions outside the South. These examples demonstrate that this dissemination process did not result in a new style of fuging tune. Composers who contributed to the 1991 edition continued to draw on all the past styles to create a heterogeneous repertoire of fuging tunes. Although the fuging tune exemplifies eighteenth-century American hymnody, this genre enjoys a long compositional history through the Sacred Harp tradition, and continues to be composed and performed by an established community of singers.
Copyright Notices and Permissions

SHERBURN
Daniel Read
Copyright © 1991 by Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Inc.
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.
Used by permission.

NORTHFIELD
Jeremiah Ingalls
Copyright © 1991 by Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Inc.
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.
Used by permission.

ETERNAL DAY
J. P. Reese
Copyright © 1991 by Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Inc.
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.
Used by permission.

JASPER
T. J. Denson
Copyright © 1991 by Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Inc.
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.
Used by permission.

SARDIS
Sarah Lancaster
Copyright © 1991 by Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Inc.
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.
Used by permission.

THE BETTER LAND
O. A. Parris
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.
Used by permission.

ODEM (Second)
T. J. Denson
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.
Used by permission.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Mike Hinton and Richard DeLong of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company for allowing me permission to reproduce the fuging tunes that served as the focus of my research. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Melinda Boyd and Dr. Edward Nowacki for their interest in my work, their insights, and careful proofreading of my work. Dr. Bruce D. McClung has been a patient advisor and a valuable mentor to me throughout this project. I am also grateful for his careful proofreading of numerous drafts. Finally, I am especially grateful to my parents, Patrick and Rebecca Cronin, for their endless encouragement during my education.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF FIGURES</th>
<th>vi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1. The First New England School and <em>The Sacred Harp</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2. Fuging Tunes from 1844–1907</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3. The Denson Revision of 1936</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4. Dissemination Outside the South in the Twentieth Century</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figures

1.1 Daniel Read, SHERBURN in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 21
1.2 Jeremiah Ingalls, NORTHFIELD in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 24
2.1 J. P. Reese, ETERNAL DAY in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 32
2.2 T. J. Denson, JASPER in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 36
2.3 Sarah Lancaster, SARDIS in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 38
3.1 O. A. Parris, THE BETTER LAND in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 49
3.2 T. J. Denson, ODEM (Second) in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 51
3.3 Howard Denson, HOMEWARD BOUND in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 53
4.1 Judy Hauff, WOOD STREET in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 64
4.2 P. Dan Brittain, NOVAKOSKI in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 66
4.3 Hugh W. McGraw, WOOTEN in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 68
4.4 John T. Hocutt, A THANKFUL HEART in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991 70
Introduction

Benjamin Franklin White first published *The Sacred Harp* songbook in 1844, an example of the Southern shaped-note hymnody, which developed from the New England singing-school tradition. In eighteenth-century New England, the singing school existed to promote and improve congregational singing and also became a social event for the participants.¹ Since singing-school professors often composed the hymns used and compiled songbooks to sell at the schools, these composers, such as William Billings, Daniel Read, and Jeremiah Ingalls, cultivated a particularly American sound and style. H. Wiley Hitchcock referred to these composers as the “First New England School,” and their style can be characterized by a preference for intervals of the fourth and fifth, often static harmonic motion, and the use of “choosing notes,” a practice in which the singer extemporaneously decides which of two notes to sing.² As the nineteenth-century reform of hymnody came to American urban centers through figures such as Lowell Mason, this practice and its music migrated to remote locales. Thus, the history of singing schools and their music remains important to the Sacred Harp movement because this book maintained many of these practices and traditions.³

Since its original publication in 1844, *The Sacred Harp* has gone through four major, subsequent editions: 1869, 1911, 1936, and 1991. John Bealle categorizes a major edition based on its addition and subtraction of pieces, and by how it relates to the most recent 1991 edition.⁴ The 1869 edition marks the last major edition in which B. F. White was involved before his

---


⁴ Ibid., 265.
death. In the early 1900s, many compilers put out editions trying to gain support from singers; however, in 1911 Joe S. James published an edition restoring most of the 1869 edition and including additional songs from Southern composers. James also added biographical footnotes and spiritual scriptures underneath the title to each song. In 1933 the Sacred Harp Publishing Company purchased the rights to the book and published a new edition in 1936, the so-called Denson edition, in which the editors removed the biographical footnotes and modified the accompanying scriptures. The 1991 edition drew from each of these editions in its repertory of songs, but also includes works by composers influenced by the Sacred Harp revival that began in Chicago, thus including composers from outside the South. In many ways new songs maintained the style of the First New England School.

One of the most stylistically distinctive forms in *The Sacred Harp* is the fuging tune. Having roots in England, the fuging tune became an important form for the First New England School composers. In addition to the other stylistic reforms that affected hymnody in the urban centers of New England by such artistically elite composers and musicians such as Lowell Mason (1792–1872) and Timothy Hastings (1784–1872), they considered the fuging tune an inferior form and brought it under attack. In its first publication, *The Sacred Harp* had contained fuging tunes by composers of the First New England School, but not as many from current composers, since B. F. White did not like the form. For example, of the twenty-six songs he composed or arranged, there was only one fuging tune. Although he did not appreciate fuging tunes, his interest was in selling copies of *The Sacred Harp*, so he must have included songs that

---


he believed other singers enjoyed. Of the eighty-nine songs composed during the 1830s and 40s, only four were fuging tunes. William Walker, B. F. White’s brother-in-law and compiler of *Southern Harmony*, composed three of the four. One of the most popular of these is ALABAMA. According to Bealle, the editors of the 1869 edition added 129 songs to this edition, with only 8 composed between 1855 and 1869.

The 1936 Denson edition included more fuging tunes from contemporaneous composers. Of the forty-one songs added in that edition, twenty-five of them were fuging tunes by such composers as A. M. Cagle, T. J. Denson, and Paine Denson. The 1991 edition included fuging tunes from composers inside and outside the traditional *Sacred Harp* region. Composers who contributed to the 1991 edition included the then-president of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, Hugh McGraw, as well as composers from other regions, such as Judy Hauf and Ted Mercer. Through *The Sacred Harp* tradition, composers have cultivated a distinctive style and used the fuging tune as a folk practice as well as for spiritual edification.

In this study I explore the stylistic differences of these fuging tunes from four different periods of popularity: the First New England School fuging tunes included in the first 1844 edition, fuging tunes composed at the time of the first edition and before the 1911 James edition, fuging tunes contemporaneous with the 1936 Denson edition, and fuging tunes from the time of the 1991 edition by both Southern singers and those from other regions. I have chosen fuging tunes from the First New England School based both on their inclusion in Richard Crawford’s *Core Repertory of Early American Psalmody* and popularity at recent Sacred Harp singings as


9 Ibid.
recorded in the *Minutes and Directory of Sacred Harp Singings* online database. Choosing a selection of fuging tunes composed around 1750 to 1800 by First New England School composers as historical models has enabled me to compare songs from the other periods of Sacred Harp composition: fuging tunes newly included in the 1844 edition, those composed between 1844 and 1911, a selection in the 1936 Denson edition, and fuging tunes included in the 1991 edition. Subsequent compilers and editors of *The Sacred Harp* enjoyed fuging tunes more than B. F. White because of the increased number composed and included in the 1936 edition. Many of these songs are different from the First New England School prototypes because they have difficult rhythms in the fuging sections, and often a pair of voices begins the B section followed by two successive entrances or another paired entrance. The history of the dissemination of *The Sacred Harp* in the twentieth century is important in analyzing the later pieces, especially because they exist outside the regional tradition. The musical aspects I have considered are the harmonic language and the rhythmic texture, and musical elements that vary over the course of Sacred Harp composition.

Fuging tunes during the early 1900s that were added in the James edition of 1911 are more taxing to sing and were not as popular during the revival in the 1970s. During the B section, eighth-note patterns predominate, which are difficult to sing. These songs also are not in as straightforward a style, such as those from the First New England School. For example, they often had complicated rhythms during the A section. More recent composers such as Judy Hauf have returned to the simpler style of the First New England School, straightforward harmony and homophonic texture instead of the complicated eighth-note passages.

Since the revival of *The Sacred Harp* in the 1970s, the singing conventions and meetings have become socially diverse. In addition to the established Southern families, Northern

---

urbanites have become a staple at singings. New participants often have different religious beliefs than those of Southern families. During the folk revival, Sacred Harp singing became a sort of underground activity for Northern participants. Desire to find the folk roots of American culture and the ability for participants from any background to join harkens back to the ideals of the early Americans, those who first cultivated the fuging tune. The inclusion of newly composed pieces by current singers, particularly singers who are not considered traditional singers, shows the continued remnants of this democratic and participatory tradition from the eighteenth-century singing school. The fuging tunes themselves exemplify this attitude, as each part is equally important. By studying the history of these editions and the shifting audience for each of them, I show how this context influenced the style of these songs, and how they represent these different audiences.

While this study deals with only fuging tunes in *The Sacred Harp* songbook, fuging tunes existed outside this tradition throughout the twentieth century: art composers also composed them as a folk idiom and as a novelty from the past which they could modernize. For example, Henry Cowell composed eighteen works that he called *Hymn and Fuging Tunes*, but they were scored for instrumental ensembles. Ross Lee Finney also composed an orchestral piece entitled *Hymn, Fuging, and Holiday* in 1943. These works are outside the scope of this study, as I am analyzing or considering fuging tunes that survived in the context of the singing-school tradition and that have their roots in eighteenth-century New England hymnody.

Other scholars who have addressed *The Sacred Harp* have researched the history of the singing practice, examined the folk elements in the singing practice, and explored the interaction between life-long singers and new-comers to the practice. George Pullen Jackson, one of the

---

first scholars to study *The Sacred Harp* seriously, was a German specialist, but became interested in *The Sacred Harp* as a representation of a folk tradition. His work outlined the use of various shaped-note tunebooks throughout the South. He also traced many of these songs to familiar folk songs or ballads.\(^\text{12}\)

Dorothy Horn’s *Sing to Me of Heaven: A Study of Folk and Early American Material in Three Old Harp Books* concerns folk hymns in these songbooks instead of composed pieces such as the fuging tune.\(^\text{13}\) Buell Cobb’s *The Sacred Harp: A Tradition and Its Music* addresses the history of the book itself.\(^\text{14}\) He outlines its early history, discusses its revisions, and describes the history of the large conventions and the state of *Sacred Harp* singing as of 1978. John Bealle’s study of *The Sacred Harp* entitled *Public Worship, Private Faith: Sacred Harp and American Folksong* considers the book as a cultural object, demonstrating how the song book faced opposition through the urbanization of the Midwest.\(^\text{15}\) He then discusses the literary discourse surrounding the book and finally its revival as a part of a larger trend of the search for American folk music.\(^\text{16}\)

Another significant study of Sacred Harp singing is Kiri Miller’s dissertation, entitled *A Long Time Traveling: Song, Memory and the Politics of Nostalgia in the Sacred Harp Diaspora*. This study concerns the dichotomy between traditional singers, those who grew up singing *Sacred Harp*, and what she terms “diaspora” singers. Sacred Harp diaspora, as Miller defines it,

---


\(^\text{14}\) Cobb, *The Sacred Harp*.

\(^\text{15}\) Bealle, *Public Worship*, xii–xiii.

\(^\text{16}\) Ibid., 189–91.
is characterized by “travel to distant conventions, memorialization of dead singers and nostalgia for rural America.” While recognizing many potential divisions in the large Sacred Harp community such as North/South and Christian/folk enthusiasts for example, Miller describes the diaspora singer as any singer who recognizes or affiliates themselves with the Southern-tradition of singing. These are singers who came to Sacred Harp singing by any means and recognize and respond to the need to travel to those distant rural locations in order to learn from the source. Her study deals with the interaction of these two types of singers.

Many of these studies focus on the oral tradition from all these different periods or reconstructing the history of the book, but none of them focus specifically on the popular and historic fuging tune. As a result, my focus is on the continued use of the fuging tunes, which have been added to the *The Sacred Harp* and their stylistic differences. I show how these tunes reflect the goals and aesthetics of the editors based upon their reception at singings and targeted audience of the four major editions.

---

17 Kiri Miller, “A Long Time Traveling: Song, Memory, and the Politics of Nostalgia in the Sacred Harp Diaspora” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2001), iii.
Chapter 1

The First New England School and *The Sacred Harp*

Although Sacred Harp singing is a rural Southern singing tradition, many elements can be traced to eighteenth-century New England hymn singing. While one can compare traditional elements of the singing practice to the New England singing school, much of the music in *The Sacred Harp* also has its roots in this tradition. *The Sacred Harp*, its singings, and its conventions serve as one of the only performance traditions for the characteristic harmonic language for which eighteenth-century composers in New England, referred to now as the First New England School, were known. *The Sacred Harp* also includes hymn forms that have fallen out of popularity, such as the fuging tune and spiritual folk song. Singing school participants in eighteenth-century New England and those in the Southern singing tradition where *The Sacred Harp* began sang and published fuging tunes. Since the second half of the fuging tune has an imitative section, singers in both traditions enjoy the interaction between the parts. Despite the nineteenth century reform of sacred music by such figures as Lowell Mason, this distinctive style with its characteristic forms has survived through Southern singing practice. This chapter will demonstrate how the fuging tune flourished in America after its origin in England, and how the sacred music and musical education reform led by Lowell Mason in the nineteenth century encouraged others, such as Benjamin Franklin White, to cling to tradition through the fuging tune, the characteristic harmonic language, and singing-school practice.

