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# A History of Music Education in the United States



JAMES A. KEENE

United States

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# Preface

THE HISTORY of music education in the United States has been, generally speaking, one of reform. Our early settlers, as well as the Founding Fathers, considered their efforts to be rooted in an idealism whether it be expressed in terms of religious or political liberty, and from such beginnings Americans have tended to regard themselves as reformers from that day to the present. It is less important to approve or disapprove of each reform than it is to observe the consistent efforts of Americans to cast aside the old way and adopt that which is new and different. This national trait prevailed throughout the history of music education in America, resulting in our music educators changing methods and philosophies sometimes capriciously, sometimes thoughtfully.

The history of music education in the United States cannot have an independent existence, just as the history of art, the history of music, and the history of education all relate to and feed upon the social history of a people. America's music education cannot be divorced from the history of music both in this country and in Europe. The American white man is, after all, only a displaced European, while the American black man's contributions to American music, particularly in the field of jazz, have been considerable, though his role in music education has only begun to be explored.

The white man's folk art was an important force which began to develop after the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620. Generally taken for granted by its practitioners, folk art is close to the people and is considered an everyday necessity. It is mentioned by early writers and observers only in times of controversy but otherwise blends into the culture of the people. As the first formal attempts at music education came in reaction against the folklorization of church music in the colonies, this music will be examined in some detail in order to understand what processes were involved, not only in the folklorization but in the so-called reform that followed.

The folk culture in America has always been a source of embar-

nessment to those who looked toward Europe as their artistic Mecca, and the polarity between America's indigenous music and its European counterpart has not been resolved to this day. The earliest reforms of the eighteenth century have much in common with the average sentiments of music educators of the twentieth century. Both groups fought against and were critical of American folk art.

It is usual to think of the development of music education in terms of music and music teachers. But such an approach is limiting and omits certain trends in the general history of education, trends that affected the development and direction of the profession. To give this idea substance, parts of this volume deal forthrightly with various historical and philosophical tendencies, with an attempt made to relate them to the prevailing thoughts and movements in music education. It would have been much more difficult for our music teachers to promote the concept of teaching their art in the public schools if society were not ready to endorse a general expansion of the school curriculum. It is necessary to observe these changes in our educational expectations in order to gain a broader understanding of the role of music education as it relates to the public school.

The subject of the history of music education in the United States is broad. A one volume study can never hope to be definitive, and this work is no exception. Our informal educational practices, instruction in the home and in the streets, are a part of our sociology and influence our formal educational practices even when the two areas are in contention. The formal introduction of music education into the public school curriculum was repeated again and again in various cities and towns throughout the country. Lowell Mason's efforts, being the first, have been more fully chronicled, but many hard-working and politically active music teachers repeated his work in their own cities, but one could never hope to mention them all. Even the many influential music educators who made contributions on a national scale must await due recognition in another volume whose point of view would be more receptive to such an account.

It would have been impossible to write this volume had it not been for the increase in interest in the history of music education on the campuses of our colleges and universities in recent years.

The number of doctoral dissertations in this field has multiplied dramatically, and I am indebted to these scholars who have done the difficult and time-consuming spadework of identifying the primary sources and pointing out trends. But the field is still in its infancy with much work remaining to be done. Music teachers deserve to know where they have been in relation to where they are at the present. Without a secure knowledge of our past, music educators reinvent methods and philosophies believing sincerely in the universal efficacy of that which they espouse. Insights based upon an historical prospective will make our profession more mature (more thoughtful when presented with older methodologies masquerading as new) and more understanding of the complex interrelationships between our profession, the problems of general education, and the changing values of our society.

I would be remiss if I did not take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Allen P. Britton who was kind enough to read this manuscript and make many valuable suggestions, to Charles Leonhard whose interest and enthusiasm helped to make publication a reality, and to Cynthia Barry whose diligent work with the manuscript contributed much to the organization and clarity of this volume.

