

2 Feb 2015

What should we title them?

46 posts by 12 authors

Barry Johnston

Jan 20

In an online conversation in another context, we have been discussing nomenclature: What should be the names of songs? especially 17th-19th century American Christian songs. One opinion has been expressed, that since these are properly hymns the Title should be the first line of the lyrics, whereas names like Rutland (William Billings) or Stratfield (Ezra Goff) are properly Tune Names. Now, I am not an expert, but I do disagree with this opinion. Please let me know how far off I am in the following.

1. In America (at least) 17th-18th century sacred choral music was almost all *psalm*-singing, and this continued until the middle of the 19th century in many mainline denominations, and of course still continues on, thank the Lord! "The Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in America were exclusively *psalm* singing for nearly 200 years, from the Pilgrim Fathers to the Jacksonian Era, as were the Congregationalists and Baptists. ... In addition to the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists, the Anglican and Episcopal churches boast a 300-year history of exclusive Psalmody, singing first from the Sternhold & Hopkins' Old Version (1547, 1557), then Tate & Brady's New Version (1696, 1698). Not until the publishing of Hymns Ancient & Modern in 1861 did hymns gain entrance to the Anglican liturgy" (Johnson 2009). **So these songs should be called *Psalm-Tunes*, or (my preference) *Psalm-Songs*, not *Hymns*.** Most of these were a *cappella* four-part vocal works, in which the melody was mainly carried in the Tenor line. American psalmody derived in part from English psalmody, but improved and expanded it.
2. The Titles of most psalm-songs were made in various ways by the composers; some used names of New England towns or countries: *Rutland*, *Russia*, *Kittery*. Other songs had titles descriptive of the lyrics, such as *David's Lamentation* or *Deliverance*. In my opinion, since these Titles have been confirmed by the experts (Nathan 1977, Barbour 1960, Kroeger 1981-1990, Kroeger and Crawford 1995) **they should be retained as the titles of these compositions.** To do otherwise is to do a disservice to the composers. In many cases, the title given by the composer is part of the composition.
3. There was a major wave of revisionism in America, starting in the large cities of New England in the early 19th century. A leader in this revision was Lowell Mason; see the Wikipedia article about him. This movement tried to suppress American psalm-singing and *Psalmody* (practice and study of psalm-singing) in favor of central-European style *Hymnology*. Terry Johnson chronicles the American Presbyterian hymnals, which in 1843 began with multiple versions of all 150 psalms, but by 1866 the psalms had nearly disappeared (Johnson 2009). Other denominations went through the same process. Some of these new hymns were based on older psalm-songs, but went through considerable revision to put them into the new chorded SATB mold.
4. In hymnology after 1850 or so, the Title of a hymn is usually the first line of the lyrics. The revised psalm-songs were also titled with the first line of the lyrics, with the original psalm-song title used as the Tune name. Thus Oliver Holden's *Coronation* became *All hail the power of Jesus' name* after considerable rewriting. About the same time, though, there was a considerable increase in hymn-writing in America. Many of these new hymns were titled with words other than their first lines. Examples include Julia Johnston's *Grace greater than our sin*, which words appear in somewhat different form at the end; or Elvine Hall's *Jesus paid it all*, the first words of the chorus. In the mainline hymnals, these are sometimes renamed, but more often the original title is retained. If the

original title of *Jesus paid it all* is retained, why not *Coronation*? The hymnal I grew up with (Presbyterian 1933) doesn't have titles at the tops of the pages, but the index is to first lines.

5. So my summary is to call four-part *a cappella* American Christian songs *psalm-songs*. They should be titled as the composer titled them; of course, if no distinctive title was given, then the first line could be used. This could be extended to four-part *a cappella* English Christian songs or secular songs (like much of Ravenscroft), but I know less about those.

Johnson, Terry. 2009. The history of psalm singing in the Christian church. Presented at *Where are the Psalms? A symposium on Congregational Psalm Singing*, a symposium held at Erskine Seminary, February 2009. 25 pp. <http://www.ipcsav.org/article/the-history-of-psalm-singing-in-the-christian-church/>

Kroeger, Karl, Editor. 1981. The complete works of William Billings, Volume I. Brunswick, Maine: American Musicological Society, 383 pp.

Kroeger, Karl, Editor. 1986. The complete works of William Billings, Volume III. Brunswick, Maine: American Musicological Society, 399 pp.

Kroeger, Karl, Editor. 1990. The complete works of William Billings, Volume IV. Brunswick, Maine: American Musicological Society, 332 pp.

Kroeger, Karl; and Richard Crawford. 1995, Daniel Read and American Psalmody. Pp. xiii-xxxviii in Karl Kroeger, Editor. Daniel Read: Collected works. American Musicological Society.

Nathan, Hans, Editor. 1977. The complete works of William Billings, Volume II. Brunswick, Maine: American Musicological Society, 362 pp.