While the first mention of a singing school occurred in 1710 in Virginia, this tradition spread and flourished in post-Revolutionary New England. The singing school became the primary way to raise literacy for congregants and to replace the practice of “lining out.” When “lining out” a psalm, the clergyman of the congregation would sing a line of the psalm, and then
the congregation would repeat it back.¹ This practice became a problem because even after the congregation learned to sing, they continued this practice. From this dissatisfaction with musical practice came the argument between Regular Singing, singing from notation, and the Usual Way, from oral tradition.² Boston was the hotbed for this debate, and many ministers defended one side or the other. Thomas Symmes supported Regular Singing and in 1720 published the first document on the matter, *The Reasonableness of Regular Singing or, Singing by Note*, which was followed by sermons and pamphlets by other supporters such as Cotton Mather.³ The solution to this illiteracy became the itinerant singing school master who would travel and hold singing schools. Symmes supported Regular Singing claiming that God would be glorified and the psalms would be much easier learned through this practice.⁴ Not only did congregants become more musically literate through these singing schools, but the repertory of music for the churches also grew.⁵

Members of the congregation appointed a “singing master” who organized these singing schools. Here participants learned the rudiments of singing: clefs, names of the notes, solmization, and various meters.⁶ This practice continued, and the itinerant singing school master would travel to different locations to lead these singing schools. These men usually had other jobs or trades, such as tanner or general store owner. In addition to their regular jobs and the income from traveling as a singing school teacher, these men also compiled their own tune

---


³ Ibid., 37.

⁴ Thomas Symmes, *The Reasonableness of Regular Singing or, Singing by Note*, 1720, quoted in ibid., 39.

⁵ Bruce, 135.

books to sell to their students. As musical literacy increased among the participants, composition became an important skill for teachers and students as well. It was in this way that the members of what H. Wiley Hitchcock coined as the First New England School of composers came to be. William Billings and Daniel Read are representative of this school. Many scholars recognize Billings as the most important composer of his time. Billings was born in 1746 and learned the rudiments of music from a singing school. According to newspaper announcements, he was leading his own singing schools by 1769. He published his first book the next year, which was very similar to English publications, such *Royal Melody Complete* by William Tans’ur. While Billings’s position in New England hymnody is very important, many other composers followed a similar career trajectory. Born in Connecticut, Daniel Read lived in New Haven for a large portion of his life. Since William Billings and Andrew Law taught singing schools in nearby Providence, Rhode Island, it is very likely that Read attended singing schools of these two influential composers. Other members of the First New England School composers include Supply Belcher, Amos Bull, Daniel Read, and Jeremiah Ingalls; the later two will be considered in more detail below.

After the debate about the Usual Way and Regular Singing in the 1720s, another reform centered in New England in the 1820s, and pushed this singing school practice further from the urban centers of New England and into the South. Lowell Mason and Thomas Hastings advocated the “better music” movement. The effects of this reform were felt long after the

---

7 Ibid., 39.

8 Ibid., 41, 140.


initial changes were implemented. Under the influence of Mason, the objectives of this reform emphasized the improvement of congregational singing. Just as those before him, Mason wanted to improve music literacy and create more “qualified” singers for the church. Also similar to singing school teachers before him, he kept a job outside of music in banking, at least at the beginning of his career. Unlike the First New England school composers, however, Mason’s methods did nothing to cultivate a particularly American idiom but instead relied upon and imitated European tastes and practices. Through this reform composers such as Mason and William Bradbury cultivated a style in America modeled on European composers.

Credited as the most influential character in musical reform in the early nineteenth century, Mason’s ideas affected choral music and music education in the urban centers of America such as Boston, and his influence was felt as far west as Cincinnati. He moved from Massachusetts to Georgia when he was twenty years old and became the organist and choirmaster at Independent Presbyterian Church. In his spare time he compiled a collection of church music, which included traditional English music, adaptations of classical pieces, and new compositions. At the urging of W. M. Goodrich, an organ builder from Boston, Mason showed his collection to the Boston Handel and Haydn Society, which approved of the collection. He later published this book under the name *Boston Handel and Haydn Society Collection of Church Music*, but was not recognized as the compiler because he was known as a banker in Georgia.¹¹ Upon an invitation to lead music at three churches in Boston, Essex Street, Hanover Street, and Park Street, Mason moved back to New England in 1827. Although he accepted this offer, he still maintained a banking job. As his choirs became popular and well known, he continued

---

¹¹ Hamm, *New World*, 163.
serving as the president of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society in 1827, maintaining this position for five years.\textsuperscript{12}

Nathaniel Gould also reported disdain for singing schools in America in the early nineteenth century. He noticed issues of decorum and behavior that he believed were unbecoming of young adults. Through his description of decorum at singing schools we can see additional evidence of the urban desire to reform singing schools. In his \textit{Church Music in America} from 1853, Gould recounted the state of singing schools at the turn of the nineteenth century. According to Gould, the singing school had become a completely secular practice, and some even believed that the students’ behavior was inappropriate. Singing-masters often held the schools in taverns and were called upon to play fiddle while participants danced. He also noted that young students often were more interested in socializing during breaks than singing during the sessions. Singing school master Andrew Law had also confirmed this also: “I viewed also the general character of singing Masters as not favourable to religion.”\textsuperscript{13} Further evidence of the secularism of the singing school is that William Billings, and other members of the First New England School, never held church positions.\textsuperscript{14} The clergy had no control over the singing school, and Lowell Mason believed it important for the clergy to regain power. As a part of his determination to improve congregational singing and musical literacy, Mason became active in the musical education of children both in the church and in the public school realm. His first experience with teaching children had occurred in churches through singing schools, creating an outlet for hymnals targeted at children, such as \textit{Juvenile Psalms; or, the Child’s Introduction to}

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 166.


\textsuperscript{14} Hamm, \textit{New World}, 44.
*Sacred Music*. After organizing the Boston Academy of Music in 1832 with other local musicians as an outlet for children to learn vocal music for free, he was appointed the Superintendent of Music for the Boston public schools.\textsuperscript{15}

As stated in the preface to *Juvenile Psalmist*, the purpose of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society was to improve the style of church music. Although the Society acknowledged a number of appropriate melodies written in America, it claimed that not enough attention had been paid to harmony.\textsuperscript{16} The style of this collection differs from that of the First New England School. Hamm notes that the songs are all attributed to European composers, with the exception of a few hymns that Mason composed himself. The chords are all complete triads; the songs include figured bass for optional organ accompaniment.\textsuperscript{17} For many of the pieces, Mason took the melody of a popular tune and fitted European voice-leading accompaniment, forcing the text into Common meter. In a vast contrast to the practice and function of singing schools, Mason discouraged congregational singing because of the cacophonous sound. Instead, he encouraged churches to use only a choir of “cultivated” singers. Congregations should only be invited to sing if the songs are simple and easy enough for a group of uneducated singers to sing.\textsuperscript{18} As the better music movement took hold in the cities, singing schools and fuging tunes became scarce. In cities, singing schools did not carry the same social function as they had in the country, as it was easier to socialize in the city. Eventually in the cities, the new style of Mason won out, and the fuging tunes and indigenous style were pushed into rural areas.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 167.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 163–64.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 164.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 165.

\textsuperscript{19} Cobb, 63.
This shift had to do not only with the style of music, but also with music education. Mason was an advocate of the Pestalozzian education practice, which became very popular and replaced the singing school tradition. After Boston, Cincinnati became an important center for this debate. John Bealle cites three reasons for Cincinnati’s importance as a center for reformation. Instead of its importance as a musical center, Cincinnati had common school pedagogy, the western printing trade, and frontier Presbyterianism. The work of Timothy Mason, Lowell Mason’s younger brother, served as a model for other western cities as they developed. The link between Lowell Mason’s reform and Cincinnati is clear through Timothy Mason’s arrival in Ohio and by Lyman Beecher’s tenure here, which was modeled after Lowell Mason’s work in Boston. Although these reformers viewed shaped-note notation as a backward practice, its popularity in the West made it necessary for Timothy Mason to publish his tune books with the patent notation.

B. F. White, through *The Sacred Harp*, preserved the tradition of the earlier style hymnody and the singing school through the music he included in his book. He was intent upon maintaining the traditional practices to which Southern, nineteenth-century singers were accustomed. Going against the Northern and European influence on hymnody, he made sure to keep the hymns in *The Sacred Harp* “traditional.” The concept of “traditional” has many implications in Sacred Harp singing, a discussion which has continued until present-day singings as Kiri Miller explores. Quickly becoming a sensitive topic, all singers have opinions about what “traditional” is and whose model should be followed. The legitimacy of a sing or a


22 Ibid.
convention is also based upon how it follows tradition, and singers who come from singing families are held up as the most authoritative voices on important manners. The emphasis on tradition prevailed even in the book’s early life. About these reforms and how they were affecting Sacred Harp singing, B. F. White wrote in 1855, “A spirit is abroad in the land to contend against a custom and system of music which has been in use, unmolested, for one hundred years or more; as new musicians spring up, new ideas spring up with them.”

Even before *The Sacred Harp* became important as a relic of the past, as some view it today, publishers promoted it as a preservation of a pure, “untainted” practice. The idea that this practice had existed since the time of William Billings without change is what draws some people to Sacred Harp singing and is what B. F. White strove to preserve.

Although today it has become its own tradition, *The Sacred Harp* (1844) and its singings preserve many aspects of the New England singing school. Compilers of shaped-note song books doubled as singing school teachers who often had other jobs. Leading singing schools was a secular pursuit in that it did not necessarily take part in a church and did not have any ties to specific denominations within Protestant Christianity. The singing school never substituted for religious activities, but rather was an extra-curricular activity that sometimes served as a social outlet just as the practice had during the eighteenth century. In addition to these similarities, musical ones abound. These include organal harmonies that emphasize fourth and fifth intervals, gapped-note scales reminiscent of folk-tunes, choosing notes, and fuging tunes. The fuging tune was a favorite of composers from the New England era, and although it fell out of favor in

---


25 Cobb, 32.
the urban centers and was not popular with B. F. White, other compilers and composers for *The Sacred Harp* continued composing fuging tunes, and they survive as participants up to the present have composed them for this collection.

Although the fuging tune did not originate in America, composers of the First New England School embraced it; the number of fuging tunes penned by these composers attests to its popularity in America. Indeed, the fuging tune was one of the main attractions of the singing school in addition to the schools’ success as a social venue. Some credit English composer William Tans’ur with the invention of the fuging tune. Before scholars became familiar with the fuging tune, some believed it was an unsuccessful attempt at writing a classical fugue, but Irving Lowens traces the term “fuging tune” to its earlier term “fuging psalm tune,” placing it in the genre of eighteenth-century metrical psalms and hymns. The fuging tune as we know it today is a binary form with a homophonic, homorhythmic A section, followed by a repeated polyphonic B section, often using points of imitation. The earliest fuging tunes had these contrapuntal sections simply as optional extensions of the homophonic section. In the eighteenth century, composers employed the term “fuging” to describe simple imitation, and psalters often used this term also. Pieces in Thomas Este’s 1592 psalter entitled *Whole Book of Psalms*, for example, demonstrated a style similar to fuging. The fuging often begins in the bass part, and then the entrances move up the system with the alto sometimes entering last. Neely Bruce speculates that these staggered entrances mimic the spatial disposition of the

---

26 Ibid., 56.


28 Ibid., 48.

29 Ibid., 47.
galleries in the New England churches.\textsuperscript{30} Billings articulated his enthusiasm for the fuging tune in the preface to his collection \textit{Singing Master’s Assistant}: “Notes flying after each other, altho’ not always the same sound. N.B. Music is said to be Fuging, when one part comes in after another; its beauties cannot be numbered. It is sufficient to say, that it is universally pleasing.”\textsuperscript{31}

While \textit{The Sacred Harp} preserves some of the actual music from the First New England School, Sacred Harp singing, or “shaped-note” singing, follows many of the traditional practices of the eighteenth-century singing school. Singers sit in a “hollow-square,” each side being a different voice part. Traditionally, the altos and tenors face one another, and the sopranos and the basses make up the other two sides and also face one another. The tenor part has the melody and is made up of both men and women, who sing the melody up an octave. While the gospel style of seven shaped-notes became popular and replaced many books of four shaped-notes tune, \textit{The Sacred Harp} uses only the traditional four shapes from the New England practice: fa, sol, la, and mi.\textsuperscript{32} The singers also typically sing the shapes before singing the text to the songs regardless of whether the song is familiar or not, which also comes from the New England tradition. The terminology used at a Sacred Harp sing also comes from the traditional singing school. The singers are often referred to as “a class,” and the leader leads “lessons.”\textsuperscript{33}

Composers such as Lowell Mason promoted what they viewed as a more sophisticated style of Protestant hymnody, which followed the Western European tradition. \textit{The Sacred Harp} was an outlet for singing school participants to continue the practice of these pre-reform customs and song types. The fuging tune is an important example of the prevalence of the older tradition

\textsuperscript{30} Bruce, 134.

\textsuperscript{31} William Billings, \textit{The Singing Master’s Assistant} (Boston: Draper and Folsom, 1778), quoted in Hamm, \textit{New World}, 145.

