

History, Historic Places and
Performances throughout the U.S.A.

Guide to Musical America

Lynne Gusikoff



GUIDE TO MUSICAL AMERICA

By Lynne Gusikoff



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INTRODUCTION

The intention of this book is twofold: to present historic highlights of different styles of music as they developed in particular regions of the United States at various times; and to specify certain geographic locations where one may hear different styles of music today. Thus, the armchair reader at home, as well as the music-loving traveler, can journey through the world of music, caught up in the sense of place and also of time. To my knowledge, this book is the first endeavor of such scope.

The *Guide* is organized according to five geographical regions: the Northeast; the South; the Midwest; the West; and the West Coast. Within a region, each of several chapters discusses a particular musical style. At the end of each regional section, a general map of that region as well as several maps of its large cities are annotated to show places significant for music. Although the city maps show many major streets and intersections, they are not meant to be complete street maps, such as may be obtained from chambers of commerce or tourist bureaus. The reader is urged to explore an area further after becoming generally familiar with what is available in terms of music.

I have been selective while journeying through music history, emphasizing significant developments relating to place and time: for example, jazz in the South in the early 1900s; psalmody in New England in the 17th and 18th centuries; symphonic music in the Northeast in the mid-1800s. Information was gathered from correspondence with major symphony orchestras, opera and ballet companies, tourist and travel bureaus, music agents and managers and public relations people; from general guidebooks; from extensive library research; and from my own continuing personal travels and experiences.

One observes that musical styles overlap today. Although the chapters in this book deal with specific styles, such as rock, jazz, country, etc., listening to music demonstrates clearly that styles have interacted, fused, and either diluted or added to each other's essence. Purity in form has yielded to the eclectic, and we now hear country-rock, folk-pop, and other modern hybrids. Nevertheless, I

feel it is important to know how it all started and where, in order to listen to music knowledgeably and with enhanced pleasure.

Throughout the nation is a plethora of regional music fairs and festivals; numerous colleges and universities with active music departments and programs; and an inordinately large number of hotels, nightclubs, and museums all offer musical fare. It was an overwhelming task to decide which ones to list. Limits of space and my own judgment were solely responsible for the choices. I trust that any omissions will not be interpreted as being unimportant or unworthy.

A word of advice. Before contemplating a visit to a musical event, always check with the sponsors in advance to verify dates and addresses—which frequently are changed. Entertainment sections in local newspapers are helpful too for checking.

I earnestly hope readers will derive as much enjoyment in reading about and attending events as I did in writing about and attending them. We are fortunate indeed that the United States is richly varied in its musical offerings. Wherever we look, whatever our preferences, we find that the beat goes on.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1620 the Mayflower carried 103 men, women, and children across the stormy seas to a narrow strip of land extending westward from the Atlantic Ocean. The place was Massachusetts, the sixth of the original thirteen colonies. It was here that the settlers found shelter, peace, and hope for a productive life. And it was here that American music began to develop. These weary settlers had brought with them their musical expression in the psalmody that they sang regularly. Psalmody took firm root in conservative New England and throughout many of the New World colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Psalmody was practiced in churches and meeting halls. It vocally defined the society's taste for solemnity, simplicity, and morality.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries growing numbers of European emigrants settled in the large cities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. These cities thus grew rapidly and became "melting pots" of the Northeast. The heritage of Bach, Handel, Haydn, and Beethoven, and then Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner spread through the region. There were enough musically aware citizens to create a demand for large concert halls for the performance of symphonic music, opera, and dance.

The Europeans also brought their folk music. And the Africans brought their music, which was to become part of the foundation of that American art form called jazz. Cultural diversity assimilated with developing American experience and resulted in the development of several genres of popular music. The different kinds of music interacted, changed, and grew, reflecting the interaction, change, and growth of the people of the United States.

PSALMODY IN NEW ENGLAND: OUR COLONIAL BEGINNINGS

Austere Life, Austere Music

The Pilgrims who arrived in Massachusetts in 1620 were plain people. A Separatist sect of Puritans from England and Holland, they were strict of mind and sturdy of character. Their arduous struggle for physical survival in the New World paralleled in rigor their struggle to keep a demanding faith. Hard work, austerity, and a conservative vision constituted the Protestant Ethic. An intense, all-pervasive ongoing religious experience was sought by the Pilgrims. Leisure and luxury were viewed as sinful. This prescribed manner of living was reinforced in their music, colonial psalmody. Moreover, any other music was considered evil and improper.