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## CHAPTER I

# Colonial New England



THE AMERICAN musical folk art took some years to develop. After the unsuccessful attempt at forming a colony at Jamestown in 1607, the Pilgrim separatists established their more successful enterprise at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620, followed ten years later by the Puritans in the Massachusetts Bay area. The *Mayflower's* passengers were on the whole landed gentry, craftsmen, tradesmen, and artisans. They had emigrated from England to Holland to escape religious persecution. Fearful that their children would be assimilated into the Dutch world, they left the relative security of their refuge to start life anew.

The Pilgrims had an essential musicality as evidenced by the famous statement of Edward Winslow in his *Hypocrisie Unmasked* of 1646. Winslow describes the large Leyden congregation in Holland bidding farewell to those setting out on their long and perilous journey.

They that stayed at Leyden feasted us that were to go at our pastor's house. it being large; where we refreshed ourselves, after tears, with singing of Psalms, making joyful melody in our hearts as well as with the voice, there being many of our congregation very expert in music; and indeed it was the sweetest melody that ever mine ears hears.<sup>1</sup>

Despite hardships, the small band maintained a unity based upon religious and social homogeneity. But the Plymouth colony had little support from outside sources and no influential friends. In 1630, the larger and more prosperous Massachusetts Bay area, colonized by the Puritans, began to eclipse the Plymouth colony.



Both the Pilgrims and the Puritans were English separatists, followers of the religious tenets of John Calvin, and expressed their religious sentiments through the singing of psalms. The Pilgrims brought with them the *Ainsworth Psalter*, prepared especially for the separatists by Henry Ainsworth in Holland and first printed in Amsterdam in 1612.\*

The thirty-nine different tunes were written for one voice only, with diamond notes and without bar lines. Ainsworth borrowed French and Dutch psalm-tunes as well as some from the older *Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter*. Many tunes in the latter psalter were also borrowed from the *French Psalter* of the sixteenth century, pointing to a common source for both the *Sternhold and Hopkins* and the *Ainsworth* psalters. The music of the *Genevan* or *French Psalter* was either composed or arranged by Louis Bourgeois, who made good use of French *popular songs* of the sixteenth century. The music of *Ainsworth* had much rhythmic variety; the rigid regularity so often associated with psalmody was absent. Waldo Pratt observed forty-five different line-rhythms, typical of the folk-song style.<sup>2</sup> Stanzas of five, six, eight, and twelve lines as well as eight different rhythms used for one six-syllable line were frequently incorporated.<sup>3</sup> The melodies, both in minor and in modes typical of the day, were meant to be sung in unison with the men's voices leading. Apparently the Pilgrims did little part singing, although harmonized versions of some of the psalms appeared in England during the latter part of the sixteenth century.<sup>†</sup> What part singing there was tended toward the contrapuntal, which is understandable considering the nature of music in the late sixteenth century. As modality was only on the verge of giving

\* Ainsworth was born near Norwich about 1570. He studied four years at Cambridge and then became active in the separatist movement, probably in London. Religious persecution caused him to go to Amsterdam in 1593 where he worked for a time as a porter in a Dutch book shop. By 1610, he became a recognized leader and teacher of the principal congregation in Amsterdam. He was a biblical scholar and learned in Hebrew. His commentaries on the Old Testament were collected in 1627 and often republished. He died in 1623.

<sup>†</sup> Day in 1563; Damon in 1579; Estes in 1592; and Ellison in 1599. William Brewster, one of the original Pilgrim fathers, brought with him his personal library of three hundred volumes. Among these volumes was the *Psalms of David*, by Richard Allison, London, 1599, a harmonized version of the psalms. Allison's psalms were in four parts accompanied for "lute, orpharyen, citterne, or bass violl." This was one of the first psalm books to give the melody to the soprano. It was intended for domestic use, set out in "table music" fashion. It is conceivable that these harmonized versions of the psalms were sung in America by those settlers who remembered them. Unfortunately the evidence is not clear.

way completely to the system of tonality in the early seventeenth century, the few offerings of a modal designation in *Ainsworth* were in keeping with the period.