Thank you for your advice and help.

Barry Johnston

Gunnison, Colorado

R. L. Vaughn

Jan 21

Barry,

You ask the question, "What should be the names of songs?" Could you clarify what you mean, or in what context? For example, are you asking what name/title we should use for an old song if we are adding it to a new publication? To what end are we titling these songs? I hope my question makes sense.

Thanks.

His glories sing,

Robert Vaughn

Mount Enterprise, TX

Barry Johnston

Jan 21

Robert,

As usual, I was over-generalizing, for which I apologize. Really I am focusing on the works of William Billings, Daniel Read, and their contemporaries.

The issue is the Title name assigned to pages in an online choral database (cpdl.org); this page title then becomes how the song is referenced in other pages. For example, if I title a page "Maryland" on

the William Billings page, which I did a few days ago (Billings song from 1778), it then gets referenced on the William Billings page as "Maryland" and on the Isaac Watts page as "Maryland (William Billings)" (and other pages too). But if it titled by the first line "And must this body die", then it appears under that name, and I think it becomes much more difficult to find, and isn't fair to the composer. This is a pretty singable song to my way of thinking, by the way, and appears in *The Norumbega Harmony*. See [http://www.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Maryland_\(William_Billings\)](http://www.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Maryland_(William_Billings)).

So I am dealing with new entries in this data base, not interested in changing what people might have titled other songs, or in other contexts.

Thanks!

Barry

R. L. Vaughn

Jan 21

Barry, thanks for the extra information. I'm not that familiar with the work of [cpd.org](http://www.cpd.org), but it seems the primary purpose there is the music (tunes over text). If so, it seems to me that it would be preferable to enter by tune name (and the first or original tune name, when known).

His glories sing,

Robert Vaughn

Mount Enterprise, TX

<http://baptistsearch.blogspot.com>

Ask for the old paths, where is the good way

<http://mtcarmelbaptist.blogspot.com>

For ask now of the days that are past...

<http://oldredland.blogspot.com>

Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land.

Warren Steel

Jan 21

Unfortunately, CPDL is trapped in a random system. In English-language psalmody and hymnody, texts and sacred poems have independent names, lives and histories.

A hymn is a poem. It may be known by its "incipit" (the first line or part of the first line) or by a "title" assigned by the author or by a hymnbook publisher, such as "The Morning of a Lord's Day."

A tune is a musical setting, with its own proper name, the likes of which you have given a good summary, and which *may* refer to a commonly-used text. Generally, hymns and tunes are interchangeable within a given poetic meter -- in fact, Billings's MARYLAND was printed with varying texts, or with no text at all!

The Hymn Tune Index <http://hymntune.library.uiuc.edu/> is aware of this, and searches independently by tune (the primary focus) and text. CPDL, because of its wiki nature, has no such capability, but since it is primarily a database of musical compositions, individual sacred pieces should be known primarily by their *tune title*, such as MARYLAND, or KITTERY or JUDEA. There are other means of searching for hymn and psalm texts, or someone might index the texts of the works in the database.

Warren Steel

mu...@olemiss.edu

Professor of Music University of Mississippi

<http://www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/~mudws/>

Barry Johnston

Jan 21

Warren Steel,

Thank you for your very helpful comments. They have given me some ideas to work on with the CPDL situation.

Barry Johnston

Gunnison, Colorado

Roland Hutchinson

Jan 21

This is bound to be a matter of taste, but for what it's worth, my tastes run as follows:

There is no reason to deviate from established terminology.

The tunes are psalm tunes until sometime the 19th century; thereafter (being composed for hymns) they are hymn tunes.

To quote Grove Online:

"Psalmody. A general term for music sung in Protestant churches in England and America from the 17th to the early 19th centuries. The term was first associated with the chanting of psalms (following traditional practices of the Roman Catholic Church) and later with the singing of metrical psalms, but after these had been gradually replaced by hymns, the term was retained to cover all kinds of sacred music sung during the period." (article "Psalmody" by Richard Crawford and Laurie J. Sampsel, from Grove Dictionary of American Music, 2d ed.)

Psalm tunes and hymn tunes have their own names, which MAY occasionally reflect a text with which they are associated in the EXCEPTIONAL case in which a tune is associated with one particular text. (This becomes more common toward the end of the period.)

The more inclusive term nowadays is "hymn tune" for any tune whether used for hymns or metrical psalms or both. Earlier on, the generic and inclusive term (sanctioned by long usage) was "psalm tune" even when referring to tunes composed as hymn settings. Even in the second half of the 19th century, the output of Lowell Mason, consisting largely of hymn settings, was characterized as consisting of "psalm tunes" both by Mason during his lifetime and by others for a time thereafter (he died at a ripe old age in 1872). Nowadays, we don't hesitate to call them "hymn tunes" according to our now-established usage.