In Salem, a woman complained to authorities that she saw the master of the house "dancing and drinking." The Reverend John Cotton proclaimed from his pulpit, "Wanton dancing to lascivious music with amorous gestures should be frowned upon." Indeed, plain services, plain meeting houses, and plain music describes the Pilgrims' way of life.

Psalms

A psalm is a sacred song or hymn, usually one of the hymns from the Old Testament *Book of Psalms*. The name comes from the Greek, meaning "a song sung to the playing of a harp." In Hebrew, *tehillim* is the word for "songs of praise," or psalms. The *Book of Psalms*, also called the *Psalter*, is a great resource for Jewish and Christian liturgies. Musically, the meters of the psalms in English translation vary widely, with inconsistent line syllabification and accents. This fact was responsible for much of the music history associated with New England psalmody.

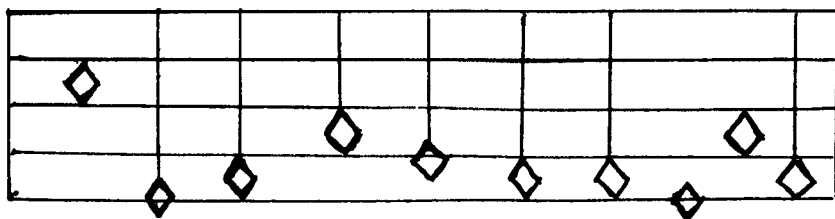
Ainsworth's Psalter

The Pilgrims brought with them Henry Ainsworth's *Psalter*, or *Book of Psalmes*. It was printed in Holland in 1612 for the Separatists who had fled from England to Holland. It contained thirty-nine psalm-tunes translated into English from the original Hebrew and was described in the later *Bay Psalm Book* thus:

Psalmes of David in Englishe Metre, by Thos. Sternhold and others. . . . Very mete to be used of all sorts of people privately for their godly solace and comfort, laying aparte all ungodly songes and ballades, which tende only to the nourishing of vice, and corruption of youth.

Some of the widely sung songs from Ainsworth's *Psalter* were "I Laid Me Down and Slept," "Confess Jehovah," and "Old Hundredth." The last song survives as the familiar modern hymn, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." Written in five, six, eight, or twelve lines, each line of a typical psalm might express a different rhythm and seem to be independent of the other lines. The melodies, written with one note to a syllable, were designed for a single musical part to be sung in unison and unaccompanied. Although few could read music, the music was nevertheless notated. The music notation was in the form of diamond-shaped notes without bar lines on the staff. A tune from the Ainsworth *Psalter* was the following, Psalm 7.

Pfalm 7



Jehovah mine almighty — God, I hope

Musical notation from the Ainsworth Psalter (Amsterdam, 1612)

In the nineteenth century Henry Wadsworth Longfellow immortalized Ainsworth's *Psalter* in his poem, "The Courtship of Miles Standish," in which he describes Priscilla singing:

*Open wide in her lap lay the well-worn psalm book of Ainsworth,
Printed in Amsterdam, the words and the music together.
Rough-hewn, angular notes, like stones in the wall of a churchyard,
Darkened and overhung by the running vine of the verses.*

"Old Style Singing"

The style of singing in unison in church was called "old style singing" or "common singing." Not only was it a slow and tedious manner of singing, but it lent itself to musical chaos. Tempo and pitch varied among the singers in a group, singers did not always keep in time with each other, and grace notes and trills were introduced gratuitously. Everyone sang more or less as he or she pleased. Frequently, one person, most likely the presiding clergyman might "lead" by modulating his voice (raising or lowering the pitch accordingly), hoping to encourage group members to follow. The results were not always musical. And repertoire probably consisted of no more than half a dozen songs sung over and over.

Psalmody Spreads Throughout New England

Beginning in 1630 congregations expanded to include non-Separatist Puritans who had sailed to America from all parts of the British Isles. These Puritans settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (encompassing Boston, Medford, Lynn, and Charlestown), Dorchester (now in New Hampshire), Watertown (now in Connecticut), and Roxbury (now in Maine).