The *Ainsworth Psalter* was an octavo volume of 342 pages. It represented the first real competition to the *Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter*.<sup>\*</sup> The book circulated mainly in Holland and England. Pratt believes there are about ten copies in America: one each at the Boston Public Library, Boston University, Congregational Library of Boston, the American Antiquarian Society, and the Hartford Theological Seminary. The remainder are privately owned.<sup>4</sup> *Ainsworth* constituted a completely new translation of the psalms in prose. Each psalm was accompanied by notes and comments on the text. Beside the prose are metrical arrangements for use in song. This translation from prose to metered verse is shown in the two versions of the Twenty-third Psalm:

Jehovah feedeth me; I shall not lack. In folds of budding grass He maketh me lie down; He easily leadeth me by the waters of rests. He returneth my soul; He leadeth me in the beaten paths of justice for his name sake.

Metered version:

Jehovah feedeth me, I shall not lack;  
In grassy folds He down dooth make my lye;  
He gently leads me quiet waters by.  
He dooth return my soul; for His name sake  
In paths of justice leads me quietly.<sup>5</sup>

The versification in all early English metrical psalters is uniformly iambic. In *Ainsworth* only a few psalms have feminine endings.

The metrical versions of the psalms had considerable influence on the musical renditions. Verses and music were interdependent. The various types of verse were joined to the available kinds of melody. As many of the melodies were interchangeable—that is different melodies could be used for the same metrical patterns—the genre had the potential to minimize the number of different tunes that were used when the settlers, for diverse reasons, forgot many of the more complex melodies and retained and passed on to their children the less complex tunes.

But in the *Ainsworth Psalter* a preference for long stanzas predominated. The four-line pattern, so popular at a later time, was

<sup>\*</sup> Later editions of *Ainsworth* came out in 1617, 1626, 1639, 1644, and 1690.

only used in one psalm in ten. One-half the psalms were in eight-line stanzas, while thirty-four had six lines and eleven had five lines.

The complex melodies in the *Ainsworth Psalter* became increasingly difficult for the colonists to remember. During the seventeenth century, the thirty-nine tunes were reduced to about a dozen. The shorter tunes were easier to remember and sing to common meter, a trend which aligned with the increasing simplification of the psalm tunes. This trend toward greater simplicity was as evident in England as in the colonies and is an example of the gradual change in stylistic expectation.

The *Ainsworth* tunes were not original but were borrowed from Dutch, English, and French sources.

Tunes for the Psalms I find none set of God; so that each people is to use the most grave, decent and comfortable manner of singing that they know. . . . The singing-notes, therefore, I have most taken from our former Englished Psalms, when they will fit the measure of the verse, and for the other long verses I have also taken (for the most part) the gravest and easiest tunes of the French and Dutch Psalters.<sup>6</sup>

The many, varied melodies represented the Late Renaissance style, incorporating a more or less free and irregularly accented melodic line whether that be a single melody or several contrapuntally conceived parts. The emergence of a regularly accented meter caused profound changes in the singing habits of American congregations. These changes, attributed by many to a musical illiteracy in the colonies, may very likely reflect a dramatic change in the musical expectations of the seventeenth century. While these changes were observed on the Continent and have been well-documented, similar changes also occurred in Protestant church music in America and will be discussed later.

