

Wesleyan ♦ University

**SACRED HARP SINGING IN EUROPE:
ITS PATHWAYS, SPACES,
AND MEANINGS**

By

Ellen Lueck

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mark Slobin

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Sacred Harp singing—a printed form of a cappella sacred music developed by 18th, 19th, and 20th century Americans for the purpose of worship and social networking—has experienced significant participatory growth in the past eight years, with new community groups formed in twenty countries world-wide. The majority of Sacred Harp singing’s transnational spread has concentrated in Europe.

Several factors have encouraged the flourishing of European participation both at the local level and within the international Sacred Harp singing network. These factors include strong international support from traditional Sacred Harp organizations in the U.S. Another factor has been the charismatic and enabled leadership from within European communities. The third factor is the utilization of current media which promotes an inclusive network that extends to Sacred Harp singers everywhere.

Balancing the ethnographic placement of European Sacred Harp singing within this dispersed network, I investigate the subject through three primary considerations. I first look at Sacred Harp singing’s historical and recent pathways to and from Europe, including 17th and 18th century exchanges of English language poetry and music, and 19th century German language tunebooks in the Mid-Atlantic states. I then explore the 21st century pathways that *The Sacred Harp* took to form communities in Europe, including its pathways to the United Kingdom, Poland, and

Ireland. Secondly, I look at local, transnational, and created spaces that Sacred Harp singing occupies. Here, I contextualize my concept of the affinity interzone, a nebulous category of socially constructed space, where participants are encouraged to engage in internationally interpreted organizational choreography, social codes, and nuanced performativities. Finally, I investigate meanings that Sacred Harp singing takes on for European participants, including religious and secular meanings, a sense of belonging to a community, and the experience of transformative emotions. I include four ethnographic profiles which contextualize these meanings and consolidate points made throughout the paper.

I draw on theoretical concepts from ethnomusicology and sociology to develop my analytical perspective. This dissertation will provide new insights and models to the growing body of ethnomusicological studies on transnational musical networks, musical affinity groups, music revivals, and contemporary Sacred Harp singing.

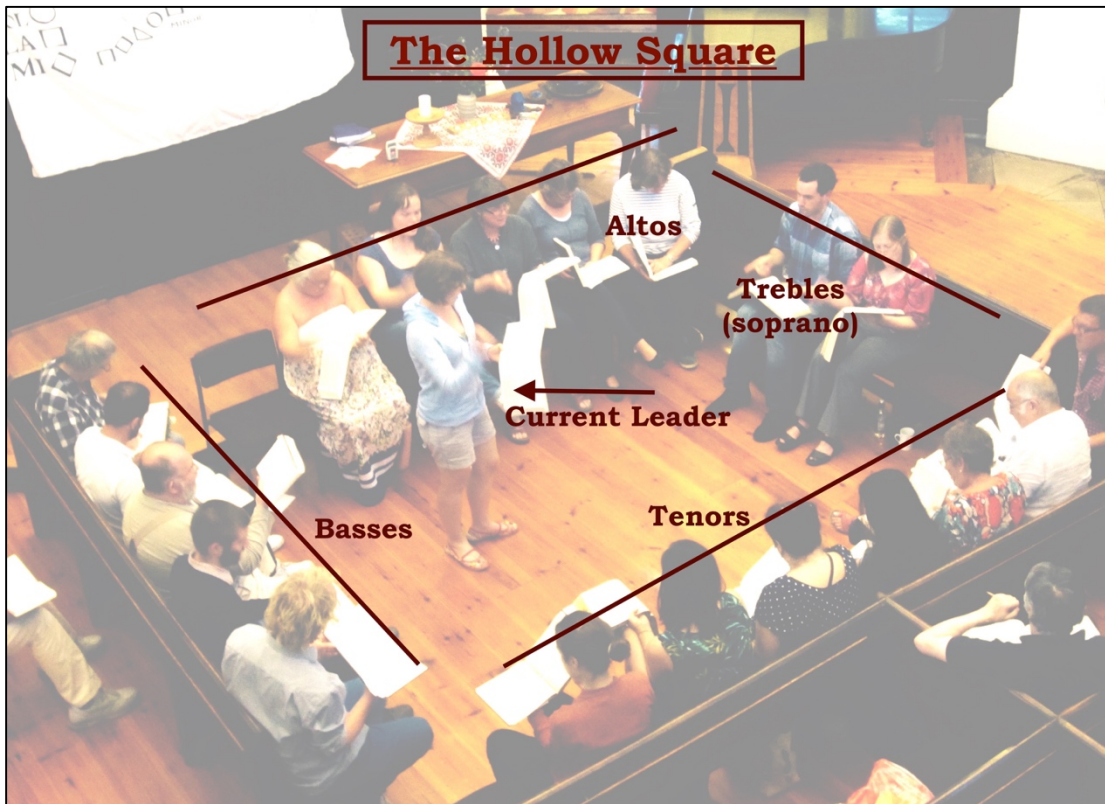
INTRODUCTION

The Sacred Harp is a Protestant shapenote¹ tunebook strongly associated with singing enclaves in the American South. Compiled by amateur composer B.F. White, the tunebook has been in constant use since its original publication in 1844 in the state of Georgia. Although the rise of accompanied gospel music after the American Civil War led most worshippers to abandon *The Sacred Harp*'s open harmonies and raw *a cappella* sound, many families and congregations in Georgia, Alabama and Texas continued to develop the tunebook, and passed on the community values and performative keys which have become inextricably associated with it. One of the most visible examples is participants' formation into a "hollow square" (see Figure 1). Another is perhaps the most important and persistent community building aspect of Sacred Harp singing, namely the cultivation of reciprocating networks of singers who travel to each other's Sacred Harp events.

In the mid 20th century, the increase of popular interest in folk traditions attracted a dedicated following of religious and secular participants around the United States.

¹ 'Shapenotes', as they are often called, were first published in 1801 in the United States. They appeared in *The Easy Instructor*, by William Little and William Smith. Each shape – triangle (*fa*), oval (*so*), rectangle (*la*), diamond (*mi*) – represents a syllable that corresponds to a musical scale degree. The major scale sounds and reads as follows: *fa, so, la, fa, so, la, mi, fa*. The minor scale sounds and reads as follows: *la, mi, fa, so, la, fa, so, la*. The shapes and syllables are almost always sung before repeating on the text.

Figure 1. Format for the Hollow Square in Sacred Harp Singing



What was once a regionally localized network of singers expanded to become a national network. Researchers envisioned its proliferation and insiders debated its benevolence. For example, Alan Lomax, the controversial ethnomusicologist and folklorist, predicted in a 1982 interview at the Holly Springs Sacred Harp Convention² that thousands of Americans would sing from *The Sacred Harp* in the following years. He cited its democratic ideals, rich sound (see Fig. 2), and generous community as heralding the tradition's future as a national singing movement (Lomax 1982, 8:38-11:01). Phil Summerlin, a Sacred Harp singer and researcher seated next to Lomax in the interview, responded with cautious support for such a movement. As

² Stream the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3mb3Ya9OUc>

Lomax made connections between the potential dispersion of Sacred Harp singing to the marketing of bluegrass music during the folk revival, Summerlin feared that Sacred Harp “could ... be taken over somewhat, as bluegrass has been taken over” (ibid, 11:01-11:26).

In the same interview, Lomax compared Sacred Harp singing to choral traditions of Western and Eastern Europe—the four-square melodies of Britain, Cornish harmonies, Ukrainian and Macedonian choral singing—as he rapidly patched together a mythical trans-Atlantic prehistory of music in the Appalachian Mountains.

However, despite his ability to make endless connections between various singing styles which westwardly crossed the northern Atlantic, and the music found in *The Sacred Harp*, even Lomax failed to consider that Sacred Harp singing would become a meaningful activity for enthusiasts far beyond U.S. national borders. Yet in the past twenty years, and most strikingly in the past eight, Sacred Harp singing has expanded into Europe, Oceania, and East Asia. More specifically, it has made its way to Canada, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, France, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Choosing to sing from *The Sacred Harp* situates participants within a dispersed but tight-knit and highly mobile network. Most enthusiasts today are not born into Sacred Harp singing families or raised in Sacred Harp social circles, yet these enthusiasts come to care deeply about Sacred Harp singing, and often feel a sense of responsibility toward the tradition and toward their adopted community. Buell Cobb,

a renown Sacred Harp singer and historian, attributes this sense of responsibility to Sacred Harp singers' assertion that they are distinctive. He writes, "this feeling is without doubt deepened by the consciousness that they stand alone in their undertaking—keeping the old songs resounding in a world which has either gone over to lighter, more 'entertaining' and frivolous types of song or has given up *all* community singing" (Cobb 1978, 150). Though Cobb wrote this before Sacred Harp singing was regularly practiced outside of the U.S., this consciousness has been extended to participants in East Asia, Oceania, Israel, and most importantly for my purposes in this dissertation, Europe.

Here, I limit my scope to Sacred Harp activities in Europe and the connections that these participants have made with singing networks in the United States. When I started working on this project in 2011, I had intended to include Australia. At that time, the active countries in Europe included only Poland, Republic of Ireland, and the United Kingdom. There were new enthusiasts in Germany, France, and Netherlands, but they had not yet formed strong local Sacred Harp communities. There was no activity in South Korea or Hong Kong at that time. After I attended the Second Ireland Sacred Harp Convention in March 2012, however, I saw that even limiting my scope to multi-sited research in Europe would be a challenge. Soon, Sacred Harp proliferated throughout Europe, and singings began sprouting up almost as fast as I could keep track of them from Connecticut.

For example, in 2011 there were around twenty-two annual all-day singings and conventions in the United Kingdom, plus the Ireland Convention and all-day. In 2016,

there are forty-nine shapenote conventions and all-day singings in the U.K. alone.

Most of them feature the ubiquitous 1991 Denson edition of *The Sacred Harp*, but a few feature other sources such as *The Christian Harmony* (2010 ed.), and the newly compiled *Shenandoah Harmony* (2012). In addition to those, there are all-days and conventions in Norway, Sweden, Poland, France, two in Germany, and Australia.

There are, of course, dozens of local singing groups in Europe that don't yet host their own large events. However, there is still tremendous room for growth, considering that the United States holds approximately 285 Sacred Harp singing conventions and all-days per year.

By 2013, there was already a strong pan-European Sacred Harp singing network formed. There were also deep friendships forged between singers in Europe and the United States as traditional singers³ and enthusiasts traveled back and forth for Sacred Harp events with more frequency. While I continue to find the Sacred Harp singing activities and identities of cohorts in Australia, Israel, Korea, and Hong Kong important to a complete picture of Sacred Harp singing's reach outside of the American South, Europe's Sacred Harp community is currently the most dynamic.

³ By "traditional singers", I am referring to Sacred Harp singers who were raised with Sacred Harp singing as part of their family heritage or church community heritage. These families and churches have been concentrated in Georgia, Alabama, and Texas for decades, though some of these singers have moved around the country, and even abroad. The term "traditional" has some controversial connotations, such as the implication that a form of cultural expression deemed "traditional" is fetishized as timeless or unchanging. Sacred Harp singing certainly has changed over its 172-year history. However, these families have facilitated that change, and they have been responsible for the music's continuation into the present. Therefore, I have found that "traditional singer" is the most useful term to distinguish from an "enthusiast", or someone who comes to Sacred Harp singing as a non-member of these families or churches. Additionally, I refer to Sacred Harp singing as a tradition, and do so without the intent to fetishize, but rather to pay homage to its history and to its persistence despite operating on the margins of Southern culture for over a century.

Furthermore, the activities of Europe's Sacred Harp singers have even gone so far as to impact the activities and interests of many enthusiasts in the United States. It is a very exciting time to be engaged with Sacred Harp singing in Europe both as a researcher, and as a participant.

While the majority of my American enthusiast research collaborators connect a sense of ownership of Sacred Harp singing to their national or regional identity, European enthusiasts must negotiate a particular set of issues that American participants do not (for an example of Sacred Harp singing in the United States, see Video 1). They must search for other ways to connect themselves to the music and tradition in a way that feels and appears legitimate. For most members of the European Sacred Harp singing community, it is insufficient to be an affinity group isolated from the community-at-large. One way that European singers accomplish this sense of legitimacy is to trace historic pathways that link the contents of *The Sacred Harp* across the northern Atlantic, much like Lomax did in 1982. Whether or not these historic pathways are themselves pathways toward a legitimate claim to cultural ownership of Sacred Harp singing is debatable. Nonetheless, it is true that the tradition did not appear in Europe out of thin air. *The Sacred Harp*'s 17th and 18th century prehistory did travel a series of pathways across the northern Atlantic in both directions, and *The Sacred Harp*'s present continues to do so again.

Another way that European Sacred Harp singers connect themselves to the tradition is through investing in the knowledge that the community-at-large has to offer. A series of Sacred Harp-specific codes—learned musical and social



**Video 1. Singing at the Keystone Sacred Harp Convention in Philadelphia, 2015.
In attendance were many of the same singers I first encountered in 2008.**

performativities—are engaged and communicated outwardly to other Sacred Harp singers. Most importantly, these codes are interpreted by other singers, and judged as legitimate or illegitimate forms of Sacred Harp cultural expression. These Sacred Harp-specific codes combine with local, regional, national, and religious codes, which may signal a web of simultaneous belongings—belonging to the Sacred Harp community-at-large, belonging to the alto section, belonging to the United Kingdom, belonging north of Hadrian’s Wall, belonging to Catholicism, etc. These belongings define the physical space surrounding European Sacred Harp singers, as well as creates and shapes the socially constructed space that results from their engagement in Sacred Harp singing.

Finally, many Sacred Harp participants in Europe place a great deal of meaning on their community, their emotional response to the music, and their religious or

spiritual beliefs in regards to Sacred Harp singing and its performative keys and social codes (I will explain what I mean by keys and codes later in the Introduction). These meanings change from individual to individual, depending on factors such as their level of regular commitment to Sacred Harp singing and their ability or willingness to surrender themselves to powerful emotions elicited through text or communal dynamics. Personal opinions about religion are various, as are individuals' levels of comfort with the overtly religious elements of Sacred Harp singing and Sacred Harp singing culture. Nevertheless, most singers have an opinion about religion, and these opinions become an important part of interpreting meaning.

Carrying Out the Project

I first came to Sacred Harp singing in the summer of 2008. At that time, I was an intern at Smithsonian Folkways Recordings in Washington D.C. One of my peers, Jessica Keyes, dragged me along to a local singing in Baltimore one weekday afternoon in July, even though I insisted that *I do not sing. I am an instrumentalist only*, I told myself. But this experience was not like the experience of singing in a choir, or singing on any stage. The handful of people in the Baltimore church basement were singing only for themselves, facing each other in a square, rather than toward an audience.

For the first time, I felt comfortable enough to at least open my mouth and give singing a try. I wasn't great, but I wasn't horrible either. I had trouble sight reading the shapenotes at first, but I was still having fun. I was confident I would be comfortable with them soon enough. The texts were vivid and challenging—nothing like the trite hymns I remember singing in the Presbyterian church of my youth which resembled love songs. The abundant parallel fourths and fifths in the musical arrangements in *The Sacred Harp* resonated with my general skepticism of authority; following the rules of tonal harmony never resulted in my favorite music. Most of all, it was a liberating experience to sing—to be vulnerable—to dare to allow my own voice to sound, to make music with it without training, to direct it at others who were doing the same. I understood why people got into Sacred Harp singing, and I knew that wanted to continue doing it too.

Since that summer, I have attended over fifty Sacred Harp singing conventions and all-day events in eleven U.S. states. I have also been involved as a regular participant in my local singing communities in Middletown and New Haven, Connecticut. My domestic involvement has not only taught me about Sacred Harp singing—the music, the performative keys and social codes, etc.—but it has taught me first-hand about community, and how musical communities based on mutual affinity can form across such vast areas as the 3,000 miles between San Francisco, California and Northampton, Massachusetts, for example.

I have attended sixteen singings in traditional Sacred Harp regions in Georgia, Alabama, and Texas throughout various trips between 2011 and 2016. While I have

made many friends from my travels there, I have not invested nearly as much time learning from traditional singers as other Sacred Harp singing researchers have. This is a point that could be criticized. However, my loosened personal ties to traditional singing has been an advantage for this project in particular. My position has relieved pressures to excessively weigh the legitimacy and “authenticity” of Sacred Harp singing in Europe against the authority of Sacred Harp singing in the American South. I am known to my European research collaborators as an ethnomusicologist and a fully functional Sacred Harp singer, but they do not necessarily see me as imbued with authority from the traditional source of the music. This has also been an advantage, as European singers I encountered seemed less likely to be concerned about my judgement of their authenticity. I wanted to participate in Sacred Harp singing with them in whatever way they preferred to participate. My lack of a dazzling traditional lineage aided my ability to do that.

From 2011 to 2015, I made six, concentrated field work trips to various singings in Europe. As mentioned above, my first was a short trip to Cork for the Second Ireland Sacred Harp Convention in March 2011. The following March of 2012, I attended the third annual convention, also hosted in Cork. At these conventions, I was introduced to scores of international singers who had traveled from all over the U.S. and Europe to attend, many of whom were supportive of my project, and helped me connect with more corners of the European Sacred Harp singing network over the following years. In the summer of 2013, I spent a month in Scotland and England, where I attended the first Glasgow All-Day Sacred Harp singing. Throughout the rest

of my trip, I visited dozens of local singing events in London, Sheffield, Norwich, Oxford, and Newcastle Upon Tyne.

I traveled to Hamburg, Germany for the first Germany Sacred Harp Convention in the spring of 2014. I returned to the country in the summer of 2015 and spent time with singers in Munich and Frankfurt. In September of 2014, I traveled to Poland to attend the second session of Camp Fasola Europe, held in Chmielno, a small lakeside town outside of Gdańsk. Camp Fasola provides a weeklong opportunity for youth and adult enthusiasts to take classes on various Sacred Harp related topics taught by traditional singers and vetted superenthusiasts.⁴ The following weekend, I traveled to Warsaw for the third Poland Sacred Harp Convention. I audio recorded almost all of these events (there were a few local singings in England where the participants were uncomfortable with the idea), took photographs and video, as well as extensive notes. Each of these conventions and all-day singings attracted a fair number of international and interregional travelers, and over the course of my visits, I met singers representing every country listed above, with the exception of New Zealand.

I conducted scores of informal interviews during my travels. However, these concentrated trips involve fast paced social events, and it can be a challenge—even a detriment—to take extensive time for one-on-one interviews with enthusiasts while activities are taking place. Most enthusiasts would rather be joining in on the fun than answering my questions for an hour. Therefore, the majority of the sixteen formal

⁴ I use the term “superenthusiast” to refer to enthusiasts who generally live their lives in relation to Sacred Harp singing—those who travel to sing most weekends, whose social life revolves around Sacred Harp singing, whose identity is significantly defined by Sacred Harp singing.

interviews I conducted with both European singers and American singers with significant ties to the European network were conducted over Skype. Three were conducted in person. Three collaborators preferred to correspond with me via email. In between my trips, I kept daily track of the activities in the European Sacred Harp singing network through Facebook, where singers post about their local events, travels, and other media coverage such as radio and television features. I was also able to connect with many European Sacred Harp singers who traveled to the United States.

Generally, I view the Sacred Harp singing affinity group in Europe not as mere consumers of Sacred Harp culture, but as creators in their own right—creators of pathways, creators of space, and creators of meaning. This affinity group has formed their own interactive community through their mutual interest in an American tradition. Though this community is in constant dialogue with the Sacred Harp community-at-large—i.e. the international network as a whole, which ultimately radiates from Georgia and Alabama—they nevertheless have created something new, and have ushered Sacred Harp singing into a new era in the 21st century.

Influential Literature

There have been many scholarly writings on Sacred Harp singing that have influenced my thoughts and understanding of this music and its history inside and

outside the American South. Most of them can be found cited throughout this dissertation. However, some have made a particular impact on me as a researcher, and as a participating enthusiast. Buell Cobb's 1978 book *The Sacred Harp: A Tradition and Its Music* provided a colorful view into Southern Sacred Harp practice, culture, and historic figures before I made my first visit to a traditional singing in Alabama in the summer of 2011. Cobb's book is indeed considered the standard "go to" source for new Sacred Harp enthusiasts who are eager to learn more about the music they love.

Before Cobb's work was published, interested readers on Sacred Harp singing were inevitably lead to the early 20th century publications by the American Folklorist George Pullen Jackson—particularly his 1933 book *White Spirituals of the Southern Uplands: the story of the fashola folk, their music, singing, and "buckwheat notes."* Cobb was rightly critical of some of Jackson's assertions, including Jackson's understanding of Sacred Harp singing as an activity relegated to Baptist and Methodist participants (Cobb 1978,19), and Jackson's predictions that Sacred Harp singing would be a dead art by the year 2044 (ibid,158).

More recently, American Studies scholar Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg, who is also a prominent figure in the participant community as the Vice President of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, has written a large-scale critique of Jackson's positioning of Sacred Harp singing as an activity perpetuated by white communities in his 2015 dissertation "Folklore's Filter: Race, Place, and Sacred Harp Singing." Karlsberg argues that Jackson's aim to describe Sacred Harp singing as rooted solely in white

Anglo-Celtic-American history not only whitewashed reader's imaginings of active Sacred Harp communities in this time period, but also aided in the decline and eventual all-but-vanishment of Sacred Harp participation by black communities and black families who had sung from *The Sacred Harp* for decades.

While Karlsberg's work does not create a direct pathway to my work here on the spread of Sacred Harp singing outside of the United States, it disrupts the ubiquitous narrative of Sacred Harp singing as a traditionally white-skinned American activity with European and American roots. Perhaps most importantly, "Folklore's Filter" implicitly disrupts the notion that the meaning of Sacred Harp has been defined solely by Euro-Celtic-American structures. Karlsberg's work has only been available for a year, and has not yet had the chance to permeate a new crop of scholarship on Sacred Harp singing. However, I have no doubt that it will impact future writings on Sacred Harp singing, and also impact the way that the Sacred Harp community-at-large views its own history, and perhaps, its social responsibility.

Of course, Sacred Harp singing has traveled historic pathways that can be traced to European-American and European communities, poets, and composers. I trace many of them in this dissertation, and they are meaningful to current participants both inside and outside of the United States. Unsurprisingly, these pathways across the northern Atlantic even create a sense of ownership and entitlement to *The Sacred Harp* among some European participants. However, my aim in this project is not to perpetuate the notion that these pathways and structures of space and meaning carved by a majority white enthusiast community are the sole or "true" foundation of this

transnational musical activity—an activity which was not long ago confined to the American South, along with all the politics of race, erasure, space, and meaning that is associated with the region, and the whole of the United States more broadly.

While Cobb's and Karlsberg's works have disrupted previous understandings of Sacred Harp singing in its late 19th and 20th century contexts, there have also been several published scholarly writings that highlight the spread of Sacred Harp singing to new enthusiast communities across the United States from the late 20th and 21st centuries (Garber 1987; Bealle 1997; Herman 1997; Marian-Bălașa 2003; Miller 2008; Clawson 2011). Two of these works have made a particular impact on my thought process for this dissertation. These books are Kiri Miller's *Traveling Home: Sacred Harp Singing and American Pluralism* (2008), and Laura Clawson's *'I Belong to This Band, Hallelujah!': Community, Spirituality, & Tradition Among Sacred Harp Singers* (2011).

Miller's *Traveling Home*, written through the lens of ethnomusicology, describes the inner social and performative structures that are adopted, contested, and negotiated by nationally bound Sacred Harp enthusiasts in relation to the perceived expectations of traditional Sacred Harp singers in the American South. She covers these movements and interactions which took place from the 1980s into the first decade of the 21st century. Miller walks a line between celebrating the "different forms of localism and authenticity" (2008, 28) among the growing affinity for Sacred Harp singing, which she calls the "Sacred Harp diaspora," and suggesting that such affinity groups should remain bound to traditional Sacred Harp structures on

principle. While she sometimes exposes her bias towards traditional Southern Sacred Harp practices, she nevertheless presents a nuanced social analysis of both the differences and intimate connections between Sacred Harp communities throughout the United States—from their stance on performative appropriation, emphasis on religion, and sources for claims to personal ownership over the singing tradition.

Clawson's *I Belong to This Band, Hallelujah!* takes a less nuanced approach to many of the same issues that Miller addresses, including Sacred Harp community formation, singers' relationship to religion and spirituality, and notions of authenticity. Written from a sociological lens, Clawson essentially divides the Sacred Harp singers in the United States into two geographically based categories: "South" and "North". She frames the traditional Sacred Harp singing activities in the American South through the constructions of "family and community" (2011, ch. 2). Meanwhile, she frames the activities of Northern singers through the constructions of "traditions, complication, and change" (ibid., ch. 3). For her, Southern singers are grounded in religion, while most Northern singers are actively seeking a spiritual connection to something.

Though her superior admiration for Southern Sacred Harp communities is clear, she paints "the South" with a broad brush—a place, where Sacred Harp participants are confined to their immediate family and local networks, and where "the genuine tradition" resides (ibid.120). While Clawson's ethnographic descriptions of traditional singing communities, such as that on Sand Mountain in Alabama (ibid, ch. 1), do suggest that such familial and local networks are highly important, she pays little

attention to the significance of real global forces, such as education and job opportunities, which not only move traditional Sacred Harp singing family members around the country and to other parts of the world, but also move “Northerners” to the American South—some of whom become highly active Sacred Harp enthusiasts and influence the community-at-large.

Within the context of studies on Sacred Harp singing, this dissertation seeks to move away from excessive comparisons of the Sacred Harp singing affinity group to the structures of traditional singing communities that have historically resided in the American South. This move is not intended to take away from the importance of these traditional communities, nor, as Kiri Miller writes, to “deny the value of Sacred Harp’s embedded history in Southern culture and religious practice” (2008, 184). Traditional Sacred Harp singing communities have been well documented (James 1904; Jackson 1933, 1937, 1944, 1952; Wolf 1968; Ellington 1969; Boyd 1970, 1971, 2002; Horn 1970; Cobb 1978, 2014; Miller 2002; Sommers 2010; Steel 2010; Webb 2010; Karlsberg 2015). It is undeniable that they have laid the performative and structural foundation for the community-at-large. However, this dissertation looks toward the activities and structures of the affinity group, and specifically the members of the affinity group who primarily participate in Europe—i.e. those who are even farther removed from the nuanced politics of “the American South” and “the rest of the United States.”

On the other hand, I acknowledge that structures of traditional Sacred Harp singing in the American South informs much singing in Europe, and traditional

singing remains highly important to many members of the affinity group. Therefore, I do not entirely ignore comparisons and interactions between these groups. However, my aim is to investigate the pathways, spaces, and meanings that pertain to European participants specifically. European participants have only recently been included in publications intended for the Sacred Harp community-at-large (Gryszko 2011; Karlsberg 2011, 2012, 2013; Walker 2012; Wedgbury 2012; Titford-Mock 2013; Brown 2014; Lueck 2014; Witt Duarte 2014), and have found their way into only three available scholarly sources—two M.A. theses in ethnomusicology from Ireland, and a chapter in an edited book authored by me (Wedgbury 2011; Wise 2012; Lueck 2015).

Like Miller's and Clawson's work, this dissertation looks at broadly dispersed Sacred Harp activities and structures through a social scientific and musical lens. While these two authors don't explicitly organize their theoretical material under the headings "pathways", "spaces", and "meaning", they nevertheless express the importance of these structures throughout their writings. One reason for this is that these topics—though perhaps called by various names—are deeply important to Sacred Harp singers themselves.

The Significance of Pathways, Space, and Meaning

The history of Sacred Harp singing communities and historically important figures are frequently recounted in Sacred Harp oral culture. At Camp Fasola held in Alabama and Poland, lessons are given on specific Sacred Harp composers and other remembered community personalities. In the memorial lesson—a short event held at most Sacred Harp conventions—the names of singers from the community-at-large who have passed away within the year are read aloud. Sacred Harp singing events are meticulously documented and preserved through official channels such as the annually released Sacred Harp Minutes Books, and through other media such as local singing groups’ Facebook pages.

The act of preserving history and documenting actions of the community effectively carves pathways for singers to understand the shaping of Sacred Harp practices and culture. As the community-at-large expands geographically across the Atlantic and Pacific, these internationally accessible oral and written records maintain pathways which ultimately lead back to traditional Sacred Harp singing structures.

Space is also a central theme in the community consciousness of Sacred Harp singers. There is an emphasis on physical space in relation to historic importance—i.e. space imbued with historic meaning, either from within Sacred Harp history specifically or some other local historic significance—and in relation to desired aesthetic acoustic integrity. For example, Liberty Baptist Church in Henegar, Alabama has housed Sacred Harp singings for generations and is one of the handful of churches remaining that still uses *The Sacred Harp* during worship services. Sacred Harp singers from all over the world hold Liberty in the highest regard, and

Miller and Clawson both write about this space as an important marker in the wider community's consciousness (Miller 2008, 174-74; Clawson 2011, 165).



Figure 3. Inside and outside Liberty Baptist Church, Henegar, Alabama

It is also beloved as a space which is ideal for acoustic enjoyment of Sacred Harp singing—a type of space which singers affectionately refer to as a “wooden box”. Liberty’s structure is mostly made of wood, and has few glass windows; its ceiling is low; when filled with three-hundred singers, the room is practically impossible to maneuver in. It appears to be the opposite of a cathedral space, apart from the modest depiction of Jesus that hangs on the wall of Liberty which marks it as a place for Christian worship (see Figure 3).

These physical features also make Liberty Baptist Church the acoustic opposite of a cathedral, and that is exactly how Sacred Harp singers prefer it. There is no excess of spatial volume for sonic reverberation. The sound of the voice bounces off the wood, and quickly and clearly reaches the ear of the listener. When the room is packed with active participants singing at full volume, the entire structure vibrates from the sonic pulses moving through the building materials. Because all of that

sound also moves through the body, this physical sensation can create a powerful musical and emotional experience for Sacred Harp singers, making the specificity of space an intrinsic aspect of Sacred Harp performative practice.

Pathways and space aside, the Sacred Harp community is ultimately driven by the meaning it gives to the music. Sacred Harp enthusiasts will declare that the music found in the pages of *The Sacred Harp* is some of the greatest participatory vocal music available, and that they can sing it week after week and year after year without tiring of the tunes' familiarity. Yet, Sacred Harp enthusiasts will also agree that Sacred Harp singing is more than the sum of its pages—that it is a powerful force which stirs a wealth of emotions, connects participants to God or to some personal experience of spirituality, and brings participants together both physically and figuratively to form an international community.