It is sometimes necessary to distinguish sometime between "hymn tune" meaning the melody and "hymn setting" or "hymn tune setting" meaning the (usually) four-voice setting in parts. However, "hymn tune" (or "psalm tune") can also be used for the setting in parts or for either the bare tune or the setting indifferently (sometimes it doesn't matter which one is meant); context generally makes the meaning clear when necessary.

As for the term "psalm song," it is simply a hideous neologism. I know it is not your own coinage; that, however, does not stop it from being both hideous and neologistic. A psalm BY DEFINITION is a song, even though its words may at times -- indeed frequently -- be read rather than sung. Saying "psalm song" is like saying "medical physician" or "pedagogical schoolteacher" or "oblong, landscape-format end-opener". If you mean "psalm setting" say so. In any event "psalm song" (cringe), if it must be admitted to use, seems to carry at some fairly strong implications about date of composition (recent)

and style (so-called "praise music") that don't apply to earlier American repertoire; I just can't see it as applicable to that repertoire.

The hymn is the text. The title of the hymn is the title of the hymn, not the title of the tune, nor the title of the hymn setting that combines the hymn with the tune. The combination of a particular hymn with a particular tune DOES NOT HAVE A NAME, although some texts (psalms in the beginning of the period; a minority of hymns toward the end) do have "proper tunes" that can be referred to by reference to the text even when used with other words (e.g., "To the tune of the 100th Psalm" -- that sort of thing).

The name of the tune is the name of the tune. Sometimes the same name has been used for more than one tune (in which case, the composer's name can be added in parentheses to disambiguate; hopefully no composer used the same name more than once). And conversely, sometimes the same tune is known by more than one name. Judicious use of parenthetical additions can help with that, too.

The repertoire as a whole is called (American) psalmody until some vaguely defined point a few decades into 19th century, at which point it becomes hymnody. Terms like "Early American psalmody" include such hymns and their settings as were in use during colonial and Federalist periods; this is consonant with "psalmody" being the general, all-inclusive term in reference to that period, as previously explained.

Roland Hutchinson

Montclair, New Jersey

R. L. Vaughn

Jan 21

From: Roland Hutchinson <gamb...@gmail.com>

...hopefully no composer used the same name more than once).

I wouldn't bet on it! I've done so and only discovered it by entering the titles into a spreadsheet. Then again, perhaps in days gone by composers may have a little more leisure time to keep up with what they were doing (or had a better memory).

His glories sing,

Robert Vaughn

Mount Enterprise, TX

Barry Johnston

Jan 21

Billings used the same name for different songs at least three times; he also revised tunes quite a few times, sometimes major overhauls, with different key and time signature.

Daniel Read was more careful, but he was apparently a better businessman, so kept more careful records.

Barry

Roland Hutchinson

Jan 21

It would, indeed, be a foolish bet.

Roland Hutchinson

Montclair, New Jersey

who may have come close to doing the same thing once or twice

tweed

Jan 21

Most of my hymnody is traditional English, though I've composed a few shape-note tunes. I use a particular naming formula, as follows:

1. English tunes: named (normally, a few exceptions) after towns and villages in Northamptonshire, England, from whence my family originates. Hymn title is first line.
2. Shape-note tunes: named after people, streets, towns, roads, villages, or geographic features in the area where I live in Ohio.
 - 2a. If the text is a Psalm, the song title is Psalm ###.
 - 2b. If the text is NOT a Psalm then the title is the tune name.

A recent composition of mine took two forms: an "English" version, and a fasola version. The first bears the first line as title with tune name underneath, but the fasola version has the tune name ("Beck's Knob") as the title.

Thurlow Weed

Lancaster, Ohio

Robert McKay

Jan 22

My view is that the name of the poetry is what the poet named it (or if he didn't, the first line works), and the name of the tune is what the composer named it. Now when putting poetry and tune together in a book, the question then becomes, is the book primarily one of *poetry* set to a tune, or of *tunes* with accompanying poetry? When it comes to most (perhaps all, but being no scholar I won't be dogmatic<g>) shape note books, we're dealing with tune books, and thus the combined poetry and tune goes by the name of the tune. :)

Robert McKay (goffsc...@juno.com)

R. L. Vaughn

Jan 22

Subject: Re: [fasola-discussions] What should we title them?

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RLV: Some 30 years ago I came up with what I thought was a unique solution. For the songs I wrote I used a tune name and a "song name" -- which was the name for the combination of that particular tune with the particular hymn. I was using this system for my song SWEET THOUGHT that is in the Cooper Sacred Harp, No. 468, though you can't tell because of the standardization. There is a hymn name (A Sinner's Meditation on Christ's Death), a tune name (Ogilvie) and a song name (Sweet Thought, which by default becomes the tune name in the Sacred Harp). This was a great idea until I figured out it required *way too much* thought and work.