In 1630, the Puritans landed in Salem carrying with them the *Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter*, first printed without music around 1548. This psalter was begun before 1550 by Thomas Sternhold and was finally edited by a committee chaired by John Hopkins. The combined effort was first published in 1562. Sternhold's psalms were originally intended for court circles but were of poorer quality to those of Marot in the *Genevan Psalter*, which was first printed with music at Geneva in 1556. It expanded through other editions until 1561 when it reached its final edition

of eighty-seven psalms set to sixty tunes. This psalter was heavily indebted to the *French Psalter* but the preparer of the music is unknown.<sup>7</sup>

The Puritans then were a modestly musical people. It had long been considered that the Puritans were antimusical, an idea beautifully put to rest by Percy Scholes.<sup>8</sup> The Puritans loved their psalm singing both in church and in the home. There were no laws prohibiting music though there were some statutes that attempted to control it. An English ordinance tried to regulate street and tavern music, but such an effort only points to the universality of the practice. In 1644 another English ordinance cautioned against organs and elaborate music in the churches. We do not know exactly what the church fathers considered "elaborate"; quite possibly any renditions of the psalms that violated the simple, grave, and unison treatment dictated by the divines.

At the Conference of Baptists in Bridgewater, England, in 1655, the question was asked "Whether a believing man or woman, being head of a family, in this day of the gospell, may keepe in his or her house an instrument of musicke, playing on them or admitting others to play thereon." The question was answered:

It is the duty of the saintes to abstaine from all appearance of evil, and not to make provision for the flesh, to fulfill ye lusts thereof, to redeem the time, and to do all they do to the glory of God; and though we cannot conclude the use of such instruments to be unlawful, yet we desire the saints to be very cautious lest they transgress the aforesaid rules in the use of it, and do what may not be of good report, and so give offence to their tender brethren.<sup>9</sup>

And so the Puritan divines approved music, with qualifications. Admitting that the practice of music was not unlawful, the church most self-consciously and with much reserve gave its permission if not its blessing. Today our task is to try to understand the relative power and influence of psalm singing upon the Puritans themselves and their institutions.

The leaders of the Puritans at Salem felt too many liberties had been taken with the original Hebrew in the *Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter* and sought to improve it. A committee of thirty was charged with the responsibility of making a more literal translation. In 1640, a small press at Cambridge, Massachusetts published 1,700 copies of *The Whole Booke of Psalmes Faithfully*

*Translated into English Metre*. Because the new psalter was immediately accepted almost everywhere in the Massachusetts Bay colony it became known as the *Bay Psalm Book*. No music was included in the first edition of the first book-length publication in the American colonies.<sup>10</sup> The tunes at first were well-known to the Puritans, and there was no readily available music printing at this early time. The number of meters, however, was reduced from that of the *Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter*, demonstrating that even at this date, Puritan psalmody was in the gradual process of simplification. The more difficult tunes were either being ignored or had been forgotten by the early settlers. Fully three-quarters of the psalms in the *Bay Psalm Book* were in common meter. Although tunes for these psalms could easily be found in Ravenscroft's *Whole Book of Psalms*, not all the tunes in Ravenscroft were familiar to the Puritans in 1640. This first attempt by the Puritan divines to save psalm singing by reducing the number and complexity of the tunes was destined to fail. The scarcity of music and the gradual decline in congregational participation in the church services lead to an increasing musical illiteracy in the colonies.

The old *Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter* employed seventeen metrical schemes, and it was a Puritan ordinance to sing the entire book of psalms through in sequence. The early settlers apparently had this repertoire, but by 1640 the *Bay Psalm Book* with its six metrical patterns presented sufficient difficulties for the Puritan congregations. This simplifying trend started in England and therefore could not be attributed exclusively to the difficult frontier life of the settlers and their isolation from Europe. It corresponded instead with the trend away from the late Renaissance melodic complexity toward a more straightforward, rhythmic style that was to fuse in America with certain indigenous folk tendencies into a unique genre of religious folk music.

The second edition of the *Bay Psalm Book* was the same as the first, but the third edition in 1651 incorporated considerable changes. This later edition, of which two thousand copies were printed, reflected growing dissatisfaction with the original text. The psalm-tune repertory diminished again with increasing reliance on a common-meter text, a state of affairs prevalent in England also during this time. Thirty-six new songs were added in this edition, and its name was changed to *The Psalm Hymns and*

*Spiritual Songs of the Old and New Testament faithfully translated into English metre for the use, edification, and comfort of the saints in publick and private, especially in New England.* This was the definitive edition until 1758.<sup>11</sup> As a testament to the popularity of this version, forty editions were printed in both England and Scotland.