Exploring these intricate meanings—some of which are experienced by the majority of singers, and some of which are experienced by particular groups of enthusiasts—is the primary aim of both Miller's and Clawson's social analysis of Sacred Harp singing. Ultimately, it is also my aim to explore the meaning of Sacred Harp singing for the new crop of enthusiasts in Europe. Engaging the Sacred Harp pathways that crisscross the northern Atlantic, as well as engaging the spaces that are occupied and created by singers in Europe aid and inform me in this aim.

Affinity and Affinity Groups

There are other theoretical factors which have been formulated outside the realm of Sacred Harp singing that inform my interpretation of these meanings. One major theoretical factor that has influenced my work here, and in general, is ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin's construction of the 'affinity group'. In his groundbreaking work, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (1993), Slobin defines the musical affinity group as a "small scale network of human bonding" which may form across and in spite of geography, ethnicity, race, politics, or age cohort (ibid., 35). Sacred Harp singers who were brought up outside of the Sacred Harp singing familial and community networks described by Clawson certainly fit this description. Participants who come to Sacred Harp singing from outside the United States fit the bill even more so. While these outsiders who enjoy Sacred Harp singing collectively form an affinity group, I refer to the individual members of this broad category as 'enthusiasts'.

Slobin identifies three areas which account for the forming of what he calls the "micromusical home" (ibid., 53), within which the affinity group is essentially placed. These areas are choice, affinity, and belonging. Slobin recognizes that individuals in Western culture have a significant amount of choice in the musics they participate in and enjoy. He notes that this is contrary to older assumptions in cultural pluralism in which, "everyone starts off life in a recognizable subculture that spreads out from a nuclear family and is based in heritage and locale" (ibid, 55). Yet, Slobin asserts that both freedom of choice and family origin may be at play for today's music

makers, concluding that, “if we combine these two perspectives, we can say that we all grow up with *something*, but we can choose just about *anything* by way of expressive culture. Part of the reason for this eclecticism is that we start with many ‘somethings’” (ibid, 55).

Affinity, on the other hand, is essentially the commitment to, or pursuit of the choice. Affinity can also be as complicated as the identity of the choosing individual, seemingly lacking rhyme or reason when viewed by an outsider, and intricately layered or even contradictory at times. Using the example of contra dance enthusiasts in New England—an affinity group which shares some enthusiasts with the Sacred Harp singing affinity group—Slobin points out that many of these dancers also participate in various other social dance forms from the Celtic and European tradition. He writes,

The overlaps of memberships can be striking, going against any simple formulation of heritage equals membership, or even membership A implies membership B... The listing confounds any sense of belonging out of regional revivalism or ethnic orientation. The only affinity seems to be to dance itself... (ibid, 56)

Assuming that an individual does indeed have the choice to pursue their affinity, this act inevitably leads to a sense of belonging, and hence to the creation of an affinity group through such “human bonding” over mutual music making and mutual interest. The individual is no longer a solitary chooser, but part of a community of individuals who have made a similar choice based on affinity for the same form of expressive culture. As Slobin puts it, “expressive culture is both what ‘we’ do and what ‘I’ do... the two are so intertwined as to be inextricable” (ibid, 56). Yet “we” and

“I” are also engaged in other interests, groups, and obligations. To shed light on the complicated reality of simultaneous belongings, Slobin adds that expressive culture,

...is also what ‘they’ do. No cultural rule says that people cannot play allegiance to small, medium, and large groups simultaneously... This option may be very attractive to individuals, who can locate themselves variably—hence comfortably—in different groups (ibid, 56-57).

This idea of multiplicity rings true for Clawson’s “Northern” singers, and for Miller’s Sacred Harp “diaspora,” particularly in relation to religious or spiritual identity. I believe this multiplicity of belongings plays out even more so for Sacred Harp enthusiasts in Europe, who not only belong to various religious and spiritual groups, but are also performing nationalism while simultaneously engaging in Sacred Harp performative keys which have been transmitted from the United States.

I am not the first to write about such musical affinity groups. That scholarly pathway has been labored upon by several other ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, and journalists (DeWitt 1999; Solís 2004; Hadley 2007; Laušević 2007; Bidgood 2010; Cohen 2010; Sterling 2010; Young 2010; Lueck 2012; Steele 2013; Bithell 2014; S. Brown 2014; Ross 2015). However, there have been different approaches to the topic. These studies all include the fundamental process of affinity group formation through choice → affinity → belonging, discussed through differing terminology. But they variably emphasize what I consider the three fundamental categories which define a particular affinity group, which are pathways, space, and meaning. The studies also vary in terms of what is being transmitted to the

forming affinity group: musical objects? musical aesthetics? a musical discipline? a musical philosophy?

Ethnomusicologist Peter Hadley, for example, centers his affinity-based study on the dispersion of a musical instrument rather than an aesthetic, such as Laušević's Balkan dance enthusiasts, or a performance ensemble such as gamelan, which I undertook for my Masters research. In his 2007 dissertation, "The Didjeridu Dispersion: The Transmission and Transformation of a Hollow Log", Hadley writes,

This study is based on the premise that the didjeridu is nothing more or less than a hollow log, and that all meanings, understandings and interpretations about the didjeridu and its appropriate uses reside in the narrative contexts of the people involved with the didjeridu. As the object is adopted into different narrative (cultural) contexts, the understandings, interpretations, and appropriate uses change. (i)

Here, pathways, space, and meaning all play an intricate role in Hadley's analysis of the dispersion of this Australian Aboriginal musical object, which has found its way to enthusiasts all over the world. While some understanding of the instrument's origins and traditionally intended uses are generally passed on to enthusiasts, these origins and uses are often seen as highly exotic and inaccessible. Participants either pursue a perceived authentic connection to the instrument, ignore the specifics of its traditional uses, or operate in some middle ground. While enthusiasts of the didjeridu may form an affinity group, this group does not necessarily have a unified vision across regional or national borders, and its practitioners do not necessarily form a community in the same way that Sacred Harp singers do (for a discussion of "community", see Chapter 4).

Mirjana Laušević's 2007 book *Balkan Fascination: Creating an Alternative Music Culture in America*, documents the activities of a music and dance affinity group, based in the United States, which has formed around a general "Balkan" aesthetic. The affinity group—or "village" made up of "Balkanites", as the author describes her research collaborators—draws from a wide range of repertoire from countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Russia, Ukraine, and other "Balkan" countries. Rather than lingering on the issues of space and meaning, Laušević delves primarily into the pathways which created the Balkan music and dance affinity group. She chooses this focus primarily because the members of the affinity group themselves had strikingly little knowledge or understanding of the existing pathways which so enabled their activities. Laušević writes,

I discovered that most of the members of this "village" were more interested in tending the grounds and maintaining the house, so to speak, than in understanding when, why, and how the village came into existence, how it got its present-day shape, what it was built for, and who inhabited it before them. (2007, 9)

In this regard, the author's "Balkanites" are different from the European Sacred Harp community, where many singers are quite aware of the pathways that led to the establishment of their local community, and are also aware of the pathways to and from the community-at-large. This could be in part because the Sacred Harp communities in Europe are so new. But this is also because of Sacred Harp singers' general interest in documenting its own history, and perpetuating its oral culture.

Ethnomusicologist Caroline Bithell's recent monograph, *A Different Voice, A Different Song: Reclaiming Community through the Natural Voice and World Song* (2014), provides a look at a singing affinity group in the United Kingdom which is in many ways similar to the Sacred Harp singing affinity group in Europe. Rather than observing the transmission of a musical object or a generalized repertoire, Bithell explores the natural voice movement as an affinity group formed through the transmission of a performative ideology. This movement encourages all people to sing regardless of prior training or inherent talent.

Furthermore, it encourages all people to sing with, "the voice nature gave us, the voice we were born with—a voice that might be construed as primordial, naked, instinctive, and authentic; a voice that has not yet been constrained or adulterated by modern, grown-up, educated notions of what sounds 'proper'" (ibid, 46). This echoes much of the rhetoric used to describe and promote Sacred Harp singing to new enthusiasts—the "sacred harp" itself refers to the human voice, the natural instrument we are born with. Also like the Sacred Harp community, the natural voice movement makes room for the creation of ensembles who don't perform for outside audiences. These ensembles only rehearse for the members' personal enjoyment of singing together. However, unlike the Sacred Harp community, the meaning for the natural voice movement is not centered or defined by a specific repertoire. Rather, its participants draw from a wide range of "world song", which includes styles of harmony singing from around the globe, often in languages other than English. Sometimes they even draw from American shapenote sources.

Abandoning the emphasis on appropriative affinity groups in Western society, anthropologist Marvin D. Sterling provides an in-depth analysis of the Jamaican music and dance affinity group in Japan through his work, *Babylon East: Performing Dancehall, Roots Reggae, and Rastafari in Japan* (2010). The musical and intellectual pathways between Jamaica and Japan are given some consideration, however Sterling's primary focus is on space and meaning as he uses the affinity for dancehall, roots reggae, and Rastafari subcultural performance to ultimately shed light on issues of gender, class, ethnicity, and social identity throughout wider Japanese culture.

The author asks many of the same questions of his Japan based affinity group that I ask of my Europe based affinity group, namely: How is nationalism and regionalism performed within the affinity group which has appropriated expressive culture from another country? How is a transnational network formed and traveled? How does an affinity group imagine or create their kinship to their chosen affinity (i.e. how do they position their belonging in relation to the culture from which they have appropriated)? And how do members of the affinity group position themselves spiritually or religiously in relation to an appropriated musical culture which is driven by religious meanings and sensibilities?

Each of these authors have contributed to my understanding of the Sacred Harp singing affinity group in Europe as distinct in that it possesses all of these defining characteristics discussed above. On one hand, the choice to sing Sacred Harp is made available through the transmission of a musical object. Physical copies of *The Sacred*

Harp are purchased and shipped around the world by The Sacred Harp Publishing Company which is located in Georgia. On the other hand, a particular musical aesthetic is also transmitted along with the object. Like Laušević's study, this aesthetic is transmitted to the affinity group mostly through oral culture. For today's Sacred Harp singers, oral culture is passed on through media such as the Internet, through traditional singers who travel to the affinity group, and also through the Rudiments section of the tunebook itself. In this regard, *The Sacred Harp* as a print object carries a significant amount of information, including an entire repertoire, and, I would argue, is more complex than Hadley's "hollow log".

The Sacred Harp affinity group is simultaneously based on the transmission of a performative ideology much like Bithell's natural voice practitioners. Enthusiasts are drawn to it because it requires no formal musical training, it seeks to maintain an ethos of participant freedom and community democracy, and its musical activities are primarily designed for the enjoyment of the music-makers themselves, rather than an audience. However, the Sacred Harp singing affinity group in Europe is nevertheless inherently appropriative. Like Sterling and Slobin suggest in their respective studies, as participants' identities are shaped by Sacred Harp singing, the shaping complicates and multiplies other layers of national, regional, and spiritual/religious identity for European singers.

Affinity and Cultural Appropriation

I would like to take the time to describe and clarify what I mean by appropriation, as this word has come to possess highly negative associations with disenfranchisement, offense, and theft in current popular dialogue. While certain forms of appropriation by particular groups or individuals do indeed meet these severe definitions—for example, the vast wealth procured by white executives from the music of African American musical artists—I believe that cultural appropriation can also have more nuanced outcomes. Nevertheless, it is a concept which is intrinsic to the nature of musical affinity groups.

I argue that cultural appropriation within the realm of the Sacred Harp affinity group in Europe—or Sacred Harp singing outside of traditional singing contexts in general—is not particularly harmful. This is not to suggest that it is not complicated, or even offensive to some. However, it can certainly be used as a tool to discuss the complex undercurrents between the outward message of inclusivity that is projected by Sacred Harp singing advocates, and the simultaneous anxieties among traditional singers as well as enthusiasts—the message that Sacred Harp singing belongs to anyone who wants to sing it (but it really belongs to singers from the state of Georgia, or from the state of Alabama); that all voices are welcome (but Southern voices are the most welcome); and that all bodies are encouraged to attend any Sacred Harp event (unless a traditional singing has become overrun with outsider enthusiasts).

To aid my thinking about cultural appropriation, I draw from the work of Canadian philosopher James O. Young, who has written extensively on nuances of the

topic in his aptly titled book *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (2010). Young takes the term ‘cultural appropriation’ at face value, defining it as simply, “appropriation that occurs across the boundaries of cultures. Members of one culture... take for their own, or for their own use, items produced by a member or members of another culture” (ibid, 5).

In the case of Sacred Harp singing, what “items” are being appropriated? Copies of *The Sacred Harp*, certainly, which condones its appropriated use within its own text as it claims to be the best collection “ever offered the *singing public* for *general use*” [emphasis added] (McGraw 1991). However, as I mentioned above, there is more being transmitted than the object alone. Artistic content is also taken on by the Sacred Harp affinity group. Artistic content may include the pieces of music in the tunebook, but also elements such as singing style, oratory style, event format, and even fashion style, etc. According to Young’s five categories of cultural appropriation—which are: (1) object appropriation; (2) content appropriation; (3) style appropriation; (4) motif appropriation; and (5) subject appropriation—three of these categories are relevant to my discussion of the Sacred Harp affinity group, namely object appropriation, content appropriation, and style appropriation.

Young defines object appropriation as occurring when, “the possession of a tangible work of art is transferred from members of one culture to members of another culture” (6). Luckily for Sacred Harp singers everywhere, *The Sacred Harp* remains in print, and most anyone who would want a copy can acquire one. Furthermore, when a European singer gains a copy of the tunebook, it does not mean

that a traditional singer in the American South no longer has access. The Publishing Company has kept up with the demand for books, and have sold approximately 60,000 copies of the 1991 edition.⁵

Content appropriation, on the other hand, occurs when, “an artist has made significant reuse of an idea first expressed in the work of an artist from another culture” (6). In terms of Sacred Harp singing, content appropriation is occurring every time enthusiasts gather together to sing songs from *The Sacred Harp* in the hollow square with a leader in the center, etc.

Finally, style appropriation—the borrowing of “something less than an entire expression of an artistic idea” (6)—may occur less frequently by Sacred Harp enthusiasts, yet there are plenty of readily available examples which I discuss throughout this dissertation. For example, when a performing choir sings songs from *The Sacred Harp*, or when a European enthusiast composes shapenote music in the style of *The Sacred Harp*, this is style appropriation.

Now that I have identified the types of cultural appropriation undertaken by the Sacred Harp affinity group, I would like to turn briefly to the other party required in such an exchange, namely those whose music is being appropriated. However, this immediately prompts the question: Who owns Sacred Harp singing anyway? If Sacred Harp singing is defined by the object—*The Sacred Harp* tunebook—then its content is owned by the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, a non-profit organization

⁵ This sales figure was reported by Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg at the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, and was relayed to me via Neely Bruce, August 27, 2016.

which is controlled by both traditional singers and superenthusiasts. By this reasoning, those who purchase a copy of *The Sacred Harp* from the Publishing Company also own it. The more copies are purchased by enthusiasts, the more proceeds go to the Publishing Company. In turn, the Publishing Company spends those proceeds on facilitating the growth of the international Sacred Harp singing community as they subsidize overseas shipments of cases of *The Sacred Harp*, and provide other useful publications for the community-at-large such as the Sacred Harp Publishing Company Newsletter.

But what about other institutions, such as the Alabama based Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association, run by singers from traditional singing families? This organization publishes the Sacred Harp Minutes Book, which as mentioned above, publishes the annual proceedings for every Sacred Harp singing convention. SHMHA also hosts sessions of Camp Fasola in Alabama and Poland, which promotes the adoption of traditional Sacred Harp singing practices to members of the affinity group (or at least what the organizers of SHMHA deem to be traditional practices).

Like the Publishing Company, SHMHA has embraced the spread of Sacred Harp singing to new enthusiasts. However, they have clearly staked a claim as bearers of the “correct” cultural practices, and have positioned themselves, and Alabama singers more broadly, as the authentic cultural home for Sacred Harp singing. Thus the descendants of traditional singing families in Alabama could also be considered the cultural owners of Sacred Harp.

Though there may be undercurrents of disagreement about this cultural ownership of Sacred Harp singing among traditional singers from Alabama and traditional singers from Georgia, or Texas for that matter, it follows that families who have passed this music down for generations are also its cultural owners. The idea that collective ownership of an art form can rightfully belong to a culture is nothing new, and is even propagated by established international institutions. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights claims that, “ownership and custody of their heritage must continue to be collective, permanent and inalienable, as prescribed by the customs, rules and practices of each people” (Young 2010, 67). While this statement refers specifically to indigenous cultures—a category which traditional Sacred Harp singing families cannot claim⁶—the general sentiment still rings true that they, as a collective, may claim ownership over the intangible practice of Sacred Harp singing. If the United States participated in UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage List, it is perfectly conceivable that Sacred Harp singing would be on that list as an art form that extends beyond the publication of a tunebook.

I have established that Sacred Harp enthusiasts appropriate Sacred Harp singing in various ways from traditional singers. But is this appropriation harmful? Does it constitute cultural theft? As long as the Sacred Harp Publishing Company continues to sell copies to anyone, it is certainly not object theft. Additionally, I have never heard of an instance where a traditional singer suggested that copies should be

⁶ Consider that the regions of northern Georgia and Alabama, where many of these traditional singings take place, is also the region where the Creek, Cherokee, and Seminole people were forcibly marched to Oklahoma between 1830-1850 in accordance with the Indian Removal Act.

restricted (it is entirely possible that this has been suggested behind closed doors). However, I have also established that Sacred Harp singing is more than an object, so there is more to this issue than the transmission of copies of *The Sacred Harp*.

What about harm committed through content and style appropriation? I argue that the act of participating in music is essentially a renewable resource. If someone engages in Sacred Harp singing in Hong Kong, it does not remove or limit the opportunity for a traditional singer to practice Sacred Harp as she pleases in the state of Georgia. It is possible that a traditional singer may be offended by the idea of an enthusiast in Hong Kong engaging in Sacred Harp singing, but the traditional singer is not really experiencing harm or disenfranchisement.

In terms of harm to Sacred Harp singing as religious expression, some Christian singers feel that participating with non-Christian singers takes away from the spiritual experience they are seeking (see Miller 2008). However, the Sacred Harp singing convention was founded on the premise of multi-denominational participation, and singers held a variety of beliefs. Singing with mixed believers may be offensive to some, and one could argue that it is harmful to personal feelings, but I argue that it doesn't harm the integrity of Sacred Harp singing itself.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly to this issue, there are no singers—traditional or enthusiast—who are acquiring monetary wealth from Sacred Harp singing. Most of the money that changes hands in regards to Sacred Harp singing goes towards sustaining local groups. Occasionally money is raised through Sacred Harp singing to benefit civil community efforts in the non-profit sector. A handful of

artists may make a little bit of money from recordings of Sacred Harp songs, and a few shapenote scholars earned their academic appointments with stable salaries through researching Sacred Harp. But no one is truly profiting from this music at the expense of traditional singing communities.

Sacred Harp was never meant to be limited as a ritual rite for a select few. It is not comparable to the Navajo Blessing Way ceremonies, for example, which are meant to be performed by the Navajo alone. The nature of Sacred Harp singing's inclusivity has shifted many times over its 172-year existence—at times excluding women from certain rolls, at times excluding African American singers, etc.—but in general it adheres to tenets of Protestant thinking which suggests that The Word is for all people. Likewise, the spread of Sacred Harp singing throughout the United States and abroad has been promoted by many of its institutional and cultural owners. However, similar to what Christian missionaries have discovered over the centuries, once *The Sacred Harp* and its cultural practices, performative keys, oral history, etc. are passed from traditional singers to people from another culture, there is no telling how they may eventually interpret its demands and its meaning. Nevertheless, there are systems in place designed to aid the spread of a uniform vision for Sacred Harp singing across vast distances.

Proposing a Theory for a New Space, the Affinity Interzone

Although cultural appropriation is inherent to affinity groups, the Sacred Harp community-at-large—with its direct connections to traditional singing—creates a socially constructed space for this appropriation on its own terms. I call this type of space the *affinity interzone*. The affinity interzone, in a broad sense, is a portable space constructed to create community cohesion and uniform understanding of a genre of music, its meaning, and performance across geographic distance by its practitioners. It aids in promoting the “sameness” of a musical activity throughout the world. This way, enthusiasts can easily and comfortably participate in any affinity-oriented musical event, no matter its location. An affinity community constructs the affinity interzone by transmitting participants’ expectations regarding a familiar event choreography at formal gatherings, nuanced performative keys, and social codes to incoming enthusiasts. I will explain these terms and concepts below. In addition, the successful production of these elements defines a legitimate musical event for experienced participants. Yet, how exactly is the affinity interzone constructed, and who is responsible for carrying out each element?

The organizational format of a formal musical event or gathering acts as recognizable choreography, which creates structure for the affinity interzone space. The implementation of event choreography is primarily the responsibility of the event hosts. The performative keys, on the other hand, are where the intricacies of the musical culture lie, and the interpretation of these performative keys by participants relies on markers within the event choreography. These performative keys are enacted by hosts and visitors alike. The expected social codes are, in essence, the laws that

govern the people who occupy the affinity interzone. The enactment of social codes is also the responsibility of all attending participants. When this event choreography is successfully engaged and interpreted through these keys and codes, the result is the creation of a space, the affinity interzone, where the musical and social ideals of a dispersed affinity group are underscored and encouraged. If a transgression against any of these expected elements occurs, there is the potential for a rift in the interzone.

The foundational elements for the construction of an affinity interzone are supported in theoretical materials outlined in sociologist Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974). Goffman's work successfully describes the interpretation and recognition of both natural and social events, which he refers to as "primary frameworks," through the correct understanding of "keys" by members of society. These keys are defined as "a set of conventions" which are "meaningful in terms of some primary framework" (ibid., 43-44). In the case of the affinity interzone, the event choreography is the primary framework. Considering the performative nature of the affinity interzone, I find it helpful to separate out the keys which distinguish performative style (hence "performative keys"), and the keys or codes which distinguish the expectations of the social dynamic of a community event (hence "social codes"). Goffman acknowledges that the terms "keys" and "codes" are essentially interchangeable, the latter term most commonly being used in the field of linguistics (ibid. 44). By "codes" I also mean a set of conventions by which an event is interpreted. I use these two terms merely to distinguish between performativities

relating to the music, and those which govern the desired social atmosphere of the affinity interzone.

Below I discuss the specifics of the affinity interzone that has been tailored by the Sacred Harp singing affinity group, however I argue that this type of socially constructed space also applies to other dispersed affinity groups, such as the competitive Scottish pipe band affinity group, or the Balinese gamelan affinity group in the West, for example. Their affinity interzones are also constructed by anticipated event choreography, nuanced performative keys, and social codes. However, their specific choreography and keys/codes may appear very different, or even opposite from those of the Sacred Harp community. To provide a brief example, the social codes of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone aim to provide an atmosphere of democratic participation and community inclusion. The social codes within competitive bagpiping, on the other hand, allow for certain levels of peer criticism and intimidation in the spirit of competition.

The greatest tool that Sacred Harp singing has for the transmission of the elements that make up the affinity interzone is the Sacred Harp convention and all-day singing, an event which is held annually by a local singing cohort where enthusiasts travel to sing from *The Sacred Harp* together for a determined weekend. Members of this dispersed community expect each Sacred Harp singing convention, regardless of location, to maintain the same organizational format and event choreography. This format contains many specifics, including the arrangement of chairs into a hollow square; a committee of local volunteers who help organize

dinner-on-the grounds; public prayers; visitor housing, and other tasks surrounding the singing convention; an organized system for calling upon song leaders in a democratic fashion; periodic breaks throughout the day of singing; and an allegiance to *The Sacred Harp*, 1991 Denson edition (other shapenote conventions follow a similar format, but with allegiances to other books, including *The Sacred Harp, Revised Cooper Edition*⁷). These choreographic elements help to define the Sacred Harp convention, and it is expected that convention hosts will not deviate from them.

Enthusiasts also expect that advanced singers will engage performative keys deemed traditional. The list of keys also contains many specifics, but includes pitching songs without the assistance of an external device (this process is called “keying,” and should not be confused with performative keys), designating the front row of the tenor section for experienced leaders, singing without the use of vibrato, and expressing a familiarity with the repertoire by singing tunes from memory with a closed tunebook.

As mentioned above, there is the social expectation that Sacred Harp singing events will respect an inclusive environment for people of all backgrounds. At a

⁷ *The Sacred Harp*, through its history of revisions after the death of B. F. White, experienced a sort of participatory schism over a 1902 edition headed by Alabama arranger W. M. Cooper. Cooper incorporated contemporary gospel tunes and arrangements in close harmony, which he hoped would attract a new crop of singers. Many traditional singers lamented the changes that Cooper made. In response, J. S. James published his own edition in 1911 which sought to maintain the old sound. From this revision, we now have the common 1991 “Denson book”, also called the “red book” for its color. The Cooper edition is known as the “blue book” for its color. Some families continued singing from the Cooper edition, and others from the Denson edition, and a handful sang from both. Most singers have a strong preference for one over the other. Still, the two editions are in reality quite similar, and Sacred Harp singing enthusiasts can easily transition from one to the other with few changes in performative keys. It is the 1991 Denson edition of *The Sacred Harp* that has had the greatest impact throughout the United States and Europe.

convention, the display of personal politics and religious beliefs are avoided despite the explicitly Christian texts used. Comments or suggestions regarding a singer's musical ability are also deemed inappropriate, as all voices are considered equally welcome. This ban on controversial topics and expressed aesthetic preferences enables singers to focus on singing and fellowship, rather than personal difference. While 'small talk' may be frowned upon in other circles, it is an important part of the social fabric of the Sacred Harp community. If a local singing cohort expects singers from other distant cohorts to travel to their convention, it is understood that they must first and foremost meet these definitive choreographic expectations, and that the legitimacy of the event will be determined through participant enactment of such social codes, as well as performative keys which are perceived to be "authentic".

Regarding the need for members of the affinity group to feel that they are taking part in a legitimate or "authentic" Sacred Harp singing event, and regarding this sense of legitimacy stemming from the proper employment of choreography, keys, and codes, this "legitimacy" aspect of the affinity interzone is directly in line with observations of music revivals more broadly. The spread of Sacred Harp singing to enthusiasts outside of the American South since the 1950s, and its resultant re-energization in traditional Sacred Harp singing regions squarely places contemporary Sacred Harp singing in the category of music revival. Ethnomusicologists Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell write in their theoretically motivated introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*,

Successfully and convincingly wielding this label ["authentic"] thus has the potential to confer power and legitimacy. The process of

establishing authenticity begins with the highly selective and subjective identification of particular aspects of elements in a music-culture, followed by the decision that they should be perpetuated and the assertion of their value. These selections become ideals, models to strive towards, measures of assessment, and the criteria for establishing authenticity. In revivals, these idealized criteria are often historical—though history may be reinterpreted, imagined, or selectively focused in order to emphasize criteria that resonate with contemporary interests... Conflicting assertions of authenticity amongst different parties are not uncommon. (Hill and Bithell 2014, 20)

As described in my previous section on appropriation, traditional singers have largely been successful in retaining control over the affinity-wide selection of musical and cultural aspects (i.e. choreography, keys, and codes) through frequent, direct intervention and engagement with Sacred Harp enthusiasts. These selected musical and cultural aspects are most frequently disseminated to enthusiasts through experience and absorption in the affinity interzone. However, the outer regions of the dispersed community, including Europe, do find themselves with a significant amount of independence, and “conflicting assertions of authenticity” do occur. These conflicts can either result in a rift in the affinity interzone, or they may be simply ignored by participants in accordance with the Sacred Harp social codes.

I am not the first to point out the importance of topics such as event organization, social codes, and performative elements to the Sacred Harp community. Yet Sacred Harp researchers have described these community expectations as separate issues that are unconnected within the limited scope of Sacred Harp singing in the United States. For example, Kiri Miller spends a significant amount of time writing about the importance of the organization of the standard Sacred Harp convention. She places

the hollow square—the primary choreographic marker of shapenote singing—as the musical homeland for her Sacred Harp “diaspora”, which is analogous to my preferred term “dispersed community”.

Sacred Harp performative keys carry significant social currency, and the proper fulfillment of them can make a singer visible or known across vast spaces. Miller observes that the outward display of these performativities—i.e. not only performing the acts, but making sure the acts are witnessed by others who can interpret these codes—“show that there are complex status relationships in play at Sacred Harp conventions, where authority is claimed or ascribed according to singers’ apparent competence as tradition-bearers” (2008, 79). I argue below that the enactment of these keys also signal and encourage belonging.

The spread of Sacred Harp singing outside of the American South, and more recently outside of the United States, has increased the social expectations regarding community inclusiveness towards a diverse body of people. Even in the 19th century, there was a need for participants at Sacred Harp conventions to create an inclusive environment towards Protestants of several denominations. However, the current 21st century demographics of the Sacred Harp community-at-large calls for new levels of sensitivity. Laura Clawson aptly labels this “strategic silence” (2011, 9). Miller calls this inclusivity the “ideology of tolerance” (2008, 195).

These days, it is entirely plausible that a right-wing activist would find themselves singing next to a left-wing activist, or a xenophobe next to an immigrant, for example. In order to promote fellowship and inclusivity among a diverse class of

singers, the Sacred Harp community essentially promotes a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy in regards to discussing subjects outside the realm of Sacred Harp singing, travel, and topics of “small talk” such as the weather. Even questions regarding a singer’s profession can be considered uncomfortable, as participants’ economic and educational situations are so varied. While event choreography, performative keys, and social codes can be parsed out and discussed as separate issues relating to the Sacred Harp convention, I observe that these issues work together to create the Sacred Harp affinity interzone.

The term *interzone* has been used before. In its most benign setting, it has been used to refer to an international zone—a territory governed by international law such as the north African city of Tangiers, or an international airport. The term is most well-known by fans of the paranoid fiction author William S. Burroughs, who uses it to name a fictional city controlled by a sort of nebulous, international agreement. I admit that I first got the idea to appropriate the term while watching the film adaptation of Burroughs’ *Naked Lunch* (Cronenberg 1991), when one character declares to another that the “Interzone is the only place that’ll have a shady character like you at such short notice.” While I don’t remotely consider the Sacred Harp community to be full of characters like those in Burroughs’ disturbing novels, the line made me think of Sacred Harp’s inclusivity—anyone is welcome, no questions asked.