\textsuperscript{32} Cobb, 1.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 8.
since it survives from the First New England School. Two fuging tunes from the eighteenth century that have maintained their importance throughout the various editions of *The Sacred Harp* document the close link between the two traditions. In the *Core Repertory of Early American Psalmody*, Richard Crawford based this collection upon the most frequently printed hymns in an effort to give a sample of style of psalmody during the late eighteenth century.\(^{34}\) SHERBURN\(\)E has remained popular in the Sacred Harp practice, surviving four major editions of the book from 1844–1991.

Daniel Read’s SHERBURN\(\)E serves as an exemplar of the First New England School fuging tune. One of the most influential eighteenth-century composers, Read’s career and education were typical of a composer from the First New England School. Although born in Massachusetts, Read relocated to New Haven, Connecticut by the time he was twenty-five in 1782. Typical of tune-book compilers and composers, he held down other jobs in addition to his musical activities, such as general store owner and comb-maker. His musical training occurred at singing schools and possibly from such influential singing masters as William Billings and Andrew Law.\(^{35}\) Read’s place as an influential composer in New England is most evident through his collection *The American Singing Book* of 1785, the first collection of an American composer after Billings to focus on a single composer’s music.\(^{36}\) Read was clearly important among his contemporaries and as a composer of the First New England School, and his SHERBURN\(\)E is a popular selection at singings and conventions based upon its inclusion at conventions and sings


as recorded in the Minutes and Directory of Sacred Harp Singings online database. Read’s SHERBURNE is included in this study because of its consistent use in the hymnody and singing-school practice as evident from Crawford’s Core Repertory, its inclusion in the most recent edition of The Sacred Harp, and its popularity at recent singings.

Originally very popular in New England, SHERBURNE was frequently sung at many singing schools. Crawford compiled seventy-nine printings with over half of them in New England. Contemporary critics S. P. Cheney and F. O. Jones attested to the popularity of SHERBURNE and of Read’s skill as a composer, claiming that this piece placed Read on the same compositional level as Billings. In addition to its inclusion in Crawford’s Core Repertory, the online minutes of the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association shows that SHERBURNE ranked as one of the most frequently lead songs in the Sacred Harp tradition from 1995 to 2006. Having been sung 1,037 times over eleven years, it ranks as the thirtieth most sung piece. In 2005 2,051 singings were included in the ranking.

SHERBURNE’s homophonic A section (mm. 1–5, p. 21) is followed by a contrapuntal B section (mm. 6–20). While many elements are similar to Billings’s style, Read’s use of imitation differs slightly, and he employs some triadic harmony. The A section of the fuging tune is straight-forward and homophonic. Although there is triadic harmony throughout the tune, the significant chords lack thirds such as the first chord and the harmony at m. 5. Typical of a fuging tune as described by Lowens, the bass first enters followed by an entrance in each voice moving up the system; however, in this case, the alto part does not enter last. The distinctive characteristics of the fuging section lie in the imitation at the opening of the B section and the

38 Crawford, Core Repertory, lix.
repeated notes throughout. The exact imitation in Read’s section contrasts with the non-imitative counterpoint that some recognize as a characteristic of Billings.\textsuperscript{40} Instead, Read has exact imitation in all voices, which outline a D-major triad. Each voice has the same melody up through the following B-naturals, after which the imitation ends. The repeated notes in the next section create a sense of stasis. Although the words are declaimed at the same speed, the harmonic changes are infrequent and the triad is not outlined by each voice, but instead the chord is accented by these repetitions. Measure 11 is a good example not only of this static harmony but also of the open chords without thirds.

\textsuperscript{40} Bruce, 134.
Figure 2.1. SHERBURNE in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991.
Jeremiah Ingalls’s NORTHFIELD, like SHERBURNEx, is an important tune in both the early New England repertory as well as in the Sacred Harp tradition. Crawford shows that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was printed fifty-two times, with seventy percent of these in New England. Ingalls’s NORTHFIELD appeared in The Christian Harmony, or the Songster’s Companion (1805), and this collection proved significant in the Northern tune-book repertory. Over half of the 137 tunes in this publication maintain the style of early American hymnody. Many of the remaining songs are in a folk style and represent the first appearance of the spiritual folksong. Although common practice in the Southern tune books such as The Sacred Harp and Southern Harmony, Ingalls’s inclusion of these songs in The Christian Harmony marks one of the first inclusions of the spiritual folksong which displays another strong connection between eighteenth century Northern tunebooks and those from the nineteenth-century South.41

Although Ingalls’s Christian Harmony included NORTHFIELD, the hymn circulated in the decade before in The Village Harmony from 1796.42 The Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association also ranked NORTHFIELD as the twenty-sixth most led song in the last eleven years, with 1,086 sings at the recorded singings or conventions.43 One possible reason for its popularity among singers is its emphasis on the fuging section. Like Read’s SHERBURNEx, the homophonic A-section lasts only five measures before giving way to the B-section, which lasts fifteen

41 David G. Klocko, “Ingalls, Jeremiah,” Grove Music Online, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 26 June 2007), http://www.grovemusic.com. Charles Hamm also credits Ingalls for these folk characteristics. He shows other First New England School composers who used folk traits such as pentatonic scales, avoiding the fourth and sixth scale degrees. However, Hamm shows a rhythmic characteristic in Ingalls tune “Love Divine” that is reminiscent of dances. Hamm, New World, 158. These folk traits are an important area of scholarship surrounding Southern tune books, but as this study is based upon composed tunes, they are outside the scope of this study. Scholars who discuss this topic include Dorothy Horn in Sing to Me of Heaven and George Pullen Jackson in White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands.

42 Crawford, Core Repertory, xlvi.

measures. Similar to Read’s SHERBURN, the beginning of the fuging section outlines the tonic triad. However, the bass and alto emphasize the tonic by their entrances, and the tenor and treble part have the third and fifth of the triad in their entrance. Additionally, this fuging section is an example of the delayed entrance of the alto part, which Neely Bruce observed was not present in Read’s SHERBURN. 44

Harmonically, Ingalls stays within the style of his predecessors in of the First New England School. There are no modulations and important cadences are undecorated and simple dominant-to-tonic motions. An example of this simplicity is in the last cadence. Although this cadence is V–I, the dominant chord is missing the third, which weakens the direction, as there is no leading tone. Similarly, the cadence of the A section is a half cadence on C major, but this chord is also missing the third, leading to modal ambiguity and avoiding the link between e-natural and f, which would be important in the Western European tradition.

44 Bruce, 134.
Figure 2.2. NORTHFIELD in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991.

SHERBURNE and NORTHFIELD exemplify the First New England School style. Their frequent appearance in New England tune books at the turn of the nineteenth century attests to their popularity during that time and their survival in *The Sacred Harp* and popularity today attests to the affinity within this tradition for this style. Through *The Sacred Harp*, this compositional style and the fowing tune have remained popular. Since most of the tunes in *The Sacred Harp* have regular meters such as Common Meter, Short Meter, or Long Meter, there is the possibility of interchanging texts with the same meter. However in both of the songs shown here, the text is the same that was most associated with the tune in the late eighteenth century. Later composers for *The Sacred Harp* continued using eighteenth-century texts for contemporary music, setting the works of Nahum Tate (1652–1712), Nicholas Brady (1659–1726), and Isaac Watts (1674–1748). B. F. White strove to uphold tradition and although changes were allowed throughout publication, these traditional practices and the musical style and forms discussed here that are associated with the First New England School continued through subsequent editions of *The Sacred Harp*.

---

45 Crawford, lix, xlvi.

46 Hamm, *New World*, 41. A good example of this is contemporary composer Judy Hauf’s use of Tate and Brady texts, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.
Chapter 2
Fuging Tunes from 1844–1911

While many musical aspects of *The Sacred Harp* (1844) come directly from the First New England School, some of the songs composed for subsequent revisions have characteristics that distinguish them from that eighteenth-century practice. As in the First New England School, the harmonic language of the nineteenth-century pieces in *The Sacred Harp* places importance on each voice. Instead of focusing on voice-leading, as most choral music does, composers writing for *The Sacred Harp* were more likely to fashion melodies that were interesting for the singers.¹ The folk hymn emerged during the middle of the nineteenth century, in which the melody of a folk song often features a gapped scale and pentatonicism, and arrangement in a three- to four-part texture. Many of these tunes are attributed to the early compilers of the Southern tune books, who often compiled and arranged them, resulting in pentatonic folk hymns, which were often in open voicing with many fourths, fifths, and octaves.² These folk elements also appear in some of the fuging tunes composed during the mid-nineteenth century. Dorothy Horn’s research shows characteristic cadences and melody types that appear in these folk hymns.³ The fuging tunes from the nineteenth-century period exhibit characteristics consistent with folk-hymn trends. The form is still consistent with the eighteenth-century practice; however, composers began incorporating distinctive cadential figures, melodic figures and contours, and a varied rhythmic texture that resemble some of the folk-hymn characteristics, but also may simply demonstrate a change in aesthetics.

² Ibid., 266.
The fuging tunes in *The Sacred Harp* from the later part of the nineteenth century continue in the style of the First New England School through the importance of each voice just as the remainder of the pieces in the book do, and they also incorporate contemporary styles and tastes. This chapter concerns fuging tunes from the nineteenth century that composers fashioned specifically for *The Sacred Harp*. These fuging tunes exhibit changes in rhythmic activity and melodic statements characteristic of songs from this era and borrowings from the folk hymn tradition. *Eternal Day* and *Sardis* are two of the most popular fuging tunes from the middle of the nineteenth century. Stylistically they exhibit stock phrases and rhythms, while Denson’s *Jasper* represents his early compositional style, rooted in the New England tradition. Composers from the mid-nineteenth century continued to employ this old form of the fuging tune, but incorporated the popular hymn styles of composers such as Benjamin Franklin White.

Charles Hamm and Kay Norton have proposed a variety of scenarios to explain the use of these folk elements in Southern tune-books such as *The Sacred Harp*. Based upon her study of Jesse Mercer’s 1810 *Cluster of Spiritual Songs* from Georgia, Norton believes that the shape-note practice was a convenient way for these Southern singing school masters to institutionalize a practice that was alive and well in the South. Hamm hypothesizes that this distinctive harmonic style came as a part of the institutionalization of shape-note singing and the need to keep each melodic part interesting, as this tradition was one of entertainment as well as pedagogy. In this scenario, the tunes originated traditionally and were orally transmitted, and the compilers subsequently adapted them for a larger group to sing. With each successive edition of *The Sacred Harp*, the editors updated the collection and tradition by including contemporary composers such as J. P. Reese, T. J. Denson, and Sarah Lancaster. Composing in a style that

---


5 Hamm, 267.
followed tradition while imitating the work of their teachers or employing contemporary popular musical practice, these composers and their musical style suggests reliance upon these two sources. Nineteenth-century composers retained the form inherited as well as the characteristic static harmony from the First New England School. In addition, Southern singing-school masters usually retained the voicing of these tunes, the melodies, and the rhythmic characteristics.

Nineteenth-century composers of *The Sacred Harp* learned the tradition of singing and composition from B. F. White himself and perhaps shared or imitated his stylistic preferences. One of the most influential nineteenth-century singing-school teachers and composers was J. P. Reese (1828–1900). An important and well-known teacher, he taught students who emulated him along with his contemporaries, and his successors held him up as a standard. In his centennial history of the Chattahoochee Musical Convention, Earl Thurman recalls that as a director of Sacred Harp songs, no one was as talented as Reese. Thurman connects Reese directly with B. F. White by recollecting that no one came as close to White’s style of leading as Reese.  

Some, like Neely Bruce, speculate that B. F. White preferred the three-voice idiom because he did not like the female voice in a low range. Even though Reese’s *Eternal Day* has four voices, the tradition of the three-voice idiom can be seen in the motion of the alto voice. When including alto parts they often created a three-part counterpoint for four voices, perhaps as a result of S. M. Denson’s edition of 1911.

---


Reese’s *Eternal Day* from 1859 demonstrates how the nineteenth-century fuging tune broke with the style of the First New England School. Through neighbor notes and eighth-note runs, Reese infuses this tune with more rhythmic activity than First New England School examples. Since Reese composed it in 1859, the same year as one of *The Sacred Harp* editions under the supervision of the Southern Musical Convention which B. F. White founded, *Eternal Day* displays a connection to White’s tradition. Unlike the static harmonic motion, note repetition, and persistent emphasis of the triad in the melody found in the examples from Read and Ingalls in Chapter 2, *Eternal Day* employs stepwise motion in the melodic contour. For example, in m. 3 the bass voice emphasizes the tonic and dominant, but also has a lower neighbor note (see Figure 3.1). The parallel motion in m. 2 is consistent with Hamm’s observation that composers in the Southern hymnody tradition followed counterpoint practices in contrast to traditional practices of voice-leading. The top three voices contain parallel octaves and parallel fifths. The cadence to the A section in m. 7 results in parallel fourths between the treble and the alto. While the music has parallel fourths, in practice the singers sing the treble part in octaves, producing parallel fifths.