The ninth edition is of special interest as it was the first edition known to us to include music.<sup>12</sup> Thirteen psalm tunes in two parts were included in addition to a few instructions for "their proper performance."<sup>13</sup> The thirteen tunes were copied from the 1679 editions of John Playford's *Brief Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, a standard treatise of the latter part of the seventeenth century.

The following from the ninth edition was taken verbatim from Playford's *Brief Introduction*:

First observe of how many Notes compass the *Tune* is. Next, the place of your first *Note*, and how many *Notes* above and below that: so as you may begin the *Tune* of your first *Note* as the rest may be sung in the compass of your and the peoples voices, without Squeaking above, or Grumbling below.<sup>14</sup>

Such rudimentary instruction is significant. We see an initial attempt at instruction in music, an effort that will be repeated in American tune books hundreds of times in the eighteenth century in an effort to improve the quality of church singing in the colonies. The *Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter* had a discourse on the theory of reading music from its 1562 edition. This effort in the colonies in a sense paralleled similar attempts at improvement and reform in England as well.

The four note gamut was recommended in the ninth edition of the *Bay Psalm Book*, and again this system appears in the 1672 edition of *Brief Introduction*. This system of syllable notation became fashionable in Elizabethan England and came into use in the colonies. Only four syllables were used: fa, sol, la, and mi. Only mi was not repeated in the scale and was used to identify the leading tone and hence the key. A major scale would appear thus:



The fasola system was to retain its popularity into the nineteenth century, and the story of its gradual removal—first from the urban centers and later from rural New England to the Southwest—is closely tied to the changes in music and music education during the first half of the nineteenth century. In the ninth edition of the *Bay Psalm Book* the fasola letters were placed directly under the musical notes.\* The use of notation and syllable indicates that there was some musical literacy in the colonies. No institutions existed at this time to perpetuate music instruction in the colonies, but the singing of psalmody was transmitted mostly through an oral tradition from one generation to another. Although the trend was toward simplification between the time of the *Ainsworth* and *Sternhold and Hopkins* psalters and the *Bay Psalm Book*, the institution of psalmody was indeed vigorous and close to the hearts of Puritan colonists.

Secular music also existed in the colonies, but there was little official enthusiasm for this art. Its practice was tolerated by some and enjoyed by others, but this music was uncomfortably close to the devil to be a necessary and vital part of Puritan culture. That it appears to be condemned in the literature of the times tells us of its prevalence. Cotton Mather, a leading Puritan, noted in a "Discourse on the Good Education of Children"<sup>†</sup> that teachers are worthy of honor "that convey Wisdom unto our children."

Their stipends are generally far short of their Deserts. . . . I can't but observe with a just indignation; to feed our children, to Cloath our Children, to do any thing for the Bodies of our Children, or perhaps to teach them some trifle at a Dancing School, scarcely worth their learning, we account no expense too much; at the same time to have the Minds of our Children Enriched with the most valuable Knowledge, here. To what purpose? is the cry; a little Expense, how heavily it goes off! *My Brethren, These things ought not so to be.*<sup>15</sup>

In church, the Puritan settlers in America probably sang their psalm tunes in unison and unaccompanied. But at home these same tunes would have been sung in harmony and accompanied by instruments. While harmonized versions of the psalms did oc-

\*Probably the source of John Tufts's notation in the *Introduction to the Singing of Psalm Tunes* of 1721.