Furthermore, I also have found the term affinity interzone useful as an extension and adaptation of Mark Slobin’s discussion of the *diasporic interculture*. Slobin writes of the interculture to describe “the far-flung, expansive reach of musical forces

that cross frontiers” (1993, 61). He further defines the more specific diasporic interculture as emerging “from the linkages that subcultures set up across national boundaries” (ibid, 64). The diasporic interculture certainly describes part of what is happening within the international Sacred Harp network and affinity groups more broadly. However, the more I examined the nature of the Sacred Harp singing convention and the expectations that singers bring to these events, the more I began to think of this bonding phenomenon as a portable, socially constructed space within which specific event choreography, signs of belonging through the enactment of performative keys, and governing social codes which help to negotiate individual personalities within the community, conspire to perpetuate and enable a uniform vision for Sacred Harp singing—some space that incorporates the interculture, as well as cultural difference, institutional forces, and the individual. The term affinity interzone seemed the best fit for this purpose.

To reiterate, the affinity interzone is a space that provides a familiar structure and social order across geographic and cultural distance. In other words, Sacred Harp singing’s sameness as an activity performed around the world is ensured through the shared event choreography which is legitimized through performative keys which rely on that choreography for interpretation, and social codes which police the space. But more than that, the affinity interzone is a space in which singers can express their belonging to the community-at-large, giving this structure and order meaning, and corroborating its meaning with other singers.

The rows of chairs arranged into the hollow square, along with sightings of dark red copies of *The Sacred Harp* are the primary signals that the room Sacred Harp enthusiasts have entered is now a space for Sacred Harp singing. Other expected choreographed details act as markers which continue to reinforce the definition of the event: the chairperson greets the class; a prayer is given; the arranging committee invites singers one by one into the hollow square to lead a song from *The Sacred Harp* of their choosing, so long as that song has not already been called by another singer that day (see Figure 4); an hour break is taken for dinner-on-the-grounds. These details continue to signal to participants throughout the day that they are attending a Sacred Harp singing, and not any other kind of musical event. In other words, the correct implementation of event choreography limits the potential to alternately define the space or activity. When hosts fail to execute the choreography, or seek to alter it, singers may perceive a rift in the interzone.

Figure 4. The arranging committee at the Third All-Ireland Sacred Harp Convention, 2013



Likewise, when singers engage Sacred Harp performative keys, these keys signal social belonging within the choreographed event format, as well as signal cultural competence. For example, when a Sacred Harp enthusiast is invited to the center of the square, then calls a fugging tune, pitches her own song, and leads that tune from memory with a closed book under her left arm, she not only proves her mastery of tune leading skills, but also signals that she is a Sacred Harp singer specifically. She belongs in the hollow square. She was invited by the arranging committee—a major choreographic component—to contribute to the class. She demonstrates that she knows how to move idiomatically within the choreography. Those who sing with her demonstrate that they also belong.

While performative keys are somewhat choreographed, the expectation of their enactment is lesser than the expectation of strict event choreography. For example, there are certain nuanced movements and sounds that signal an individual's performative legitimacy more than others, such as confident yet assertive arm movements when leading a song. Likewise, there are certain movements and sounds that when used within a Sacred Harp singing context explicitly signal an individual's performative illegitimacy, such as the use of a music stand by a song leader, or the use of a bel canto timbre. At a Sacred Harp convention, it is not expected that each participant will engage every nuanced key that signals legitimacy. As long as a small number of participants are visibly engaging these keys, attempting to pass them on to the rest of the class through example, then the event itself is not in jeopardy of being perceived as illegitimate. By engaging such performative keys, these singers

demonstrate to each other that they understand the meaning behind the strict event choreography. On the other hand, if the majority of singers, particularly those with hosting authority over the event, are using music stands, then the other singers may perceive a rift in the affinity interzone.

Variations in the nuance of these performative keys may also be subtly shifting the collective understanding of their meaning. This is particularly possible when the Sacred Harp affinity interzone is far removed from the physical presence of traditional singers or their close advocates. For example, a visiting American enthusiast to a European convention may perform a vocal ornament that is not traditionally within the Sacred Harp singing style, though the European singers may nevertheless hear it and interpret it as traditional. In this theoretical scenario, the expectations of event choreography do not change, but a new performative key now occupies the interzone.

Finally, the social codes regarding inclusivity act as social governing within the Sacred Harp affinity interzone. The interzone has organizational choreography and a performative culture, but it also needs laws to maintain peace and order as individuals who aren't necessarily likeminded move and engage each other throughout the space. The 'laws' of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone are few in number, and there is no formal institution which enforces them. Mere social pressure to abide by these expectations is usually enough to keep enthusiasts from transgressing.

These social codes are designed to make everyone involved feel welcome and safe while in the Sacred Harp affinity interzone, no matter their musical ability or

political, religious, economic, educational, or other type of personal identity. Even when a singer does transgress and engage another in these topics, the social policy is generally to pretend it did not occur—at least while they remain in the affinity interzone. For example, singers in the hollow square may audibly critique an enthusiast's choice to lead a particular song. Public critique goes against social codes of appropriateness, yet even a few revered singers are known for this transgression. It is generally not worth further disruption to the class to make a scene of it. However, once an offended singer is outside the limits of the interzone, he may very well discuss another's transgression with Sacred Harp singing friends who he relates to on a personal level. Even in such a widely dispersed international community, gossip of a singer's transgressions against these basic social expectations can travel and damage a singer's reputation.

This brings us to the limits of the affinity interzone, which are often flexible, and at times, difficult to distinguish. The Sacred Harp affinity interzone is always erected at a Sacred Harp convention, yet they are not one and the same. The convention is an event, and the interzone is the socially constructed space that forms within the event. The interzone is not necessarily bound only to the convention. It may form at local Sacred Harp singings as well, particularly if a local cohort has significant ideological diversity, or is seeking to transmit Sacred Harp knowledge to newly attending enthusiasts. (However, most local cohorts consist of tight knit, socially bonded groups of people who forgo the Sacred Harp social codes reserved for more formal events).

Alternately, the Sacred Harp convention is not entirely bound by the affinity interzone. For example, if the arranging committee is continuing to call leaders in the square, and the class is participating, the singers in the square are engaged in the interzone. But if two singers who are close friends temporarily leave the active square for the coffee and donut table in the back of the room, and quietly gossip about the odd performativities of certain singers at the convention, they have temporarily removed themselves from the affinity interzone, yet have not removed themselves from the convention. However, when a formal break is called and the diverse class of singers is mingling at the coffee and donut table in this context, the table now occupies the affinity interzone.

Here is an example of how the Sacred Harp affinity interzone works in context. I attended my first all-day Sacred Harp singing in New York City in the fall of 2008 where I began to absorb these keys, codes, and choreography. This event was more formal than the local Baltimore singings I had attended over the summer where the meetings were generally occupied by ten to fifteen people who behaved casually with one another. At the all-day singing, I noticed a distinct structure or event choreography, and that most people in the room—many of them not from NYC—were familiar with this structure, the nuances of performative keys, and social codes. Those who weren't familiar were helped by those who were.

As time went on, I attended other conventions in the U.S. where these elements were reinforced and my understanding of them deepened with nuance. Though the physical location of these various conventions changed, the events were by-and-large

the same each time. The event choreography was the same at each singing. Participants generally engaged in the same performative keys, and the social expectations were uniform. Even the specific personnel had some uniformity as other superenthusiasts traveled frequently for the same Sacred Harp events that I traveled to. The participants from New York to California were more or less defining the Sacred Harp convention and Sacred Harp singing practice the same way, and these definitions were formally presented and performed by constructing and engaging in a Sacred Harp affinity interzone wherever participants happened to be.

When I attended the Second Ireland Sacred Harp Convention in 2011—an event hosted by a local cohort with only a few years of Sacred Harp experience under their belt—I still had no trouble participating in the same way I had in the U.S. because the Irish singers organized their convention according to the standard Sacred Harp event choreography. They learned how to do this through the help of more experienced singers. They had a hollow square, an allegiance to the 1991 Denson edition, an elaborate dinner-on-the-grounds, breaks every hour, a memorial lesson, a chairperson, etc. Their arranging committee was headed by an experienced visitor, but was shadowed by a local Cork singer, helping them learn for future events.

The enthusiastic yet inexperienced Irish singers performed the most important performative keys and cultural codes, such as singing the shapes and leading in the square. The experienced visitors performed more nuanced keys, such as leading with their books closed, and engaging each vocal part throughout their chosen song. As most of them were aware that inexperienced singers were watching and learning from

them, there were few instances of performative transgressions. Some of the Irish singers picked up on many of these nuances, and began performing them throughout the convention as well. All participants, for the most part, respected an inclusive environment that accommodated the diverse, international crowd (although I explore a moment of social tension culminating in a deep interzonal rift in Part 2).

Through observing the actions and behavior of traditional singers and experienced enthusiasts in attendance, the inexperienced singers began to absorb the performative and social nuances associated with Sacred Harp singing. They witnessed how these nuances fit in to the choreographic structure for the event that had already been passed on to them. Additionally, the experienced singers who traveled to the Ireland Sacred Harp Convention were invigorated by the exuberance expressed by the youthful, eager hosting cohort. Experienced singers from the U.S. were introduced to experienced singers from the U.K., and these new social connections began to form.

The Irish singers successfully implemented the Sacred Harp event choreography, which signaled a framework for the proper construction of the complete Sacred Harp affinity interzone by both the host community and the visitors. Other inexperienced visitors from other European countries such as France, Germany, and Poland, also learned about these expectations by engaging in the affinity interzone, and went on to encourage the same behavior and habits in their own newly forming local cohorts.

After I explore some early and recent trans-Atlantic pathways for Sacred Harp singing, as well as some other types of spaces that inform the Sacred Harp singing

community in Europe, I will return to the affinity interzone in Part 2, where I further investigate its limits and the consequences of its rifts.

Summary of Chapters

Balancing the ethnographic placement of European Sacred Harp singers with critical analysis, I investigate the subject of the Sacred Harp dispersed community in Europe through three primary considerations in three parts. In Part 1: Chapter 1, I look at Sacred Harp singing's historical and recent pathways to and from Europe. I include 17th and 18th century colonial exchanges of English language poetry and music, as well as 19th century German language shapenote tunebooks in the Mid-Atlantic states. These German tunebooks have created a precedent for potential shapenote publications in languages other than English. I also retrace Sacred Harp singing's spread to new regions of the United States in the mid 20th century. Moving on to Part 1: Chapter 2, I explore more recent 21st century pathways that *The Sacred Harp* traveled to form communities in Europe. I include three profiles which specifically look at pathways to the United Kingdom, Poland, and Ireland—three of the earliest groups to form in Europe. Together these three enclaves built a foundational, accessible network within which the rest of the European affinity group could grow.

In Part 2: Chapter 3, I look at the types of spaces that Sacred Harp singing in Europe occupies, and how these spaces contain singers' belonging. I explore physical spaces, local, regional, national, and transnational spaces. New to the scene, yet nevertheless essential to the spread of Sacred Harp singing abroad, I also look at the Internet and virtual space, and its position in a transnational community where there is such a high value placed on face-to-face music making. In Part 2, I also reintroduce my concept of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone, and explore the intersectionality of these various spaces and structures of belonging for participants in Europe.

In Part 3: Chapter 4, I investigate the meanings that Sacred Harp singing takes on for European participants, including religious and secular meanings, Sacred Harp singing as part of a "spiritual marketplace," a sense of belonging to a community, and the experience of powerful, transformative emotions. Finally, in Part 3: Chapter 5, I provide four ethnographic profiles which exemplify the material presented in chapter 4. However, these profiles also seek to consolidate many of the points and observations made throughout the dissertation.

The first profile is of the second session of Camp Fasola Europe, where the usual wariness towards religious speak among enthusiasts was surprisingly absent. The second is an individual profile of a young singer from Sweden who was for some time the only Sacred Harp enthusiast in his country. He is also a Lutheran pastor seeking a personal spiritual outlet where he can simply be a part of the flock, so to speak, rather than a spiritual authority figure.

A young Irish singer from Cork is the subject of my third profile. I focus on her first Sacred Harp related visit to the United States, where she happened to arrive for an unexpected, emotional event in the heart of traditional Sacred Harp singing. She then learns of the powerful reach of the Sacred Harp networks in the United States as she continues on to visit singers in Portland, Oregon. Lastly, I conclude the chapter with a profile on a singer based in Glasgow who, in more ways than one, is a counter example to the singers who find such meaning in the Sacred Harp community, the emotional investment, and spirituality. Rather, he would prefer just to sing, and to sing from *The Sacred Harp* in his own way, the way he could before Sacred Harp singing had any force in Europe. Though different from my other research collaborators, his critiques rightly call into question the benevolence of a unified vision for the affinity group.

My analysis throughout this dissertation as a whole will contribute to ethnomusicology's growing interest in transnational musical communities, affinity groups, and music revivals more broadly.

PART 1

PATHWAYS

CHAPTER 1

SACRED HARP PATHWAYS

AND THEIR CREATORS

When contemplating the idea of a musical pathway, it may initially appear simple. A pathway is a marked route one takes from point A to point B, or beyond through a series of potential destinations. To travel a pathway also means to progress through time, making it a useful tool for discussing the history or chronological process of some being or event. A person's musical pathway, therefore, must be the marked route one takes from their initial interest in music to whatever musical life they possess for themselves, from instrument, to genre, to career success. However, upon reflecting briefly on the concept of a pathway, it is clear that there is more to it.

First of all, for a pathway to come to be, someone must first travel it and mark it. In the digital age, it seems we can hardly travel anywhere without creating some sort of record, even unintentionally. Our locations ping from nearby cell phone towers,

and security video footage frequently captures our image, for example. Still, some one, or some group, must be the first trailblazers of a pathway. But pathway markers don't necessarily remain intact forever, and someone must labor to maintain them. If a pathway becomes particularly popular, some may also labor to widen it, to increase its accessibility, and perhaps its visibility. These changes, however, do not happen on their own. A pathway is, after all, just a thing or an idea. A person or a group of people are responsible for the change. These same complications apply to musical pathways, and certainly to the musical pathways created and maintained by the transnational Sacred Harp singing community-at-large.

The idea of musical pathways has been present in music scholarship for at least nine decades, and generally pertains to efforts in music education, such as claims to the development of methods which, “illuminate musical pathways too seldom followed” (Earhart 1931, 64). The term continues to be used in this context frequently (Walzer 2015; Custodero 2009; Campbell 1992). The term “musical pathway” is also used sometimes by neuroscientists when discussing brain activity and music (Hodges 2007; Borchgrevink 1982).

In ethnomusicology, musical pathways became an important topic through the work of Ruth Finnegan in her groundbreaking book *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town* (1989), where she used the idea to explore how individual music-makers choose to participate in specific genres, performance groups, or even play at particular venues—in other words, how enthusiasts choose to pursue a musical affinity. After detailed analysis of the “musical worlds” occurring in the town of

Milton Keynes, Finnegan makes insightful remarks about the nature of musical pathways that lead to their formation:

There seems, then, to be no single answer to why particular people find themselves on one or another of the established musical pathways, leading them in directions shared with many others but still favoured by only a minority of the population at large. A whole series of factors can come in—some seemingly just matters of individual accident—and those people perceiving their choices as unfettered and personal ones certainly have one part of the truth. Musical paths are voluntary, something essentially self-chosen not primarily for monetary reasons but in some sense for their own sake, something too which demands continual work and commitment to balance the undoubted satisfactions. But to this awareness of free choice must also be added the patterns of constraints and opportunities that—sometimes partly outside the actor’s own awareness—help to draw individuals towards or away from particular paths, or shape the way they tread them, chief among these the influences of gender, of age, of stage in the life-cycle, the link to various other social groupings and—the point that recurs again and again—family musical background. (ibid, 533)

Finnegan’s insight into the causes for individuals to walk a certain musical pathway are equally relevant in the case of Sacred Harp singing in Europe and the United States. Some singers are born into Sacred Harp singing families and are brought up participating as a matter of course. Others encounter it through recordings, or through movies or radio programs, and feel compelled to seek out the practice. Still, some encounter the Sacred Harp singing community by accident—they are dragged to a singing by a friend, or they walk past a building where Sacred Harp participants are gathered. They enjoy it enough to come back again and again. These

are the pathways that individuals take, each a little different from one another, or a lot.

But what about the practice of Sacred Harp singing as a whole? What pathways has Sacred Harp singing taken, or been taken on, to form a world-wide community of Sacred Harp enclaves stretching from Alaska, to Europe, and all the way to Australia? Certainly, the individual pathways of specific enthusiasts play an important role in answering these questions. However, my aim in Part I is to step beyond the individual's pathway and explore those carved by communities past and present, carved by reciprocal interest in the growth of Sacred Harp singing, and ultimately, carved by global forces which move Sacred Harp enthusiasts around the world. I continue to limit my study here to Sacred Harp activities in Europe and North America.

I first take a historical approach to uncover some of the broad pathways carved by the movement of people and ideas from Europe to the American colonies, and from the American colonies back to Europe in the 16th through the 19th centuries, which subsequently led to the creation of *The Sacred Harp*. I situate the religious belief in congregational a cappella singing as stemming from European Protestant thinkers who influenced religious groups in the colonies. Also, I examine the British and American sources for the texts used in *The Sacred Harp*. This leads to some exploration of the historical transnational flow of relevant Protestant poetry, and their author's associated denominational ties to Europe—looking briefly at Baptist, Methodist, and Anglican denominations.

Then, stepping away from an Anglo-American transnational narrative, I position the 19th century German language shapenote repertoire as historically relevant for potential future shapenote publications in languages other than English. These German-American tunebooks were authored and published in the Mid-Atlantic states, and some of them had direct influence on tunes found in *The Sacred Harp*.

Next, I move farther away from Europe in order to expose the early pathways which lead to the Sacred Harp revival in California and New England in the mid 20th century. The pioneering activities of several individuals and singing enclaves are presented. I argue that these paved the way for the development of a nation-wide Sacred Harp singing community. I focus particularly on the efforts of Sam Hinton and Curt Bouterse in San Diego in the 1950s and 60s; Bill Sattler in New York City in the 1950s; and then I move on to discuss the development of Sacred Harp singing in New England, and the subsequent founding of the First New England Convention in Connecticut in 1976. This was the first Sacred Harp convention established outside of the American South. The Sacred Harp activities of choral conductor Larry Gordon are described in detail, as he played a major role in both the founding of the New England Convention and the first convention in the United Kingdom in the late 1990s.

This 20th century history of the spread of Sacred Harp singing was a substantial turn in Sacred Harp singing's pathway—a turn which eventually lead to the extension of the pathway across the northern Atlantic into Europe. I include this history because it is pertinent to understanding the relationships between Sacred Harp enthusiasts and

traditional singers which were present at the time that Sacred Harp singing was picked up in Europe. It also provides historical context for its spread across the Atlantic, demonstrating that the movements of Sacred Harp singing in Europe had displayed similar patterns decades earlier in the United States.

Finally, in Chapter 2, I analyze the pathways which lead to three singing enclaves in Europe: the United Kingdom, Poland, and Ireland. I look at how Sacred Harp singing first reached these areas, and follow with events and activities that helped form these enthusiasts into a community. Specifically, I look at the First United Kingdom Shape-Note Convention in 1996; the first two Sacred Harp workshops taught in Poland in 2008 and 2009; and the Sacred Harp academic course taught in Cork, Ireland, and the subsequent First Ireland Sacred Harp Convention in 2011. I argue that this last event in Cork was a catalyst for greater European participation in Sacred Harp singing, and also for the formation of a European Sacred Harp singing circuit comparable to the national circuit in the United States.

The Trans-Atlantic Exchange of Protestant Words, Ideas, and Music in the Colonial Era

The specific history of Sacred Harp singing in Europe is a recent one, caused in many respects by developments in the national community in the United States during the second half of the 20th century. Much of it is indeed so recent that I present it later

in this chapter and throughout the dissertation within the context of current ethnographic research. However, the groundwork for the spread of Sacred Harp singing to Europe has been laid for centuries through the labors of other trailblazers and travelers who crossed the northern Atlantic from either direction. Examining this history allows us to view the current transnational Sacred Harp affinity group within the context of similar historical events surrounding musical exchange between North America and Europe—at least in terms of Protestant a cappella singing. These historic events reflect a similar geographic musical pathway, and they connect the current transnational community with various aspects of *The Sacred Harp*'s own trans-Atlantic roots, which often are left unexplored in American-centric studies of shapenote music.

The Sacred Harp's musical and ideological roots can, theoretically, be traced back to the father of Protestantism himself, the German theologian Martin Luther (b. 1483, d. 1546). After presenting The Ninety-Five Theses to the Roman Catholic Church in 1517, Luther continued to write rather extensively about his thoughts on the role of music in Protestant worship. Most notably, he believed that congregations should sing in worship. This was evident in his compositions as well, such as the *Deutsche Messe*, published in 1526. As church music scholar John Barber notes, “it stressed the simple marriage of text and tune so that all people, especially the uneducated laity, could participate” (Barber 2006, 3).

The early French Protestant thinker, John Calvin (b.1509, d.1564), influenced the conservative relationship between music and worship that marked many of the

denominational affiliations represented in *The Sacred Harp*. Calvin's philosophy of music was also influential in regards to *The Sacred Harp's* conservative compositional style, which is known for its frequent use of open fourths and fifths, and homophonic texture (however, there are many exceptions found in the tunebook). Calvin disagreed with the use of instruments in worship, and emphasized the ultimate importance of the texts over enjoyment in music-as-worship. This view led to the deeply conservative stylistic predecessors to 19th century shapenote repertoire, such as metrical psalmody of the 17th century.

In his famous *Commentaries* on the Psalms, Calvin insists that,

To sing the praises of God upon the harp and psaltery unquestionably formed a part of the training of the law and of the service of God under that dispensation of shadows and figures, but they are not now to be used in public thanksgiving. (*Commentaries*, lxxi. 22)

Calvin justifies this banning of instruments in worship through stressing an ideological focus on the biblical New Testament, which does not mention the use of musical instruments. This Calvinist stance on music in the Church was staunchly present through much of the Protestant religious landscape in America through the latter half of the 19th century, positioning the 1844 publication of *The Sacred Harp* near the crux of a significant shift in Protestant congregational worshipers seeking to modernize (Cobb 1978; Goff 2002; Campbell 2004). This modernization led to a

popular preference for accompanied singing, pushing Sacred Harp singers to the margins of musical worship style through to the present.⁸

This Calvinist religious landscape was marked by the early psalm and hymn books in use in the colonial period. Many of the books used in the British Colonies and early Republic which are considered by scholars to be bibliographic ancestors to *The Sacred Harp* were imports from across the Atlantic, or merely reprinted in America. I will briefly explore a few of them.

In 1620, the Mayflower, set sail from Plymouth, England, carrying a willing band of religious separatists from the Church of England, marking the start of a long, powerful force of Protestant settlement in America. They carried with them *The Book of Psalmes: Englished both in Prose and Metre* (1612), by Henry Ainsworth (Chase 1987). Soon after the arrival of the legendary Pilgrims, more groups of Puritans arrived in New England, most of them carrying the much older, Church of England derived *The Whole Booke of Psalmes, Collected into Englishe Meter* (Sternhold and Hopkins 1562), also known as the *Old Version*. This is the same book that was carried by Sir Francis Drake to California in 1579 (Chase 1987).

The metrical Psalmody of Sternhold and Hopkins, a book directly overseen by John Calvin, was the most commonly used psalmbook with text and music until the publication of the *Whole Booke of Psalms* in 1640 (widely known as the *Bay Psalm*

⁸ Attempts to reconcile Sacred Harp singing with the popularity of accompanied harmony can be found in some early 20th century recordings, such as “Allison’s Sacred Harp Singers” which were originally recorded from 1927-28 and released on 78rpm discs (rereleased on CD in 2004). In these recordings, a small ensemble sings arrangements from *The Sacred Harp* on top of an organ accompaniment.

Book). *The Bay Psalm Book* was a new book of psalms and tunes translated by the English settlers of New England, and the first book published in the American Colonies (Foote 1940).

The *Bay Psalm Book* was a success in New England. It was also reprinted in England and Scotland, and used frequently by separatists in the Old World—a reminder that this trans-Atlantic network of Puritans remained highly active (Foote 1940, 55). It is with the publication of the *Bay Psalm Book* that many scholars of American music start the clock for American musical innovation. Yet, as Crawford advises, “we should resist the temptation to think of American history as something that has happened west of the Atlantic Ocean. For the territory that is now the United States was an extension of the European empire” (2001, 15). The *Bay Psalm Book* contained no actual music notation, but only text. When singing these texts, worshippers would either use a melody from memory, or would use Ravenscroft’s English publication, the *Whole Booke of Psalms* (1621), which contained notated melodies.

To emphasize this point about the trans-Atlantic publishing network further, once *The Bay Psalm Book* lost favor in New England after a period of about sixty years, it was replaced by the popular psalms and hymns of English poets such as those found in Tate and Brady’s *New Version of the Psalms of David in Metre* (1696), Isaac Watts’ *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament* (1719), *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707), and John Wesley’s *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* (1737). Though the style of part writing for congregational singing began to

take on a distinctive American sound in New England through the work of such composers as William Billings and Daniel Read, the religious psalmody and hymnody were taken almost exclusively from the English poets until the 19th century during the camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening. At this point it was supplemented with the writings of American hymnodists such as John Adam Granade, Caleb Jarvis Taylor, and George Askins.⁹

By the early 19th century, the works of these New England composers found their way into the West Gallery repertoire in England, which was sung primarily by Methodists and Calvinists. English Sacred Harp enthusiast Chris Brown—with the help of fellow tune researchers Edwin Macadam, Sheila Girding Macadam, Fynn Titford-Mock, Judy Whiting, and others—have pinpointed several examples of New England tunes found in the private handwritten collections of 19th century English and Welsh music makers (Brown 2014).

For example, an 1811 manuscript which belonged to Joseph Featherston from the English mining area of Upper Weardale in County Durham contains thirteen New England derived tunes, eight of which are published in the 1991 edition of *The Sacred Harp*. These eight boisterous fusing tunes include Daniel Read's "Greenwich" and "Russia," Justin Morgan's "Montgomery," Amos Munson's "Newburgh," Eliakim Doolittle's "Exhortation (Second)," Howd's "Whitestown," and Nehemiah Shumway's "Schenectady" and "Ballstown" (ibid). Chris Brown also found examples of New England tunes officially published in well-known volumes of music, such as

⁹ For more information on these American writers, see Steel 2010.

Walker's Companion to Dr. Rippon's Tune Book (1811), published in London, which included the popular Jeremiah Ingalls's tune "New Jerusalem" (ibid). This tune is also found in *The Sacred Harp* today.

The religious content of *The Sacred Harp*—the impact of not just Protestant, but specific denominational influences on the texts (to many, the most important part) and intercultural performative keys—are also linked with ideologies rooted in Britain and mainland

Europe. The Baptist Church, for example, has its roots in Germany, where the Anabaptists preached a radical alternative to Lutheranism in the 1520s. Furthermore, those German Anabaptists greatly influenced many of the early English dissenters. Groups of English dissenters such as the Particular Baptists (see Figure 5), as well as German Anabaptists such as the Amish and the Mennonites, were largely expelled to the American Colonies where they furthered the great Protestant movements that characterize American history and culture (Gaustad 2005, 783).

Alternately, American Protestant preachers of the Second Great Awakening (primarily Methodist) were evangelizing in parts of Europe, particularly in England. Native American minister Samson Occom—whose texts appear in several shapenote sources—traveled to England and Scotland in the 1760s. The New England



Figure 5. Zoar Particular Baptist Chapel, Norwich England, 2014

Methodist, Zadoc Priest, is also reported to have preached in England in 1796 (Brown 2014). Lorenzo Dow traveled to the British Isles three times throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries, where he encouraged the first British camp meetings¹⁰ to take place. Chris Brown also suggests that some of the call-and-chorus tunes that are associated with camp meetings may have also been transmitted to English worshipers around this time period (ibid).

The large Baptist Churches that have so influenced American culture and politics today (think televangelist Billy Graham, or Senator Ted Cruz) have such distant, and at this point, weak ties to Europe. The factions into different Baptist groups within the United States were numerous due to doctrinal and political disagreements—for example, the issue of whether or not a slave owner could serve as a missionary, and disagreements over Arminianism and Predestinarianism. The emphasis on adult baptism may be one of the few remaining ideological threads that connect the early Baptists of 16th century Europe to the Southern Baptist Convention of 2015.

There are however smaller independent and Primitive Baptist Churches in America which adhere steadfast to older Baptist traditions, such as the belief in Predestinarianism, and claim origins directly rooted in the Calvinist Particular Baptists of England where the church is still active (Crowley 1998). These American churches also happen to have a thoroughly documented history of participation in Sacred Harp singing, and took part in its continuation into the 20th century (Cobb

¹⁰ The first American camp meeting took place in 1799-1801 in Logan County, KY, and were conceived of by Presbyterian minister James McGready.

1978; Sommers 2010). The Primitive Baptist communities, who have historically kept to themselves, tend to prefer the older poetry of Isaac Watts, and other English authors from *Rippon's Selection* (1787) whose works were republished in the pocket-sized American hymnal *Primitive Hymns* by Benjamin Lloyd (1841).

More recently, in the 1980s, a community of Primitive Baptist Sacred Harp singers was “discovered” in Hoboken Georgia. They had been singing for many generations, but had supposedly been unaware of the larger, nation-wide community. The stylistic traits typical of the Hoboken singers—leading “in four” (the standard 4/4 conducting pattern), slow tempos, low keying of the tunes, and ornamentation on the melody (very suggestive of “lining out,” an early Baptist musical worship form) (Sommers 2010)—have impacted the way that dozens of other Sacred Harp enthusiasts choose to lead and sing certain songs in the repertoire, as singers from Europe have made a particular effort to attend singings in Hoboken. One Hoboken singer, Tollie Lee, has also traveled to sing in Ireland on several occasions, where he gave his lessons in the Hoboken style.

Before early 20th century folklorist George Pullen Jackson decided that Sacred Harp was “Old Baptist Music”, he believed that the folk-hymns were constructed primarily for Methodists (Jackson 1933; Cobb 1978). While this is not entirely true either, it is certainly not entirely false. The Methodist denomination has had a powerful impact on the texts and repertoire found in *The Sacred Harp* and other tunebooks—and their influence extends beyond music into the foundation of American religious revivalism and democracy. However, the Methodists got their

start in Oxford, England through its initial founding by theologian John Wesley and his renown hymnodist brother Charles Wesley, whose texts comprise approximately 5% of *The Sacred Harp*. *The Sacred Harp* may not have been intended “especially for Methodists,” however, some of the key historical processes that shaped the tunebook—such as the emphasis on itinerant, charismatic preaching, and the development of the camp meeting—were driven by Methodists (Hatch 1989). In the full spirit of Arminian theology, the words and events were intended for everyone.