In addition to the parallel motion associated with the Southern tradition, other musical characteristics further link *Eternal Day* to folk hymns, such as its cadences and rhythmic elements. Dorothy Horn devotes a chapter of her book to centonization in songs from three old harp books, *The Sacred Harp, Southern Harmony* (1835), and *The Harp of Columbia* (1849). Centonization refers to putting together pieces of songs, or inserting sections of one song into another, thus creating songs with similar characteristics and shared phrases.⁹ Even though *Eternal Day* does not exhibit all the characteristics Horn describes, its final cadence, melodic

---

contour, and rhythmic texture do show similarities to Horn’s examples. She categorizes the
cadences according to their mode and shows characteristic cadential figures in these different
modes. In her analysis, the final in the Aeolian mode is often approached from below. In many
tunes, the final is initially reached by a descending third, but then embellished with a lower
neighbor note. However, composers approach some cadences by step from below, after an
ascending third.\textsuperscript{10} Reese approaches the final cadence in \textit{Eternal Day} from below in the same
manner as the six examples Horn provides, but has some rhythmic variation.\textsuperscript{11} The cadence in
the treble part between mm. 6–7 also follows this rule, although the figure is in the treble instead
of the tenor. A large number of songs from early the nineteenth century approached the final
from below, just as \textit{Eternal Day}. Horn documents this cadence in the \textit{The Sacred Harp} and
\textit{Southern Harmony}.\textsuperscript{12}

The melodic contour in \textit{Eternal Day} also exhibits characteristics associated with folk
hymns, the most prevalent of which is a four-note figure found in the treble part leading to the
final cadence. The figure appears in the treble in m. 23 (see Figure 3.1) during the last
melismatic phrase. The other voices show variations by inverting the four-note figure, like in the
tenor and the alto part in m. 24. This example exhibits similarities in its treatment in various
tunes Horn used as examples. Horn shows this four-note pattern is a common rhythmic element
among tunes that are in the folk hymn tradition; however, in \textit{Eternal Day} it demonstrates how
prominent composers of these hymns and fuging tunes created more rhythmic variety in a
different style from the First New England School composers. Reese’s use of it in \textit{Eternal

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 52.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 51.

\textsuperscript{12} White’s brother-in-law William Walker edited and published \textit{Southern Harmony} after the two collaborated on it.
DAY actually antedates all but one of the folk hymn examples from Horn’s study by approximately fifty years.  

This four-note rhythmic pattern is atypical of Reese’s output at this time, and few tunes from this time period share the rhythmic density of ETERNAL DAY. Those that do exhibit similar rhythmic figures are by Reese’s brother and T. W. Carter. Only two of Reese’s twenty pieces have this cadential figure, and for one of these, he is only credited as the arranger. Of the approximately forty-one songs from 1859, a number of them share the rhythmic density of Reese and the four note eighth-note figure that Reese employs. The most remarkable examples are those of H. S. Reese, his brother. H. S. Reese was a minister, and Thurman attributes his moderate activity in the Sacred Harp community to his professional and religious responsibilities. Although he was not as active as J. P. Reese in singing conventions, he was present at the Chattahoochee Convention between 1865 and 1900. Despite his other responsibilities, his tunes, like J. P. Reese’s, are considered very important among singers. Some of these rhythmic figures also pervade songs from earlier in the tradition. Composer T. W. Carter’s songs from 1844 have particularly dense rhythms similar to Reese’s. Along with Reese, Carter is considered one of the most important figures in the beginning of the

---

13 Horn, 53. WARRENTON by J. Williams and William Walker uses this four-note pattern in the same manner as Reese in ETERNAL DAY; it is stated and used in inversion. In Ruth Denson-Edwards’s INFINITE DAY, she analyzes this figure almost as a theme throughout the hymn. This hymn is dense melodically and very melismatic. But Reese’s ETERNAL DAY antedates Denson’s tune. Horn’s examples, save the Williams-Walker tune above, are from the twentieth century, while ETERNAL DAY dates from 1869.

14 H. S. Reese’s tunes are NEW HOSANA, for which he is credited as arranger, MELANCHOLY DAY, and WORLD UNKNOWN.

15 Miller, Chattahoochee, 49.

16 Carter arranged FLORENCE, EXHILERATION, and IRWINTON.
Chattahoochee Convention. He is listed among B. F. White, King, and Reese as one of the leaders of the early part of the singing convention.\footnote{Miller, Chattahoochee, 32, 36, 41, 58.}

Figure 3.1. ETERNAL DAY in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991.

\[ \text{ETERNAL DAY, C.M.D.} \]

```
D Minor Charles Wesley, 1759.

1. O what of all my suf’ring here, if, Lord, Thou count me meet
   With that enrapured host t’ap-pear
   Riv’ers of life di-vide I see,
   And wor.ship at Thy feet.
   And trees of pur-a-dise.

2. O what hath Je-sus bought for me, be-fore myr-vish-thedeyes?
   With that enrapured host t’ap-pear
   Riv’ers of life di-vide I see, Riv’ers of life di-vide I see.
   And wor.ship at Thy feet.
   And trees of pur-a-dise.
```

Copyright © 1991 by Sacred Harp Publishing Company. Used by permission

Folk characteristics, such as the cadential figure and the four-note figure, are the stylistic elements exhibited in the fuging tunes of *The Sacred Harp*, and the musical similarities between these stock folk elements and the composed fuging tunes do not necessarily indicate folk origin. The composers may have employed these stock figures to imitate popular style. Horn’s study shows examples of these common figures, regardless of whether the piece is a folk hymn with its origin in oral tradition or a composed tune employing these same popular characteristics.
ETERNAL DAY shares some similarities with songs from earlier in the tradition and those who were contemporaries of the composer, especially his brother. Buell Cobb asserts that Reese and his contemporaries most likely learned their skill from B. F. White, who was known for these folk adaptations as part of his distinctive style. Reese was active as a composer in the years directly following B. F. White, and he would have had close activity with him. ETERNAL DAY exemplifies the changing style of the fuging tune during this period of transition after the First New England School. While ETERNAL DAY maintains the form that the First New England School composers employed, Reese incorporates other characteristics that he would have been exposed to through both his teachers and the songs in the book itself. Some of these characteristics would continue to be used in the shape-note tradition.

Unlike Reese’s incorporation of stock figures from folk elements, T. J. Denson’s early fuging tune JASPER is closer in style to the First New England School style. Denson (1863–1935) belonged to one of the most important families in the shape-note singing tradition and the publication history of The Sacred Harp. His uncle James Denson was a composer, and his CHRISTMAS ANTHEM appeared in the first edition of The Sacred Harp in 1844. According to James’s footnotes, the elder Denson was a prolific composer who planned to publish a group of songs, but never had the opportunity. The more recognized shaped-note musical careers instead came from his two nephews, T. J. and S. M. Denson. Late in life, the two brothers would go on to found the Sacred Harp Publishing Company after purchasing the rights from the Johnson family after Joe S. Johnson’s edition of 1911. These two brothers established the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, which published the current 1991 edition, so it remains rooted in the tradition established by the Densons and participants still refer to it as the “Denson

---

18 Cobb, 74.

19 James, 225; Cobb, 110.
revision.”\textsuperscript{20} With his brother S. M. Denson, T. J. Denson taught singing schools in Northern Alabama and Georgia, and kept the tradition strong in that region.\textsuperscript{21} In 1909 James praised the family for their abilities to read and sing music of all kinds, and that those who knew the family agreed that “the Densons cannot be beaten in singing.”\textsuperscript{22} Their descendants are still active in Sacred Harp singing, and current scholars and singers consider them authorities on the tradition’s singings and conventions.\textsuperscript{23} Unlike B. F. White’s affiliation with the Missionary Baptist Church, the Densons are from a Methodist family.

Although T. J. Denson’s JASPER dates from later than Reese’s ETERNAL DAY, Denson composed it before the James edition of 1911, hence its inclusion in this chapter. JASPER exhibits elements of the First New England School such as outlining the tonic triad in the melody, rhythmic texture, and voicing. Denson’s emphasis of a triad recalls Read’s SHERBERNE, as all the voices, except for the treble, move by third in m. 2. In m. 6 all the voices outline the F major tonic triad. Although JASPER shows more rhythmic variation than First New England School fugal tunes, especially in the B section, this variation is less pronounced than the melismatic eighth notes and dotted rhythms in ETERNAL DAY. The rhythmic texture in JASPER moves by quarter note instead of the melismatic runs in ETERNAL DAY. In this manner, Denson’s JASPER displays a similarity to the First New England School. The fuging section does have dotted rhythms; however, these are in the middle of the fuging section, and they do not lead up to a cadence in the same way this rhythm does in ETERNAL DAY. These characteristics are especially typical of Denson’s early twentieth-century compositions, while some other

\textsuperscript{20} Cobb, 7, 110.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 112.
\textsuperscript{22} James, 527.
\textsuperscript{23} Amanda Denson was a niece of Paine Denson. She grew up singing and served as a source for Miller’s history of the Chattahoochee convention. She also serves as an authority for singing in Miller’s dissertation.
contemporaneous fuging tunes have even more rhythmic activity.\textsuperscript{24} Denson’s LOGAN from 1908 exhibits these same qualities. For the most part it has a distinct quarter-note texture with the addition of eighth-note melismas in the B section. The melodic contour also emphasizes a triad instead of making use of neighbor and passing notes. LOGAN uses the four-note motive in the B section melismatically; however, each voice only has one statement of it. LOGAN, like JASPER, does not have the dotted-rhythms like ETERNAL DAY.

While the triadic emphasis and rhythmic variation differ between Reese and Denson, Denson’s voicing demonstrates the increased use of and attention to the alto voice. Denson’s use of the alto voice aligns him with the First New England School more than it does with the original Sacred Harp composers, such as B. F. White. JASPER employs all four voices in counterpoint giving all four voices a distinct entrance in the B section. Denson composed JASPER after Reese’s ETERNAL DAY, so perhaps he was more separated from the three-voice idiom.

Different communities and individuals vied for the allegiance of the singing community during the turn of and the early part of the twentieth century, which created a tumultuous time for The Sacred Harp. In addition, different publishers attempted to create the most authoritative version. Many participants were drawn to what editors claimed was traditional or original, and the changing rhythmic texture that became popular with fuging tunes, like JASPER, held more strictly to the original First New England School style.

\textsuperscript{24} A. M. Cagle, 316, 439.
Sarah Lancaster’s SARDIS dates from 1869 and stylistically stands between JASPER and ETERNAL DAY. SARDIS dates from the time of Reese’s ETERNAL DAY, but does not exhibit the
same stylistic characteristics. Although there is very sparse biographical information on Sarah Lancaster, she and her sister, P. R. Lancaster, studied with Reese and B. F. White in singing schools in Georgia. SARDIS demonstrates a simple rhythmic texture with a mixture of the elements that characterize ETERNAL DAY and JASPER. Lancaster’s use of the four-voice texture and a triadic melodic contour are similar to Denson’s early pieces, but some of the rhythmic elements are more in line with Reese’s ETERNAL DAY. In the fuging section, the melodic contour mostly outlines a triad, like the tenor part in mm. 8–9. Although the linear motion of the parts is active, the harmonic function is very simple with repeated chords, especially in the fuging section. Also, the prevailing quarter-note texture is interrupted by melismatic texture leading up to the cadences. As in Denson’s JASPER, each voice enters independently in the fuging section beginning in m. 7, creating a four-part imitative texture instead of the three-part exhibited in ETERNAL DAY.

SARDIS shares the same rhythmic figures as ETERNAL DAY. The distinctive rhythmic figure before each cadence recalls some of the melodic and rhythmic figures in Horn’s study, especially those of Reese. In mm. 3–4 of SARDIS, all the voices reach G-major cadence after a dotted quarter-note figure. The same figure appears in the A section cadence as well as in the song’s final cadence. SARDIS does not have as much rhythmic variation as ETERNAL DAY, but the figures before each cadence are different from the First New England School examples from Chapter 2. True to Horn’s observations about typical cadences in major keys, the cadence note in the tenor of the last chord is approached from above.

Figure 3.3. SARDIS in The Sacred Harp, ed. 1991.

---

25 James, 374.

26 Horn, 52.
Mid-nineteenth and early twentieth-century tunes in *The Sacred Harp* demonstrate a blending of styles. The presence of works from the First New England School contributed to *The Sacred Harp*’s revival in non-Southern areas, as choir directors in the late twentieth century searched for American choral music for their ensembles. *The Sacred Harp* also attracted the interest of folk music scholars such as George Pullen Jackson whose writings contributed to the demand for this music. Through the frequently used cadences and stock phrases, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fuging tunes demonstrate the influence of the older composers and the singing school masters on the present generation. The earlier fuging tunes from the mid-nineteenth century, like Reese’s and Lancaster’s, exhibit some of the characteristics from the First New England School such as static chords with repeated quarter notes, but they also display...
increased rhythmic variety and melismas. The Reese brothers’ songs from 1859, in particular, show a difference in fuging tune style during this time period. Lancaster’s SARDIS similarly used the dotted-rhythm pattern before cadences perhaps to emphasize these points of repose. Lancaster’s and Denson’s tunes are both different from those of Reese in that the linear motion of each part outlines a triad, and in the case of SARDIS, most prevalently in the fuging section. In the static quarter notes and emphasis of a triad, these two songs recall those of Daniel Read.