When it comes to most (perhaps all, but being no scholar I won't be dogmatic<g>) shape note books, we're dealing with tune books, and thus the combined poetry and tune goes by the name of the tune. :)

RLV: I think this is true in a broad sense, though I don't think *The Sacred Harp* is nearly so much a tune book now as it was in 1844. By that I mean that White (and other such compilers) intended their standard metrical tunes to be used with a variety of texts. This can be seen in the use of single lines of poetry with standard hymns, but with all the poetry given with something not likely to be readily found in a hymn book (e.g. the poetry with *The Dying Californian*, 15 stanzas; *Edmonds*, 13 stanzas). Today, with some exceptions, we sing them with the text that is given in the book to the extent the text and tunes are usually identified together in the minds of most singers. Ultimately, the combined poetry and tune goes by whatever name the book compiler gave it. Often it was the original tune name, but not necessarily so.

His glories sing,

Robert Vaughn

Mount Enterprise, TX

Wade Kotter

Jan 22

To me, the best evidence that recent editions of the *Sacred Harp* and other collections like the *Shenandoah Harmony* are moving away from being "merely" tune books is the inclusion of first line indexes. In my research on early LDS hymnody, I've looked at nearly 100 tune books and song books dated 1835 and earlier; all but one or two of these do **not** include first line indexes. Instead, they have indexes by tune name and, in many cases, indexes by meter.. It's only when it became more common to think of specific tunes going with specific texts that we start seeing first line indexes. It took longer for this to happen with shape-note tune books, but I believe Robert is correct that most singers today identify texts and tunes together, with certain exceptions, of course. To test this for yourself, when you're looking for a song but can't remember the page number, do you more often look in the tune name index or the first line index?

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

From: 'Robert Vaughn' via Fasola Discussions <fasola-di...@googlegroups.com>

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RLV: I think this is true in a broad sense, though I don't think *The Sacred Harp* is nearly so much a tune book now as it was in 1844. By that I mean that White (and other such compilers) intended their standard metrical tunes to be used with a variety of texts. This can be seen in the use of single lines of poetry with standard hymns, but with all the poetry given with something not likely to be readily found in a hymn book (e.g. the poetry with *The Dying Californian*, 15 stanzas; *Edmonds*, 13 stanzas). Today, with some exceptions, we sing them with the text that is given in the book to the extent the text and tunes are usually identified together in the minds of most singers. Ultimately, the combined poetry and tune goes by whatever name the book compiler gave it. Often it was the original tune name, but not necessarily so.

His glories sing,
Robert Vaughn
Mount Enterprise, TX

Will Fitzgerald

Jan 22

On January 22, 2015 at 3:31:16 PM, 'Wade Kotter' via Fasola Discussions (fasola-di...@googlegroups.com) wrote:

To test this for yourself, when you're looking for a song but can't remember the page number, do you more often look in the tune name index or the first line index?

I think this is an unfair comparison. The text is “richer” than the tune name by virtue of it being semantically more coherent as well as being longer. The tune name is often completely arbitrary — often just one word, while the text is meaningful. It's no surprise that we mere mortals often find it easier to check the first line index (or the word index on fasola.org).

Of course if I know the tune name, and the first line, I'd check the tune index just because it is much more unique (only a few tunes share the same name, but many texts share the same first line).

Will

Wade Kotter

Jan 22

I see your point, Will. My "test" was not very well thought out. However, can you provide an alternative explanation for why first line indexes were not included in most tune books published in the 18th and early to mid 19th centuries and, in addition, why first line indexes were not added to the Sacred Harp, if I remember correctly, until 1991 in the James-Denson-McGraw "stream" and even later in the Cooper Book line. Wouldn't the greater semantic coherence of the first line and the fact that the first line was longer have been just as significant for singers back when first line indexes were virtually unknown in tune books? As Warren mentioned, in some 18th and early 19th century tune books, tunes were printed without any text. It seems to me that the compilers of these early tune books have expected those who purchase these books to use them as a source for music, not a source for texts. I don't think what appears to be a correlation between the increased appearance of first line indexes and the shift towards the "one tune for each text" idea is a coincidence.

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

Jason Fruit

Jan 22

Wade, I think there is an alternative explanation; in most American churches, a hymn is the combination of a text and its tune, and they're seldom parted. The traditional function of a tunebook is foreign to many people's everyday life, even many who understand it in the context of shape-note singing. So an index of first lines becomes more useful because of a change in the culture, not because the function of a particular tunebook has shifted.

Of course, the change in the culture may affect the function of a particular tunebook . . .

Jason

Jason Fruit

Jan 22

Wade —

You're obviously *not* being dense, because my explanation *doesn't* differ from yours. It was my weakly tongue-in-cheek way of suggesting that the wording, "the Sacred Harp . . . is moving away from being 'merely' [a] tunebook" might meet more instinctive resistance than would suggesting that our culture is unfamiliar with tunebooks. Nobody wants to see their beloved tunebook "move away" from its roots!