Even the Anglican Church had its historical impact on *The Sacred Harp*. By far the oldest tune in the book, “Old Hundred” (SH 49t) was first published in *Pseaumes octant trios de David* (1551). In 1562, less than thirty years after the Anglican Church seceded from the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England adopted the *Old Version*, to be used with the tunes that were gaining popularity in the *Genevan Psalter*, as well as with popular ballad tunes, such as “Chevy Chase.” This psalter was used almost exclusively until the publication of Tate and Brady’s, *New Version of the Psalms of David in Metre* in 1696, which quickly replaced the *Old Version* in England and in the Colonies. It is from the *New Version* that the arrangement of “Old Hundred” in *The Sacred Harp* gets its text. Tate and Brady wrote several other texts that remain in the tunebook: the Christmas hymn, “While shepherds watch their flocks by night,” found in “Sherburne” (SH 186), “Shining Star” (SH 461), and their beautiful rendering of Psalm 42 “As pants the hart for cooling streams / When heated in the chase / So longs my soul, O God, for Thee / And Thy refreshing grace,” found in “Converting Grace” (SH 230).

Other than these historical traits derived from the Church of England in the 16th and 17th centuries (consider that the tune “Old Hundred” was composed almost three hundred years before its inclusion in *The Sacred Harp*), the Anglican influence on *The Sacred Harp* was relatively minimal for most of its revisions when compared to non-conformist denominations, such as Baptists, Methodists, and even Presbyterians. However, the 1991 edition of *The Sacred Harp* contains four pieces by Dan Brittain, an Episcopalian, and one of the most popular shaped-note composers of the 20th century. He came to the singing community as an adult in the 1970s, and studied shapenote composition (as a style) with venerated singers and composers in the South, including Jim Ayers, Loyd Redding, and Hugh McGraw (Steel 2010:91). His four tunes in *The Sacred Harp*—“Cobb” (313), “McGraw” (353), “Akin” (472), and “Novakoski” (481)—all draw from the English texts of Isaac Watts.

German Shapenote Repertoire in the Middle Atlantic States

The young republic in the 1800s—1860s produced a rich environment for self-made tunesmiths who published and distributed their own oblong books of composed and compiled shapenote repertoire to people in the countryside. There has been excellent research done on this period of American music publishing (Cobb 1978; Chase 1976, 1987; Crawford 2001; Marini 2003; Pappas 2013), so I will not dwell on it here. However, one notable aspect to this period in regards to current trans-Atlantic

shapenote relationships is the sizable shapenote repertoire that was published in the German language in northern Virginia, western Maryland, and Pennsylvania. This history is significant not only because it is a source for American shapenote repertoire in the native language of a new group of singers in Germany, but also because it sets a historical example for the potential pathway to future shapenote tunebooks in languages other than English.

Many of these German language books came about from reactions to pressures from the Anglo-American hegemony to assimilate the large numbers of German immigrants to the Mid-Atlantic, the second largest ethnic group in the region during this time period. Historical musicologist Daniel Grimminger writes on this as the subject of his 2009 dissertation. Grimminger notes three useful types of German American music publications in use during this period that resulted from these pressures: (1) retentive tune-and-choral books in the High German language and style, which included imported books from Germany¹¹ such as the Helmuth's *Choral-Buch für die Erbauliche Lieder-Sammlung* (1813), and Doll's *Sammlung geistlicher Lieder nebst Melodien* (1798); (2) adaptive tunebooks in the German language, but with Anglo-American musical stylistic elements, including the use of shapenotes, such as Funk's *Die allgemein nützliche Choral-Music* (1816); and (3) amalgamation tunebooks, which were published in the English language and in the contemporary hegemonic Anglo-American style, such as Funk's *Harmonia Sacra* (1832).

¹¹ According to Grimminger, it became necessary for German Americans to publish and print tunebooks in the United States when the War of 1812 placed trade restrictions with Germany (2009, 83).

The retentive tunebooks resulted from deep internal anxieties about assimilation. In urban centers and in the countryside, the Lutheran clergy were “concerned that the pressure put on them to Americanize as well as the popularity of Revivalism would rob them of their own language and ethno-theological identity” (Grimminger 2009, 46). In addition, the High German Lutheran authorities faced potential threats to their congregations from the southwestern German sectarian groups, or *Sektenluete* (Pardoe 2001, 180). Producing tunebooks that looked, sounded, and functioned like the books back home in Germany was a conscious move to hold onto their cultural-linguistic-musical identities, which to them were inseparable from theological identity.

The Lutheran churches did, however, hold singing schools in a similar style to the widely known singing schools of New England as a method for maintaining this cultural retention in times of pressure to assimilate (Grimminger 2009, 62-65). The New England singing schools are considered the direct pedagogical forbearer to the Sacred Harp singing schools that occur throughout the world today. It appears that these stationary Lutheran singing schools did not draw the number of attendees quite like the itinerant New England singing masters such as William Billings or Daniel Read. However, artist Lewis Miller’s

Figure 6. Frontispiece image from William Billings’s *New England Psalm-Singer* (1770)



(b.1796, d.1882) sketch of a York Pennsylvania Historical Society Lutheran singing school portrays men and women, as well as children, seated around a rectangular table, holding a book with a frontispiece resembling the famous image on William Billings's *New England Psalm-Singer* (1770) (see Figure 6) (Grimminger 2009, 66-68).

As the 19th century moved into its second and third decade, the German Americans were straining in two directions: to participate in aspects of Anglo-American society, and also to retain their German culture—particularly the German language. This conflict is evident from the tunebooks that were published for both Lutheran and Reformed congregations, as well as Mennonite communities. These collections used the newly popularized four-shape notation system, and also drew from contemporary English language shapenote sources, such as Ananias Davisson's *Kentucky Harmony* (1816), which was popular in the region. A notable Mennonite example is Joseph Funk's influential *Die allgemein nützliche Choral-Music*, also published in 1816 in Harrisonburg, VA (Shearon 2013, 134). Publications marketed to the Lutheran and Reformed communities include John Wyeth's *Choral Harmonie enthaltend Kirchen-Melodien* (1818), which presents William Billings' "Easter Anthem" with both English and German text: "Der Herr ist erstanden! Hallelujah!" set directly underneath "The Lord is ris'n indeed! Hallelujah!" (Grimminger 2009, 152).

Joseph Funk is arguably the figure with the strongest link between the German American shapenote publishing circuit and the tunebook circuit which influenced the

American South and the making of *The Sacred Harp*. Funk was born in 1778 into a German speaking Mennonite family in eastern Pennsylvania, but settled in the northern Shenandoah Valley in the wave of southern and westward movement at the turn of the 19th century. His first book, *Choral Harmonie* (1816), mentioned above, is his only German language publication. All of his later books were published in English. He also adopted many of the compositional preferences among Anglo-American composers of the time, such as open harmonies which give preference to dyads of fourths and fifths. His most famous and impactful tunebook, *Harmonia Sacra* (1832), shares much of its repertoire with *The Sacred Harp*, and is still used by Mennonite communities in the Mid-Atlantic. *The Sacred Harp* specifically claims *Harmonia Sacra* as the source for several tunes, including “Cookham” on page 81.

Another connection between *The Sacred Harp* and the German American shapenote books is in the current overlap of participants. Many Pennsylvania and northern Shenandoah Valley Mennonites who continue to sing from the *Harmonia Sacra* also participate in regional Sacred Harp all-day singings and conventions. At each annual Maiden creek All-Day Sacred Harp Singing in Shoemakersville, PA, they honor this musical and cultural heritage by presenting a German lesson, where they pass out photocopies and sing a German language shapenote tune from these 19th century sources.

There are currently no plans for a new collection of shapenote repertoire in any language other than English. However, the recent surge in new English language collections produced by Sacred Harp superenthusiasts in the United States could set

the stage for new collections published by European, East Asian, and Oceanian enthusiasts. It is conceivable that the desire to sing shapenote repertoire in a first language other than English could inspire new collections in German, Polish, Hungarian, or Swedish, for example. There have been several individual new compositions written in Polish and other languages, and while they don't yet make up a significant volume of repertoire, they could increase with continued interest in Sacred Harp singing in Europe.

Sacred Harp Singing Extends Beyond the American South in the Folk Revival

As the 20th century reached its middle, Sacred Harp singing made its first moves outside of the American South as the folk revival swept the nation. California, which was drawing all types to its beautiful coasts, including free thinkers and musicians, is the first place outside the American South where I can find the seeds of a Sacred Harp affinity community, followed by the Northeast. Of course, many of the earliest enthusiasts who were singing outside of the South were themselves Southerners. They were part of the large migration of both black and white laborers seeking new opportunities westward and northward from the 1930s into the 1960s as agricultural production was decreased in the American South to stimulate the economy, leaving fewer jobs for Southern sharecroppers (Denning 1997, 35).

With this migration, many individuals took the opportunity to shed their Southern identities and embrace a new way of life in the city. Still, participation in Southern folk music was a way to feel connected, at least in part, to the place they once called home. In line with the general societal push towards modernity in the American South, there was also a push to elevate the status of folk music as a serious musical form with roots in early classical music.

The music, including Sacred Harp singing, began to reach new interested participants whose beliefs, backgrounds, and lifestyles were very different from those of traditional Southern singers. These early forgers of the Sacred Harp affinity group in the 1950s, 60s and 70s were, rather, interested in it as an American folk music tradition positioned alongside other folk music forms, such as ballads, cowboy songs, and old time music. The rising interest in Early Music was also associated with the Folk Revival (Livingston 1999; Haines 2014), and the repertoire chosen by some early groups of Sacred Harp enthusiasts in California and New England suggests that they viewed shapenote singing as fitting into this category. However, it was touted as the distinctly American counterpart to the more widely known early music of Europe, such as chant and madrigals.

By linking shapenote singing more widely to “America” as opposed to the “American South”, and placing its imagined activity as occurring “early” as opposed to “currently active” these folk revival enthusiasts staked a claim on Sacred Harp singing as a body of repertoire open to some interpretation rather than an active community of faith-driven music-makers with a century of family participation in

several regions of the Southern United States. While the legitimacy of these American folk revivalist claims are debatable—and indeed these claims have been the source of tensions between some traditional singers and enthusiasts, and between enthusiasts with differing philosophical views on appropriation—they nevertheless cleared the trailhead for all future Sacred Harp enthusiast participation, and even for the eventual publication of the enthusiast-influenced 1991 edition of *The Sacred Harp*, without which the spread to Europe might never have been feasible.

As I discuss in greater depth in Part 2, many local Sacred Harp groups also rely on the right leadership personality at the right time to establish singing activities. This is true for early groups founded in the United States outside of the South. Below I will briefly discuss the pathways cleared in the late 1940s through the 1960s in southern California by enthusiasts such as Sam Hinton and Curt Bouterse; in New York in the 1950s by Bill Sattler; various actors in Massachusetts and Connecticut in the 1970s through the 80s, including Neely Bruce and Steve Marini; and in Vermont in the 1970s by choral activist Larry Gordon, who went on to introduce shapenote singing and *The Sacred Harp* to participants in England. While the spread of Sacred Harp singing to other areas of the United States outside of the American South had little to do with Europe at the time, I doubt that Sacred Harp singing could have found its way across the Atlantic to form communities of participants who engage in an international network without these American pathways having been formed.

California

Sam Hinton was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1917, but was primarily raised in Crockett, Texas, a small town midway between Houston and Dallas where he first encountered a seven-shape Methodist Hymnal. This memory encouraged him to read about shapenote music as a young man, which is how he learned about *The Sacred Harp* (Herman 1997, 34). Through library research at that time, he likely would have encountered as his major source George Pullen Jackson's *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fiddle Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and "Buckwheat Notes"* (1933). Jackson's influence on Hinton's imaginings of shapenote singing are also evident in Hinton's own writings, where he calls the genre "white spirituals" and recalls the importance of many of the same tunebooks as Jackson did (Hinton 1973, 9). In 1937, Hinton attended a large shapenote singing event in Cleveland, Ohio (Herman 1997, 34), but it is not clear what book was used, or if the participants used four or seven-shape notation. He eventually moved to California in 1940 to pursue a career as a marine biologist, where he found long-term work in San Diego.

In 1948, Sam Hinton began teaching tunes from *The Sacred Harp* in his folk music course at the San Diego University Extension. The tunes he presented to the class suggest that he positioned *The Sacred Harp* within the context of American musical practices in the 19th century southern and western expansion and religious revival, rather than positioning the tunebook as a carrier of New England fusing

compositions. The study guide for his course, titled “Singing Through American History”, lists songs by theme and category—much like text-only hymnals of the 19th century, such as *Lloyd’s*, mentioned above. All but one of the tunes found in *The Sacred Harp* are listed under the category “Religious Ferment,” and include mostly camp meeting tunes and songs with distinctive open harmony arrangements such as: “Wondrous Love,” “Amazing Grace,” “Greenfield,” “Promised Land,” “Weary Pilgrim,” “Garden Hymn,” “Wayfaring Stranger,” “Rocky Road,” and “Old Ship of Zion” (Hinton 1948).

In 1952, Hinton began teaching from *The Sacred Harp* at summer workshops at the Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts (Herman 1997, 34). 1952 is also the same year that Harry Smith released his *Anthology of American Folk Music* (then titled *American Folk Music*), which contained two tracks of Sacred Harp singing on the compilation of “Social Music,” which were originally recorded on 78s in the 1920s. At the time, the collection of records was an expensive item, costing \$25 (Marcus 1997). However, the California folk enthusiasts probably would have been aware of this record, especially since Smith had been an active folk music collector on the west coast before moving to New York.

If the Idyllwild singers were not aware of *American Folk Music* in 1952 then they certainly were by the 1960s, as Harry Smith’s entire anthology was gaining a significant influence over the widespread narrative of American folk music in the United States, United Kingdom, and mainland Europe. It brought artists such as Doc Boggs and Clarence Ashley out of obscurity and into the international spotlight.

Though the spotlight was generally not shown as bright on the “Social Music” collection, these two tracks did help bring Sacred Harp singing to the wider listening public. *Anthology of American Folk Music* became the personal trailhead for at least one Sacred Harp superenthusiast’s pathway in the U.K.

Hinton continued his summer Idyllwild shapenote singing workshops into the 1960s when reliable interest among participants finally started to gain traction. Folk enthusiast Curt Bouterse, also a transplant to San Diego from Tennessee, attended one of these workshops in the summer of 1962. After spending two years away, Bouterse returned to San Diego in 1966 and established regular gatherings among friends to sing from *The Sacred Harp*. According to Janet Herman, who wrote her 1997 dissertation on Sacred Harp singing in California, new enthusiasts filtered in from the San Diego Folksong Society, and they sang standing in a circle, rather than sitting in a rectangle (35). Members of the local shapenote community were friendly toward one another, but did not initiate contact with traditional singing communities. Neither did other small shapenote singing enclaves, which were springing up along the California coast throughout the 1960s and 70s. It wasn’t until the late 1980s—when two singers from the Sacred Harp enclave in Chicago moved to California—that Sacred Harp singing on the west coast began to form a network and host conventions.¹²

¹² The Chicago group had recently committed to conducting their Sacred Harp singings like the contemporary traditional singings, and were committed to maintaining direct lines of communication with traditional singers. For more on the Chicago Sacred Harp singers, see Miller 2008.

The Northeast

In New England and New York City, Sacred Harp singing became a blip in the folk and early music enthusiasts' radar around the same time as in California. Susan Garber's 1987 M.A. thesis on the Sacred Harp movement in New England provides expert primary sources that describe these early years. In it, one of the first Sacred Harp singers in the Northeast, Bill Sattler, born in the South, describes the accidental pathway he took to self-discovery of the tunebook in 1942.

...I was driving a moving van. I stopped for fifteen minutes at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, and stayed for five days. I took part in my first Sacred Harp singing there—still have the 1936 Denson edition I was given there (Garber 1987, 48).¹³

Upon his move to New York City by 1950, Sattler discovered that others in the area—again, mostly Southerners who had relocated northward—were also interested in singing the music. I quote him at length.

...I was a night engineering student at Cooper Union; one evening I heard the unmistakable sounds of Sacred Harp singing from what proved to be a large, commodious loft apartment on the west side of the Square. There were usually thirty to fifty people; I think we met once a month, and I sometimes cut classes to attend. They used the Denson edition... some of these folks, it developed, had been at Highlander, others had worked for the Southern Tenant Farmers Union¹⁴ to do which in the thirties was to risk imprisonment or lynching if their 'cover' was blown.

¹³ Bill Sattler's 1936 copy of *The Sacred Harp* is now cared for by Neely Bruce.

¹⁴ The Southern Tenant Farmers Union was founded in response to the government's payment to landowners to decrease crop production in the South. Many landowners neglected to share those funds with the sharecroppers, stimulating the desire to unionize. Needless to say, the wealthy Southern elites were not supportive of the unionization efforts.

Later, a friend and fellow aficionado, William Pressman...and I tried to get a weekly singing going in a friend's apartment on Cherry Street on the Lower East Side. At about that time, Jean Ritchie had come to Henry Street Settlement as a group worker; although she hadn't sung shape note before, she was a great asset. However, the folks preferred to sing a general repertoire—rounds, and canons, chorales, English Gothic music, madrigals, etc. We couldn't get the shape note 'style' across—they wanted to sing 'beautiful.'

In the mid-to-late fifties, a group met on Second Avenue in New York City... I sometimes led this group, and attempted to arouse interest in shape note singing... Although several of the folks were from Tennessee, none of them understood the style, and by the time some more copies of the Denson edition had been ordered, the group began to fall apart. (Garber 1987, 10-11)

Several early Northeastern Sacred Harp enclaves experienced similar difficulty to Bill Sattler in maintaining consistent momentum and local interest in the early years. Connecticut also experienced frustrating periods of low community interest and participant retention in the 1970s, even as other shapenote communities in western Massachusetts, Boston, and Vermont were experiencing success in these areas. Interestingly, this is in part because the communities in Massachusetts and Vermont were organized into a more exclusive format—more like a club or a chorus than today's "come one, come all" mindset present in the Sacred Harp community-at-large.

For example, a Boston shapenote enclave that calls itself Norumbega Harmony was initiated by Wellesley College professor Steve Marini as, "a good means of promoting fellowship on campus" in 1976, and was reliant solely on the college community for its first years (ibid, 80). Marini had first learned of Sacred Harp singing through Poppy Gregory, a folk music enthusiast who occasionally hosted singings in her Cambridge home. She had learned from friend and enthusiast-

colleague Tony Saletan, who had attended a shapenote convention in Kentucky in 1970, and started performing and teaching it at Old Joe Clark's, a cooperative house also located in Cambridge (ibid 1987, 12).

Marini instigated weekly singings at Wellesley which were designed for committed group members—quite a significant catalyst for community formation in comparison to the monthly singings in other parts of New England and California at the time, even if the closed nature of the group goes against what many believe to be in the spirit of Sacred Harp singing. In exchange for sponsorship and for providing a weekly meeting space, the college chaplaincy requested that Norumbega Harmony occasionally provide the music for Sunday worship services. The element of formal performance, even if slight, also creates an aura of exclusivity, and Norumbega Harmony continues to face direct and passive-aggressive resistance from Sacred Harp enthusiasts for their willingness to rehearse and perform for an audience.

In 1981, Poppy Gregory apparently ceased to host Sacred Harp singings in her home, leaving a void of open access singings in Boston. Norumbega Harmony was in a position to fill that void, and they began hosting a monthly singing open to anyone, while continuing to maintain their weekly closed meetings. These monthly singings experienced significant growth and foundational community building in its first years. Marini and Norumbega Harmony members began to publicize the monthly singing—sending notices to regional newspapers and radio stations, and posting flyers—and people came out for these open singings in much larger numbers than most of the other New England singings at the time. The open singings typically attracted a

minimum of thirty attendees, and there were reports of some meetings with up to one hundred visitors ranging in age between twenty and sixty years (Garber 1988, 89).

At this point, in the mid 1980s, Norumbega Harmony community participants started to become increasingly interested in developing a more in-depth relationship to both the music in *The Sacred Harp*, and also the performative keys associated with it. A greater percentage of participants began learning to lead their own songs, and began stepping out to include more complicated tunes in their repertoire. One element that was key to this upswing in personal commitment to cultivating Sacred Harp is that Northern singers began traveling to sing at traditional conventions in the South. They became invigorated by what they experienced, and brought that excitement and insight back with them to Boston. That energy was then transferred to the local singers who could not travel, but who nonetheless were able to learn new things about Sacred Harp singing and become empowered by the skills they were witnessing of other regular singers.

This is not to suggest that Norumbega Harmony began running their meetings as traditional singers do, or even leading them according to how they imagined traditional singings to be run. Nor were they particularly interested in doing such a thing. Marini and Norumbega Harmony were interested in maintaining their own identity as a distinctive shapenote singing group. Nevertheless, their community reaped the social and musical benefits of traveling to Southern singings.

In my observation and research, as with Kiri Miller's (2008), and Laura Clawson's (2011), this factor alone—traveling to participate with more experienced

Sacred Harp singers, particularly in regions where traditional singing is active—can be the primary catalyst for local community formation, deeper engagement with the repertoire, and the forging of interregional and international Sacred Harp networks. I discuss the benefits of travel for European Sacred Harp affinity communities in further detail in Chapter 3 and in my profile on Daire O’Sullivan in Part 3: Chapter 5.

The wide-reaching benefits of Northern singers’ communication with traditional Southern singers—particularly with Hugh McGraw, a charismatic Sacred Harp community organizer from Georgia and an activist for the expansion of Sacred Harp singing outside of the American South—actually manifested several years earlier in a memorable trip to the 1976 Georgia State Convention by folk chorus enthusiast Larry Gordon and his Word of Mouth Chorus. At the Convention, Gordon reportedly mentioned to McGraw about a concert of music from *The Sacred Harp* they planned to perform at Wesleyan University through an association with Neely Bruce, who had also been traveling to Southern singings since 1968. According to Susan Garber, McGraw, “embraced the idea as an excellent one, but not sufficiently ambitious” (1987, 225-26). He subsequently suggested upgrading the scheduled performance to incorporate the first New England Sacred Harp Convention. Forty Southern singers who witnessed this interaction between Gordon and McGraw also agreed to travel northward and participate in what would be a historic event.

Approximately three-hundred people attended the first New England Convention in Wesleyan University’s Memorial Chapel in September, 1976. A bus-load of Southern singers traveling with Hugh McGraw also showed their support by



Figure 7. Neely Bruce at the Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention, March 2013.

attending—a story that is still retold in today’s Sacred Harp oral culture.¹⁵ The remaining singers were there as a result of the excellent efforts of Neely and Phyllis Bruce (see Figure 7), Juanita Kyle, and the Wesleyan University students to promote the event through mailings, radio broadcasts, and by word-of-mouth. They also provided home-cooked food for the traditional-style Dinner on the Grounds. The mailing lists were a collective effort on the part of other singings active in New England, and Poppy Gregory provided her established collection of contacts which included the membership roster of the Folksong Society of Greater Boston and the Pinewoods Folk Music Club (Garber 1987, 226). The convention was held mostly in

¹⁵ For an account of this bus trip taken in 1985 to the New England Convention, see Rogers and Walton 1986.

a style similar to typical Sacred Harp conventions in the American South—parts and singers were arranged in a hollow square; the sessions were opened and closed with prayer; a committee was publicly appointed to run the convention; and most importantly, the New England Convention adopted *The Sacred Harp*, Denson edition as their only source.

It was decided that the New England Sacred Harp Convention would be an annual event, and that it would rotate among the New England states where Sacred Harp singing was active. In 1976, this included Connecticut, Vermont, and Massachusetts in the Boston region. Now in its fortieth year, the convention continues to rotate, but includes Rhode Island and Maine as well as western Massachusetts. The singing still attracts a large gathering upwards of two-hundred participants from around the country. It also continues to attract a particular crowd of New England Sacred Harp singers who were involved in the early years of the affinity community.

As the current Sacred Harp community in the U.S.'s Northeast has shifted its focus to open singings, and tends to distance itself from formal performance, the New England Sacred Harp Convention pays homage to the folk enthusiast pioneers of the affinity group. Its continued recognition and support from prominent Southern singers is a reminder to the recent enthusiast arrivals of the deep significance of the first Sacred Harp convention that took place in a revival context.

Larry Gordon's Pathway and Sacred Harp Singing in the United Kingdom

Larry Gordon, a Sacred Harp enthusiast and choral conductor mentioned above, is a particularly important transitional figure for my purposes in this dissertation because he was so greatly involved in both the revival in New England and subsequently in the United Kingdom. I will describe his efforts in spreading Sacred Harp singing both within the U.S. and internationally before moving on to a larger discussion about the origin of several other Sacred Harp enclaves in Europe.

Larry Gordon was first introduced to Sacred Harp singing in Cambridge, MA, 1970. At that time, he was already involved in choral singing and choral folk traditions more specifically. Yet, he recalls his first experience with Sacred Harp singing in fond detail:

I was living in Boston, and a friend of mine who had grown up in North Carolina and had been exposed a little bit to Sacred Harp music (he was certainly not a Sacred Harp aficionado or anything, he hadn't done that much), he showed me copies of the songs, and I remember that some of the first songs that I ever sang were "David's Lamentation" and "Captain Kidd" ["Wondrous Love" in *The Sacred Harp*]. . . We had a little madrigal group that met irregularly, and some of my friends like to sing, so every once in a while we got together and sang a couple of songs. And the friend who introduced me to Sacred Harp music put a couple of those [tunes] in front of us once, and we started singing them and we loved them a lot. So then I started looking a little bit further into it. (Garber 1987, 210)

In 1971, soon after his first introduction to shapenote singing, Gordon moved to Vermont, where he went on to establish a long and wide-reaching career as a choral community organizer, teacher, and mentor. He began looking to shapenote sources to include in his repertoire, and organized informal singing gatherings at the Plainfield

commune where he lived, and also at the Bread and Puppet Theater at Gate Farm. The theater produced a play called *The Fourteen Stations of the Cross* in 1972. With direction from Gordon, a group came together to perform Sacred Harp songs such as “Wondrous Love,” “Idumea,” and “Kedron” to accompany the “primitive and Biblical” imagery of the production (ibid, 2011). By 1973, this group of singers had formed the Word of Mouth Chorus—an ensemble dedicated to singing rounds and American folk hymnody.

By 1976 the Word of Mouth Chorus increased their activities in performance and in their pursuit of a more comprehensive understanding of Sacred Harp singing. They self-published a collection called the *Early American Songbook* (1975) in standard, non-shaped notation. The repertoire was mostly derived from *The Sacred Harp*, but the songbook displayed a bias in favor of New England composers. The ensemble also planned touring concerts of shapenote pieces. Gordon recalls the subtle tension between the desire to perform and the desire to provide an open community environment for Sacred Harp singing in Vermont during this period in the group’s history:

At least for a while we kept having regular Sacred Harp [singings] that we wanted to encourage as many people as possible to come, but we also got interested in doing more performing. There were several years when we were doing a lot of performing in Vermont, going around to a lot of small churches and schools and things like that, especially through 1975, 1976 and 1977... because there then happened to be a lot of people in the group at that time, myself included, who loved to perform. (Garber 1987, 213)

Larry Gordon's willingness to perform Sacred Harp for formal audiences has not gone without criticism from those who firmly believe that the repertoire should be enjoyed only within an open community context, or from those who adhere to the trope of "it's just not done" in the American South. Kiri Miller devotes an entire subsection of her book to a critique of the Word of Mouth Chorus and their 1979 album *Rivers of Delight* where she essentially claims a hijacking of *The Sacred Harp* for the purposes of a personal project (2008, 160-167). While her argument perhaps rightfully positions Larry Gordon as operating outside of the Sacred Harp tradition as it currently circulates transnationally, it is still important to consider the positive impact that the professional presentations of the Word of Mouth Chorus had on Sacred Harp singing in New England, and subsequently across the Atlantic. The album *Rivers of Delight* itself was widely distributed nationally and internationally, having been released by Nonesuch Records and produced by the label's forward-looking and globally conscious director, Teresa Sterne.

Gordon's chorus also had an impact that extended beyond their recordings. The desire to tour and perform was the original impetus for the Word of Mouth Chorus traveling to traditional Sacred Harp conventions in Georgia and Alabama. While the half-dozen-or-so trips the group took to the South may not pass muster by Miller's standards as qualification to "claim membership in the tradition" (ibid., 162), it certainly impacted Gordon's and the Word of Mouth Chorus' impressions of Sacred Harp singing toward a more meaningful understanding of the music—even if the

experience didn't have as direct an impact on the sound of their ensemble,¹⁶ or the placement of their performances within a traditional context. Gordon's memories of his experiences and interactions at Southern singings suggest a positive and welcoming environment where both the New Englanders and traditional singers expressed a willingness to share their musical worlds. He recalls:

Certainly the first time we went to a Southern [singing] was pretty amazing for all of us, which was in 1976... We had been performing Sacred Harp quite a lot, but we nonetheless were unprepared for the excitement of the real thing. First of all, the sound was so strong and the rhythmic drive was so strong. There were many people there who knew so many songs so well, and they all loved us. They were so happy to see a bunch of young people taking up Sacred Harp singing, so they were thrilled to have us there. They were incredibly hospitable! We had had a certain amount of trepidation as to whether we would find the religiosity a little heavy for us; we found that not to be a problem. And so, in every way it was a wonderful experience for us. It really, I think, altered the way we heard Sacred Harp music in our heads. Once you hear a sound like that, it's lodged there forevermore. (Garber 1987, 214)

Gordon's narrative of his early trips to Southern singings is in many ways echoed by the experiences of European singers who travel to traditional singings. This is especially true for the handful of visitors from England in 2000, and then visitors from Ireland and Poland who traveled to Southern singings in 2009-2011. It seems that in the early years of a musical exchange network or affinity network—such as that between Sacred Harp singers in New England and the American South, and between Europe and the American South—neither party yet expresses concern for the

¹⁶ The Word of Mouth Chorus sounds deliberately rehearsed and well blended, which is not a priority in the traditional Sacred Harp aesthetic, though otherwise their timbral production is not entirely out of touch with the style.

potential shifts in musical and community identity by promoting such an exchange. In fact, it seems that each party is more swept up in the mutual excitement and exoticism of the other.