ETERNAL DAY, JASPER, and SARDIS exhibit the manner in which composers incorporated different musical elements to the preexisting genre of the fuging tune. Some of them were more ambitious rhythmically, like J. P. Reese’s and his brother’s tunes. Lancaster and Denson arguably returned to the aesthetic of the First New England School. The nineteenth-century fuging tunes demonstrate the importance of tradition, in that they draw on musical elements of the First New England School. They also show how composers updated the genre by incorporating new musical elements like stock phrases and cadential figures from the folk tradition. The variety of influences displayed in the book at large and specifically with the genre of the fuging tune is evident from the examples from this era in Sacred Harp.
Chapter 3

The Denson Revision of 1936

The early twentieth century saw various revisions of The Sacred Harp, and this period brought with it a tumultuous time in shape-note publication. The different revisions came from various groups of people who claimed authenticity by tracing their efforts to Benjamin Franklin White’s original 1844 edition. Throughout these changes, a trope in the Sacred Harp community was B. F. White’s admonition in his 1869 edition to “ask for the old paths and walk therein.”¹ His successors took this to heart and even used the sentiment to appeal to the singing community. In context his statement refers to the rise of a seven-shape note system of singing,² but it also served as an important principle for a practice so steeped in tradition. The different early twentieth-century editions vied for acceptance by singers, who had the power to keep them in print through their willingness to purchase and use them at conventions. Although four different revisions enjoyed popularity among the larger Sacred Harp community, the loyalties to different books were regional. Published in 1902, the Cooper Revision had a large following in the western regions like Alabama, and in 2007 sixty-seven singings were led from the Cooper book.³ Despite the Cooper Revision’s continued use, the 1936 edition from the Denson family proved more popular and the majority of 2007 singings, 277, used it. Conventions often allow time for an “Alternate Book” session where participants may sing from other editions. The James edition from 1911 enjoyed use until 1976, but because of its biographical footnotes, it was


as much a historical document in conception as a tunebook for practical use. As John Bealle explains in his book *Public Worship, Private Faith*, revising *The Sacred Harp* gives the tradition vitality. Historically, a new revision of *The Sacred Harp* provides a snapshot of a particular trend, it recognizes participating members by including new composers, it may make some statement about past revisions, and it comments on other popular books.

Writings about the different editions of *The Sacred Harp* exhibit the importance of upholding tradition and which groups have adopted which edition. In all these editions, fuging tunes continued to be included and newly composed ones incorporated too. In fact, in the 1936 Denson Revision, most of the pieces composed between 1932 and its publication are fuging tunes, which indicate the continued popularity of this genre. The fuging tunes from this era show a reliance on tradition through form and texture, while expanding the boundaries of harmonic language, difficulty, and rhythmic activity. While representing the recreational aspect of singing, the fuging tune takes skill and practice requiring singers to be familiar with the style or adept at sight reading. The eighteenth-century First New England School fuging tunes can be characterized by quarter-note chord texture, static motion, and repetitive rhythms. The composers of the *The Sacred Harp*, 1844–1911 changed somewhat from the musical characteristics of First New England School style. While the form did not change, nineteenth-century composers did not adhere strictly to the rhythmic conventions of the First New England School composers. Nineteenth-century pieces can be characterized by rhythms and cadential patterns from the folk hymns. O. A. Parris’s, T. J. Denson’s, and Howard Denson’s pieces in

---

4 Cobb, 84.
the 1936 edition of *The Sacred Harp* exhibit many of the characteristics from the second generation of Sacred Harp composers, such as J. P. Reese, which broke from the rhythmic characteristics of the First New England School. This chapter will deal with the importance of tradition as it relates to B. F. White’s legacy and the musical characteristics of the popular fuging tunes from the 1936 Denson Revision. Early twentieth-century fuging tunes exhibit a stylistic heterogeneity, which shows the influence of the First New England School and the nineteenth-century Sacred Harp composers.

The two most popular early twentieth-century editions of *The Sacred Harp* came from B. F. White’s son J. L. White and W. M. Cooper. Both editors tried to link their books to B. F. White’s tradition, whose authority was in jeopardy through different attempts at modernization after his death in 1869. During this period J. L. White modernized the tradition through incorporating gospel songs or hymns employing the seven note shaped in *The New Sacred Harp: A Collection of Hymn-Tunes, Anthems, and Popular Songs* (1884). Although J. L. White quoted his father in this collection’s preface, his claim did little to popularize his collection. Buell Cobb observes that George Pullen Jackson does not even mention the book in his extensive study, and no singing or convention practice today uses it.

W. M. Cooper’s revision of 1902 remains in use and is the only other revision to seriously rival Denson’s 1936 revision in certain regions. While most singings use the 1936 Denson Revision, some still use the Cooper Revision, which came out of South-Eastern Alabama. Jackson found that Cooper’s revision maintained its popularity in the western area of the singing tradition such as parts of Alabama and Texas, but not in the South-Eastern regions

---

8 Ibid., 88.
where B. F. White’s original revisions were popular. In the 1970s, singers used the Cooper edition from Florida to Texas, and the Southern regions of Alabama and Mississippi. Jackson and others credit the rejection of the Cooper edition in more traditional regions to its original purpose, which was an attempt at modernizing an old tradition by including gospel-style songs and adding an alto part. Ironically, Cooper’s addition of the alto part has since become commonplace, as S. M. Denson also added the alto parts for the 1911 James edition, and these remain in the 1991 edition. Also detracting from the credibility of Cooper’s revision among traditional singers was his geographical separation from the origins of the tradition. Bealle points out that none of the compilers of the Cooper edition could claim B. F. White as their teacher. Since the Denson revision incorporated the same elements as Cooper’s such as alto parts and updated rudiments, it seems that part of the loyalty to the Denson revision had as much to do with the editors’ reputations and locations as with the actual contents of the book.

The Cooper revision did not achieve widespread popularity in all regions of Sacred Harp singing activity, but its use in some areas may have served as a catalyst for those who credited B. F. White as their teacher to produce a revision that better followed tradition. Already known as a historian of this tradition with his *Brief History of the Sacred Harp* in 1904, James attempted to instill respect for B. F. White among the new Sacred Harp participants when the connection to the original editor B. F. White was not as important. In 1911 the United Sacred Harp Musical Association commissioned a new revision entitled *Original Sacred Harp*. This association, formed in 1904 and headed by James, aimed to be the most important and far-reaching Sacred

---

9 Jackson, 106.

10 Ibid., 90.


12 Ibid., 148.
Harp association. James’s revision added eighty-two songs, alto parts by S. M. Denson, and historical and biographical information about the composers. The editors, who included James and well-known singers and composers, stated their intent of fidelity to the original edition. Moreover, they confronted other popular hymn trends:

In these compositions there are but a few of the twisted rills and frills of the unnatural shaking of the voice, in unbounded proportions, which have in the last decade so demoralized and disturbed the church music of the present age, in this section, but in other sections to an alarming extent.

Despite adding songs and alto parts, the editors evoked the language of B. F. White’s 1869 edition, attempting to give it the authority of the previous revision. Additionally, the editors were careful not to change to the system of seven shape-note that had gained popularity in the interim, but maintained what they referred to as the “old harmony.”

S. M. Denson (1854–1936) and T. J. Denson (1863–1935), who were involved in The Sacred Harp early in their lives, led the James Revision of 1911. Both had an enormous influence as teachers, while singers and historians today consider them responsible for the continued strength of the Sacred Harp tradition in parts of Alabama. S. M. Denson was credited with many of the alto parts for the James Revision, and T. J. was on the revision committee. In addition to periodically revising the book, at 580 songs, the size of the James revision necessitated a new edition. This 1936 revision captured the devotion of many traditional singers

---

13 Jackson, 102–104.
14 Bealle provides a thorough and informative table as an appendix in Public Worship, 265; and Cobb, 96.
15 Cobb, 94.
16 J. S. James, Preface to Original Sacred Harp (Atlanta, GA: n.p., 1911), iii.
17 Cobb, 96–97.
18 Ibid., 112.
and came from the Denson family. After purchasing the rights to the book from the James family, T. J. Denson organized the Sacred Harp Publishing Company in such a way that his sons, Howard and Paine, would be the president and secretary. Claiming a connection to James through the Densons gave it credibility to those who were concerned with authenticity.\(^{19}\) Like other editions and revisions before it, the Densons’ 1936 edition tied their efforts to previous editions and may owe a portion of their success to associating their edition with the past. Bealle notes that the editors did this in three ways: naming it *Original* as James had done, keeping a very similar content and style, and self-proclaiming their edition as the “true successor” to the James edition.\(^{20}\) While this edition did cling to the format of the James edition, the editors made some changes. One of these changes was removing 176 of the least popular songs not only to decrease the size of the book but also to make room for new compositions, of which forty-one were added. Admitting the most substantial change in format, Paine Denson on behalf of the editorial board, rewrote the rudiments in the front of the book. Denson’s rewriting of the rudiments exhibited knowledge of conventional music theory practices.\(^{21}\) In making these changes, Denson modernized the theoretical explanations of music without updating the hymns and tunes.\(^{22}\)

Throughout the changes in ownership and editing of *The Sacred Harp*, many elements of its musical style remained consistent. Contemporaneous singers still composed hymns, anthems, and fuging tunes in a similar harmonic language, although they included some updates such as accidentals and secondary cadences. The most popular fuging tunes from this edition

\[^{19}\text{Ibid., 113.}\]

\[^{20}\text{Bealle, *New Strings*, 27.}\]

\[^{21}\text{Howard Denson and Paine Denson, preface to *The Sacred Harp* (Haleyville, AL: Sacred Harp Publishing Company, 1936), 10.}\]

\[^{22}\text{Cobb, 113.}\]
date from 1935 and represent new compositional trends. The texts the composers set are worth addressing as well. While the tunes in the last chapter, dating from 1844 to 1911, used the eighteenth-century poetry, the text to the 1935 tunes was contemporary, or at least from the same century. Composer O. A. Parris wrote the texts to *The Better Land* and *Homeward Bound*, and James Rowe penned the text to *Odem* (Second) in 1915. These texts deal with dying and heaven and refer to “going to a better land” and being “homeward bound.” A popular handout at current singings, which Lisa Grayson published, addresses what she refers to as “gloom and doom” in the songs. In her brief explanation, she recognizes the religious roots of the practice and explains that current singers do not necessarily subscribe to the beliefs expressed in the songs.²³ Kiri Miller in her dissertation goes into more depth, explaining that death has a significant meaning for Sacred Harp singers and that by remembering the dead and acknowledging it, death represents the transmission of the tradition.²⁴ The history of the Denson revision of 1936 shows that the editors considered preservation a priority and that they had a responsibility to carry on the tradition of B. F. White. Linking the edition with B. F. White’s authority in the Sacred Harp community gave the edition credibility.

O. A. Parris composed *The Better Land* in 1935. According to the *Minutes and Directory of Sacred Harp Singings* online database, it is ranked the thirteenth most sung song from 1995 to 2006 with 1,194 singings over the course of 2,051 conventions.²⁵ Parris was active in the Southern singing practice by composing, editing, and participating in conventions. Composing four songs for *The Sacred Harp*, he was also active in the larger Southern tunebook


²⁴ Kiri Miller, “A Long Time Traveling: Song, Memory, and the Politics of Nostalgia in the Sacred Harp Diaspora” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2005), 239.

tradition with his revision with John Deason of *Christian Harmony* in 1958.\(^{26}\) Like some of the songs discussed above, *The Better Land* adheres to the form of the fuging tune, with different characteristics than those from the First New England School. With the fuging section three times as long as the homophonic section, perhaps his emphasis on the polyphonic portion of the song has contributed to its continued popularity. Harmonically, *The Better Land* has more progressive elements than other tunes in Sacred Harp practice. For example, *The Better Land* includes a tonally open A section. In B-flat major, the A section ends with a cadence from C major to F major. The E-natural in m. 5 is an accidental in the key of B-flat, but in this case the accidental forms a part of the V/V harmony. The use of the half cadence at the end of the A section displays a similarity to the practice in the First New England School, but in the First New England School tunes, the cadence would be in the original mode. The nineteenth-century examples do not share this harmonic element, and the A-section ends in the tonic, making both sections tonally closed. Of thirty-six tunes composed between 1932 and 1936, twenty-three of them are fuging tunes. Most of these have two tonally closed sections, so Parris’s harmonic scheme differs from contemporary fuging tunes, even others that he composed.

In addition to Parris’s harmonic scheme, some of the stylistic traits in *The Better Land* make it a difficult piece for beginners, including the rhythmic variation in all parts and the range. In the First New England School, composers had used static rhythm. *The Better Land* exhibits rhythmic activity with many eighth notes, such as the bass part in the last eight measures. The range of *The Better Land*, an eleventh in the bass and a ninth in the treble, also may require additional practice. Although Sacred Harp singers use relative pitch, this still might be a demanding range for singers. While *The Better Land* shows more harmonic variation than what is typically expected in *The Sacred Harp*, Parris employed traditional counterpoint

\(^{26}\) Cobb, 234, fn 18. William Walker published *Christian Harmony* in 1866.
practices of Sacred Harp composers. In nineteenth-century tunes, composers had often employed three-part counterpoint in four voices, usually with the alto entering with another voice. The fuging section in *The Better Land* begins with three entrances: the bass and treble enter together, and the parts only come back to a homophonic texture for three measures at the end.
T. J. Denson had a long composing career, which spanned from the James edition of 1911 to the first Denson revision in 1935, although he died before that songbook was published.