Sometimes I forget that people can't see my arched eyebrow as I type.

Jason

On Thu, Jan 22, 2015 at 7:37 PM, Wade Kotter <wadek...@yahoo.com> wrote:

Jason:

I'm obviously being dense because I don't see how your explanation differs in essence from mine. I'm quite aware of how hymns are viewed today in most American churches, as a combination of a text and its tune. I believe this concept began to develop in the early to mid 19th century at about the same time when tune books began to include first line indexes and began to morph into song books like those of William Bradbury and denominational hymnals for use in worship services. The Sacred Harp bucked this trend until fairly recently, I would contend, because it was still being used in much the same way as its "ancestral" tune books were used in the 18th and early 19th centuries, as a source for music, especially in the context of singing schools and conventions, and not a source for texts. As more singers became involved who came from a background where a hymn is viewed as a combination of a text and its tune, singers expected to find a first line index and, sooner or later, the editors of the two major variants of the Sacred Harp in use today responded to this expectation by adding a first line index.

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

From: Jason Fruit <jason...@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, January 22, 2015 5:47 PM

Wade, I think there is an alternative explanation; in most American churches, a hymn is the combination of a text and its tune, and they're seldom parted. The traditional function of a tunebook is foreign to many people's everyday life, even many who understand it in the context of shape-note singing. So an index of first lines becomes more useful because of a change in the culture, not because the function of a particular tunebook has shifted.

Of course, the change in the culture may affect the function of a particular tunebook . . .

Jason

Wade Kotter

Jan 22

Sorry for the misunderstanding, Jason. Yes, your wording is certainly less likely to result in an instinctive resistance; I do tend to be somewhat of an iconoclast at times, sometimes deliberately and sometimes by accident. Perhaps I need to find an emoticon or other method to indicate that I'm trying to "stir up the pot."

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

Barry Johnston

Jan 22

Wade and Jason,

There are a significant number of compositions where the title given (when first published) has meaning, and I claim, is really *part of the composition*. A few examples from *The Sacred Harp* are 50 Mortality, 134 The Christian's Hope, 209 Evening Shade, and many more. A good example is 268 David's Lamentation -- the word *lamentation* doesn't appear at all in the lyrics. To title these songs any other way would do the composer a disservice, I think, and take something away.

I think there are three different topics here, that sometimes overlap: Title, Tune Name, and Text. These are all important, and ideally we need indexes to all three. I respect this music and its composers and lyricists enough to think that if a composer gave a name to a composition, we should keep it as the title -- of course if we apply the music to a different text or vice versa, then we can be more free in nomenclature. The text, as often shortened to the first (metrical) line, has meaning also.

About more indexes to first lines, I wonder if it's partly because people don't memorize as much as they once did, music as well as other things. Listening to audio tracks from 80-90 years ago, it's not hard to imagine those singers remembering names and words to many songs and the fa-so-la's too! Who needs an index?

Barry Johnston

Gunnison, Colorado

Wade Kotter

Jan 23

Barry:

I don't think I ever suggested using anything but the composer's "original" title/tune name in CPDL; on the other hand, I don't think it's necessary or advisable to change the current title of a tune back to the original, such as changing BEAR CREEK back to WASHINGTON. Also, the more indexes the better, in my opinion. It's clear to me, however, that Billings, Read, Shumway, Davisson, Walker, B. F. White and other composers/compilers did not feel the need to include a "title" index separate from an index by tune name (in the 1844 ed, B. F. White called it a General Index, but it's still tune names); neither did they feel the need to include a first line index. If they included a second index, it was metrical. To them, the title of the song was the tune name, regardless of whether the original tune name was arbitrary or reflected in some way the nature of the selected text. For the record, I don't count DAVID'S LAMENTATION as a hymn or psalm tune; to me it's a short anthem and I would never consider using a different text with the tune. Going back to your example of Billings's MARYLAND, to me, and I suspect to Billings, it is not a psalm tune but a hymn tune. Billings's original choice of text was not one of Watts' metrical psalms but a text from Watts' Hymns and Spiritual Songs. This distinction between Psalm and hymn may not be so relevant to us today, but it certainly was relevant

to Billings and his contemporaries. For the metadata you add on CPDL for your transcriptions of Billing's tunes, I think you should use Billing's original tune name as the "Title" and identify the genre by categories such as psalm tune, hymn tune, fusing tune, anthem, etc.. As others have pointed out, psalm-songs is problematic.

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

R. L. Vaughn

Jan 23

About more indexes to first lines, I wonder if it's partly because people don't memorize as much as they once did, music as well as other things. Listening to audio tracks from 80-90 years ago, it's not hard to imagine those singers remembering names and words to many songs and the fa-so-la's too! Who needs an index?