While there have been consequences to the performance of Sacred Harp by the Word of Mouth Chorus—such as passive audience misinterpretation of what Sacred Harp singing “is really about” for traditional singers—a look back at the events of 1976 also suggests potentially drastic consequences had both Gordon’s chorus and Southern Sacred Harp leadership personnel taken a xenophobic stance toward one another. The New England Convention may never have happened. Had it somehow been scheduled, there would not likely have been such support from Southern singers, and the Sacred Harp affinity community in the Northeast could still be limited to performing “Northfield” in a program of madrigals on the remote stages of New England—rather than its extension into a lifestyle as it today. The famed Chicago community “founders” or the “Old Guard” of the late 1980s—thoroughly documented by Kiri Miller and Laura Clawson (2008; 2011)—could subsequently still be conducting from *The Sacred Harp* with batons and music stands. And many of the people who were first attracted to Sacred Harp singing through the Word of Mouth Chorus’ *Rivers of Delight* may never have found a pathway to the inclusive and thriving singing network that is present today.

The events of 1976 provided a precedent and valuable lessons for the future exchanges between Southern and European Sacred Harp participants. I am convinced that the latter could not have occurred as it has without the former taking place. Had

Larry Gordon experienced an unpleasant and unwelcoming class at the Georgia State Convention, perhaps his energies put towards promoting Sacred Harp repertoire would have waned, and perhaps he never would have brought it to performances and workshops he organized in Europe and the United Kingdom in the 1990s—the first practical and community-forming shapenote connection to take hold across the Atlantic.

In 1988, one year after becoming involved in Tony Barrand’s second edition tunebook project, *Northern Harmony* (1987), Gordon founded his famed choral organization Village Harmony, which attempts to maintain the balance between being a collection of amateur community choral groups and a semi-professional ensemble capable of touring memorable programs and recording albums in the broad genre of “world folk harmony” or “world song” where Sacred Harp singing, for all intents and purposes, is positioned by Gordon. In 1993, his ensemble, also called Northern Harmony, was established as the highest level touring ensemble in the organization. They began to tour internationally throughout the U.S. and Europe.

The 1994 tour to the United Kingdom was particularly pivotal for my purposes here, as they toured and workshopped a repertoire of shapenote pieces, and collaborated with other “folk harmony” ensembles there—the types of ensembles that became the subject of Caroline Bithell’s recent monograph on the Natural Voice Movement in the U.K. (2014). This was an environment ripe for the first establishments of a Sacred Harp affinity group in England. In the liner notes to Northern Harmony’s 1995 album *Heavenly Meeting*—a product of the European tour

repertoire—Gordon recounts that the group “had particularly rewarding collaborations with West Gallery choirs in many parts of England”¹⁷ including Malvern, Oxford, Newcastle, Lancaster, Brighton, and Southampton. Northern Harmony also worked with other groups of singers in England, Holland, Germany, and Italy. In addition, he adds a hopeful and poignant conclusion, writing that, “We hope we have inspired them to keep singing this music and share it in their local communities.”¹⁸

That is exactly what several participants in Larry Gordon’s workshops did—they continued working with the repertoire as best they could. However, on their own, and having received minimal instruction, the English enthusiasts struggled with singing the shapes. Hannah Land, who is now a confident leader in her Sacred Harp community in Manchester, and in Europe more broadly, recalls memories of her parent’s experiences with shapenote singing in the early 1990s:

I got started through my parents, really. We came across the music via Northern Harmony. Larry was coming over to the U.K. with his various choirs and groups and doing concerts and workshops. And then we didn’t really know about Sacred Harp, or certainly I didn’t, we didn’t even know what the shapes meant, really. We weren’t using the shapes at that time, and we were struggling singing some of the songs. Some of the people we were singing with were writing it out in round note notation—such an alien concept now. And then we were given a copy of the Denson book when it came out in the early 1990s, and then started singing some songs from that. It gradually escalated...¹⁹

¹⁷ See link to liner notes to Northern Harmony’s Heavenly Meeting (1995): <https://northernharmony.bandcamp.com/album/heavenly-meeting-1995>

¹⁸ See link to liner notes to Northern Harmony’s Heavenly Meeting (1995): <https://northernharmony.bandcamp.com/album/heavenly-meeting-1995>

¹⁹ Hannah Land. Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 4, 2012.

In many respects, the interest in shapenote singing escalated in England at a similar rate as Sacred Harp singing in the U.S.' Northeast did twenty years earlier. As described above, folk enthusiasts in New England and New York began to encounter the music in the late 1960s and early 1970s, often without a firm grasp of the shapes, or even their significance. Yet, by 1976, the singers in New England held their first convention. Similarly—in terms of the time taken for Sacred Harp singing to absorb in a completely new community—the United Kingdom held its first Sacred Harp convention in 1996, less than a decade after American shapenote singing had been introduced by Larry Gordon.

CHAPTER 2

PATHWAYS TO NEW SACRED HARP COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE: UNITED KINGDOM, POLAND, IRELAND

The First United Kingdom Shape Note Convention

The first United Kingdom Shape Note Convention occurred on a Saturday and Sunday, September 14-15, 1996, at Woodside Hall in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, a town a little over an hour's drive north from London. Unlike the first New England Sacred Harp Convention, the first "Big Singing" in the United Kingdom adopted two oblong tunebooks to call from: *The Sacred Harp* (1991 Denson Edition), and the New England 20th century compilation, *Northern Harmony* (1987). The inclusion of the second book was a decision made specifically to draw in the people who had been learning from Larry Gordon over the previous years.²⁰ Many of these participants were also involved in singing from the English West Gallery tradition, which, as mentioned previously, has several connections to repertoire found in American shapenote sources and *The Sacred Harp*. (By 1999, the annual convention declared

²⁰ "About the Convention." <http://www.ukshc.org/about-the-uk-convention/>

that *The Sacred Harp* be the only source used at that singing, and officially changed the event title to the United Kingdom Sacred Harp Convention.)

The U.K. Shape Note Convention also adopted structured activities that are not part of a traditional singing, including a formal workshop on Saturday, and a Ceilidh scheduled in the evening where enthusiasts performed other types of English and Scottish folk music before an audience seated for a served dinner. Most of the women and men at the convention were already involved in singing or folk music of some kind, and this shapenote event was an extension of their existing interests. A video of the event was recorded, edited, and recently published to YouTube²¹ for the Sacred Harp community at-large. I will describe the details of this pivotal event below, and then I will explore its impact.

Steve Fletcher of Hitchin, a friendly, enthusiastic woman, and the primary organizer and chairperson of the event, stood beside a modest music stand in the center of the hollow square to greet the class of approximately one hundred assembled singers.

“Good morning everybody. Welcome to the First Annual U.K. Shape Note Convention,” Fletcher announced. Applause broke out among the attendees, who were seated by vocal part in the hollow square. Many of them, including Fletcher, wore a beige commemorative t-shirt with the rectangle, oval, triangle, and diamond

²¹ “First UK Sacred Harp Convention”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bosRcJQtDB8>

shaped noteheads printed above the phrase, “Get Into Shape.” the rest of the class was generally dressed in casual clothing—button-down shirt with denim or khakis.

“It’s wonderful to see so many people here. I’m completely overwhelmed. A particular thanks to our friends from across the pond who have taken the terminal risk of coming.” Laughter burst from some singers. An American woman in the treble section reassured her, “there was no risk.”

Fletcher continued, “what I’d like to do is get us straight into the [singing]. Just one item to get us going. Sacred Harp, page 276, ‘Bridgewater,’” she said confidently... Then slightly less confidently followed with, “I’m going to beat one bar before we start singing, all right Americans?” Self-conscious chuckling bubbled from around the square—an indication that they knew they hadn’t been practicing it the “traditional” way, which is to simply start the tune with no preparatory bar—but that’s what they were used to. After a silent, yet expectant two beats given with both of her arms (*The Sacred Harp* placed on the music stand), the first convention class in the United Kingdom joined together in song. “Bridgewater” was clearly familiar to many in the square. They successfully sang the shapes once through, and with the help of nine experienced American singers—most of them from outside the Northeast or Washington state—the class sounded strong.

Following the opening of the convention, a visiting singer from Massachusetts, Bruce Randall, stood before the class to give a shapenote singing workshop. “How many here have never done this before?” he asked. Four participants within the vision of the video camera raised their hands, though perhaps there were more seated nearer

the back rows. “Just trying to see how many I can corrupt,” Randall quipped, as the class again broke into laughter. This joke continues to pay off in singing school situations outside of the American South, and it points to the sometimes negative views of shapenote singing as backwards or brash which some classical voice and choral musicians have toward the style.

“Turn to page eighteen in *The Sacred Harp*,” Randall said. “By the way, if you don’t own a *Sacred Harp*, I highly recommend that you buy one. It has more music for the price than anywhere else.” Randall was not a representative of the Sacred Harp Publishing Company, though his remark was very much in the spirit of the itinerant singing masters who would produce their own collections of music and sell them as they traveled from town to town teaching. His next move as a shapenote workshop instructor, however, was to take a modern approach which recognizes the common Western “round note” system, and he compares it to the four-shape system found in *The Sacred Harp* and *Northern Harmony*. His theoretically oriented description is clear, and perhaps influenced the enthusiasts in England who were previously reluctant to sing the shapes to begin doing so. I quote him at length:

What shapenotes are is a method of making music reading easier for people who don’t already know how to read music. If you already know how to read music, it’s kind of redundant, but it’s actually a helpful way of learning how to read by making the different degrees of the scale a different shape... There are seven notes in the scale, but there are only four shapes, and that seems a little confusing to modern people, but when this system was invented, they used only four syllables to sing the scale.

Today, if I said sing a scale using the syllables, and you knew what that meant, you would sing ‘do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do.’ And you have seven different little syllables for the seven notes of the scale. But around the year 1800, when this system was invented, they sang the seven notes of the scale with four syllables, three of which repeated. They sang, ‘fa, so, la, fa, so, la, mi, fa...’

When I first started doing this, it bugged the heck out of me because I couldn’t tell ‘fa’ from ‘fa’ but once I started doing it, I realized it wasn’t all that difficult, and once you get the hang of it, it’s actually easier to learn to sing a piece of music than it is to sing from something in round notes...

Those of you who already read music probably know that one of the hardest things about learning to read music is where the half steps are in the scale. They always move around. If you are in the key of C the half step is between E and F, but if you sing in the key of D then the half step is between F# and G and between C# and D... This eliminates the need to stop and look at it and figure out where the half steps are, because they are always right below the triangle, the fa. (Ross 1996)

He continued with his workshop in a manner typical of the singing schools taught since the publication of the 1991 edition of *The Sacred Harp*, which issued a new “rudiments” section in the begging of the book. The “rudiments” are intended to explain the fundamental elements of Western music, and the process for reading and singing the shapenote tunes in the book. This feature has been included since its original publication in 1844, though the rudiments in the 1991 edition, authored by chemist and folk music expert John Garst, situates Sacred Harp singing within a broader musical and cultural perspective. This makes it potentially accessible to singers coming from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Unlike most singing schools directed toward a general audience in the United States, Bruce Randall positioned his lesson as though the majority of newcomers

could read standard Western notation. It is true that most U.K. shapenote singers in the 1990s were drawn to it through an interest in other types of choral music, and so were in a situation to encounter Larry Gordon. However, even English attendees at the 1996 workshop in Hitchin who had no direct choral experience would have been more likely to know the basics of music reading than their contemporaries in the U.S. While formal music education in England has had different faces over the past half-century, it has been steadily implemented, and most who were brought up there know *something* about reading music (Service 2014; Henley 2010; Finney 2011).²²

After the shapenote workshop, the singing continued much like a typical convention. Singers who had checked on their registration cards that they would like to lead in the square were called before the class. Throughout the sessions on Saturday and Sunday, thirty-one different leaders were called, and a total of ninety-four songs were sung—sixty-six from *The Sacred Harp*, and twenty-eight from *Northern Harmony*. On Saturday, thirty-nine tunes were called from *The Sacred Harp*, and sixteen from *Northern Harmony*. On Sunday, twenty-seven and twelve respectively. None of the American visitors chose tunes from *Northern Harmony*.

Not only does the simple numerical data show that *The Sacred Harp* was more than twice as popular as the other book, but the class also responded most intensely to its repertoire. Page 178, “Africa” by William Billings was particularly exuberant.

After a string of slow-moving songs, page 299 “New Jerusalem” was lead at a driving

²² Public music education in the United States was fairly strong through most of the 20th century, but it has declined significantly in recent decades due to budget cuts, as well as the increasingly prevalent notion that the subject of music and the arts should be relegated entirely to the extracurricular realm.

pace and was met with applause at the end. Judy Mincey, an honored visitor from Georgia, closed the Saturday session with a rollicking page 198 “Green Street.” The class stood as a formality of the last song of the day, but the front bench sections were rocking back and forth in rhythm—something that would probably be frowned upon now for lack of nuanced taste and awareness of Sacred Harp performative keys—but was at this time demonstrating the singers’ uncontrollable excitement for the excellent day of shapenote singing they had experienced for the first time in the United Kingdom.

On Saturday evening, the singers transformed the same Woodside Hall community center into a dance space for a Ceilidh—an informal gathering centered around music and dance in England, Scotland, and Ireland. A contemporary contra dance band including silver flute, mandolin, fiddle, bass, and electric keyboard was hired to accompany and call the dance. Following the dance, the singers ate a catered dinner with wine, and were seated around clothed tables bordering the room, leaving the dance floor space open for solo performers.

Sheila Smith (now Sheila Macadam; see Figure 8) sang a classic song popularized by Florrie Forde in 1906, “My Wife Won’t Let Me,” of which the textual content

Figure 8. Sheila Macadam at the *Shenandoah Harmony Launch Singing* in Cork, Ireland, March



marks a stark contrast from the English and American hymns found in the tunebooks that the crowd had been singing from all day. The majority English audience easily joined in the chorus,

There was I, waiting at the church / When I found he'd left me in the lurch / oh how he did upset me (ha ha!) / All at once, he sent me round a note / Here's the very note / this is what he wrote / 'Can't get away to marry you today / My wife won't let me!'

A few other sing-alongs were presented, and then, at the end, a solo performance on the Scottish small pipes.

During the Sunday session, the U.K. Shape Note Convention also introduced the “celebration lesson” alongside the traditional memorial lesson for those in the community-at-large who have passed away in the previous year, and a lesson for the “sick and shut-in” who are too ill to attend the event. The celebration lesson was led by Bernard Collard, who went on to be a highly active Sacred Harp singer in the U.K., and who also traveled to singings in the American South for several summers. He stood before the class and led them in page 228, “Marlborough”, a joyous fusing tune composed by Massachusetts singing school master Abraham Wood in 1793. The text by Isaac Watts was particularly fitting for such an occasion as the celebration lesson: “O for a shout of sacred joy / To God the sov'reign King! / Let ev'ry land their tongues employ / And hymns of triumph sing.” The list of celebrations included the return to health of friends and family; a new job; wedding anniversaries; births; and, of course, the first ever United Kingdom Shape Note Convention.

The celebration lesson has been held off and on over the years. The last one took place in 2012 in Wokingham. Some feel that the celebration lesson takes away from

the seriousness of the memorial lesson. Others dislike it because it is “just not done” in a traditional context, or they argue that it takes away from potential singing time. These are valid observations. However, the celebration lesson was also a marker of the individuality of the United Kingdom Shapenote Convention—the first convention outside of the United States—and it also reflected the joy of that first event.

Many new groups of singers find the experience of the memorial lesson overwhelming and even uncomfortable, particularly when they are not personally familiar with the names on the list of those who have passed on. This class at the 1996 U.K. Convention, however, was mourning the loss of Chris Whiting, who had been an active Sacred Harp singer in the earliest years of shapenote singing in England. The class did take the time to properly memorialize Chris Whiting in the traditional memorial lesson, along with dozens of other singers from the United States. Following this solemn occasion, the celebration lesson refocused the class on the excitement of the event at hand, which they wanted to be joyous.

All politics regarding catered Ceilidhs and celebration lessons aside, the first United Kingdom Shapenote Convention spurred significant growth of Sacred Harp singing within England, and also strengthened the new trans-Atlantic singing pathway in both directions. For example, fourteen people from England came to the National Convention in Birmingham, AL in 1997. Buell Cobb introduced them formally in the square, and they sang a few 18th and 19th century West Gallery pieces from English parish churches before a class of hundreds (460 people were reportedly registered that year). Cobb and the English singers explained to the crowd, “It is in this music that

the roots of Sacred Harp can be found” (Williams 1997). The group also attended the all-day singing at Little Vine Primitive Baptist Church the following weekend.

Although a few English enthusiasts had traveled to the New England Convention in the years leading up to the first United Kingdom Shape Note Convention, the trips that singers took to singings in the American South in 1997 were particularly invigorating. Several of those who traveled have gone on to be leaders in the U.K. shapenote community. Helen Brown of Derby has continued to travel to Southern singings annually, and has been respected by singers who travel the circuit since long before the twenty-first century shapenote revival in Ireland and mainland Europe. Helen Brown has noted that she has only missed two sessions of the National Convention since 1997, and that the two missed years were for important family milestone events.

American singers—both traditional singers and enthusiasts—have also continuously traveled to the United Kingdom Sacred Harp Convention and other singings in England since 1996. While the convention included the *Northern Harmony* alongside *The Sacred Harp*, the U.K. convention attracted visitors from New England, such as Larry Gordon and Steve Marini. However, in 2000, after the sole adoption of *The Sacred Harp* in 1999, singers from the American South returned to the U.K. Richard DeLong, at that time considered one of the great singing school teachers, was even brought over to lead a workshop. Additionally, in June 2007, an official Sacred Harp Heritage Tour of England and Wales was taken by several singers from the U.S.—mostly from the American South. They visited various sites of

historical significance to *The Sacred Harp*, including poet John Newton's church in Olney, and Phillip Doddridge's church in Northampton. The tour participants and many U.K. singers convened in Derby for a special singing hosted by Helen and Ted Brown.

The success of the first United Kingdom Shape Note Convention also led to the founding of many other singings in the U.K. In five years following 1996, English singers founded the Sussex Shape Note Singing Day (1998, by Tony Singleton), the Oxford Sacred Harp singing (1999, by Sheila Smith), and the New Year's Day Sacred Harp Singing in Derby (2000, by Helen Brown). The East Midlands Convention also followed soon after in 2002.

The Pathway to Sacred Harp Singing in Poland

Sacred Harp singing in Poland began as a small, informal interest group at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań as early as 2006. It was spearheaded by English literature Professor Magda Zapędowska, who had self-discovered Sacred Harp singing while on a research fellowship at Stanford University in California in 2003. Magda's work involved the poetry of Emily Dickinson, and she became interested in the influence of English sacred poetry, such as the works of Isaac Watts. Her research into Watts inevitably led to her learning about Sacred Harp singing. However, Magda's first practical experience with the music was in western

Massachusetts, where Emily Dickinson lived, and where Magda was conducting additional research at Amherst College. There, she saw a posted flyer advertising the local singings. While in Amherst, she also attended the 2005 Pioneer Valley All-Day Singing.

When Magda returned to Poznań, she followed through on her newfound interest and invited colleagues and students to participate with her. Western Massachusetts-based singer Tim Eriksen, who is now Magda's spouse, remembers, "she had a singing at her house for a year or more where it was just three or four people. At that time, they sang 101 on the top [Canaan's Land] over and over again."²³ A few of these early participants in Poland were interested in an opportunity to expand their repertoire and knowledge of the music. They also hoped to expand the number of Sacred Harp enthusiasts in Poland. In response, Magda used her connections to the Polish participatory sacred music festival, Song of Our Roots. With Tim, they devised a Sacred Harp workshop opportunity there in 2008. The success of this event set in motion a stronghold of Sacred Harp community in Poland, and forged a lasting transnational relationship between the Sacred Harp enclaves in Poland and western Massachusetts.

The Polish singing community grew through a series of workshops and singing schools spread out nearly annually from 2008-2011. These singing schools were taught by American superenthusiasts, including Tim Eriksen, who are known as Sacred Harp singing pedagogues in the community-at-large. All of them were local to

²³ Tim Eriksen, interview with Ellen Lueck, March 13, 2016.

New York State and the Pioneer Valley in western Massachusetts. In Poland—in the meantime between these workshops—a small number of dedicated devotees continued to sing in Warsaw and Poznań.

In these early years, the Polish singers had few visitors. They relied on the Internet resources available at the time which mostly consisted of fasola.org, ukshapenote.org.uk, and YouTube videos of singings. The Polish enthusiasts also placed a high value on the knowledge gained by extensive Sacred Harp singing travel, spearheaded by several local Polish community leaders including Father Błażej Matusiak, Maciej Kaczyński, Gosia Perycz and Justyna Orlikowska. In their early years, the success of the singers in Poland was more a result of strong internal community support, and the determination of the singers there to not only learn the music, but also join the wider community in a practical, and perhaps spiritual or religious sense. It is also significant that the singing community in Ireland was coming up at the same time, and the singers there were equally enthusiastic about the music and the activity. I discuss the rise of singing in Ireland in the next section.

Unlike in England, where the first annual Shape Note Convention was a marked start to the incorporation of England on the singing circuit, there was no singular event that signaled the grand start to Poland's singing community. It was more of a gradual process. Their first convention occurred in 2012—six years after Magda started hosting her local home singings in Poznań; four years after their first successful workshop; and three years after the American singing circuit was first introduced to the eager Polish travelers in New England in 2009. For this reason, I

will highlight the first two singing schools taught in 2008 and 2009 which illuminated and shaped the direction of the current path for Sacred Harp singing in Poland.

As mentioned above, the first singing school brought to Poland was conducted by Tim Eriksen with the help of Polish singer Magda Zapędowska. Tim is a revered musician and ethnomusicologist with several specialties, including American folk music in New England. He has been singing Sacred Harp for decades. His remarkable ability to engage newcomers in learning how to sing shapenotes, as well as his magnetic personality and strong leadership skills create a rich environment for the growth of Sacred Harp singing wherever he goes. He helped make Western Massachusetts one of the strongest Sacred Harp enclaves outside of the American South. During Eriksen’s residency in Minnesota, the regular singings in the Twin Cities experienced a growth in numbers and exuberance.

In August 2008, Eriksen arrived in Poland to give a six-day Sacred Harp workshop at the Song of Our Roots festival. Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg, who was living in Troy, New York at the time, traveled with Tim Eriksen to assist him. Prior to their arrival, Magda had been busy promoting the event, mostly through the radio.

Tim explains,

Probably the biggest thing besides getting me to go to that festival—which [Magda] was connected to—was that she did a couple of radio documentaries for Poland Radio 2, and those generated tremendous interest. And so when I went over, I did another radio appearance—a live broadcast—and also there was a television broadcast. So there were a lot of people who found out about it first through mass media.²⁴

²⁴ Tim Eriksen, interview with Ellen Lueck, March 13, 2016.

He adds an interesting anecdote that describes the power that this music has over some enthusiasts:

And then there was one guy who said he was driving down the highway and heard the radio thing, and he pulled over and stopped the car, and then he went to the festival. So it was really that kind of outreach that people first encountered it.²⁵

Tim, Jesse, and the class of new enthusiasts were able to accomplish much at this first Sacred Harp singing school in Poland without the use of a translator. Tim attributes this to the multi-day nature of the event, and also to the fact that there were already a few participants in the group from the Poznań cohort. He explains,

[The participants] asked after the very first lesson if we could meet twice a day—we were supposed to meet once a day—and the festival said it was okay. So we met twice a day and we extended the time we were singing. We began singing with shapes around town, like with chalk on buildings and things. And we heard people practicing through the windows in little groups. They really got excited—I think because it was close enough to what they were doing as sacred music, sung by an already partially existing community, that it made sense to them. But it was just more exciting, including even for Błażej who is an expert in chant.²⁶

A video taken on August 23, 2008—the final showcase performance at the festival—displays a highly capable class of enthusiastic singers.²⁷ Approximately one hundred people fill a small room, and others—many of them priests and nuns—look on from a doorway filled with observers. The singers seated in the hollow square

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ “Sacred Harp in Jaroslaw, Poland.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkG7vm50Ns&list=FL9f1Azg2jBlyGuR2S48rK1Q&index=6>

formation read from packets compiled by Eriksen, as there was only Magda's copy of *The Sacred Harp* in all of Poland at that time. The twenty-or-so people actively participating in the workshop sang remarkably well with a strong, full voice, and with care to stay in tune. They sang both the solfege and the text with apparent ease, and sang them with such clarity that an American observer could distinguish a Polish accent, particularly when compared to the audible voices of Tim (a tenor) and Jesse (a bass). Each participant also took their turn leading in the center of the square, and many of them did so with confidence—Tim barely aiding from the corner of the front row tenor section.

Several of the tunes the workshop participants sang were particularly impressive performances. One young woman lead “Calvary” on page 300, known as a difficult piece in minor, with studied expertise. She led in each vocal part in the atypical fugging introduction, and again in the fugging repeated section without error. The singers followed her precisely. The piece “Edom” on page 200—known as a rollicking “class” song that can derail groups of American singers—was also expertly sung on both the solfege and the winding text: “He sends His show’rs of blessings down / To cheer the plains below / He makes the grass the mountain crown / And corn in valleys grow.”

The success of the six-day workshop at the Song of Our Roots festival stirred up interest for several burgeoning Polish enthusiasts. Tim notes that this particular experience was different than many of the other Sacred Harp workshops he has lead over the years in that a whole community was able to grow from it. He says,

My aim was to share as much as I could. And to let people know that [Sacred Harp] existed. Usually there is a handful for whom it means a lot. But there was something about the zeitgeist of that place, plus the concentrated work that they got to do, that turned it into something else.²⁸

In Poznań, a small handful of singers continued to practice, even after Magda moved to the United States. Enthusiasts in Rzeszów—a town in southeastern Poland—also continued to hold informal singings for a time (Schofield 2009). Father Błażej Matusiak, a Dominican monk who attended the festival workshop, was particularly taken with Sacred Harp singing. Upon his return to his monastery in Warsaw, he continued to recruit interested local singers and he managed to start a regular monthly singing.

Father Błażej and his friend Maciej Kaczyński subsequently traveled to the Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention in March of 2009, where they met hundreds of American Sacred Harp singers who were excited to meet new enthusiasts from such a distant place. Prior to this point, singers traveling from England had become somewhat commonplace at large singings, but because of the familiar language and culture, England is hardly considered as exotic to the average American as Poland.²⁹

By attending the Western Massachusetts Convention specifically, Father Błażej and Kaczyński were exposed to a high-intensity Sacred Harp singing environment,

²⁸ Tim Eriksen, interview with Ellen Lueck, March 13, 2016.

²⁹ Back in 2002, four singers from Australia—exotic if only for its extreme distance—had managed to trek to the National Sacred Harp Convention in Birmingham, AL, though by 2009, news of the Australian singers was almost mythical—their presence becoming more widely known only after their first all-day singing in 2013.

ripe for pure trial-by-fire learning. With 427 registered singers, and 213 songs lead on Saturday and Sunday sessions, the travelers from Poland sang over one third of the repertoire in *The Sacred Harp*, and were witness to one of the most regionally diverse conventions in the U.S., with representatives from twenty-five U.S. states in attendance.³⁰ They gained experience regarding how to organize and run a Sacred Harp convention. Perhaps most importantly, they experienced first-hand the warmth, passion, and helpfulness of the nation-wide Sacred Harp singing community, and were able to bring that positive experience back with them to Poland and pass it on to the other local singers there.

It wasn't until October 2009—over a year after Tim's and Jesse's workshop—that the singers in Poland had access to another singing school. This time, Allison Blake Schofield (she now goes by Allison Steele), another seasoned superenthusiast from the Pioneer Valley was sent by herself to conduct the workshop in Warsaw. This event was also organized by the collaborative efforts of Father Błażej, the Eriksens, and Allison. It lasted four days, and was not associated with any special festival. The singing school was the primary event and draw for participants. There were about forty people in attendance. Allison also made use of packets of music as there still remained a shortage of copies of *The Sacred Harp*. However, she managed to fit an extra nine copies of the tunebook in her luggage to leave behind. Though Allison spoke no Polish, no translator was needed as all of the participants spoke English well

³⁰ “Minutes for the Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention, 2009”.
<http://fasola.org/minutes/search/?q=Western+Mass&yr=2009&n=3013>

enough to understand the singing school, and enough to read and sing the texts in *The Sacred Harp* (Schofield 2009).

After her return from Poland, Allison wrote a report on her experiences there, and published it to the Sacred Harp google groups page. Many of the lessons about Sacred Harp singing that she imparted to the participants at the Warsaw singing school made a significant impact on that community's attitudes towards Sacred Harp, towards its rich history in America, and towards a deep respect of the reciprocal culture of the community-at-large. The Polish singers who were in attendance have also fondly recalled this aspect of Allison's singing school to me when they recount the workshop as an important event. In her writing, Allison was specific about her intentions in imparting the American history of Sacred Harp singing, which were not to alienate the Warsaw singers in her class, but in fact to connect them to the rich path that Sacred Harp singing has taken through the present. I quote her at length:

One of the things that I focused on throughout the singing school was to try to give a sense of the tradition, and the stories and heritage that makes up Sacred Harp Singing. While always keeping in mind that this history can serve to enrich one's experience of it and lead to many things. One thing it can do is to help explain the "why" of what we do... The other important reason for talking about the history and greater Sacred Harp context was to hopefully impart a sense of being connected to something greater than an individual. To give these new singers a connection to singers past and distant whom they have never met. It was also important to me to emphasize that though this music has this rich history in America, it could equally be their music. Not that they were borrowing my music. That they needed to listen carefully and be open to learning and respecting that tradition but they need to find, together, their own way to make it authentically theirs. I believe that they are, and will continue to be successful in this. (Schofield 2009)

Throughout her report, Allison continues to describe ways that the new Warsaw singers began this process of looking across the Atlantic, and also within their own culture to define Sacred Harp singing in Poland. The workshop participants seemed eager to not only learn the event choreography, performative keys, and social codes (the modes of time, how to read the shapenotes, melodic phrasing and rhythmic emphasis, sitting in the hollow square formation, etc.), but also eager to learn what it means to be a Sacred Harp singer, and to learn how to contribute to their local community, and the community-at-large (see Figure 9 of Justynuya Orlikowska, an attendant at the workshop who is now a highly active participant within the community-at-large). After lessons, many class participants remained at the venue—a chapel in Father Błażej’s monastery on Freta street—listening to American recordings of Sacred Harp singing, and asking questions. Soon, the singers began to practice the typical performative keys displayed at any singing in the U.S.: the singers on the front bench aided and supported those leaders struggling in the center of the square; they marked time with their arms while seated; they, as a class, became attached to certain songs—“Poland” in particular, on page 86—



Figure 9. Justyna Orlikowska at the First Germany Sacred Harp Convention, May 2014.

which they were convinced sounded somehow more traditionally Polish than other songs in *The Sacred Harp* and the workshop packet (ibid).