ODEM (Second) ranks forty-second in popularity in the Minutes and Directory of Sacred Harp Singings online database with 924 singings.\textsuperscript{27} Denson composed it in 1935, the same year he died, and the text dates from 1915. As outlined in Chapter 3, Denson’s style in 1907 can be characterized by block chords moving in repeated quarter notes making the rhythmic texture uniform during the A section and at the end of the B section. Although not as rhythmically

\textsuperscript{27} www.fasola.org, accessed 26 June 2007.
active as *The Better Land* with melismas in the fuging section, *Odem* exhibits a change in style from Denson’s early tunes to those from later in his life. In fact, many of Denson’s tunes published in 1935 have a more rhythmically active texture than his 1907 *Jasper*. Three of them have melismatic text setting in the B section,\(^{28}\) while the other two are rhythmically similar to *Odem*.\(^{29}\)

*Odem*’s harmonic scheme and cadential figures display a similarity to the nineteenth-century tunes. Denson included no printed accidentals, and the A and B sections are tonally closed. Denson emphasizes the tonic triad by outlining it in the first measure in the tenor part, while all the other voices have tonic triad notes as well. The cadential figure has a dotted quarter-note rhythm, reminiscent of the pieces from the previous generation, like *Eternal Day* from 1859. The rhythmic activity and the characteristic cadential figures, however, differentiate *Odem* from the First New England School practice, but Denson’s static harmony and his emphasis on the triad remain in the earlier tradition. This style exemplified a trend instead of an anomaly in style, as his other works published in 1936 share these characteristics, and some have even more complex rhythms.\(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\) 397, 380; 293 is not melismatic but has many eighth-note figures in the B section.

\(^{29}\) 382 has a very similar setting to *Odem*.

\(^{30}\) Denson 380 *Lawrenceburg*, 382 *Coston*, 411 *Morning Prayer*, all from 1935.
Parris and T. J. Denson exhibit more complex and active rhythms in their tunes than those found in the First New England School, but to varying degrees. A comparison between these and the late nineteenth-century fusing tunes shows a continuation of the style begun with Reese. While The Better Land and ODEM exhibit this trend, Howard Denson’s Homeward Bound shows that the First New England School aesthetic of repeated quarter notes and block chords never completely went out of fashion. The son of T. J. Denson, Howard’s connection to
the Sacred Harp practice included his involvement with the 1935 revision of *The Sacred Harp* and his service as the secretary of the newly established Sacred Harp Publishing Company.\(^{31}\) The *Minutes and Directory of Sacred Harp Singings* online database ranks *Homeward Bound* the seventeenth most popular with 692 sings.\(^{32}\) The static chords and outlining of the tonic triad within the first few measures are similar to Read’s tunes, which have static homophonic chords throughout. The paired imitation that Denson employs in the B section, however, resembles nineteenth-century examples. The bass enters first, and although it does not move in exact imitation, the alto has a similar figure. The treble and the tenor move similarly. However, unlike nineteenth-century fuging tunes, the alto part displays independence; that is to say, *Homeward Bound* is in four-part counterpoint instead of three-part counterpoint in four parts, indicating that Howard Denson composed the alto part with the other three. *Homeward Bound* exhibits a continuation of the rhythmic and textural characteristics of the eighteenth-century New England hymnody.

\(^{31}\) Cobb, 113.

Nineteenth-century fuging tunes show a mixing of styles from a variety of possible sources. Influence of the early Sacred Harp composers, the folk hymns they arranged, and the style from the First New England School inspired composers to make changes in their style. Twentieth-century composers, like the nineteenth, do not exhibit stylistic unity, but instead present a heterogeneous style. T. J. Denson’s output demonstrates a clear change in style between his early twentieth- and later twentieth-century fuging tunes. Some composers
employed a particularly active rhythmic texture, like J. P. Reese with HOMeward BOUND and O. A. Parris with THE BETTER LAND. At the same time, Howard Denson’s HOMeward BOUND demonstrates that the First New England School aesthetic existed alongside these changes, as does the presence of First New England School fuging tunes themselves.

Throughout the history of The Sacred Harp, compilers have had the responsibility of appealing to the singing community in two important ways, through catering to their singing tastes and choosing literature that singers considered traditional in Sacred Harp singing. In the early twentieth century, compilers brought out the most successful and longest lasting of these revisions from those who B. F. White and his contemporaries had taught. Joe James’s revision garnered respect, but its over five hundred songs made it large and cumbersome. Denson’s revision claimed authority over other revisions and provided a venue for contemporary composers. The most popular fuging tunes from the 1936 revision show an adherence to the original eighteenth-century form and, at times, a reliance on the triadic emphasis from the First New England School.
Chapter 4
Dissemination in the Twentieth Century Singing Practice

In the late twentieth century, the Sacred Harp singing tradition spread to additional regions, including areas outside the South. Just as in the nineteenth century, fidelity to tradition remained important when different editors undertook the task of creating new editions of *The Sacred Harp*, and Benjamin Franklin White’s admonition to “seek the old paths” and his reputation remained an important influence even in the most recent Sacred Harp activities.

The Chattahoochee Convention dates from 1852 and is considered one of the most authentic conventions of Sacred Harp singing because of its age, rural location, and connection to the founders of Sacred Harp singing, B. F. White and his associates.¹ When Earl Thurman wrote his centennial history of the Chattahoochee Convention in 1952, he measured the abilities of the leaders and composers by comparing their skills to those of B. F. White, just as early twentieth-century participants judged different editions of *The Sacred Harp* by their fidelity to the original 1844 edition. Except for the practice of singing schools in eighteenth-century New England, the practice was confined to the South, and the representative composers in *The Sacred Harp* hail from the Southern region. However, with each new edition the geographic representation has widened. For example, in the James edition of 1911 contemporary Southern composers contributed two-thirds of the text and music to the book,² the Denson edition of 1936 continued to include pieces from contemporary Southern composers, and the 1991 edition includes contemporary compositions from further outside the traditional Southern region from


² According to the front matter of the 1911 James edition, it contains 36 songs or texts from South Carolina, 4 from Tennessee, 360 from Alabama, and 461 from Georgia. J. S. James, Preface to *Original Sacred Harp* (Atlanta, GA: n.p., 1911), ii.
such revivals as those in the Midwest and New England. Initially, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the expansion in popularity was a result of the work of singing school teachers, such as Reese and Denson, but the dissemination was still confined to the South.

In the mid-twentieth century, the heightened interest in music indigenous to the United States, such as folk revivals, brought attention to the rural tradition of shape-note singing. Incorporating technology into the Sacred Harp tradition served as an important tool for dissemination. In the Midwest and New England interested singers established Sacred Harp singing communities, which still thrive in Northern regions. Although both Chicago and New York serve as examples of singing communities that started somewhat independently from the Southern tradition, they solidified their regional practices in different manners and to different ends. New singers may have searched out traditional singers for the purpose of learning the tradition, while in other cases singers from outside the South might develop their own practices distinct from the Southern tradition. This spread in popularity and dialogue between these different regions is evinced by fourteen songs from composers outside the South, particularly from the Midwest and the Northeast, in the 1991 edition of The Sacred Harp.

The newly composed fuging tunes included in the 1991 edition will be discussed in the context of dissemination. Composers in the late twentieth century continue to draw on the styles the First New England School established and Sacred Harp composers imitated and continued. New songs in the 1991 edition demonstrate the dissemination of the Sacred Harp practice to the North. The success of Northern composers in the Sacred Harp tradition is evident through the number of songs published and by the popularity of these songs. The fuging tunes discussed in this chapter exhibit simplicity by using rhythmic patterns and a simple, straightforward
polyphonic section. They maintain the style of the fuging tune and display stylistic nuances that are in line with the pieces discussed from earlier eras.

Whether because of scholarly or folk-based interests, Sacred Harp singing became increasingly recognized, and more people made an effort to learn about it in the 1960s and ’70s. John Bealle points out that the appeal of the Sacred Harp as a folk tradition was great enough by 1969 for Sacred Harp scholar Buell Cobb to notice it. Some of the earliest Sacred Harp activity outside the South was in New York in the 1950s. In 1964 a group of Sacred Harp singers from Georgia traveled to Rhode Island for the Newport Folk Festival where they were well received. Then in 1967 Neely Bruce came across The Sacred Harp and Southern Harmony while looking for repertory for a choir concert. The variety of ways that the music of The Sacred Harp came into the Northeast is evident through the variety of sources. For example, the Northeast performing groups included music from The Sacred Harp as part of their repertory, so these singers came to know The Sacred Harp because it is a source for early American choral music. A good illustration of this is Larry Gordon and his Word of Mouth Chorus. Sacred Harp scholars such as Kiri Miller and John Bealle discuss the director and his ensemble for their appropriation of Sacred Harp music in a recording entitled Rivers of Delight. Both authors discuss the tension between the traditional singers and Gordon’s choir members during their interactions together. The tension was not animosity, but it demonstrates a difference in goal or approach. Gordon traveled with his Vermont chorus to Georgia in 1976 believing this trip gave his subsequent recording of 1979 validity. Miller observes that the refined singing style of the

---


4 Ibid., 191.

5 Ibid., 192.
Northerners on this recording contrasts with those of contemporary traditional singings. Additionally, she notes that the Northern singers believed the Southerners’ hospitality was evidence that newcomers were included in their practice, while the Southerners viewed this as an opportunity for the traditional singers to teach the newcomers.\(^6\) While the Northerners experienced the Southerner’s hospitality by means of their inclusion in the traditional meal, this demonstrated the tradition of a Southern sing. The Southerners viewed this as an opportunity to demonstrate and pass on their traditions.

Bealle further illustrates this distinction. While visiting Georgia, Gordon announced that they would be giving a concert in Connecticut. After the announcement, influential Southern singer Hugh McGraw stated that he and forty singers would be available for this concert, but referred to it as the first annual Connecticut singing convention.\(^7\) The difference in terminology is telling. To Gordon, this was conceived as a performance, while McGraw placed the event in the Southern tradition. This again demonstrates that many of the Southern singers were not viewing this as collaboration, but as an opportunity for them to spread their tradition as they practice it. According to Miller’s conversations, some traditional singers regarded the result of Gordon’s effort to reproduce Sacred Harp singing as “much too clean,” and “prettified.”\(^8\) The Word of Mouth Chorus is only one example of a professional or semi-professional group that appropriated The Sacred Harp as an example of early American music. Unlike groups such as the Boston Camerata and Anonymous 4, Word of Mouth tries to, and perhaps succeeds, legitimize their attempt by participating in dialogue with Southern singers.\(^9\) By traveling South

\(^6\) Kiri Miller, “A Long Time Traveling: Song, Memory, and the Politics of Nostalgia in the Sacred Harp Diaspora” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2005), 348–49.

\(^7\) Bealle, Public Worship, 193.

\(^8\) Miller, 354.
and experiencing a traditional singing convention, they participated in this tradition and experienced something more than what is printed in the songbook.

Because of its large convention and the willingness of its participants to travel, Chicago has become one of the most important cities for the Sacred Harp revival. Bealle cites its importance based on the number of conventions it has produced. Singing in Chicago had its beginnings in the 1980s as an informal singing among friends who enjoyed folk music, including current participants like Ted Johnson and Ted Mercer, active singers who have contributed songs to the 1991 edition. In their early meetings, they only sang a few songs, and all tried different parts. Interest and activity increased when the Old Town School of Folk Music used some songs from The Sacred Harp. Established in the 1960s, the Old Town School offered performances of folk music, dancing, instruments, and recordings. In 1983, when the audience arrived to the Old Town School of Folk Music for what they thought would be a concert, Phil Trier, who had experienced this music before and was trying to recreate the participatory atmosphere of traditional sings, passed out music and seating instructions. Bealle points out that Trier approached the music from a choir director’s standpoint, and this changed only when some members of this Chicago group contacted Hugh McGraw and the Southern singers. After travelling to the South for conventions and seeing the democratic organization, singers in Chicago desired this same tradition.

---

9 Ibid., 355; Miller and Bealle recognize the importance of Larry Gordon’s travel to the South because it started a dialogue between the two groups. The Southern singers took this opportunity to spread the tradition of Sacred Harp singing, like singing the notes and having a convention. Although Gordon’s end product, the refined recording, is not in line with the Sacred Harp aesthetic, he exhibited his willingness and desire to experience and interact with the Southern singers with his travel.