I think that is true. Also coming from the other direction -- because they didn't have the indexes, etc. there was a much greater felt need for memorization.

His glories sing,

Robert Vaughn

Mount Enterprise, TX

Wade Kotter

Jan 23

I think that certainly is a possibility, Robert, especially since so many singers today are coming to SH in their "later" years. It also occurs to me that the practice of calling tunes by page number would seem to encourage singers to focus on memorizing page numbers for their favorite songs even though the page numbers are completely arbitrary, as Will pointed out. The attempt to keep the same songs on the same page as much as possible when new editions are produced would seem to support the importance of memorizing page numbers; also, the inclusion of information giving the new page number of "old" tunes that have been moved to different pages also seems to support this notion. Sometimes, when I'm caught up in the moment and my name is called to lead, I will be so "flustered" that instead of fumbling with the index or remembering the page numbers I had thought about leading prior to the singing (yes, I should write them down, but often I don't), I will ask for help from the class in identifying a page number by either the tune name or, occasionally, the first line (if the first line is used only once). It never ceases to amaze me how quickly people come up with page numbers when presented with a tune name or a text, even people who came to singing later in their lives. Because we call tunes by page number, my often faulty memorization attempts have focused on first memorizing the page numbers for songs that I like and then associating them with tune names and, in some cases, with first lines. I suspect those singers 80-90 years ago focused first on memorizing page numbers and secondarily on memorizing tune names and/or first lines.

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

R. L. Vaughn

Jan 26

Wade,

I have a couple of other thoughts that I am just getting around to. One thing we have seen (over a period of time) is that of increasing the number of stanzas in songs, usually adding one or more to those which were originally printed with only one stanza. This indicates something of a shift in how we approach our singing.

Also, in a discussion of textual and tune based titles it is worthwhile to bring up something W. M. Cooper did with his 1902 revision. He changed some of the tune titles to text-based titles. Thus 'Lenox' became 'Blow Ye the Trumpet,' 'New Britain' became 'Amazing Grace,' and so forth. I don't think anyone has ever taken a close look at this to see exactly what he was trying to do. It wasn't that he didn't understand tune titles that were unrelated to the words, because he used some himself (e.g. Poyner, Miller, Allen). To me the most likely reason was that he was trying to make songs easier for people to find. If so, this could indicate that by the early 20th century the way people approached and remembered the songs was changing. In a sense Cooper made the first move in the direction of a first line index. Changing a title from a one word title unrelated to the text to the first line would have the effect of one looking up the first line in the index and finding the song. I don't think that completely explains what he was doing, since some of the title changes weren't to the first line. But I think what he was doing is worth considering when thinking about song titles.

His glories sing,

Robert Vaughn

Mount Enterprise, TX

Roland Hutchinson

Jan 27

Barry writes, "About more indexes to first lines, I wonder if it's partly because people don't memorize as much as they once did, music as well as other things. Listening to audio tracks from 80-90 years ago, it's not hard to imagine those singers remembering names and words to many songs and the fa-so-la's too! Who needs an index?"

Well, I'm afraid this fits into this thread's treatment of redundancies that various among us find annoying. This is one of mine:

Remember the fa-so-la's??? You don't have to remember the fa-so-las! Or rather, if you have been properly trained in the singing-school tradition as it still existed a century ago, remembering the tune and remembering the fasola amount to the same thing. Put another way, if someone can't sing the fasola for any tune that he or she knows know, then that person cannot claim to be fully musically literate in shape-notes.

Roland Hutchinson

Montclair, New Jersey

Marian Mitchell

Jan 22

Then there are people like me who tend to remember a song by a phrase somewhere other than in the first line, including the last line of the last verse -- love that concordance!

R. L. Vaughn

Jan 22

Wade, while you "test" may not be all that applicable just because of how our minds work, I do think your point about the increase in first line indexes at the least hints that we use our books somewhat differently than did our forebears in the late 18th and early 19th century. Also, while these books did not have first line indexes, many of them did have metrical indexes, also much in line with the purpose of a tune book.

His glories sing,

Robert Vaughn

Mount Enterprise, TX

Wade Kotter

Jan 22

Yes, metrical indexes were often found in those "ancestral" tune books. Personally, I would like to have a metrical index (based on a classification like Warren used in *The Makers*) in each of today's versions. I love to try the same text to different tunes, including tunes of my own devising. I find that my spiritual and, dare I say, emotional responses to a text are enriched by hearing it sung to different tunes; singing it to these different tunes often calls my attention to aspects of a text that hadn't struck me before. The online metrical indexes are helpful, but I don't always have access to the Web when I feel the urge to try a different tune for a text.

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

Warren Steel

Jan 22

Wade writes:

>I see your point, Will. My "test" was not very well thought out. However, can you provide an alternative explanation for why first line indexes were not included in most tune books published in the 18th and early to mid 19th centuries and, in addition, why first line indexes were not added to the Sacred Harp, if I remember correctly, until 1991 in the James-Denson-McGraw "stream" and even later in the Cooper Book line.