Along with adopting the tune “Poland” as an anthem of sorts, the singing school participants took a distinctively Polish approach to their first ever Dinner on the Grounds, the potluck meal that takes place at every all-day singing and convention in the United States. First of all, Allison notes that the conversations surrounding the hosting, cooking, and serving of the meal took place in the Polish language. She suggests that this, “points to how seriously the food was being approached: no room for confusion” (ibid). The class hosted and prepared traditional Polish fare for the meal, which showcased three different soups—a food type not often presented at American-style potlucks. The most tell-worthy of these was “fasola” soup, “fasola” being the Polish word for bean, and, of course, a play on the fa so la syllables in the shapenote system.

During the singing school, several participants became particularly interested in finding a way to travel to the United States to attend singings and to continue learning. There was also talk about planning an all-day singing in Poland. They were excited about the music, the style, and the reciprocal culture present among the national singing community in the U.S., a community that was really only starting to awaken to its international counterparts (a few American singers had traveled to the U.K. and to Canada).

To aid in this interest, Allison set up a fundraising effort upon her return to Massachusetts to enable two singers from Poland to attend the Western

Massachusetts Convention and other singings. With her help and the help of other Sacred Harp singers who were eager to aid the newly cleared pathway between the Pioneer Valley and Poland, singers Justyna Orlikowska and Gosia Perycz were able to attend the Western Massachusetts Convention in March 2010 along with Father Błażej. This was just months after the Warsaw singing school came to a close. In 2011, Brooklyn-based superenthusiast Aldo Ceresa would also give a singing school in Warsaw, however, Poland would not host its own Sacred Harp Singing convention until 2012.

The Pathway to Ireland and the First Ireland Sacred Harp Convention

The history of the origins of Sacred Harp singing in Ireland compares and contrasts to origins in the United Kingdom and in Poland. On one hand, shapenote singing in Ireland began over ten years after the first U.K. Shape-Note Convention. On the other hand, both England and Ireland are primarily English speaking countries, which is helpful when learning to sing from a tunebook with English language text. On one hand, the singers in Ireland benefit from a resident expert who guides them continually in their early years, while the singers in Poland must travel at great expense or wait for months for a singing school teacher to visit. On the other hand, the singers in both countries ignite their interest around the same time, feeding the flames of international enthusiasm for Sacred Harp singing together.

Also similar to singers' experiences in Poland, the first singers in Ireland got their start through a University professor. Dr. Juniper Hill, an ethnomusicologist from the United States, first brought Sacred Harp to Ireland with the intention of creating a welcoming performance ensemble for students in her department. However, she did not expect that the members of her new community would be so welcoming of the prospect of having Sacred Harp singing in the area before she even met her students. She explains:

I was offered a position in the music department at the University College Cork in January 2009, and when I came here they said, 'we'd like you to teach a musical ensemble, what would you like to teach?' and I thought, 'it's the middle of the year, let's start maybe with something in English.' So we put it on the books, and even before I came to Ireland, I started getting emails from people that were excited about having Sacred Harp in Cork for the first time... One of those persons was Rob Wedgbury, who had been studying abroad in the United States, where he'd learned the tradition at Wesleyan, the same place where I was introduced to it (Ryan 2015).

Interestingly, when Rob Wedgbury was at Wesleyan University in 2008, he had learned from both Neely Bruce, the same Professor that Juniper Hill had learned from as an undergraduate, as well as from Tim Eriksen, who was finishing his Ph.D. coursework on campus and who also taught the initial singing school in Poland. But it wasn't just Rob Wedgbury emailing Hill. Other Cork residents had heard about her Sacred Harp singing class too. Hill continues:

Another was a local singer by the name of Pat Sheridan—he sings a lot of maritime songs, British Isles songs—so as soon as I started teaching here there was already a little bit of a buzz about it. And I already had non-student community members who were interested in participating

in the ensemble, and because of the traditional ethos of the ensemble, the more the merrier, everybody should be welcome... (ibid.)

With all these interested Cork locals coming out of the woodwork, Hill decided to open her class to anyone in the community who wanted to join—a common thing in many university world music ensembles such as gamelan, but not such a common practice at U.C.C. Nevertheless, the class was a success. Music Professor Mel Mercier described it as one of the most “engaging performance classes at undergraduate and postgraduate level” (Wedgbury 2011, 7). Course participants included those with extensive musical backgrounds, and those who were entirely new to music-making and music notation reading. Yet, the class itself was not enough for these young singers. They used a room at the University for a weekly gathering. Soon, Rob Wedgbury and Barry Twomey, another student, were singing at open mic stages, traditional music sessions, and people’s homes (Wedgbury 2011, 37). In September 2009, a young woman named Sadhbh O’Flynn joined the class, and she also became an enthusiastic, active Sacred Harp singer.

Hill’s students began introducing their friends to Sacred Harp singing. Daire O’Sullivan explains this as her first encounter with the music:

I first heard it in April 2010, and my friend Eimear brought me to her class at U.C.C. with Juniper, and she brought me to their end-of-semester participatory concert—where they give them a little packet, and they have to sight read. And she was like ‘you should come, you would like it’ and she was right. So I went, and I enjoyed it.³¹

³¹ Daire O’Sullivan, interview with Ellen Lueck, July 6, 2013.

When the semester ended, Hill's students, including Eimear and Rob, along with Daire, were left to their own devices over the summer. While they tried to engage with *The Sacred Harp*, the students were not quite able to establish their own independent singing. They got together a few times, but they realized they were lacking a few Sacred-Harp-specific skills, such as the ability to key songs,³² and were therefore struggling to enjoy the experience. But once the fall semester started up again, they found a location other than a local pub for their community singing, the Camden Palace, a community art space. They started meeting at the Camden Palace every Thursday night, and gained more regular participants through the social network and events associated with the venue.

In the fall term of 2010, more people signed up for the class, having heard about it from the previous year, and many of them also fed into the weekly singing at Camden Palace. It became a social group. They would go to the pub after the Thursday singings, and often kept in touch throughout the week. Meanwhile, as Juniper Hill steadily built up their repertoire to a reported thirty or forty songs (about 5-7% of the tunes in *The Sacred Harp*), she began planning for their first Sacred Harp Convention to take place in the spring term. Back in the summer of 2010, Hill had traveled to the Chattahoochee Convention in Georgia where she fielded the idea to traditional singers and American enthusiasts who seemed to think it was a positive international

³² The singers in Poland also had difficulty keying their own songs, but they trudged along anyway. Apparently, they often keyed the songs in such a low key, that they had trouble recognizing their favorite tunes when they traveled to Sacred Harp conventions abroad, where these songs were keyed much higher.

opportunity for Sacred Harp singing. Several of them expressed interest in flying out to attend.

It was this event, the First Annual Ireland Sacred Harp Convention, that truly widened the pathway for the Irish singers to become heavily involved in the development of an international Sacred Harp circuit. The excitement of the convention simultaneously widened the pathway for American and U.K. singers to participate in international singing events, and also created a nearby, sympathetic community with Poland. As Karlsberg has also pointed out, the 2011 Ireland Sacred Harp convention marked the first instance of “pan-European” participation in the music, and spurred movement toward great European Sacred Harp participation (2011). It subsequently raised tremendous awareness among the nation-wide singing community in the United States of the Sacred Harp activity that was starting to percolate in Europe.

The students at U.C.C. weren't sure what to expect of their first convention, held in the first weekend in March, 2011. For those students who were taking Juniper Hill's class, or for those who had already taken it, they had been exposed to Sacred Harp singing through an academic lens. They also received much of the same information that one would get at a typical singing school, and more. Hill and the new

enthusiasts had reached out to some other experts in the U.S., including Aldo Ceresa, for advice. Yet, the information remained in the abstract, they hadn't put it to the test.

They had been holding local singings, but Juniper Hill and Rob Wedgbury were the only participants who had experienced another local Sacred Harp community. Juniper Hill, Rob Wedgbury, and Sadhbh O'Flynn were the also the only participants who had attended a Sacred Harp convention. Still, none of the students had ever organized and hosted an event like this, and weren't even sure if anyone would show up for it. Many of them didn't quite grasp the scale of what was happening until visitors started to arrive in the days before the big event. As then-student Mike Morrisroe recounts,

...I wasn't even planning to go. I had an essay to kind of get done, and I was like 'eh, it won't be a big thing, I don't really care.' Then I missed the Thursday night [singing]. I was sitting in the library and I thought 'screw it, I'll go and see why everyone isn't in the pub.' Then I got to this house and everybody sounded amazing. I sat next to this guy, and somebody called a song by name. He was just like, 'oh 288,' and I was like, 'how many songs do you know in the book?' and he was like, 'all of them.' And he was just really casually like, 'of course I know all the songs.' He'd been singing for ages, and I was shocked that anybody actually sang all the songs in the book or would know them. I had thought, 'oh you probably sing about twenty,' then everybody was there, it was just shocking. Overwhelming.³³

Many visitors who had flown in were eager to attend the regular local singing on Thursday, and do some sightseeing before flying home on Monday. But, after an exuberant Thursday evening singing at Camden Palace, the group of forty to fifty

³³ Mike Morrisroe, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 10, 2012.

singers felt compelled to continue elsewhere, and ended up at the home of a local singer, where Mike would eventually meet them after his futile stint at the library.

The following evening, Neely Bruce, a professor and composer from Wesleyan University, and David Ivey, a life-long Sacred Harp singer and President of the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association, gave a singing school at the University College Cork music department. Neely Bruce also gave a paper, “The Sacred Harp as Experimental Composition”. This paper provided a historically rooted perspective on the innovativeness of the shapenote repertoire, steering clear of the trope of Sacred Harp singing as a timeless, unchanging tradition. His arguments for viewing the repertoire in *The Sacred Harp* as boundary pushing also lay the groundwork for legitimizing the geographic expansion of the Sacred Harp community. Neely argues that the style of composition was, and remains, a reaction against the musical static quo. The talk was encouraging to those Irish, English, and American enthusiasts in the room with compositional aspirations in the style of *The Sacred Harp*, many of whom continue to compose shapenote pieces regularly. Aside from occasional readings at Sacred Harp learning environments such as Camp Fasola, I know of no other examples of such a paper being presented at a Sacred Harp convention.

The convention itself, held on March 5th and 6th, 2011, took place in Aula Maxima, a beautiful hall in the heart of the U.C.C. campus (see Figure 10). Juniper Hill and her students had been preparing food for their first Dinner on the Grounds for several days, and the long tables in the back of the room were filled with covered dishes ranging from fresh salads, pasta dishes, and traditional Irish fare such as fish



Figure 10. The hollow square at the Second All-Ireland Sacred Harp Convention held in Aula Maxima, University College Cork, March 2012.

pie, and soda bread. A local videographer set up his equipment in the corner. He would expertly document the convention from multiple vantage points in the hall. The YouTube videos that were derived from his work that weekend would become some of the most watched Sacred Harp videos online, and would be a valuable resource in the subsequent spread of Sacred Harp singing around Europe.³⁴

The convention officers were chosen strategically by Juniper Hill, who acted as chairman—the primary host who is ultimately responsible for implementing the

³⁴ See the YouTube playlist: “The First Ireland Sacred Harp Convention, 2011” <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLE0DCF940CE2E1C45>

anticipated event choreography. The roles of vice-chairmen, secretary, treasurer, food and accommodations coordinator, and resolutions committee were all filled by students. However, the arranging committee—the person or persons responsible for organizing the order of registered leaders—was given to two experienced singers from the U.K., Chris Brown and Judy Whiting, as the successful rendering of this esteemed job requires intimate knowledge of the individuals in the class and their capabilities as leaders. Two of Hill's students shadowed Brown and Whiting in order to learn the process.

The class of singers sounded strong. There were 133 people registered at the convention, but there were probably more in attendance. The rows of each vocal section were full of people, many of whom had extensive experience at Sacred Harp conventions, and were deeply familiar with the repertoire. Both local Cork residents and visitors were still reeling from the excitement of the singing and fellowship that had occurred in the preceding days, and that energy fueled the intensity of the event itself as the Irish singers experienced a large class from the center of the square for the first time. Some elements of the singing remained typical of a new convention, including a relatively low number of songs called on Saturday and Sunday (fifty-seven and eighty-seven, respectively).

What was more telling than the sound of the class or the number of songs called was the international representation of the participants. The convention attendees came from Ireland, the United Kingdom, Poland, France (two Americans living in Paris), and the United States. From the U.S., nine states were represented, including

Connecticut, Michigan, Indiana, Alabama, New York, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Oregon. For each of these groups, the First Ireland Sacred Harp Convention marked the hope and promise of a new pathway—or really a system of pathways—for the formation of a greater European Sacred Harp community.

For the Polish singers in attendance, they were able to introduce themselves to other European singers, and they forged friendships. With so much attention on the prospect of international Sacred Harp singing, the Polish enthusiasts were also able to draw more recognition of their activities. The influx of American participants helped them in their need for teachers. The following week, Aldo Ceresa, who had been in Cork for the Ireland Convention, gave a workshop in Warsaw. This workshop continued to feed off the energy that the singing in Cork had stirred up. The events in Ireland also served as an encouragement to the Polish community to finally organize their own convention, which they held in 2012, the following year. After all, if the Cork singers could pull it off after singing Sacred Harp for less time than many of the Polish singers, why couldn't they host their own convention?

Some singers from the United Kingdom expressed surprise at the quality of the singing in Cork and the abilities of the new Irish Sacred Harp enthusiasts. Similar to the realizations of the Polish singers, this event marked the realization that Sacred Harp singing could be a presence in Europe, and that they could have a wider community that is more accessible than the national community in the United States, which takes a great deal of money and time to visit. The high level of musical willingness displayed by the Cork enthusiasts encouraged many of the singers in the

U.K. to take more musical risks at home, expand their personal repertoire, and be more active in their local groups—including leading more complicated songs, learning to key, and singing with more confidence.

American visitors, particularly the enthusiasts, reported a similar awakening response. Many of the American visitors were, and remain, frequent travelers to Sacred Harp conventions. They already knew the repertoire, they knew how to lead, and many of them knew how to key. They had hosted their local conventions, wept for loved ones called in memorial lessons, cooked for Dinner on the Grounds deep into the night, and shared countless hours of Sacred Harp related gossip on road trips to other conventions. Sacred Harp singing was special to them, but the initial wonder of the self-discovery process was long over. However, the excitement over the newness and promise of the First Ireland Sacred Harp Convention restored a bit of that wonder. As Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg writes in a report of the event, “The visiting singers felt the power of their role in introducing the music they loved so much to this enthusiastic and eager group; this enabled the visitors to rediscover their own love of the style” (Karlsberg 2011).

The presence of American singers representing France at the First Ireland Sacred Harp Convention was another sign of the ways in which globalization would expand Sacred Harp singing into more and more countries. Singers Aaron Khan and Alice Maggio had been trying to muster a Sacred Harp group in Paris, but they were

experiencing difficulties.³⁵ Neither singer was considered a superenthusiast at the time, and the people of France aren't particularly known for their interest in American folk arts and culture. Regardless of these setbacks, Khan and Maggio were participants in a modern wave of international movement and migration. They had both gone to Paris for temporary work. While they were there, they wanted to give something of themselves back to the community, and continue to pursue their own interests. For Khan and Maggio, that interest was Sacred Harp singing.

Education and job opportunities are drawing Americans and Europeans—some of whom happen to be Sacred Harp enthusiasts—to new international locations around the world (Salt 1994; Peixoto 2001; Maslen 2014; Gerhards 2015). This movement has had a profound impact on the spread of Sacred Harp singing, and there are many examples of its success in building new enclaves and new community strongholds. The earliest example I found is a 1951 request by North Alabama soldiers stationed in Korea to have recorded Sacred Harp music sent over to them (Anonymous 1951). More recently, Brian Sears, also an American singer, gathered a small Sacred Harp enclave while he was stationed in Seoul, Korea as a U.S. Army Platoon leader from 2013 to 2014.

Professor Juniper Hill is certainly an example of the globalization phenomenon as well, as she took a job opportunity in Ireland as an American. Michael Walker is a Sacred Harp enthusiast originally from Virginia who lives and works in London

³⁵ It has been five years since Khan and Maggio left Paris, but France will finally hold its first All-Day Sacred Harp singing in 2016.

where he invigorated a Sacred Harp enclave which was previously struggling. He also successfully mustered Europe-wide interest in the seven-shape tunebook *The Christian Harmony*, which has in turn seen a growth in popularity among enthusiasts in the United States. Previous Paris resident Aaron Khan took another temporary job in Hong Kong where an interest in Sacred Harp singing took hold among some locals.

There are examples of European enthusiasts spreading Sacred Harp singing to new countries or regions as well. Eimear Cradock had been singing in Cork for a short time before she took a job in Sydney, Australia. There had been a small enclave in Melbourne since 2001 (also an influence of Wesleyan Professor Neely Bruce), but there was no Sacred Harp activity in Sydney. With very little experience under her belt, Eimear Cradock managed to form a robust community, and Australia now holds an annual convention. Father Błażej of Poland now lives in the Czech Republic where he occasionally hosts Sacred Harp singing schools. Polish superenthusiasts Magdalena Gryszko took a job in Lithuania for a brief time where she led a small singing. She currently works in Budapest, Hungary where a Sacred Harp community is more firmly establishing itself. She has successfully encouraged the local Budapest singers to travel to conventions in Europe, and that has in turn invigorated their local singings. Cork superenthusiast Mike Morrisroe took a job teaching English in Busan, Korea after graduating from U.C.C. where he was able to assemble an active Sacred Harp community.

Rather than cease to sing after moving internationally, these American and European singers were drawing local attention to Sacred Harp, and forming their own

local communities within new areas of Europe, Australia, and East Asia. This great movement of Sacred Harp singers in the late 20th and early 21st century harkens back to the northward and westward migrations in the U.S. in the mid 20th century, and its role in expanding Sacred Harp singing to a national network, bringing to mind the crowd of Southerners singing from *The Sacred Harp* in Manhattan's Cooper Union Square in the 1950s

PART 2

SPACES

CHAPTER 3

SACRED HARP SPACES

AND STRUCTURES OF BELONGING

Sacred Harp singing rings from small country churches, from basements of towering cathedrals, from musty pubs, and unheated community centers. Sacred Harp participants congregate in flats in South London, front porches in Alabama, classrooms in New England, and radio studios in Cork. But Sacred Harp singing exists in other types of spaces—social, cultural, civil, and political spaces—that extend beyond brick-and-mortar structures into structures of belonging.

There is local space, where small, adaptable Sacred Harp singing groups are formed. Here enthusiasts incorporate Sacred Harp singing into their daily lives. Local space intersects with transnational space in the socially constructed Sacred Harp affinity interzone, where enthusiasts yield to the wider community's ethos of

inclusion, hospitable reciprocity, fellowship, and expected performative keys. There are also flexible spaces that exist in between the local and the transnational, such as the national and the regional. The most recently adopted space—the Internet—can behave as an advocate for all of the spaces mentioned above, particularly in relation to social media use. Yet Sacred Harp participants also use the Internet to create their own virtual space, impossible to recreate in the physical world. My examination of these spaces and their relationship to Sacred Harp singers in Europe enables me to define and describe areas of participant interaction, networking, and social construction.

The local space often nurtures participants' everyday commitment to Sacred Harp singing, fosters deep friendships, and creates a grounded, palpable sense of belonging to Sacred Harp singing as a community-forming activity. Local singing events, or “practice singings” as they are called by insiders, are casual two to three hour-long events held weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly, depending on the location. They provide regular opportunities for enthusiasts living in proximity to one another to engage in Sacred Harp music-making, to access locally emphasized Sacred Harp cultural and behavioral codes, and to create goals for their immediate singing community. Like any group of people who interact frequently for a common purpose, each local singing develops its own distinct practical and social dynamic (Appolloni and Gargiulo 2009).

Transnational space, on the other hand, nurtures associations with the Sacred Harp community-at-large. European singers engage in this space within the context of

Sacred Harp conventions, which are annual weekend-long, structured events typically hosted by a local singing cohort. Conventions attract dispersed enthusiasts, and participants travel internationally to sing from *The Sacred Harp* for six to seven hours on a Saturday and Sunday, followed by structured socializing in the evenings. This differs somewhat from typical singings in the United States, where enthusiasts regularly cross state borders to attend a convention, but less frequently (with the exception of an increasing handful of superenthusiasts) cross national borders. Currently, Sacred Harp conventions occur in fourteen countries. New conventions and all-day singings are founded in Europe each year, quickly lessening the impact of the United States as the gatekeeper of Sacred Harp singing for European participants.

Conventions and all-day singings fuel belonging among dispersed singers. These events infuse participants with fresh musical and performative inspiration, such as appreciation for songs not regularly sung by their local cohort, admiration for a visiting singer's leading style, or merely the experience of rumbling volume that emerges from dozens or more singers simultaneously engaging the full power of their voices. Within the context of Europe (and other areas dislocated from traditional Sacred Harp singing regions), the formalized and ubiquitous structure of Sacred Harp conventions also serves to encourage participant adherence to traditional Sacred Harp singing practices and cultural codes. Beyond adherence to tradition for tradition's sake, these attached practices and codes ensure that Sacred Harp is uniform in any transnational context.

While local and transnational spaces are essential to the formation and feasibility of the Sacred Harp community-at-large, examining them as a strict dichotomy quickly breaks down and becomes disadvantageous. They bleed into each other, or morph into new social and political spaces in varying contexts, such as national, regional, or on-line social media spaces.

The space where local and transnational converge, namely Sacred Harp conventions, also calls for its own sort of community space specific to the Sacred Harp affinity group—the Sacred Harp affinity interzone. The affinity interzone is like an extraterritorially governed space, such as an international airport, where travelers are asked to leave their weapons (metaphorical and physical), their ideological voices, and combative behavior behind in order to ensure peaceful interactions among a culturally diverse population. The Sacred Harp affinity interzone is governed by these social codes which reflect the Sacred Harp singing ethos. Singers are also encouraged to engage in performative keys which signal belonging to the Sacred Harp affinity group specifically, and these codes and keys are interpreted through the use of ubiquitous event choreography of the Sacred Harp convention and all-day singing.

I will spend a brief amount of time exploring and defining how these spaces interact, flow, and shift as singers' practical circumstances and layered persuadable identities are engaged in various ways while participating in local and transnational Sacred Harp singing events.

The boundaries of the national and regional (legally recognized or culturally applied boundaries) can stand in for “local” when necessary. The most

straightforward example of this is presented in the titles of many conventions and all-day singings hosted by a local community, which are generally defined by a city or town: Sheffield has hosted the U.K. Sacred Harp Convention; Glasgow organizes the Scottish All-Day singing; Hamburg has hosted the Germany Convention; and Warsaw holds the annual Poland Sacred Harp Convention. The same labeling system occurs for some regional singings as well; for example, organizers of several local singing groups in England converge to host the East Midlands Convention.³⁶

Sacred Harp cohorts within the same region can stand in as “local” when they frequently mingle and influence aspects of mutual style. For example, singers in London and Norwich, England have forged strong friendships, and enthusiasts from both groups frequently travel the two-hour long train ride, or carpool between the two cities at relatively low cost in order to participate in each other’s regular local practice singings (in August 2012, I purchased my one-way rail ticket for £16.50). When enough regional singers are involved in the formation of practical and social atmospheres at regular local singings, these intraregional local groups form a cohort of their own.

At times, there are explicit or nuanced tensions between these regional cohorts. For example, participants have described the relationship between Sacred Harp singers in Northern England and Southern England as historically strained. Some Northern singers feel that they are chastised by Southern singers for their liberal

³⁶ The names of these conventions are consistently broadcast in the English language, and not in German, Polish, etc.

interpretation of Sacred Harp keys and codes. Some Northern singers also criticize Sacred Harp enthusiasts in Southern England for being inauthentic in their strict appropriation of Sacred Harp as it is sung (or imagined to be sung) in Alabama and Georgia.

One singer cited the underlying cultural assumptions and stereotypes about the people of each region as a potential factor in these conflicts among Sacred Harp singers in the United Kingdom: the assumption that Northern English people are less educated, economically deprived, and culturally backwards; and conversely, the assumption that people from Southern England are pretentious and self-aggrandizing (for mass mediated accounts and academic debate on these stereotypes see: Ahmed 2002; Russell 2004; Morgan 2010; Anonymous 2012). This same singer fittingly related the case of these English stereotypes to stereotypes placed upon people from the American South, and conversely upon Northern urbanites (see Reed 1972; Devine 1989; Hartley 2005; Miller 2008; Clark 2009).

The online social media space, which cannot always be positioned by geographically bound categories, can behave like local space where transnationally dispersed singers may participate in Sacred Harp “ways of belonging” together in reference to familiar places, even if these places are distant (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004; Geōrgiou 2006).

For example, many Sacred Harp travelers from the U.S. and abroad have visited Liberty Baptist Church in Henegar, Alabama—an iconic singing space described in my introduction. Depictions and descriptions of Liberty Baptist Church on social

media—posted photographs of singers from around the world in the hollow square or standing beside the church’s sign, YouTube videos, or excited Facebook status updates about visiting Liberty’s annual convention—make this place feel intimately local within the Sacred Harp community-at-large, as dispersed singers vicariously experience it through their computer screens.³⁷ It becomes local, or familiar although it is not geographically proximal to all singers.

Facebook may also be specifically used to mobilize and organize participants into geographically local spaces. Most local Sacred Harp singing groups have their own Facebook page, which they use for several reasons. They are used to promote their singing and other Sacred Harp events to a wider on-line audience both inside and outside the Sacred Harp community. Local groups use these pages to communicate with attendees about changes in the schedule or venue regarding regular practice singings, and to organize plans for other Sacred Harp related events, such as group transportation to visit an all-day singing or convention. Facebook pages are also used as a forum for participants to post questions about Sacred Harp singing, and receive answers from other singers. Local enthusiasts may also post links to YouTube videos they find inspiring, links to articles about Sacred Harp, or alert fellow locals to non-Sacred Harp related events they think may interest their cohort.

Anthropologist Jeffrey S. Juris found similar uses for social media as a tool for local aggregation in the #Occupy Boston movement in 2011. Like my examination of

³⁷ For more on experiencing travel and locality through social media, see Green, Brock, and Kaufman 2006.

Sacred Harp spaces, Juris positions the localized #Occupy Boston movement within the much larger #Occupy Everywhere movement, which was also an organic, transnational, impassioned activity that existed in many types of overlapping spaces, including virtual, geographically local, and geographically dispersed (Juris 2012).

Additionally, Facebook is used by participants to mobilize transnational activity. Singers may easily contact the organizers of distant conventions, or field inquiries to a hosting community via their Facebook page. Hosting Sacred Harp cohorts use social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to try and entice international Sacred Harp enthusiasts to their events. As the number of trans-European and trans-Atlantic Sacred Harp singing travelers continues to increase, it becomes more likely that face-to-face encounters with international Sacred Harp social media users will occur. Most importantly, the Sacred Harp singing community-at-large places significant importance on fellowship in physical space, on natural acoustic integrity, and on face-to-face music making (literally). This deeply coded value distinguishes the online Sacred Harp community from other types of online communities which may exist solely in virtual space, such as fantasy gaming enthusiasts (for a musical example of virtual community, see Cheng 2012).

Not only does the Internet facilitate the transnational movement of participants, it also allows for the transnational flow of Sacred Harp related media—perhaps the most important process in the spread of Sacred Harp singing and the growth of the community-at-large outside of the United States. Items such as digital recordings, streamed audio, photographs, PDFs, videos, digital posters, articles, blogs,

community websites, and other Sacred Harp resources are freely circulated online. The abundance of Sacred Harp related material available on the Internet makes it practically effortless for an interested bystander to find any relevant information they might require from a simple Google search of “Sacred Harp” or “shapenote singing”—whether that is merely researching what Sacred Harp singing is, or finding the nearest local meeting near them. Anyone who endeavors to search for Sacred Harp singing online will quickly discover that this music is sung by participants in many countries.

At a national level within the United States, Kiri Miller similarly concludes that the Sacred Harp community-at-large, “could not exist without modern media, just as the regional networks of Southern conventions in the first century of Sacred Harp singing could not have existed without a mass-produced tunebook” (2008, 140). I believe Miller’s statement applies even more so in 2016, when the online resources for digital dissemination of audio/visual and intellectual material have increased in quantity and accessibility—such as the popular use of Soundcloud, Dropbox, Spotify, and the influx of internationally uploaded YouTube videos. These resources have allowed for the Sacred Harp community-at-large to spread far beyond the borders of the United States.

Now that I have briefly introduced these Sacred Harp spaces and demonstrated their multi-layered and flexible nature, I turn my focus to a more detailed description of the most prominent spaces in which Sacred Harp identity in Europe has formed: local, transnational, social media, and affinity interzone—without which the virtually

circulating media, and Sacred Harp performative keys and social codes would be meaningless. After reviewing supporting material for conceptualizing the local space, I will describe how local Sacred Harp cohorts are formed, what makes them successful, and how they encourage the development of Sacred Harp identities among participants. I will also explore how the local Sacred Harp space interacts within other areas of civil, regional, and national identity. Then I will move onto a similar investigation of Sacred Harp transnational spaces, including both a practical and idealized understanding of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone, and how it interacts with local, national, and virtual spaces in order to maintain a thriving transnational community of Sacred Harp singers in Europe.

Local Space

Like many terms that ethnomusicologists work with, the term “local” is often taken for granted as meaning “nearby,” or “native to the area,” or a group of people who live in geographic proximity to each other. Yet, in today’s shifting ecological and virtual landscape, it is worth explaining exactly what I mean when I describe a “local” European Sacred Harp singing.

Merriam-Webster provides five definitions for the adjective “local,” but only three of them are directly relevant to my use of the term and concept. The widely used dictionary states that “local” is “characterized by or relating to a position in space,

having a definite spatial form or location.” This could be a physical place which holds a regular Sacred Harp meeting in a town or city. Secondly, to be local is to be “primarily serving the needs of a particular limited district”. For my purposes, the regular singing is frequented most by people who live in proximity to that space, and they are the ones who give the space meaning, at least in the time that space is occupied by Sacred Harp singers.

Thirdly, to be local is to be “involving or affecting only a restricted part of the organism.” This third definition is commonly used in reference to medicine, such as a “local anesthetic.” However, if “organism” can be used as a rough metaphor to describe the world-wide Sacred Harp singing network, then this definition is also appropriate for ironing out the meaning of “local” in a Sacred Harp context.