10 Bealle, Public Worship, 200.

11 Ibid., 200–201.
Singers from Chicago and Charleston, Illinois, held the Illinois State Convention in 1985. Because of the interaction between Northern singers and Southern singers and the participation of Southern singers, this conference solidified the ties between Southern singers with their long tradition and those from Illinois. Bealle and Miller recognize the Northern singers’ significant desire to adhere to the tradition as it survives in the South. When talking to McGraw about the conference, Ted Johnson, one of the founding singers in Illinois, recalls McGraw asking if they “sing the notes.” Although at that time they did not sing the songs by the “fa-so-la” syllables before adding the words, they spent the remaining time before the conference practicing this in preparation for the arrival of the Southern singers.\textsuperscript{12} Miller goes on to record that two weeks after the Chicago singers had given their convention in Illinois, they travelled to the Georgia State Convention and began acquiring the styles and format of the Southern singers and eventually one of them, Judy Hauff, became experienced enough to have her own songs published in the 1991 edition of\textit{The Sacred Harp}.\textsuperscript{13} Chicago’s position in the Sacred Harp revival is significant because of the role it came to play in singing conferences. The Illinois State Convention and the Midwest Convention began from the singing group in Chicago, the latter of which grew to four hundred participants in 1992. That the United Sacred Harp Musical Association once held a convention in Chicago in 1990 further attests to the importance of this city. Founded in 1904, the association had previously been restricted to the South; however, Chicago’s meeting in 1990 marked the first meeting outside the South.\textsuperscript{14} The story of the Chicago participants shows that the Southern singers exercised a great influence as the new

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{12}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Miller, 146–48.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Bealle, \textit{Public Worship}, 209; Miller, 290.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
singers became more involved.\textsuperscript{15} By creating this network with the Southern singers, the Chicago group attained authenticity and exhibited respect for Sacred Harp singing as an ongoing practice they might participate in instead of as a mere artifact.\textsuperscript{16}

Through interviews and email, Miller observed that the Southern impression of many of these groups is that they began as a product of folk revival choirs. Led by directors with training in the Western European tradition, they claim Sacred Harp repertory as an extension of a practice that has been forgotten or inactive since the end of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{17} As part of a discussion outlining the nuanced characteristics of different regions, Miller points out ways in which the New England singing practices distinguish it from those in the South and her experience in the Midwest. Unlike the Midwest groups, New England singers, especially in Boston, are not as unified as in other regions. Miller notes that singers in the Chicago area work together in order to plan two large conventions each year. In the Boston area, different groups plan the area conference each year, so there is not the same continuity that is present in the Midwest.\textsuperscript{18} The other force that differentiates singers in the Northern conception of Sacred Harp singing from the Southern is that groups may prepare for performances, creating the need for “rehearsal-like” meetings.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite the differences between these groups, the number of conventions in the Midwest and the Northeast demonstrates the dissemination of shape-note singing. The inclusion of non-Southern composers in the 1991 edition of \textit{The Sacred Harp} provides compelling evidence for

\textsuperscript{15} Miller’s dissertation explores the intricacies of this interaction in depth.

\textsuperscript{16} Miller, 147.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 218. Miller records a New England singer’s frustration over Northerners who have never travelled to the South in order to experience or understand the strong and important Southern characteristics and traditions.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 217.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 218.
this dissemination. The late 1970s into the ’80s saw dialogue between Southerners and non-Southern singing groups by correspondence and convention-planning, and by the time of the 1991 edition, singers from outside the South saw their pieces in the printed tradition of *The Sacred Harp*. While each previous edition included contemporary composers from the South, the 1991 edition includes composers from different regions. The 1991 edition contains thirty-seven newly composed songs, fourteen of which are by composers from outside the South. Judy Hauff of Chicago and Dan Brittain of New York are among the Northern composers to have contributed to the 1991 edition and are best represented with four songs each. Other composers from the Northeast and Midwest are Ted Mercer and Ted Johnson, respectively.\(^{20}\)

Involved in the early Sacred Harp activity in Chicago, Judy Hauff led songs at the first Illinois State convention in 1985, which Hugh McGraw, noted Southern Sacred Harp authority, attended. Her musical work became important to, and was accepted by, the Southern singing community by its inclusions at singings, so much so that these songs were included in the newest edition. Her initial contributions to the popularity of Sacred Harp outside the South were tied to the events of the 1985 Convention, which exhibit the traditions the Chicago singers learned from the Southern singers. Sung over four hundred times, according to the *Minutes and Directory of Sacred Harp Singings* online database, Hauff’s tune from 1986, *WOOD STREET*, has attained popularity for a new song. Hauff chose a text from Tate and Brady from the end of the seventeenth century for *WOOD STREET*.\(^{21}\)

Harmonically, *WOOD STREET* is in line with the practice of open harmonies. The important cadences at the end of sections are without the third, although a cadence in the middle of the A section is a full G-major chord. Also, the A section ends in a half cadence. Since the


tune is in D dorian with the sixth scale degree raised, a B-natural occurs throughout the piece. Although all the scale degrees are used, the tenor part has some characteristics of a pentatonic melody because it avoids the sixth, such as in mm. 6–7, and the second scale degree is never used. The bass part is not completely pentatonic, but avoids the sixth scale degree throughout. The alto part is similar in that the tessitura is from D₄ to A₄, with C₄ used as a lower neighbor tone in the final cadence. Hauff did not use the sixth in the alto part either. The treble part employs all the scale degrees, although it does avoid the fourth scale degree, G, in the B section.

In comparison to Reese’s and Parris’s fuging tunes, WOOD STREET is simplified in many ways. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, some of earlier fuging tunes sometimes featured complex rhythms and phrasing, requiring experience or vocal agility. With WOOD STREET, Hauff attained the opposite with a simple and straightforward rhythmic texture with repetitive rhythms in each section of the tune. The A section has the rhythm of a half-note anacrusis with two quarter notes on the downbeat followed by two half notes (see mm. 1–2). The rhythmic pattern changes in the B section, but still features repetition. At the point of imitation at the beginning of the B section, each voice enters with the same rhythm moving up the system after which they become homorhythmic. The bass part departs from anything observed in the other pieces in this study. It enters with the tenor and does not engage in polyphony with the other voices, acting as a type of a pedal tone throughout the fuging section. Even though faster in the second section, the simple and predictable rhythmic texture features beats divided evenly into two parts. Leading up to the final cadence comes a dotted quarter-note embellishment in each voice (mm. 12–13), similar to those by Reese and Lancaster described in Chapter 3. Despite the dotted quarter-note figure, the tune features repeated notes and predictable rhythms, similar to the stock phrases from the nineteenth-century pieces.
Although the repeated rhythms and simple texture characterize **WOOD STREET**, Hauff’s four songs in *The Sacred Harp* display a varied compositional style. They show her ability to compose in different genres as her output comprises two fuging tunes, a three-voice hymn, and a four-voice hymn in binary form. By composing in the three-voice idiom, Hauff shows competence in the most simplified and traditionally Southern style of Sacred Harp music, as these were the types of pieces that dominated the earliest editions. Her four-voice hymn, **GRANVILLE**, features a text laid out like a fuging tune, but with a homophonic texture and lyrical melody with stepwise motion and melismatic text-setting. The other fuging tune by Hauff,
STONY POINT, displays stylistic differences from WOOD STREET. Unlike WOOD STREET, each part enters on its own point of imitation. But similar to WOOD STREET, the B section returns to a homophonic texture after only a few measures of imitative polyphony.

Like Hauff, Dan Brittain’s involvement in the Sacred Harp community went as far as having four pieces included in the 1991 edition. From New York, Brittain was introduced to Sacred Harp singing while stationed in Georgia when he was in the army. With NOVAKOSKI, Brittain employed different compositional elements than repetitive rhythms and stock phrases, but they are still within the tradition of Sacred Harp. The harmonic scheme of NOVAKOSKI typifies previous fuging tunes. In E minor, the A section ends on a B-natural in octaves alluding to a cadence on the dominant (m. 6). The B section begins and ends in E minor. In comparison to the other pieces in this chapter, the distinctive elements of NOVAKOSKI are the melodic motion and the texture in the polyphonic section. It does not have repeated rhythms like Hauff’s WOOD STREET. While NOVAKOSKI features more disjunct parts than other pieces, the note values are longer. Three voices move in the same direction at the beginning of the B section, while the alto part moves in contrary motion.

---

22 Rhythm and pitch are relative in the Sacred Harp practice, so it is difficult to assign ease or difficulty based simply on those two elements, but it is still a noticeable difference in the texture as a surface level observation based on the notation. Pitch and rhythm as performance practice in the Sacred Harp tradition is outside the scope of this project as it deals only with what is notated in the published editions.
With a four-part homophonic hymn and two other fuging tunes, Brittain displays other songs published in *The Sacred Harp* show a variety of styles, just as observed in Hauff’s output. One of his other fuging tunes, *A Kin*, has a rhythmically active B section with some syllables set melismatically. His McGraw employs more passages reminiscent of the stock phrases from the early twentieth-century composers discussed in Chapter 4. McGraw also has the four-note eighth-note passages, which became characteristic of his pieces.
Hugh McGraw and John Hocutt serve as examples of composers from the Southern tradition who are active composers. McGraw composed WOOTEN in 1976, before Hauff penned WOOD STREET. Having travelled to lead and teach Sacred Harp singings and serving as the chairman of the board of editors for the 1991 edition of *The Sacred Harp*, McGraw is an authority on Sacred Harp singing. Hauff’s and McGraw’s songs are similar in many ways, especially with repeated rhythms and modal ambiguity. The rhythmic texture in WOOTEN comprises repeated quarter notes with eighth notes as well. McGraw emphasizes the triad, especially in the middle of the first phrase in mm. 3–4, which is consistent of the style of other Sacred Harp pieces. However, McGraw also leans toward pentatonicism by avoiding the fourth and seventh scale degree in passages such as mm. 8–10. He also avoids the seventh scale degree in the treble part as well. Approaching the tonic from below, the melody always skips the E-natural, as in mm. 7 and 16.

Stock and characteristic phrases are prevalent in WOOTEN as well. Although Hauff composed a characteristic cadential figure that is reminiscent of Reese and Lancaster, McGraw uses the four eighth-note figure that composers Parris and T. J. Denson used in the early twentieth century, discussed in Chapter 4. It is present in the four-note phrases in mm. 3, 14, 16, and 18 where each voice moves homorhythmically. McGraw employs the rhythms in a more concentrated manner in the B section, perhaps to draw attention to the polyphonic section.
Figure 5.3. WOOTEN in *The Sacred Harp*, ed. 1991.

John Hocutt’s A THANKFUL HEART stylistically recalls fuging tunes from the Sacred Harp compositional tradition, perhaps even more than those by Judy Hauff, Dan Brittain, and Hugh McGraw. From Alabama, Hocutt has ties to the Sacred Harp community as a singing school teacher himself. Hocutt has published songs in earlier, small-scale revisions of The Sacred Harp.23 According to the Minutes and Directory of Sacred Harp Singings, singers sang A THANKFUL HEART at conventions 1,403 times between 1995 and 2005 making it quite popular. Hocutt set the song in A major and uses an eighteenth-century text, like Hauff’s WOOD STREET.

While Hocutt does not use dotted quarter notes leading up to cadences or the four-note figures that characterize earlier pieces, there are other characteristics reminiscent of Parris and T. J. Denson, like the melodic contour and the rhythmic texture. The melodies of each part, especially the tenor, emphasize the triad by the use of thirds in the melody, as in mm. 2 and 7. For the most part, the rhythms consist of repeating quarter notes with divisions into eighth notes for variety. This is similar to Denson’s late fuging tune ODEM. The B section is similar to older tunes in two different ways. Like some of the older fuging tunes that did not include an alto part initially, such as those by Reese in the late nineteenth century, Hocutt sets A THANKFUL HEART in three-part polyphony for four voices. The alto and the bass enter together and are homorhythmic throughout. In addition, the polyphonic texture is also similar to these older tunes in that the parts do not return to a homorhythmic texture until the last two measures. In the B section, Hocutt creates multiple entrances for each voice. The alto and bass begin with the first entrance in the polyphonic section in m. 6. After the treble and tenor have entered, the alto and bass enter again in m. 9 with the beginning of another polyphonic phrase. The four parts do not join homorhythmically until the last half-phrase, “And make me live to Thee,” in m. 17. In

comparison, Hauff’s WOOD STREET has four parts sing homorhythmically immediately after the point of imitation. McGraw’s WOOTten is similar to Hocutt’s work with the parts joining three measures after the point of imitation.

Figure 5.4. A THANKFUL HEART in The Sacred Harp, ed. 1991.


The editor’s decision to add non-Southern composers’ pieces to the 1991 edition of The Sacred Harp produced the most striking difference between it and previous editions. While these editions included contemporary composers, they were still from the South. With the increase of Sacred Harp singing activity especially the Northeast and the Midwest, composers
from these areas are now represented in the 1991 edition. This indicates the widespread dissemination of the practice in the latter part of the twentieth century. Hauff’s *WOOD STREET* draws on some of the style of the nineteenth-century composers, such as using the dotted rhythm to lead to the final cadence, but the overall style is one of simplicity with repeated rhythmic patterns. Dan Brittain’s *NOVAKOSKI* also displays simplicity, but the B section has a long melisma that is similar to the fuging tunes from the early twentieth-century composers. Hauff and Brittain both evoked the stylistic hallmarks of their predecessors, but they accomplish it in different ways. That multiple pieces of theirs were included in the 1991 edition shows that these composers have been diverse in their compositional output, appealing to singers with different forms and styles.

Comparing specific musical elements of the Northern composers to Southern composers who were lifelong participants in the Sacred Harp community does not necessarily illuminate regional differences. McGraw and Hocutt participated in the Sacred Harp community years before the 1991 edition. McGraw had a hand in the edition, and Hocutt already had songs published in earlier appendices to *The Sacred Harp*. The singing community welcomed these songs and sang them often. Hocutt’s *A THANKFUL HEART* draws on the early twentieth-century practice in a straightforward way. The B section does not return to the homophonic texture until the end, making that section more involved and utilizing the polyphonic style more than the other two examples. McGraw’s piece is not particularly difficult in the polyphonic nature of the work, but the length of the piece and the rapid delivery of the text may make it more of a challenge for singers. Sacred Harp’s popularity in other regions can be evaluated by the singing conventions held in these locales. Including songs by these Northern composers is noteworthy because it introduces non-Southerners into the printed history of this tradition. Beale puts it this way: “The
1991 edition both reflects and facilitates a change in the role of Southern singers as sole
custodians of the tradition."²⁴ Including songs by composers who are from new regions of
Sacred Harp activity shows that traditional Southern singers have encouraged and affirmed this
dissemination by their willingness to teach and travel.