<sup>†</sup>Delivered at the funeral of Ezekial Cheever, principal of the Latin School in Boston, "who died August, 1708, in the ninety-fourth year of his age, with an Elegy and Epistle by one that was once a Scholar to him."

casionaly find their way into the Puritan churches in the eighteenth century, generally speaking, the use of instruments was considered the work of the devil until the early years of the nineteenth century. Both Thomas Ravenscroft's *Whole Book of Psalms* in 1621 and Richard Allison's *Psalms of David* in 1599 were in four parts and the use of instruments was suggested for both. As there was a social and economic intercourse between the Puritans in England and those in America, it is reasonable to suppose, as Percy Scholes does, that this situation existed in America also.

Instruments appeared early in colonial New England. Judge Sewell "was at Mr. Hiller's to enquire for [his] wife's virginal" on December 1, 1699.<sup>16</sup> In England Cromwell himself maintained a body of ten vocal and instrumental performers, and Milton believed that music should have a suitable place in education in his *Tractate of Education*. So instrumental music and dancing were tolerated by the Puritans, both in England and in America. In 1647, John Cotton offered some advice about the performance of music outside the church.

We also grant that any private Christian who hath a gifte to frame a spirituall song may both frame it and sing it privately for his own private comfort and remembrance of some speciall benefit or deliverance. Nor doe we forbid the use of any instrument therewithall: so that attention to the instrument does not divert the heart from attention to the matter of song.<sup>17</sup>

It is likely that the above was a liberal reaction to criticism of a prevailing practice. From 1700, however, we see a rather spirited business in musical instruments, which points to a growing interest in the several aspects of music. Instruments were imported from London for a population increasingly willing and able to play them. In an advertisement in the *Boston News* of 1716, the following arrived from London: "Flageolets, Flutes, Haut-boys, Bass-viols, Violins, bows, strings, reeds for hautboys, books of instruction, books of ruled paper." The statements also indicate that a greater number of instruments existed in colonial New England than has been accounted for by current scholars. Tolerance, however, is a long way from enthusiastic cultivation. At no time were the Puritans officially enthusiastic about any form of music other than psalm singing. This point is of special interest because the first organized institution to teach singing—the singing school—



came about in response to the need to “reform” psalm singing in New England.

An important custom that prepared the way for the singing school was known as “lining out.” Begun in England, “lining out” was officially inaugurated and sanctioned by the Puritan Assembly of Divines at Westminster in 1644. Called “deaconing” in America, it required the deacon of the church to recite a line of the psalm (as distinguished from intoning) which the congregation would then sing. The purpose of the custom was to help those who had not learned to read to participate happily in the singing. Lining out was introduced in the colonies in 1681 in Plymouth but it was not in general use until about the middle of the eighteenth century. Though it is possible that a meeting in Worcester, Massachusetts, decided to abandon the practice, it continued in some places for nearly a hundred years.<sup>18</sup> The practice began to die out in America near the end of the eighteenth century, but in England and Scotland the practice was rather common for another hundred years.<sup>19</sup> From John Cotton’s *Singing of Psalms: a Gospel-Ordinance*,<sup>20</sup> we learn about the motives of the Puritans regarding the use of lining out.

The last scruple remaining in the manner of singing, *Concernith the order of singing after the Reading of the Psalm*. . . . We for our parts easily grant, that where all have books and can read, or else can say the *Psalm* by heart, it were needless there to read each line of the *Psalm* before hand in order to [sing it] . . . it will be a necessary, that the words of the *Psalm* be openly read before hand, line after line, or two lines together, that so they who want either books or skill to read, may know what is to be sung, and join with the rest in the duty of singing.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps one cannot read too much into the use of the word “duty,” but the choice of such a word hardly indicates enthusiasm for such singing. In 1707 Isaac Watts wrote that he was disgusted “to see the dull indifference, the neglect and the thoughtless air that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly while the Psalm is on their lips.” But lining out was accepted with enthusiasm in most places and died slowly in the eighteenth century even after it had become unnecessary.

“Deaconing the hymn” led to breaking up the musical rendition of a psalm by the deacon reciting the words every line or two. In 1730 Leman complained in his *New Method of Learning Psalm*