Despite the term “local” being taken for granted on occasion, it is a term and concept that ethnomusicologists have traditionally been interested in and continue to examine. Mark Slobin defines local musics as something not necessarily bound by geographic space, but rather music that is “known by certain small-scale bounded audiences, and only by them,” and observes that “this type of musical complex is what ethnomusicologists traditionally search for high and low” (1993, 17). Some of ethnomusicology’s most famous monographs have focused on local music, such as Anthony Seeger’s *Why Suyu Sing* (1987), Ruth Finnegan’s *The Hidden Musicians* (1989), and Aaron Fox’s *Real Country* (2004). Many recent articles and chapter length studies focus on the activities of a local community, bound by a city, town,

neighborhood, club, or church (Jacobsen 2009; Mendonca 2010; Tsioulakis 2011; Brown 2014).

Sacred Harp studies are not entirely lost on the concept of “local,” and a few publications have engaged directly with local identity and meaning (Miller 2008; Clawson 2011; Wedgbury 2011). Older sources published before the major spread of Sacred Harp singing outside of the American South, and sources which focus primarily on traditional Sacred Harp singing regions tend to take the term for granted (Jackson 1933; Cobb 1978; Bealle 1997; Webb 2010). Singing cohorts in historic Sacred Harp singing regions are often drawn from specific church communities, or from similar social cohorts, unlike the urban North, making Southern singings ideal local “musical complexes” for study.

Of the recently published Sacred Harp literature, Laura Clawson has provided the most in-depth discussion of local Sacred Harp groups, detailing events on Sand Mountain in Alabama, and two Midwestern groups in Minneapolis and Chicago (2011). But how are local Sacred Harp singing cohorts actually built in Europe, and how does that local space interact with other spaces in which participants enact their affinity? I will now turn to answering those questions.

Building local Sacred Harp communities in Europe

Anyone who has attempted to start a Sacred Harp singing knows that local groups do not form out of thin air. It takes time, effort, discomfort, and organization to get them up and running, and then more energy to maintain momentum. There are many factors that contribute to the success or decline of a local singing group. Social and practical elements compose the atmosphere of a local Sacred Harp cohort. Laura Clawson writes of groups in the United States, “each Sacred Harp singing community has its own history, its own place in a local population, and its own pace in the broader Sacred Harp community” (2011, 29). Her statement is true for local groups in Europe as well.

I will discuss six factors that contribute most to the formation of local Sacred Harp singing in Europe (and perhaps everywhere): (1) a local mobilizer or mobilizers; (2) a pool of regular attendees; (3) regularly scheduled meetings; (4) meeting location; (5) socializing outside of designated practice singings; and (6) a local cohort’s relationship to other regional or transregional cohorts.

local mobilizers

Every local singing originates from one or two people who take the initiative to start one. Sacred Harp mobilizers come from an array of cultural upbringings and musical knowledge, and have varying levels of experience with Sacred Harp singing. Harald and Ulrike from Bremen, Germany personally discovered Sacred Harp singing on the Internet after hearing covers of Sacred Harp songs performed on the radio by

American alternative country bands 16 Horsepower, and Woven Hand.³⁸ Both enthusiasts were immediately struck with affinity for the music, and were determined to find a way to sing from *The Sacred Harp* regularly in Bremen.³⁹

In Cork, Ireland, their singing was established by ethnomusicologist Juniper Hill. Professor Hill was seeking an idea for an attractive, accessible ensemble to teach in her first semester as professor at University College Cork. She decided to draw on her years of experience singing Sacred Harp in Connecticut and California, and offered Sacred Harp singing as a course module in 2009.

The original mobilizers for these local groups usually take responsibility for local leadership, at least in the first few years of operation. Eventually, leadership roles may be passed on to other singers, or shared as regular attendees gain the ability to guide new singers through two to three hours of Sacred Harp singing in an evening. This usually requires the ability to pitch or key the music without the use of a piano or pitch pipe,⁴⁰ the ability to sight read parts, and the ability to lead songs that inexperienced participants choose but aren't ready to lead themselves. In the case of the regular Cork practice singings, several students of Professor Hill's became adept

³⁸ 16 Horsepower performed an arrangement of "Wayfaring Stranger" on his album *Secret South* (2000); Woven Hand performed an arrangement of "Consecration" on the compilation album *Help Me to Sing* (Hinton 2008).

³⁹ Harald Grundner, email correspondence with Ellen Lueck, October 7, 2012.

⁴⁰ Sacred Harp "keyers" or "key heisters" rely on a sense of relative pitch (except for a few that experience absolute pitch recognition). The best keyers are skilled enough to finely adjust to the needs of a class of singers based on singing ability, group fatigue, and individual song. The key sounded by the keyer (not to be confused with my theoretical term "performative keys") may or may not have any correlation with the written key signature. This is a skill that generally takes a good deal of time and effort to acquire.

at practical Sacred Harp leadership within the first two years of singing, and now the regular meetings are more collaboratively organized.

Regardless of how these mobilizers arrive at their social and organizational position in the community, each group relies on at least one person to teach others in the local cohort about Sacred Harp. Thus, a mobilizer's knowledge of Sacred Harp can directly shape the practical and musical atmosphere of a local cohort. For example, in Sheffield, England, Sarah West and Carmel Wood—two young women with years of Sacred Harp experience and several trans-Atlantic trips to singings in the American South under their belts—are able to provide firsthand knowledge to the singers in their area. They are savvy enough to accommodate a fair share of casual enthusiasts who possess little to no prior music literacy.

On the other hand, Harald and Ulrike in Germany struggled for the first few years while their own knowledge of Sacred Harp singing was developing, along with their knowledge of Sacred Harp cultural codes and musical literacy. For them, enthusiasm for the music, the will to persevere through the challenging learning curve, and occasional assistance from experienced singers in the U.K. were enough to engage a small, local cohort until the group improved their practical skills together.

A local community mobilizer may attract other participants who are already a part of their personal social circle, or may seek to attract a variety of potential local enthusiasts. In both cases, a community mobilizer's personality can greatly affect the general atmosphere and mood of a practice singing. For example, some local Sacred Harp mobilizers in Europe prefer to remain reserved about encouraging local singers

to engage in Sacred Harp cultural and performative keys—keys such as using Sacred Harp musical terminology, or calling songs in *The Sacred Harp* by their page numbers—for fear of overwhelming the newer participants who are struggling to read the notation, or for fear of losing a democratic, inclusive atmosphere. Other local mobilizers are vocal about traditional Sacred Harp cultural codes and aesthetics. They encourage attendees to study and engage with them. Some mobilizers socially position themselves as technical support within their local cohort. Their job is merely to help the flow of the singing. Others position themselves as a Sacred Harp singing teacher and advisor. Occasionally, these two opposing leadership styles can cause social friction between different cohorts.

pool of attendees

Just as a local singing group relies on some form of leadership and skill, it also relies on a pool of regularly and occasionally attending participants. In Europe, most local singings have successfully attracted a wide array of attendees with different interests, backgrounds, and reasons for participating in Sacred Harp. Joe from London describes the class at a typical weekly singing, which attracts thirty to forty regular attendees:

We've got old folkies, who on the weekend you can find them with a banjo and a guitar down at the folk club, we have some religious people who sing in some church choirs on Sunday morning. There's a big cluster of twenty somethings who just love the sound. We have people

who believe in a mainstream version of Christianity, we have liberals, we have complete atheists. (Bruce 2015)

This sort of mixture is common in any buzzing European Sacred Harp local community today. I believe this variety of attendees also contributes to Europe's growing transnational scene, as local communities represent more of an accurate microcosm of the transnational Sacred Harp community-at-large.

Frequency of attendance is a major distinguishing factor, and can dramatically alter the atmosphere of a local singing. There are some enthusiasts who attend almost every weekly meeting, and travel to all-day singings or conventions on weekends. Emma, who was based in Norwich for several years, for example, almost never missed a weekly Monday night singing at the Octagon Chapel. Now in Germany, she still sings whenever she can. She frequently travels throughout the U.K. and Europe for weekend Sacred Harp events. Emma is also the proud wearer of a large personality, and local singers can count on her to enliven the evening, infect the singing space with her sheer enthusiasm for Sacred Harp, and present her skills as a confident song leader and alto singer. Her practical experience benefits the group musically, and her personality benefits the group socially. Yet not all enthusiasts are as dedicated as Emma. Some local singers may only choose to participate in one practice singing every few months, and may only experience an all-say singing or convention when hosted by their own local cohort.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, young people like Emma are moving their lives all over the world for a variety of personal and career opportunities (King 2003;

Morano-Faodi 2005). This trend can have a significant impact on local singings in Europe. In Cork, for example, many of the singers who made up the original core group of community mobilizers have moved on to other cities and other countries for work. In the first years of Sacred Harp in Cork (2009-2011), these burgeoning enthusiasts were mostly of college age, and attending school at University College Cork. Yet many of these students have since left the city after graduating to pursue other opportunities. Cork's regular local singing waned in growth for a period as a result. On the other hand, many of these singers founded local Sacred Harp communities in their next residential location. Some became contributing members of a local group already up-and-running. For example, Eimear O'Donovan, an early superenthusiast in Ireland, has since moved to Sheffield, England for graduate school where a local singing group has long been established.

frequency of regular meetings

The frequency of regular meetings has a significant impact on the dynamic of a local group. The greater the frequency of regular singing, the more a local cohort is likely to improve, and the greater the chances of forming strong community friendship bonds. Early local Sacred Harp communities in England (c. early 1990s), would meet once per month, following the tradition of one regular meeting per month in the American South—assuming a local community in a traditional singing region has a regular practice singing at all. However, singers in the traditional Sacred

Harp singing areas rely on an abundance of regionally accessible weekend all-day events and conventions, which occur on nearly a weekly basis. And attending all-day singings and conventions is arguably the best and fastest way to improve as a Sacred Harp singer. While the U.K. now maintains a similar landscape, the few conventions it had in the 1990s-2000s used to struggle to fill in the seats.

Some groups in England still maintain a monthly practice singing in the same format they always have. For example, singers in Oxford meet every “teenth” Thursday, and they sing from other shapenote sources every fifth Tuesday of the month, when it occurs. Other European local singings meet on a bi-monthly basis, such as in Frankfurt, Germany, where they have convened every first and third Sundays of the month since the summer of 2012. A bi-monthly singing can be a happy medium for the early struggling local group that fears singing once per month is not enough to gain any momentum, but a weekly singing is too frequent to support demand. Most local groups in Europe meet on a weekly basis. As a general rule, the more people practice singing together, the better they get, and the more enthusiastic they become.

regular meeting space

The type of regular meeting space can also affect the singing atmosphere. In Sheffield and Newcastle, for example, the attendees meet in an upstairs room connected to a pub—Shakespeare’s Pub and the Bridge Hotel, respectively—and

singers often grab drinks and food before or after the singing which establishes a casual, social environment. In Cork, they sang for several years in Camden Palace, an arts and culture space, which also created a casual and intimate experience. Now the singers of Cork meet weekly at a local Unitarian Church which is more centrally located in the city.

In Oxford and Amsterdam (and many other locations in Europe and the U.S.), participants meet locally in other singers' homes. Home singings can be extremely warm and intimate when attending singers are already acquainted or have formed friendships. Home singings can also save on the effort of forming a relationship with a local venue. The downside to home singings is that they possess the potential to isolate the civil community, and can make it appear less accessible to potential enthusiasts without prior contacts in the Sacred Harp cohort. Sarah from Sheffield was relieved when her local group switched from home singings to meeting at Shakespeare's Pub. Their home singings usually attracted less than ten people to a given singing, but they hoped that a more public venue would improve attendance. She describes that, "there are some people who are fine just turning up to somebody's house, but there are always going to be people who feel that because they don't personally know someone, they are not going to just show up at their home" (West 2012). When the Sheffield Sacred Harp singers held their first meeting at Shakespeare's, over twenty participants showed up.

Churches are also common meeting spaces for regular Sacred Harp practice singings. They can provide a variety of atmospheres to a local meeting. In Hamburg,



Figure 11. Octagon Chapel in Norwich

Germany, for example, they sing every week in an English church which occupies a modern, minimalist, architected building, complete with peaceful lighting design in the sanctuary. This provides the singing with a warm, but somewhat formal atmosphere. Yet a contrasting example is the Octagon Chapel in Norwich, a beautiful, yet eccentric space built in 1756 as a Presbyterian Church (Taylor 1848), though it is now used as a Unitarian Church. It has a dark wood interior, with brightly painted green columns reaching to the ceiling. The seating for congregants takes up five of the eight sides of the octagonal shaped building, with the innermost wooden pews forming an open rectangle—perfect for Sacred Harp singing, once a row of chairs is

added for the alto section. A lovely pipe organ looms over the room, and stacks of old church organ music pile around the keyboard located in the gallery. The fact that the church has its own quirky history, and that it possesses spiritual meaning to another community of worshipers perhaps adds to the meaningfulness of the space for the Sacred Harp singers of Norwich (see Figure 11).

In London the singing moves to a different church in a different part of the city each week on a monthly rotation. On the first Wednesday of each month, they meet in the Bethnal Green Meeting House. On the second Tuesday, they sing in the basement of Heath Street Baptist Church. On the third Monday they meet at St. George's Bloomsbury, where they sing in the main sanctuary. The London group sings from *The Christian Harmony* on the fourth Thursday at St. Mary's Primrose Hill, where a vicar is also a Sacred Harp enthusiast.

socializing outside of the regular meeting space

Local cohorts that socialize together outside of designated Sacred Harp singing time tend to be very close, and exude an aura of friendship and inclusivity. They also improve their musicality with rapid success, as socializing among Sacred Harp singers inevitably leads to more Sacred Harp singing. Some cohorts, or groups of friends within local cohorts, manage to sing together as often as four times per week from *The Sacred Harp* or other resurging shapenote sources such as Cooper edition of *The Sacred Harp* (a.k.a. the “blue book”), *The Shenandoah Harmony*, or *The*

Christian Harmony. These close friendships can also encourage traveling for all-day singings and conventions. Carpooling saves on the cost of the trip, and the chance for a weekend holiday with friends who participate in the same hobby is not exactly a deterrent for most people.

The singers of Norwich are yet again an excellent example of a local cohort that spends significant time together outside of their regular Monday night singings. When I visited in the summer of 2012, I stayed in Norwich for three nights, and was involved in six separate occasions to sing with the local community. The Saturday I arrived, Fynn and Emma brought me to the preferred local pub, The White Lion. There, in the back corner of the pub, we sang about a dozen songs as a trio. The next day was Emma's birthday, and from late morning until late evening, a small group of singers met up for the day and took a walking tour of Norwich. We sang in almost every space we stopped. We ended the day back at The White Lion, where even more local singers arrived. A group of about twenty singers sung for an hour.

On Monday morning, Cath, an experienced singer who takes on a significant amount of organizational leadership, along with Fynn, invited those local singers who were available to meet up at a local coffee shop to discuss plans for hosting their next all-day Sacred Harp singing. We walked to several venues around town, singing and testing the acoustics. Along the way, we were invited to participate at the opening of an exhibit at St. Margaret's Church of Art in the early evening, which we successfully did after Fynn sent out an urgent email to the practice singing email list. Later in the evening, the Norwich singers had their regular Monday night singing in the Octagon

Chapel. Ella, a young enthusiast from London, arrived by train to participate as well. The regular meeting was then followed by another rollicking informal singing at another local pub, The Playhouse. While these three days of singing in Norwich were more social than average, the local Sacred Harp enthusiasts showed an enormous amount of commitment to each other personally and musically, and clearly demonstrated the positive value in high levels of cohort socializing.

relationships between other cohorts

Local Sacred Harp cohorts in Europe and the United States may also be influenced or shaped by relationships with other cohorts. Transregional, and even transnational friendships form between local communities for a variety of reasons. Participants bond at Camp Fasola Europe or Sacred Harp conventions. Singers also move to other areas and form or participate in new local groups while maintaining the friendships made in their previous group. There are marriages and engagements between singers from dispersed places. Newly forming local groups sometimes actively choose to learn from a more experienced community in the same region. Whatever the reason for the success of a relationship between cohorts, they exhibit mutual influence in musical style, and influence in general attitudes towards Sacred Harp singing in terms of engagement with Sacred Harp social codes and performative keys, spirituality and religion, and intercohort levels of commitment to the Sacred Harp Community-at-large.

As mentioned above, the cohorts in London and Norwich possess this sort of friendship and commitment, and it can be heard through their singing. For example, I recorded the London Sacred Harp singers at the Heath St. Baptist Church on August 6, 2013 singing “When I Am Gone” (SH 339). On August 12, six days later, I recorded the same song performed by the singers of Norwich in the Octagon Chapel. I have provided consecutive clips from both recordings; the first example is from Norwich, the second from London (see Audio Example 1, and Figure 12).

First of all, there were three confident singers who were in attendance at both meetings, which contributes to the similar sound between the two groups. Fynn Titford-Mock was keying both sessions. The regular keyer for the London singers, Michael Walker, was out of town that week. Fynn was asked to travel from Norwich to assist the regular London singing, and Fynn was also taught to key by Michael Walker.

Both in London and Norwich, Fynn keyed “When I Am Gone” somewhere between GM and F#M. The Norwich singer who called the tune lead it at a relatively slow pace—about 75 beats per minutes. A week earlier in London, the group sang the same tune at a faster pace—about 95 beats per minute. Admittedly, a comparison of the two recordings suggests that the London singers were more familiar with this particular tune, as they sang it with more confidence on the shapes (not provided in the clips), and on the words. The London singing also had a larger group that day than they did in Norwich by about ten people. However, aside from these differences, the recordings sound remarkably similar.

Figure 12. “When I am Gone” Norwich vs. London audio example



“When I am Gone” (SH 339) Excerpt

A Major John Ellis, 1838.

1. Shed not a tear o'er your friend's early bier, When I am gone, When I am gone;
Smile when the slow toll-ing bell you shall hear, When I am gone, When I am gone.

2. Plant you a rose that shall bloom o'er my grave, When I am gone, When I am gone;
Sing a sweet song such as an-gels may have, When I am gone, When I am gone.

Audio Example 1. “When I Am Gone” Norwich vs. London



One can hear a few singers from both groups adding similar small ornaments, such as a slide between measures 5 and 6—from the notated E on “When” to the notated D on “I”. Because of the faster pace of the London singers’ rendition, this slide is less pronounced. Both groups are well in tune compared to the average local singing in the United States. Both recordings suggest that a number of singers are concerned about producing proper Sacred Harp “accent,” or rhythmic emphasis on the first beat of the measure in the case of a 2/4 time signature. Other singers in both recordings sing each note with even amount of rhythmic emphasis. A few singers are tapping their foot in both recordings, and the words are sung clearly with audible closing consonant sounds. To me, the similarities

between the recordings of “When I Am Gone,” performed by two cohorts in the same region with close friendship ties, provides evidence that they also contribute to each other’s stylistic sound.

I will return to the role of transmission of intercultural and performative keys in local community formation in my discussion of local cohorts’ relationships to other spaces.

Local Sacred Harp Singing in Contextually Shifting Spaces

As I described in the introduction to this chapter, Sacred Harp singing exists in many contextually shifting spaces. Here, I would like to examine the ways in which local singing communities respond to, and accommodate other geographic and social spaces such as the local civic community, regional singing networks, and occasions for the intersection of national identity and Sacred Harp identity.

local Sacred Harp relationships to civil community

Local Sacred Harp cohorts generally have some sort of relationship to their civil community. Local cohorts that convene through private home singings may be the only exception. This relationship can be as small as an agreement with a local pub or church to lend a space for weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly practice singings. Yet some

groups actively engage with local organizations, or seek to use Sacred Harp singing as a platform for positive change or growth in the community. First of all, local Sacred Harp groups usually attempt to be visible to potential singing enthusiasts in their geographic area. Participants post flyers for their singings in their regular meeting spaces, in public community centers, university campuses, or at other places where different kinds of musicians mingle, such as festivals or pub sessions. Many groups also have their own website which provides information exclusively on local Sacred Harp activity.⁴¹

Other groups make an effort to get the word out by performing Sacred Harp in public spaces, usually outside of the time designated for regular meetings. The singers of London and Cork have been heard on radio broadcasts as small story segments (Coogan 2014). There have also been two feature-length radio stories presenting the local Sacred Harp community in London (Bruce 2015; Matthews 2012), and one featuring the singers of Cork (Ryan 2015). These features were each complete with live Sacred Harp singing from the radio station studio, as well as thought provoking interviews with local Sacred Harp enthusiasts. Michael from London recalled an influx of sixty first-time participants at the regular singing after the Cerys Matthews' documentary aired on BBC Radio4 in December of 2012.

Off air, some local groups like to perform live in public spaces. My anecdote of the singing community in Norwich described several instances where enthusiasts

⁴¹ Some good examples are: londonsacredharp.org ; www.sacredharpbremen.org ; sacredharp86.org

gathered to sing in public spaces, such as the White Lion pub and the art gallery opening at St. Margaret's Church. In the case of both events, we were approached by onlookers who were interested in what we were singing. One woman who approached us at the St. Margaret's event attended the regular Monday night singing a few hours later, having received information about it from Fynn, who has a concise, informative and welcoming answer to all inquiries about Sacred Harp singing. Some of London's most enthusiastic participants enjoy seeking out spaces to sing in the urban landscape. They sing in empty buildings, public parks, or any church with an open door. They even sing on the crowded Tube to a mix of responses from the hostage audience. When I visited London, a few commuters appeared irritated, and a few curious people approached us to ask questions. Most patrons simply ignored the singing all together. Since this occasion, I have heard of some heated altercations arising between singers and commuters on the Tube.⁴²

The local affinity cohort in Cork often takes singing in public a step further by attempting to improve and include their civil community through engagement with charities. In 2012, the Cork singers held a workshop for members of Headway, an organization advocating for people with Acquired Brain Injury. One Headway participant called it "a powerful, uplifting experience" (Stables 2012, 8). In December 2014, the Cork singers arranged and participated in the event "Singing Shapes for Childline" to raise funds for the children's counseling hotline. Cork singers busked

⁴² Singing Sacred Harp on the train is considered controversial to many singers who feel that it is not fair to an audience who cannot escape, and fear that patrons will think they are being prosthelytized to. Not all singers in London participate in singing on trains.

outside of their regular meeting space with Childline signs and marked tins for donations. They raised almost €700 for the organization. Also in December 2014, the singers participated in Cork city's Glow Christmas Festival where they raised €222 to support the Cork Association for Autism.

when “local” extends to “regional”

Within the Sacred Harp community, the idea of “local singing” can refer to collections of regularly engaged local cohorts that are generally close in geographic proximity and have significant influence over each other. These musical and socio-behavioral influences occur because intraregional Sacred Harp singers tend to spend more time singing together, either by traveling short distances for regionally located practice singings, or by regularly attending regionally located all-day singings and conventions. Restricted to a U.S. national context, Kiri Miller investigates several regionally affiliated Sacred Harp singing groups such as Chicago and New England (2008). She focusses on the ideological factions that occur between regional singers over allegiance to traditional singing practices, rather than on ways in which regional singers strengthen each other.

In Europe, these intraregional tensions surrounding commitment to perceived “authentic” Sacred Harp singing codes and keys do exist, and can be felt as an “undercurrent of irritation” at conventions and all-day singings (Miller 2008, 114). This is particularly true in the U.K. where the earliest shapenote enthusiasts came to

sing via contact with the touring American folk chorus, Northern Harmony, in the 1990s, but quickly began traveling to traditional singing regions in the American South (see Chapter 1). However, I find the intraregional bonds formed between local singing cohorts to be a more compelling force within Sacred Harp singing in Europe than ideological factions between singers. Rather than honing in on these differences, most European Sacred Harp singers actively seek to build strong intraregional relationships.

As mentioned above, these regional relationships between local cohorts are forged primarily by frequent face-to-face interaction. In the introduction to this chapter, I used the relationship between the singers of London and Norwich as an example of a regional cohort bond. However, this is far from the only good example. Singers in Sheffield and Manchester remain closely affiliated and highly supportive of each other's Sacred Harp singing activities. The two cities are separated by a mountain range that can make traveling between them difficult. Nevertheless, the organizers of both singings share significant Sacred Harp history together. Sarah West remembers a time as recently as 2006 when fellow Sheffield resident Carmel Wood and Manchester resident Hannah Land were the only U.K. singers in their twenties pursuing Sacred Harp singing as a passion.⁴³ This was before Sacred Harp really grabbed the attention of a youthful crowd. These three women remain friends, and they encourage a relationship between their local cohorts.

⁴³ Sarah West, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 6, 2012.

Ireland presents a slightly different example. The Cork singers were the first in the region to start a local practice singing in 2008. Soon after, a weekly practice singing was established in Dublin, and a monthly singing in Belfast. The Cork singers continue to be recognized as a powerhouse of international Sacred Harp activity, and they maintain a highly active cohort of superenthusiasts. The local groups in Dublin and Belfast can count on the Cork cohort for significant numbers of attendees at their Sacred Harp events, and for generating a gravitational pull toward Ireland within the Sacred Harp community-at-large.

Other intraregional relationships between local cohorts appear less likely on the surface, but nevertheless seek to build regional support systems in order to strengthen Sacred Harp singing in their area. Local singing cohorts in Bremen and Hamburg, Germany are good examples of this circumstance. The local practice singing in Bremen was founded by two avid, vocal atheists with little musical experience, and their local cohort generally reflects this (though not exclusively). On the other hand, the local practice singing in Hamburg was founded by a church choir leader who, at first, wanted to try some of the Sacred Harp repertoire in Sunday services. While the ideological intentions of the two Sacred Harp singing founders in northern Germany are quite different, the two cohorts maintain a strong connection. Both groups struggle to increase the number of regular attendees at their weekly practice singings, and the travel time between the two cities is less than one hour by train or car. Individual singers or small groups of singers from Bremen and Hamburg frequently

travel to the other's practice singing, as stronger practice singings are mutually beneficial to the health of Sacred Harp singing in the region.

when “local” expands to “national”

Once Sacred Harp began to spread to other countries besides the U.S. in the late 1990s, international singers began identifying singings by national group as a shorthand for local singing. Singers also began identifying themselves in terms of nationality, particularly when presenting their local community to the international Sacred Harp stage. In other words, as Sacred Harp singing rapidly broadened internationally, nationally bound singing communities became lumped together when discussed by Sacred Harp singers within the context of the community-at-large. Singers from the U.S. expressed their excitement to sing in “Ireland,” or in “Germany,” as opposed to excitement to sing in “Cork” or “Frankfurt”. Alternately, singers in Europe expressed to me their interest in visiting “America” to sing, despite the vast dispersion of American Sacred Harp singing events which stretch over five thousand miles from Florida to Alaska. These sorts of generalizations are not always present in descriptions of international Sacred Harp singings, but they occur with regularity.

National borders create clear, easily describable boundaries for discussing regions of Sacred Harp affiliations in Europe. In the U.S., state borders are used for similar simplified boundaries. Singers talk about stylistic variations in Sacred Harp singing in

Georgia versus Alabama. Large conventions are often organized by state representation, such as the Key Stone Sacred Harp Convention, the All-California Sacred Harp Convention, and the Texas State Convention. There is also an annual National Sacred Harp Convention, which takes place in Birmingham, Alabama. Similarly, in Europe, singers may discuss stylistic variations in Sacred Harp singing in the United Kingdom versus in Poland, or Hungary, for example. Many conventions are represented with national titles, such as the Polish Sacred Harp Convention, the Germany Sacred Harp Convention, and the All-Ireland Sacred Harp Convention. While there is no “All-Europe Convention” which aims to represent pan-European Sacred Harp singing, there is Camp Fasola Europe, which is meant to present traditional Sacred Harp singing to European participants.

While national and state borders do create simple ways of organizing collections of local groups, it also dismisses the distinct differences between local cohorts within a politically structured border, and neglects the deep transnational and transregional networks and affiliations that frequently shape local Sacred Harp singing identity. Individual singers and collective cohorts may prefer to identify with other boundaries. For example, one singer in Newcastle-upon-Tyne claimed Hadrian’s Wall (which lies south of Newcastle) as a more appropriate dividing line between English singing and Scottish singing, as the local cohorts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Newcastle share strong regional ties, yet technically extend across the current border between Scotland and England.

Some groups work hard to distinguish themselves from a nearby Sacred Harp community that they may not relate to, or feel ideologically or practically incompatible with. For example, Glasgow singer and early European shapenote mobilizer Harry Campbell described with some chagrin the recently formed associations with singing in the broader United Kingdom since the participatory boom in Sacred Harp singing in the late 2000s.

To be totally honest I think part of me thinks, in a way, we've been subsumed into the circuit, and that the circuit is an agenda set by the English crowd. And while I'm totally fine by that and I enjoy singing as much as anyone else, I still feel that's only one way of singing the music. We had a more distinct local take on it when we were doing our own workshops.⁴⁴

Laura Clawson illuminates an extreme example of the desire for separate cohort identity in a description of the local singers in Minnesota's Twin Cities. Here, two cohorts meet to sing in the same room, but on different days, identifying themselves as either the "Sunday singers" or the "Tuesday singers" (2011, 60-61).

As civil, regional, and national spaces inform the meaning of local community for European Sacred Harp singers, questions about relationships to transnationalism quickly arise. But before I transition fully into a discussion of transnational space, I would like to briefly examine one more distinct type of European Sacred Harp local space: isolated cohorts, and isolated individual singers.

⁴⁴ Harry Campbell, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, August 29, 2013.

isolated groups

Some European singing cohorts are singularly local within their geographic area, and have no intraregional or intranational support from other Sacred Harp singing communities. Nationally singular cohorts in Oslo, Warsaw, Budapest, and Amsterdam hold regular Sacred Harp singings, but for practical reasons—such as cost and time commitment for travel—they are unable to attract frequent visitors from surrounding countries unless they are hosting a large international event, such as a convention, all-day singing, or singing school. For similar practical reasons, enthusiasts in these locations are generally only able to travel for large international Sacred Harp events. And while they may struggle at times to keep the enthusiasm for Sacred Harp singing afloat in lieu of regional support, they at least have a cohort.

In places such as Czech Republic and Sweden, enthusiasts with no cohort maintain their interest and commitment to Sacred Harp singing. These isolated singers rely on international travel to maintain relationships with other participants and for practical engagement with Sacred Harp singing. When at home, they rely on the virtual Sacred Harp community on social media to keep themselves in the fold with the community-at-large.