²⁴ Ibid., 31.
Conclusions

The fuging tune had its origins with England’s hymnody tradition, but the form so permeated the American musical landscape that many today associate it with early American hymnody and eighteenth-century American composers. Since this form did not follow conventional counterpoint practices, as its name suggests, many scholars believed this form was evidence of musical ignorance among the early American composers from whom it is known. Dispelling this misconception in the 1950s, Irving Lowens showed that the fuging tune was an outgrowth of the psalm tune, a plain tune that was composed intentionally with the staggered entrances in the second section. This form can be traced in English hymnody back to Thomas Morely.¹ This prejudice against the artistic validity within the realm of American hymnody was present, as Lowens noted, even into twentieth-century music scholarship.² This misconception and consequent disdain for the fuging tune by twentieth-century scholars may have been left over from Lowell Mason’s opinions about early American music, which were very well known through his reform of hymnody in the nineteenth century. Mason was influential in bringing European taste to American hymnody by using European tunes and following voice-leading rules more closely than the First New England School had. His mission with the Boston Handel and Haydn Society included formalizing music education in America by improving church music. Imitated in other cities, Mason’s reforms made in Boston served as an example for the rest of America as this better music movement moved through the country.³ This reform affected the style of American hymnody in general and the use and popularity of the fuging tune in particular.

² Ibid.
The open-fifth sonorities and parallel motion between the voices that characterized the First New England school survived in Southern singing schools, the repertory of which is found in shape-note tunebooks, of which *The Sacred Harp* is most popular.

Exploring the fuging tunes in *The Sacred Harp* has shown the preservation of the form and various stylistic trends. Despite the reform that for the most part eradicated the fuging tune and the characteristic style of the First New England School from the musical activity in the urban centers, Southern composers continued to compose in this “dispersed harmony” from the first edition of *The Sacred Harp* in 1844 through the 1991 edition. Representative fuging tunes from each era of compositional activity show that the nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers relied on the established form of the First New England School, updating their style to fit in with the trends that emerged within the current Sacred Harp singing tradition.

Daniel Read and Jeremiah Ingalls represent the style of fuging tunes of the First New England School. Daniel Read’s *American Singing Book* of 1785 was one of the first songbooks featuring the work of a single composer. Significant for its frequency in print during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Reed’s *SHERBURNE* was printed seventy-nine times and exemplifies the style of the First New England School fuging tune.¹ Read employs triadic harmony throughout the tune; however, at the important cadences, the third is left out. Unlike the fuging tunes of William Billings, Read employs imitative counterpoint. The B section of the fuging tune is always polyphonic, but some composers, such as William Billings, use non-imitative counterpoint. Read’s *SHERBURNE* has exact imitation at the beginning of the fuging section. Jeremiah Ingalls was similarly popular, and his *NORTHFIELD* had numerous printings.

---

during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\(^5\) NORTHFIELD differs from SHERBURNE in a few ways. The alto’s entrance is the most significant because it enters last. Ingalls’s NORTHFIELD also features a fuging section three times the length of the homophonic. Both of these pieces typify the First New England School in their static harmonic motion and open fifths.

Over the course of *The Sacred Harp*’s publication history, the style of fuging tunes changed to reflect new tastes; Chapters 3 and 4 address these changes. The founding composers and compilers of the 1844 edition did not compose fuging tunes, since they preferred the three-part hymn, so the first fuging tunes from contemporary composers came from the next generation of composers in the latter half of the nineteenth century.\(^6\) The fuging tunes discussed in Chapter 3 were composed between 1859 and 1907, limiting the scope according to the first large-scale revision of *The Sacred Harp*. Stock phrases prevalent in these fuging tunes suggest that centonization may have been a favored compositional technique. Dorothy Horn researched this patchwork style of composition in detail, showing similarities between cadences, melodic contour, and the rhythmic texture.\(^7\) While J. P. Reese’s ETERNAL DAY shows some of the same musical characteristics that linked it to the folk hymns that Horn discussed, Denson’s JASPER is simplified in the style of the First New England School, while the pieces by the two later composers, Sarah Lancaster and T. J. Denson, do not exhibit them so clearly. Sarah Lancaster’s SARDIS shows a mixture of styles with Reese’s characteristic cadential motion and the static chords and repeated quarter-note patterns from the First New England School. With the melodic


contour, the characteristic cadences, and rhythmic activity, these pieces fit in the style fostered by *The Sacred Harp* composers in the nineteenth century, as well as the style set up in the late eighteenth century by the First New England School.

The next surge in composition activity came with the 1911 edition by Joe James. Chapter 4 addresses this tumultuous time in Sacred Harp composition when many different versions vied for singers’ affections. From this period came two other revisions, the first of which is J. L. White’s revision of 1884, and the second of which is Cooper’s revision of 1902, the latter of which remains in use. While the 1884 revision was undertaken by B. F. White’s son J. L., its incorporation of gospel-style songs and the use of seven shape notes, two elements that B. F. White explicitly avoided, kept it from reaching popularity. George Pullen Jackson observed that in 1932 the loyalty to Cooper’s revision was geographically based. In regions where the original B. F. White edition was used, the Cooper was not popular, but in newer regions singers had accepted it. Many contemporary large singing conventions hold an alternate book session in which the Cooper Revision is used. Jackson also asserted that the editors of the 1902 Cooper revision described it as a modernization of an old tradition, which would not have been appealing to singers. Ironically, some of these modernizations such as the addition of alto parts were adapted later in the Denson revision. Additionally, Cooper’s revision could not claim enough ties to B. F. White to be considered authentic or traditional.

Joe S. James published his edition in 1911 after J. L. White and Cooper. Despite the importance of each of these editions and publications for the singing community, Chapter 4

---

8 Bealle, 147.


10 Jackson, 106.
concerns the repertory from 1936 when the Denson Revision was published. The James edition is a useful resource for information about songs and composers, as most of the tunes have a biographical sketch of composers, demonstrating what extra information the editors thought would be important to singers in the early twentieth century. Despite James’s contribution with his publication, scholars agree that at 580 songs its size created a practical problem.\textsuperscript{11} In 1933 the Denson family bought the publication rights from the James family and formed the Sacred Harp Publishing Company. By 1911 the Densons had already established themselves as an important singing family, as James pointed them out collectively as talented singers.\textsuperscript{12} James was instrumental in re-establishing White’s authority in the Sacred Harp tradition in 1904 with his \textit{Brief History of the Sacred Harp} and with the biographical sketches about the composers. By connecting their actions to James, the Densons were aligning themselves with B. F. White.\textsuperscript{13}

Like those in Chapter 3, the songs from Chapter 4 continue to exhibit the values of \textit{The Sacred Harp} and a heterogenous style that displays the influence of past conventions mixed with contemporary compositional practices. O. A. Parris’s songs show a reliance on tradition while incorporating other elements that have not been previously seen in the repertory discussed. \textit{The Better Land} is distinctive because it has a tonally open A section, necessitating the resolution in the B section, creating unity in the two sections of the tune. Paris builds on the style of the previous generation by creating an active rhythmic profile with a high frequency of the four-note figure that typified Reese’s tune. T. J. Denson’s piece from 1936 best typifies the musical changes that have been discussed in this study. While Denson’s \textit{Jasper} from 1907 features repetitive quarter-note block-chords, with \textit{Odem} he imitated composers from the later generation

\textsuperscript{11} Cobb, 113.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13} Bealle, 147.
like Reese and Lancaster with more rhythmic activity. The third piece from Chapter 4 was also by composer from the Denson family, Howard, T. J.’s son. Howard Denson’s *HOMEWARD BOUND* displays the heterogenous style throughout *The Sacred Harp* as the tune has less rhythmic activity than the other two songs from this chapter and time period. The rhythms are more repetitive and fall into patterns more than T. J. Denson’s and Parris’s. The music of the 1936 edition shows that some composers of fuging tunes relied on the form made popular by the First New England School, while others continued to explore more active rhythmic textures and blend the established style of the fuging tune with the popular style of the contemporary pieces in *The Sacred Harp*.

After the Denson edition in 1936, the most drastic and possibly important change in Sacred Harp activity is represented by the 1991 edition of *The Sacred Harp*. Much of Chapter 5 dealt with how the Sacred Harp community changed through the dissemination of the practice to regions outside the South, specifically the Midwest and the Northeast. Occurring in a few different ways, singers in the Northeast had an interest in Sacred Harp because of its connection to the First New England School while others came to Sacred Harp singing as a folk practice. In the Northeast, people wanted to add some of these pieces to their repertory as a choir, adding Sacred Harp music to a performance practice quite different from its original context.

Chapter 5 offered an overview of musical characteristics without addressing the interaction between these groups and the traditional Southern singers like other studies do.\(^{14}\) The songs discussed in Chapter 5 represent composers from the Southern tradition and those who came to the practice through other regions. Judy Hauff is a singer from Chicago who played an important role in the early singings and conventions, and travelled to singings in the South in

\(^{14}\) Kiri Miller, “A Long Time Traveling: Song, Memory and the Politics of Nostalgia in the Sacred Harp Diaspora” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2001), 30.
order to learn more about the tradition. Dan Brittain is from New York, but came across Sacred Harp singing while stationed in Georgia. The other two songs are by traditional Southern singers. Hugh McGraw and John Hocutt are both singing school teachers. McGraw has been instrumental in keeping the Sacred Harp tradition alive, and he played an important role in all the stories in which the Southern tradition influenced Northern singing activity. He is an important singer and teacher of Sacred Harp, and as the chairman for the board of editors played an important role in the publication of the 1991 revision.

The music from the time leading up to the 1991 edition includes many different styles. Some are of the most traditional types of hymns used in the Southern tradition. For example, Judy Hauff composed a homophonic hymn in three parts, like many Southern hymns from the mid-nineteenth century. Hauff and Brittain each have four songs published in the 1991 edition, which attests to their popularity and acceptance into the Sacred Harp tradition. That Hauff composed in such a variety of forms and her pieces were accepted into the singing repertory speaks to her abilities to appeal to singers and her connection to them.

These four pieces cannot be grouped into such categories as Southern or non-Southern, but Chapter 5 shows that the Northern singers and composers captured the style of *The Sacred Harp* and that these composers continued drawing on styles that were established in previous times. For example, the repetitive rhythms in Judy Hauff’s WOOD STREET create a predictable texture that is similar to Howard Denson’s HOMEWARD BOUND discussed in Chapter 4. The fuging section of WOOD STREET also only has three entrances, perhaps drawing on the tradition from the pieces in Chapter 3, in which the alto part may have been added later, creating three-part counterpoint for four voices. Dan Brittain’s NOVAKOSKI does not have extremely distinctive characteristics, but unlike in WOOD STREET, it has four distinct entrances in the fuging section.
with the alto part entering last. There is also a melisma in the B section, which is similar to the fuging tunes discussed in Chapter 3.

Although Chapter 5 did not exhibit definitive differences between the Northern and Southern composers, the particular songs show some differences. McGraw uses more of the stock phrases, which affects the melodic contour of the piece. WOOTTEN has the four-note eighth-note figure that characterized earlier pieces, especially those by Reese from Chapter 3. Hocutt’s A THANKFUL HEART is different from the other pieces in Chapter 5 especially because of the fuging section. This piece is stylistically similar to earlier twentieth-century pieces because of the texture of the fuging section. The polyphonic section does not return to a homophonic texture until the last three measures, after most of the voices have a second polyphonic entrance.

The Sacred Harp both preserves pieces from the past, and creates opportunities for new pieces by contemporary composers. Although in the nineteenth century the characteristic musical style of the Sacred Harp fell out of favor in urban centers along with genres like the fuging tune, the singing practice and music are preserved through Sacred Harp singings and conventions and the editions of The Sacred Harp. The pieces in this study demonstrate the importance tradition plays in Sacred Harp singing, and composers heavily draw on the conventions inherited from the practice, the influences from folk music, and their own teachers.
Bibliography


_____. Public Worship, Private Faith: Sacred Harp and the American Folksong. Athens: 
University of Georgia Press, 1997.

Bread, David Riddle. The History and Use of Hymns and Hymnbooks. New York: AMS Press, 
1975.

Chase, Gilbert. America’s Music, from the Pilgrims to the Present. 3d ed. New York: McGraw-

Cobb, Buell. The Sacred Harp: A Tradition and Its Music. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 
1978.


Hatchett, Marion J. A Companion to the New Harp of Columbia. Knoxville: The University of 

Horn, Dorothy. Sing to Me of Heaven: A Study of Folk and Early American Materials in Three 

Jackson, George Pullen. The Story of the Sacred Harp, 1844–1944, a Book of Religious Folk-

_____. White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, 

Kroeger, Karl. American Fuguing Tunes, 1770–1820: A Descriptive Catalog. Westport, CT: 


Mennel, Christina Chenevert. “Change in Early Cincinnati’s Musical Identity: Shape-Note Tunebooks from Timothy Flint’s *Columbian Harmonist* (1816) to Timothy and Lowell Mason’s *Sacred Harp* (1834).” M.A. thesis, Ohio State University, 1997.


______. “A Long Time Traveling: Song, Memory, and the Politics of Nostalgia in the Sacred Harp Diaspora.” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2005