A first line index was added in the 1971 Denson Revision, and has been there ever since.

Warren Steel mu...@olemiss.edu

Professor of Music University of Mississippi

<http://www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/~mudws/>

Wade Kotter

Jan 22

Thanks for the correction, Warren. My copy of the 1971 edition is in my office at the library, so I wasn't able to check. Do you have an opinion on why the first line index was added in 1971?

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

Will Fitzgerald

Jan 23

On January 22, 2015 at 6:27:34 PM, Wade Kotter (wadek...@yahoo.com) wrote:

However, can you provide an alternative explanation for why first line indexes were not included in most tune books published in the 18th and early to mid 19th centuries and, in addition, why first line indexes were not added to the Sacred Harp, if I remember correctly, until 1991 in the James-Denson-McGraw "stream" and even later in the Cooper Book line.

Here are a few:

- (1) It's hard to create an index
 - (2) It costs extra money to publish an index
 - (3) When the tune book was shorter, there was less need of a first line index
 - (4) The larger number of non-plain tunes
 - (5) The practice of *composers* (not singers) creating strong tune/text pairings, as well as using more original texts (going beyond Watts, Wesley, etc)
-

Wade Kotter

Jan 23

Yes, it's hard to create an index and costs extra money - but wouldn't these limitations also apply to tune name indexes and metrical indexes, which were common in tune books from the late 18th and early to mid 19th centuries, including the 1844 Sacred Harp? It also seems logical that with a shorter tune book there might have been less perceived need for a first line index. However, the Hesperian Harp, with 552 pages of music, has an Alphabetical Index (by tune name) and a Metrical Index, but no first line index. Also, the length of the James book is not much different than our current editions, but James did not see the need for a first line index (difficulty and cost could, of course, have also played a role here). The larger number of non-plain tunes might well be relevant; I'll have to think about that further. Your last alternative (composers creating strong tune/text pairings) seems to fall right in line with my idea that the development of the "one text and one tune" concept is correlated with the increasing number of first line indexes in tune books in the mid to late 19th century (except for the Sacred Harp, of course). Here I again feel the need for a time machine so we can actually interview the people involved instead of speculating on their motivations.

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

Will Fitzgerald

Jan 23

A few more speculations:

- (6) The presence of first-line indexes in (standard) hymnbooks and “little books”
- (7) The presence of first-line indexes in words-only books (which was pretty standard, I think)
- (8) The increase in tunes/texts outside the common meters (C.M., L.M.) which means that, given a text and a tune, there is a smaller percentage of other texts to sing with that tune
- (9) I think what I said about the increased number of *texts* seems important, and I buried it a bit. If you have more texts to handle, the need for a text-based index increases

Tune name and incipit indexes are something like indexes based on a ‘true name’; ideally one one tune name or incipit matches exactly one tune. Of course, the page numbers “index” (39t) is also such a thing.

Other indexes are more pragmatic; they help us do things, like sing a text to a different tune (meter index), sing songs from a particular composer or poet, etc.

The first line index is mostly there to help us find tunes, I think, and act much less like names for the Sacred Harp. This isn’t very true for modern hymnbooks, where they do serve as names.

Greetings,

Following is what I taught long ago regarding English hymnody, and as the background for American practice: Not intended as formal history, may well contain factual errors. (Temperley's "Music of the English Parish Church", 1979, is a better reference in this regard.) Recounted here is what was believed in some circles around fifty years ago. Account also omits the conquest of the mainstream denominations in England and America by German chorales (melodies) and texts (pace Catherine Winkworth) during the 19th century. Point in describing history is that indices, etc. in the old books met existing needs, although some features were retained in later hymnals (e.g. metrical index) past their original usefulness. Suggested criteria for SH: Does need exist? What is best way to meet it?

During 16th-17th centuries, despite attempts to broaden musical literacy with the metrical psalters, congregations tended to be musically as well as verbally illiterate (that's “illiterate”, not “incompetent”). I think the term “psalm tune” properly refers to melodies from those sources, and are sometimes identified by their original psalm numbers in the old books. The term also applies to those “plain tunes” composed later in this genre. Certain melodies became established as part of common or regional oral tradition(s). Those which originated at or were favored at certain parishes were named for those parishes. Subsequent composers would give their tunes place names, and, later, other proper nouns. As I recall, Lowell Mason was caught making up some Biblical-sounding tune names.

The precentor would “call out” (by name, later by number) or intone the tune (akin to “lining out” the texts, a practice which I think far predates the Reformation. (In some American examples I've heard, I think the precentor uses oral tradition versions of Gregorian psalm tones). The later metrical indices were important to select among the texts for a given tune; note that a suggested tune(s) is(are) sometimes indicated. A number of these texts also belonged to common memory (rf. “lining out” above).