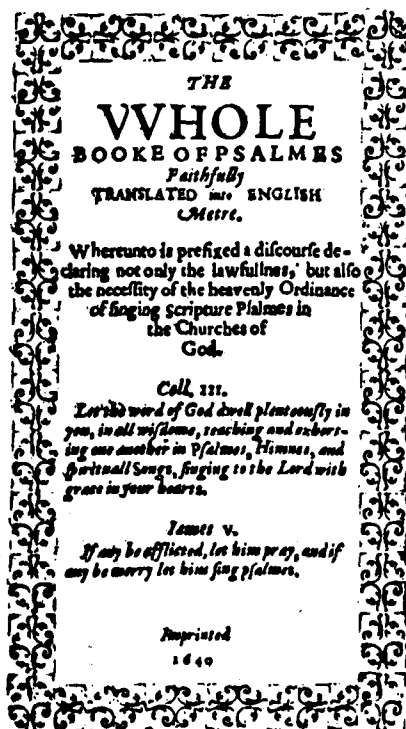
Later Puritan arrivals founded the New Haven Colony in 1638, as well as the towns of Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor along the Connecticut River. These towns formed the nucleus of what would later become Connecticut. Roger Williams, remembered as a pioneer of religious freedom, founded Rhode Island in 1636. New Hampshire was formed in 1689, and Vermont and Maine became states in 1791 and 1820 respectively. Puritans and Pilgrims mixed.

The more educated and sophisticated citizens, especially those from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, severely criticized those who took part in "common singing." They thought it akin to crude, uneducated, and even disgraceful singing. In spite of this, Ainsworth's *Psalter* and "old style singing" prevailed until 1692, when Plymouth merged with the Massachusetts Bay Colony and its people began to use the *Bay Psalm Book*.

The Bay Psalm Book

The *Bay Psalm Book* was the first book to be printed by the English colonists in North America. Matthew Daye printed it in 1640 in Cambridge. It contained fifty English hymn tunes and several reforms in the singing of hymns. In response to cries for more orderly singing the use of the four-line ballad stanza, called the common meter, was incorporated into the *Bay Psalm Book*. In common meter lines alternated between eight and six syllables. An example of this can be found in the famous Twenty-Third Psalm from the *Bay Psalm Book*:

*The Lord to mee a shepeard is,
Want therefore shall not I
He in the folds of tender grasse,
Doth cause me downe to lie.*



Title page from the first edition of the *Bay Psalm Book* (Cambridge, 1640)

The use of the common meter resulted in a more orderly, regular, standardized sound.

Directions for Singing

The *Bay Psalm Book* contained no music, but in its "Admonition to the Reader" there were detailed instructions regarding the melodies to which psalms in different meters might be sung.

The verses of these psalmes may be reduced to six kinds, the first whereof may be sung in very neere forty common tunes; as they are collected out of our chief musicians by Thos. Ravenscroft.

The reference was to Thomas Ravenscroft's *Psalter or The Whole Booke of Psalmes*, published in London in 1621, in which the "chief musicians"



Low Dutch Tune from the *Bay Psalm Book* (Boston, 1698)

were English composers, namely Ravenscroft himself, Thomas Morley, John Dowland, and Richard Allison, among others. Some of the well-known forty tunes were identified by the abbreviated titles, "Oxford," "Windsor," "St. David's," and "Martyrs." In the back of the book music notation was written in solmization, a system that used syllables (do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do) to indicate the different tones of the scale.

Another reform ushered in with the *Bay Psalm Book* was the change to "regular singing" or "singing by note," a departure from the haphazard "common singing" that critics had charged was rural and backward. Notes were now to be sung exactly as designated—in correct time, with correct pitch, and without spontaneous individual embellishment. A lively tempo replaced the slow, tedious tempo of "old singing." Many leaders fought vigorously for "regular singing," especially the Reverends Cotton Mather of Boston, Thomas Walter of Roxbury, and Nathaniel Chauncey of Durham, Connecticut. Walter wrote a pamphlet, printed in New London in 1728 entitled *Regular Singing Defended and Proved to be the Only True Way of Singing the Songes of the Lord*.

Lining Out

Reform continued with the attempt to abolish the practice of "lining out." Lining out was an old Scottish tradition that conferred upon the leader or deacon the task of setting the tune by reading the psalm line by line (primarily for those unable to read), then singing it, and finally pausing for the congregation to sing the line. The results were often more solemn and monotonous than melodious:

Low-voiced deacon reading: "Shout to Jehovah, al the earth"

Low-voiced deacon singing: "Shout to Jehovah, al the earth"

Mixed-voice congregants singing: "Shout to Jehoval, al the earth"

For more than sixty years the use of the *Bay Psalm Book* prevailed. It was revised many times, passing through numerous editions. Among the most widely used were those of Sternhold and Hopkins (1562), Tate and Brady (1696), and Watts (1711). The ninth edition (1698) contained the first music to be printed in the colonies. Thirteen tunes were inserted in the back of the book with solemn directions for singing "without squeaking above or grumbling below." By the time this edition was printed the literary quality of the translation had begun to improve, and instead of importing their melodies, the colonists had started to compose their own, which must have sounded fresher and more pleasing to them.