Texts were later (are) also called by number; see next paragraph. As non-scriptural hymn texts became better accepted, they were studied privately for edification as well as inspiration. This explains in part the popularity of the pocket-size text-only hymnals (as well as the old insistence to

“sing all the verses”. A book I have mentioned: “Hymns Unbidden: Donne, Herbert, Blake, Emily Dickinson and the Hymnographers”, by Martha Winburn England and John Sparrow, (The New York Public Library: 1966) sheds some light on the literary aspects of this development. Some of these older English texts were fine literature as well as doctrinal statements, and their suppression (see first paragraph) is cause for regret. Their retention at times in the old American books (incl SH) is, I think, part of these books' appeal.

Accompaniment, or course, was frowned on during the Reformation, and only wealthier churches could afford an organ. This was compensated for in part by vocal adornment and improvised harmonies. (Overlooked here are the church bands of the “West Gallery” period.) I think the exclusive identification of tunes with certain texts began mid- 19th century, with the first Methodist Hymnal (1848) U.S. and Hymns A&M (1861) in England. Concurrent with these was the increased availability and use of the organ in smaller parishes, and consequent congregational dependence and musical passivity.

As mentioned, the above may mix old hymn lore with literal history. Chronology aside, am fairly sure these customs existed at various places and times. IMO, some of the older practices could be revived with (social and spiritual) profit, although not without controversy, and for that reason especially among younger groups. Newer technology (overhead projectors, etc.) OK used with caution, and congregations may accept. Result, however, can be less a transaction than a conditioned response. Worship is a transaction. Years ago tried “calling the numbers” from the balcony, worked fine, also tried “lining out”, less successful, as tended to be construed as “call and response”. Now this was in a regular “steeple house”. Even so, I observed attendance increase during this period of “experimentation”; was evening service.

Best wishes,

David Jensen

Wade Kotter

Jan 23

Yes, the presence of first-line indexes in standard hymn books and "little books" is certainly a factor worthy of consideration, but these were common long before first-line indexes were added to the Sacred Harp. And yes, first-line indexes were pretty much standard in worlds-only books in England and America from the early 17th century on, because, I would argue, that they were used as sources for texts, not, obviously, as sources for tunes; and tune books were not used as sources for texts but as sources for music. Also, words-only books with first line indexes were pretty much standard during the same extended period that tune books in America hardly ever had a first line index. Metrical designations were almost always provided in words-only books so song leaders could come up with an appropriate tune for a specific text. In the early 19th century, words-only books began to include tune recommendations, almost always by tune name but occasionally by page number in a tune book. I don't think I've seen any words-only book (I've looked at nearly 600 American imprints dated 1835 or earlier) that identifies recommended tunes by first line; and, in many cases, more than one recommended tune name is provided. The increasing number of tunes/texts outside the common meters is certainly suggestive, and I agree that the increasing number of texts does increase the need for a text-based index. Again, however, these trends started long before first-line indexes were added to the Sacred Harp. I still think the rise of the "one text, one tune" idea was a major player in the rise of first-line indexes in tune books, including, belatedly, the Sacred Harp. To me, first-line indexes are most useful when each text corresponds with a specific tune; the higher the number of tunes that are used with a specific text, the less useful a first-line index becomes and, to me, the less likely a tune book publisher would be to go to the effort and expense of providing one.

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"

Will Fitzgerald

Jan 23

On January 23, 2015 at 11:35:45 AM, Wade Kotter (wadek...@yahoo.com) wrote:

To me, first-line indexes are most useful when each text corresponds with a specific tune; the higher the number of tunes that are used with a specific text, the less useful a first-line index becomes and, to me, the less likely a tune book publisher would be to go to the effort and expense of providing one.

Yes, agreed; well, sort of. Sometimes I am looking for "tunes that people will know with this text" and having a one-to-many relationship is useful. This happened to me yesterday, when I was looking for tunes using "fly fearless through death's iron gate" (coming soon to a tombstone near me), and, although I used the online concordance, the principle is the same.

So do this thought experiment: Imagine a world where no one thinks of the first line as "the name" for a hymn. Would a first line index be useful? I'd answer yes, because of the "semantic richness" argument I made the other day. We also tend to remember onsets and codas of sequences (such as lines of poetry), and so if you're limited to one line (as opposed to the more useful concordance), the first is a good one to choose.

To be clear, I'm not arguing that your theory of "first lines as names induced the SHPC to include a first line index" is wrong, it's that I think it's more nuanced than that.

Will

Wade Kotter

Jan 23

I don't disagree with any of this, Will, including the last comment. Surely, the reality is more nuanced than any single-factor explanation would allow, including (especially?) mine.

Wade

Wade Kotter

South Ogden, UT

"Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord"