Zack, a young pastor who serves a rural Lutheran congregation outside of Uppsala, Sweden commits a significant amount of time in his daily life to engaging with *The Sacred Harp* and other shapenote sources by singing alone, by listening to

recordings, and staying abreast of the transnational Sacred Harp community online.⁴⁵

I quote his description at length:

I sing songs by myself from the book. And I do it very often, several times in a week. I have my own book close to my desk at all times because I start thinking of a song, and then I'll start humming it. In fact, I opened it just now. I start humming and think, 'oh this song is a good one,' or, 'I need to look at how this vocal part goes,' and I look at the different parts. For example, when the London Christian Harmony singing came out [on YouTube] I listened and sang along to the entire playlist. So I go to YouTube, put on a playlist, and sing along with the songs. Singing these songs alone can become very emotional and spiritual.⁴⁶

For Zack in Sweden, and to an extent for Father Błażej in Czech Republic, “local” singing becomes not about geographic location, nor about the sense of community among a local Sacred Harp singing cohort. Rather, “local” takes on deeply personal meaning—local singing is simply ones’ self, engaging with *The Sacred Harp* in daily life, separated from fellow enthusiasts. And of course, Sacred Harp singing in one’s daily life may very well intersect with other spaces of identity, like local or national.

Building and Maintaining a Transnational Sacred Harp Community

⁴⁵ Since spending time with Zach in Europe, he has mobilized a local group in Sweden. However, as he was the only Sacred Harp singer in Sweden for over a year, and his experience as such are still useful as an example.

⁴⁶ Zach Lindahl, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, February 11, 2015.

It is fitting that I transition from my discussion of local Sacred Harp singing in Europe to a discussion of the transnational Sacred Harp network using the example of isolated enthusiasts. This is because isolated enthusiasts who have no local cohort experience the Sacred Harp community (outside of personal meaning) entirely in transnational and virtual terms. They are unable to be the casual enthusiast who drops by a local singing now and then, and only attends a Sacred Harp convention when their local community is hosting. Isolated singers are travelers, and isolated singers rely on the transnational Sacred Harp network as a primary structure of belonging.

Zack describes his relationship to Sacred Harp travel and his relationship to his home almost like a long-distance romance, “I have to make a home where I am [in Sweden], and also make a home where I am not... It’s about love. It’s about love carrying you in a direction, and I want to go in that direction.” But when I asked how he maintains motivation to be involved with Sacred Harp singing without regular access to a local community, he half-jokingly told me,

Of course I’m very jealous of the singers that have local groups. And I don’t like to feel that I am a visitor. But I am a visitor, especially since this was my first year. Also not knowing the music as well makes it harder. It can be challenging to not resent the people who have had so much practice, and the people who already know each other so well, but I had to wait six months until my next singing. At my first singing, I was so attracted to it and wanted to be a part of it, and I wanted to stay friends with all the people I met. So, part of my motivation is wanting to please everybody—wanting to learn the music, wanting to know everyone. That is very much amplified by not being part of a regular group, and just attending the large singings.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Zach Lindahl, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, February 11, 2015.

In his statement, Zack starts to get at the heart of how participants maintain the transnational Sacred Harp community. It is maintained through producing a spirit and aura of inclusion, by attempting to create an environment where singers feel that they belong—where they are friends, rather than visitors. This spirit of inclusion is also carefully balanced with musical, aesthetic, and social expectations which signify belonging to the affinity group. Sacred Harp singers create this atmosphere by investing in Sacred Harp social codes and performative keys, and by allowing those codes and keys to govern and legitimize transregional and transnational singing spaces such as conventions and all-day singings. The space governed by these codes is what I call the Sacred Harp affinity interzone.

The Sacred Harp affinity interzone—this structure of belonging—is partly enforced through systematic organizational choreography of Sacred Harp events. Singing participants expect the event choreography to be consistent in any international context. For example, every convention or all-day singing is expected to be put together by a series of committees, usually made up of local enthusiasts. All seats should form a rectangle. An arranging committee should be responsible for calling leaders into the center of the hollow square.

Singers expect each day to be marked by prayers or thoughtful words, and they expect time specifically set aside for the memorial lesson—a brief pause in the day of singing to collectively remember Sacred Harp singers who have passed on, and to consider fellow enthusiasts who were unable to attend the event. Finally, participants expect every convention or all-day singing to adopt the use of *The Sacred Harp* alone.

This set choreography defines the Sacred Harp singing convention. When convention committees stray from this established choreography, it can cause tension between a hosting community and the visitors who expect it.

A learned and highly nuanced set of Sacred Harp musical, aesthetic, and performative keys and social codes also implicitly govern the Sacred Harp affinity interzone. The most important of these social codes is the understanding that the expression of political views, religion, or other explicit ideological beliefs are to remain unspoken while maneuvering through the Sacred Harp affinity interzone. Some younger, less experienced singers find this particularly difficult, especially if they are involved in social activism outside of their interest in Sacred Harp singing. But this code has been a mainstay of social behavior in Sacred Harp singing culture since long before its accommodation toward international participants. Since *The Sacred Harp* was first published in 1844, it has attracted regionally dispersed participants from different Christian denominational affiliations and political views. When Sacred Harp singing spread to other regions of the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this continued ban on ideological expression allowed both traditional and adopted Sacred Harp enthusiasts to peacefully accommodate a diverse range of singers in the network.

Adherence to other musical, aesthetic, and performative keys facilitate cooperation in the Sacred Harp affinity interzone, but their interpretations often depend upon other elements of structural choreography, and social codes. For example, singers are expected to participate in any song a leader calls, regardless of

one's personal opinion of the song—unless it has already been called by a previous leader, in which case the song is said to have “been used”. Enthusiasts are expected to sing with the full power of their natural, unaffected voice. Curated timbres or accents, particularly the use of vibrato, are not desired in the context of Sacred Harp singing—however the community is sincere in its trope of “all voices welcome,” and to confront anyone about the quality of their voice would violate Sacred Harp social codes.

Despite the Sacred Harp community's emphasis on the amateur accessibility of Sacred Harp singing, participants are expected to perform the music as best as they are able. For most singers, this includes accessing both local and community-wide nuanced musical aesthetics such as rhythmic emphasis, subtle ornamentation, and unnotated musical cues. However, given the subjectivity of aesthetic preferences, and the varying abilities of individual singers to sing, lead, and read music notation (let alone shapenote notation), “performing at one's best” does not guarantee that everyone will have the greatest musical experience.

Because of the wide range of Sacred Harp enthusiasts' backgrounds, this cultivation of an ideologically neutral, socially secure, and musically forgiving Sacred Harp affinity interzone is necessary to unify the internationally dispersed community. It places the importance of mutual interest in music and fellowship above the individual differences and vertical relationships between participants. Within the context of a nationally-bound American Sacred Harp singing community, Kiri Miller observes that this structure of belonging, which she calls the “ideology of tolerance”

(2008, 195), “provides a membership category that transcends the binary distinctions of South versus North, insider versus outsider, traditional versus newcomer, rural versus urban, and Christian versus folk enthusiast” without erasing the actual divisions presented as a result of these boundaries (2008, 33).

The Sacred Harp community’s insistence on implementing the same structure of belonging through the Sacred Harp affinity interzone is also what allows for the portability of Sacred Harp singing. Singers not only want to feel as one unified Community, but they also want Sacred Harp singing, as an activity, to be consistent across any international or virtual context. Whether or not a Sacred Harp enthusiast is at home or abroad, and whether or not a visiting singer personally knows other Sacred Harp participants in the same space will not be a significant factor in the way Sacred Harp singings are formatted and sung. This choreographed structure is punctuated by the near uniform use of the 1991 Denson edition of *The Sacred Harp*, firmly linking the format and atmosphere of singing events to the tunebook itself.

Social Scientist Robert Gardner explores a similar type of portable, music-centered community ethos in his own research on Bluegrass festival enthusiasts. He suggests that these communities “composed of loosely organized groups of similarly minded individuals who seek out one another when traveling or moving frequently from place to place,” and that Bluegrass festival enthusiasts “can connect and bond with others without having formal contacts or institutional relationships to establish initial entree into the setting” (2004, 156). However, Gardner also reveals Bluegrass

cultural codes designed for excluding others, particularly used by advanced musicians to exclude beginners (169).

In line with Sacred Harp singing's emphasis on both amateurism and on the importance of guiding new singers for the benefit of future singing generations, there are no codes or keys designed to completely exclude beginners in the music-making process. However, there are culturally coded ways of excluding beginners from positioning themselves in leadership roles, such as sitting on the front bench of the tenor section at a large Sacred Harp convention—a position usually reserved for experienced singers who can help keep the class together. Also, Bluegrass music's repertoire is constantly expanding, and not all Bluegrass musicians know the same tunes—particularly in international contexts (Bidgood 2010). Despite the differences between the Bluegrass community and the Sacred Harp community-at-large, Gardner's study makes it clear that what I call the “affinity interzone”—a choreographed event governed by learned social codes and performative keys—is not exclusive to the transnational Sacred Harp network.

The Sacred Harp affinity interzone can be more difficult to implement within the sphere of social media. This is because social media users, including Sacred Harp singers, present various aspects of their religious and political identities online. Unlike older forms of online intercommunity communication such as listservs, platforms such as Facebook allow users to network and communicate with people from (and about) various social fields at once. When singers post something about Sacred Harp on Facebook, their non-enthusiast contacts may also see it. Occasionally,

these types of interactions can cause friction between singers and their Facebook friends who either don't understand Sacred Harp singing, or who disagree with it for ideological reasons.

For example, while some non-Christian singers struggle to come to terms with singing Christian texts in *The Sacred Harp*, some outsiders peering into Sacred Harp singing through social media take offense to the idea of singing text that is not ideologically in line with the performers' views. On Facebook, outsiders have the opportunity to confront singers about these sorts of issues. With this platform, conversations about personal intentions for singing Sacred Harp and personal ideology—which frequently take place between singers privately outside of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone space—become public.

These sorts of tensions can occur within the Sacred Harp social media sphere as well. Participants may publish their political views and agendas on Facebook, which may fundamentally conflict with the views of other singers. Where in face-to-face Sacred Harp situations, such as conventions, the desire to advocate for one's ideological beliefs generally yields to the social codes of the affinity interzone, on social media one's beliefs may become public knowledge through self-representation. However, most of the time social expectation holds enough power over participants to keep fellow singers from publicly engaging in political and religious debates with one another on Facebook. Singers maintain the understanding that they will sing face-to-face with participants who are not like them, and disrupting the status quo online may only make in-person fellowship uncomfortable.

The Role of Geographic Diversity in the Sacred Harp Affinity Interzone

The portable Sacred Harp affinity interzone leaves room for, and even encourages the recognition of Sacred Harp singing's transnationality. The coded Sacred Harp social behavior explained above is designed to unify and pacify singing enthusiasts' personal and individual differences, but geographic diversity among Sacred Harp participants—particularly national diversity—is freely celebrated both in discussion between singers, and in more formalized structures of belonging such as conventions, all-day singings, and singing schools. Kiri Miller also observes this aspect of Sacred Harp culture and suggests that “rhetorical celebrations of Sacred Harp singers’ diversity only get down to details on the matter of geographic origin, which serves as a stand-in for all the other forms of diversity at a convention” (2008, 37).

While national diversity is a new phenomenon within the Sacred Harp community-at-large, Sacred Harp singing in Europe remains predominantly practiced by white enthusiasts. This is true of Sacred Harp singing in the United States as well, where many historical, cultural, and rhetorical factors have prevented the inclusion of more racially diverse singing practitioners (see Miller 2008, 9-14; Karlsberg 2015). For example, in the first half of the 20th century, when Jim Crow laws were firmly established in the American South, many African American church communities in Alabama and Georgia sang from the Cooper edition of *The Sacred Harp*, but were

unable (and unwelcome by some) to participate in the privileged Sacred Harp network forged by white Southern singers due to threats to safety while traveling⁴⁸ (Foster 1999, 131; Schultz 2005, 76; Miller 2008, 13; Karlsberg 2015).

Early scholarly accounts of Sacred Harp singing also emphasized the whiteness of practitioners and of the music itself. This is demonstrated so blatantly in the title of folklorist George Pullen Jackson's book *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* (1933). Despite the spread of Sacred Harp singing to all corners of the U.S., and despite the community's resolve to welcome anyone who shows up for a Sacred Harp event, the slowly evolving tunebook, *The Sacred Harp*, remains loaded with this racially divisive history. This is one explanation why Sacred Harp singing continues to attract a majority white participatory audience.

In the United States, one can hardly talk about the culture of the American South without also talking about current and historical relations between slavery, segregation, and integration among white and black people. While these discussions are propelled by a wide variety of beliefs, opinions, and research, the discourse on race and diversity remains a prevalent topic in American consciousness, and thus remains a discourse in studies about Sacred Harp singing, which have until recently been confined to the U.S.⁴⁹ As described in my introduction, Jesse Pearlman

⁴⁸ This issue has persisted into the present, and has recently gained massive international attention after Michael Brown, an unarmed eighteen-year-old African American man, was shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, sparking the widespread use of the symbolically resistant social media hashtag “#WalkingWhileBlack.”

⁴⁹ Marin Marian-Bălașa's 2003 article on American shapenote singing is one exception, as the author and publication are based in Romania. However, the article is flawed in critical areas such as field methods and lack of research.

Karlsberg has recently provided the most in-depth account of issues regarding racism and Sacred Harp singing (2015).

But what about Europe? Do racial politics in the American South effect the lack of visible diversity among Sacred Harp enthusiasts in Europe? To an extent, the answer is yes. As mentioned above, *The Sacred Harp* carries a loaded history. But Europe has its own complex discourse and relationship to race, ethnicity, and nationalism which is metaphorically part of the mineral content of the European soil which has accepted the growth of Sacred Harp singing in recent years (Lentin 2008; Andreassen 2014; Hall 2014; Kennedy-Macfoy 2014; Svedsen 2014).

In line with early 20th century scholarly and participatory associations with Sacred Harp as a distinctly Anglo-Celtic-American tradition, this same association is perpetuated by many English, Scottish and Irish Sacred Harp singers. They feel that the *The Sacred Harp*, its repertoire, and the texts have, in a sense, returned to their ancestral home. A recent study published in the journal *Nature* indicates that strong feelings of ethnoregional identity in the British Isles are often founded in genealogical accuracy (Leslie 2015). With such a strong claim to personal heritage, coupled with the real and imaginary heritage claims to *The Sacred Harp* by English, Scottish, and Irish singing enthusiasts (and potential claims to shapenote music by German enthusiasts), it is hard to imagine this musical community being successfully “marketed” to large numbers of people living in these geographic areas with heritage identities that lie outside of British and Irish ethnonational constructions.

As for the other European countries where Sacred Harp singing has found a home—such as Germany, Netherlands, Poland, and Czech Republic—there has been a long history of appropriation of American folk music rooted in romanticized images of the rustic, expansive West, disseminated from the writings of Ralf Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Jack London (Bidgood 2010). This image has been compounded with the rhetorical trope of “dying folk culture” in the United States (Jackson 1933; Bohlman 1988; Becker 1998; Joyner 1999, 9). With styles ranging from Native American Plains music to Bluegrass, many white Europeans (i.e. white Europeans brought up with the benefits of white privilege, like white Americans) feel obliged to take it upon themselves to “preserve” these styles, because they are supposedly not being preserved at home (Bolz 1999). Although European Sacred Harp singers are actively engaged with American singing circuits, perhaps this engrained sense of entitlement provides the freedom to appropriate such a niche musical import.

To be clear, I am by no means claiming that English, Scottish, and Irish singers are purposefully excluding others with a “this is mine and not yours” argument. Nor am I saying that all Sacred Harp enthusiasts who identify with English, Scottish, and Irish ethnicity feel a hereditary link to Sacred Harp singing. White Americans and white Europeans regularly experience the privilege of being able to appropriate whatever cultural art form they desire from anyone and anyplace (McIntosh 1989; DiAngelo 2012). However, in the case of the appropriation of Sacred Harp singing, this does not mean that mainland European enthusiasts feel explicitly and consciously

entitled to the music over other people. These privileges are codes—codes that are weaved into the fabric of European identity, invisible because they are ubiquitous.

While Sacred Harp singing continues to attract a predominantly white participatory audience, the transnational Sacred Harp community continues to take pride in its newfound national diversity. National diversity is highly desired and put on display at Sacred Harp conventions and all-day singings. Convention hosts frequently advertise their event to international participants by posting electronic flyers to Sacred Harp groups' Facebook pages, emphasizing the price of airline tickets if they are particularly inexpensive, and boasting of other local tourism sites that may convince a contingent of international singers to attend. The singers of Cork, for example, jokingly encourage all visitors to patronize the city's Butter Museum.

The highlighting of international visitors' participation is also worked into the formal choreographic structure of conventions and all-day singings. It is the job of the arranging committee to keep track of where attendees have traveled from. Sacred Harp social codes suggest that visitors who have traveled internationally be called to lead in the center of the hollow square at certain times in the day when the class is predicted to be at the peak of musicality and attendance, usually in the sessions immediately before and after dinner-on-the-grounds. The arranging committee may also choose to call groups of people to lead in the square together, and these groups are often organized by country for convenience.

For example, all the attendees from Poland may be called together, or Germany, or the United States. At the end of a convention or all-day singing, the event secretary

is also responsible for breaking down the list of registered attendees, and sorting them by geographic location such as by country, or by American states. This list is announced to the class during the “business session,” when final words from the hosting community are made before the event is closed with the song “The Parting Hand.” The number of represented countries, along with the number of registered singers for an event is a source of pride for a hosting Sacred Harp community. These numbers, which are often recorded and published online and in printed minutes books, can act as inter-community advertisement for the following year, and can point to the popularity of a convention, or indicate if an event is an up-and-coming “must visit” for transnationally mobile superenthusiasts.

Another benefit of singing with a geographically diverse class is the exposure to repertoire. At a Sacred Harp singing event where representatives from dispersed local and national groups are called to lead the class in their individual favorite tunes (which applies to most Sacred Harp events in Europe these days), singers are introduced to, or reminded of songs in *The Sacred Harp* that are not frequently called among their own local cohort or in the surrounding area. Over the course of two days of singing, an efficient class can sing in the neighborhood of two hundred songs, practically ensuring that there will be a select number of songs that are, at the very least, less familiar to enthusiasts—particularly since the majority of participants in Europe have been singing for a seven years or less.

The influx of studious, traveling Sacred Harp enthusiasts making their way around the European singing circuit, as well as traveling to historic Sacred Harp

singing regions in the American South has increased community expectations for musicality, leading skill, and complexity of repertoire selection. The growing number of experienced singers has infused the transnational European community with a healthy dose of competition. Sarah West from Sheffield recalls a time as recent as 2009 when experienced singers in the U.K. carried significant organizational and musical burden at nation-wide conventions and all-day singings:

For a long time in the U.K., it was really easy for people to kind of come along to singing a couple of times a year and sit in the back, and never lead a song because they just think, ‘it’s fine because the people who have been doing it for years will carry us.’ For those of us who had to lead six songs in a day and left feeling absolutely exhausted, it sometimes felt like such a chore to keep everything ticking along.⁵⁰

Since European Sacred Harp groups outside of the U.K. have been hosting internationally attended conventions and all-day singings, Sarah West has observed an upswing in ability and desire for personal musical and practical accountability. She explains,

People are putting a lot more effort into the events that they organize, and newer singers in the U.K. are getting more proficient more quickly because they are seeing good singers in other places, and they are thinking, ‘well this person has only been singing for the same amount of time as me, or this person has only been singing for a year, and they are leading all these complicated songs, so I should be able to lead these complicated songs.’⁵¹

Sarah West’s observations are supported in the data provided by the Sacred Harp Minutes Book. In 2010, there were only forty-one leaders out of eighty-nine

⁵⁰ Sarah West, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 6, 2012.

⁵¹ Sarah West, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 6, 2012.

registered singers (46% leaders) at the United Kingdom Sacred Harp Convention over the course of two days. The majority of the leaders were from the U.K., and a few were visitors from the United States and Ireland. In 2012-2014, the number of leaders and the number of registered singers grew significantly, along with the percentage of leaders to non-leaders in the class. In 2012, there were 141 registered singers and seventy-seven leaders (54% leaders) from eight countries. 2013 had 128 registered singers, and eighty leaders (62% leaders) from nine countries. And in 2014, the United Kingdom Sacred Harp Convention held its largest event ever, receiving 155 registered singers and 104 leaders (67% leaders) from eight countries. They sang a total of 182 songs, ranging from classic, simple favorites like “Mear,” to complicated fusing tunes such as “Logan” (Caudle 2010–2015).

Another effect of such international dispersion of Sacred Harp singing has been an increase of singers traveling for tourism. Now that Sacred Harp singing is established in so many cities in Europe, Australia and New Zealand, East Asia, and the United States, enthusiasts are finding Sacred Harp singing events to also be the perfect excuse to travel the world. Participants are able to tap into the singing network and easily make local contacts based in their tourist destination, even if they have never met in person. This is a benefit of the quantitatively small size of the dispersed community—the network is small enough that singers trust other singers they do not know personally because the news of dishonest actions toward another singer could quickly spread around the circuit, or could make for some very uncomfortable social



Video 2. Visitors sing “The Solid Rock” from the belltower of St. Petri Church, Hamburg, May 2014.

interactions in the future.⁵² Additionally, visitors traveling from afar are often provided accommodations by local hosts for the duration of a convention, which can cut the cost of international travel.

Local hosts frequently lead informal tours around the area of the convention. Or, when hosts are busy preparing for the event, groups of visiting singers will join up and explore the area together. For example, at the first Germany Sacred Harp Convention in June 2014, groups of singers wandered around sites of Hamburg, stopping to sing from *The Christian Harmony* in acoustically and historically interesting places, such as the Georg Telemann Museum, the cavernous St. Michaelis

⁵² I am not saying here that dishonesty and slighting never occurs between singers. It has happened, but usually with significant social consequences.

Lutheran Church, completed in 1669, and the bell tower of St. Petri Church, founded in 1189, where eight singers climbed over five hundred stairs to sing “The Solid Rock” while observing the sprawling city below (see Video 2) (for another account of singers’ tourism activities in Hamburg, see Witt-Duarte 2014).

Singers may also extend their trip to experience a greater tour of a particular country, or Europe more broadly. David and Richard Ivey, along with fellow Alabama singer Henry Johnson traveled around the Republic of Ireland for a full week before arriving in Cork for the Third Annual Ireland Convention. David Ivey also arranged a formal tour to facilitate a group of singers from Alabama and Georgia as they traveled to the United Kingdom Convention, Camp Fasola Europe in northern Poland, and then on to other areas of Eastern Europe in September 2014.⁵³

The case of Southern Sacred Harp singers traveling to Europe for tourism that includes Sacred Harp singing activities presents a model that differs significantly from other scholarly accounts of music tourism. The discourse on music tourism primarily focusses on participant or observer enthusiasts who travel to witness “authentic” music performed at its perceived source, or performed at locations such as folk festivals, where the staged music is nonetheless considered to be “authentic”

⁵³ Along with Sacred Harp singers using conventions and all-day singings as a tourism opportunity, some singers have also traveled together to various tourist destinations and vacation sites around the world, singing from *The Sacred Harp* independently along the way. Notable examples include a group tour taken by Hugh McGraw and two dozen traditional singers to Israel in December 1972, and a recent trip taken in 2016 by several singing friends from the U.S. and Europe to Peru. The group to Peru posted a video of themselves to Facebook singing from *The Sacred Harp* at Machu Picchu, which has been viewed thousands of times.

(DeWitt and Stokes 1999; Titon 1999; Gibson and Connell 2005; Graml 2005; Harnish 2005; McFarlane-Morris 2011; Lashua, Spracklen and Long 2014).

Ethnomusicologist Jeff Titon explores this second scenario in his analysis of performances of Old Regular Baptist singing at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington D.C. Although the Old Regular Baptists were not performing in an “authentic” context (they sang under a tent on the National Mall, rather than in their church as a worshiping congregation without a formal audience), the festival attendees nonetheless expected to hear and see “the real thing,” as it would be done in the singers’ home church (Titon 1999).

Yet, in the case of European Sacred Harp tourism, there are traditional singers (and enthusiasts from the American South whose local singing community is rooted in historic Southern singings) traveling to support affinity based Sacred Harp communities in Europe without any expectation of pay, and without bearing an official role as a teacher (though I would argue that there is an implicit, coded understanding that the actions of visiting traditional singers should be observed and learned from by affinity singers). I believe this flip-flopped directional flow of music tourism implies an interesting relationship between contemporary Sacred Harp culture and contemporary freedoms of appropriation among predominantly white Westerners, which I will discuss in the conclusion to this dissertation.

Expressing Nationalism in a Transnational Context

Sacred Harp culture employs an affinity interzone space designed to pacify an internationally and ideologically dispersed affinity community. Within the Sacred Harp affinity interzone, national diversity is seen as a desired achievement. However, while such diversity is seen as a sign of community growth and cooperation, the actual enactment of national identities is received with a mixture of positivity and social tension, depending on the situation. The context in which national identity is enacted is also significant. At an internationally attended Sacred Harp convention or all-day singing the explicit expression of national identity can either support the community ideals of geographic diversity, or it can cause singers to feel excluded or even offended.

For example, there are several American patriotic songs in *The Sacred Harp* which explicitly reference historical anti-British sentiments, and contain texts that valorize the U.S. military. Most European singers choose not to regularly engage with the patriotic songs for lack of personal significance, but a few also avoid them because of political values, such as abhorrence for current U.S. foreign relations. National identity is also expressed by Sacred Harp singers outside of the convention setting as singers travel, and as issues of political relevance become internationally visible in the news media, and on the Internet.

National identity intersects with Sacred Harp affinity as singers use texts, intercultural codes, and interactions between local and dispersed participants in order to perform national consciousness. An examination of this intersection describes the complexities of identity multiplicity: participants display loyalty to the Sacred Harp

affinity interzone and exchange in rhetorical celebrations about the spiritual connectedness of Sacred Harp singers. Yet through nuanced coded behavior, and through “code switching”, participants simultaneously display loyalty to their identity as a citizen of a nation, which, as Benedict Anderson has argued, is also an “imagined community” perceived as a “horizontal comradeship” despite the real vertical social and economic structures of power that exist in any nation (1983, 7).

Ethnomusicologist Phillip Bohlman suggests that nationalism and musical meaning may be inseparable to some extent. He claims that, “nationalism contributes fundamentally to the ontology of European music, that is, to music’s ‘ways of being’ in Europe” (Bohlman 2004, xxi). In line with Bohlman’s assertions, local communities and individual singers within a particular national border engage with *ways of being*—defined as “the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2007, 164-165) – and *ways of belonging*—“practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates conscious connections to a particular group” (ibid, 164)—to a nation while simultaneously engaging in the Sacred Harp affinity interzone and social field. This idea is most vividly enacted through explicit national representation, such as the Scottish singer who wears a kilt to Sacred Harp conventions and frequently calls tunes in *The Sacred Harp* with known Scottish origin, such as “Sacred Throne,” Or the Cork community’s creation of a shapenote logo which resembles a Celtic cross.

As mentioned above, the patriotic songs in *The Sacred Harp* can create palpable tensions among nationally diverse participants at singing events.⁵⁴ Sacred Harp social codes dictate that no song in the tunebook is off limits for participants to lead, but that does not preclude mixed reactions from the class. During my field research, one incident stood out in particular, which took place at the Second All-Ireland Sacred Harp Convention in March 2012. The final day of singing was running smoothly until one woman from California was called to lead in the last session. She stood before a class of 150 people and lead “Ode On Science,” an American patriotic tune composed in 1798 when the American Revolution was still fresh in the new nation’s consciousness. The first half of the text plods along with predictable nationalistic imagery rooted in Manifest Destiny (“The mourning sun shines from the east / And spreads his glories to the west / All nations with his beams are blest / Where’er the radiant light appears”), but the final lines of the poem are what caused the commotion in the singing room that day, where the structures of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone verged on an utter breakdown. The text proclaims, “The British yoke, the Gallic chain / Was urged upon our neck in vain / All haughty tyrants we disdain / and shout long live America!” SH 244). At this line, which repeats, several English singers closed their tunebook in protest, some were visibly bothered. The remainder of the class continued singing, but several participants shared awkward glances. Eyes

⁵⁴ Even at conventions and all-day singings in the United States where all singers present are U.S. residents, patriotic songs can cause tensions as singers are deeply cognizant of the extreme political rifts currently dividing liberal and conservative thinking. Many singers are also aware and sensitive to the fact that the Sacred Harp community is now international, and feel that the patriotic songs create an atmosphere that excludes international participants.

widened in disbelief that someone would call this song with so many English singers present.

This incident was a vivid snapshot of the ways in which national identity can fail to properly intersect with Sacred Harp intercultural codes. “Ode On Science” played on national ways of belonging for the American, Irish, and British participants. For both Northern and Southern singers from the United States, singing the patriotic song expresses a way of belonging to the nation, much like singing “America the Beautiful,” or even “This Land is Your Land” (some Americans, on the other hand, find the references to Manifest Destiny offensive). However, I gathered that the American woman who called the song did not lead it to explicitly celebrate the United States, but rather as an homage to the Republic of Ireland—her way of acknowledging the shared history of oppression by the British Empire—an oppression that lives vividly in historical and cultural memory for Irish citizens, but not for Americans (Hutchinson 1987; Moran 1998, 54; Devine 2006, 131).

For obvious reasons, English singers generally avoid this song altogether. Rather than creating a moment of nationalistic camaraderie between Irish singers and American singers, the choice to lead “Ode On Science” at the Ireland Sacred Harp Convention created a momentary identity crisis. Singers had to choose to either yield to the Sacred Harp social codes and respect the leader by singing the song, or choose to refrain from singing it in support of the English participants who were affected by the text.

At Sacred Harp conventions and all-day singings, national consciousness also plays out in less divisive ways that support the Sacred Harp community's interest in national diversity (see Figure 13). For example, food served by a hosting community at dinner-on-the-grounds may incorporate national or heritage cuisine. Singers traveling to the American South can expect Southern favorites such as fried chicken, barbecue, macaroni & cheese, and sweet potato pie to be among the dishes spread out on long picnic tables. In Europe, event hosts may try to include some of these Southern dishes that have become a part of the Sacred Harp interculture. However, local cooks also take the opportunity to showcase dishes from their own area. At the Ireland Convention, I had the opportunity to taste a delicious salmon pie and a hunk of soda bread; in Scotland, Scottish eggs. In Warsaw, trays of mouthwatering pierogis were provided from a local vendor.



Figure 13. *The Sacred Harp* and an Irish Passport

Displays of explicit and implicit national sentiment occur outside of Sacred Harp events, on the Internet, and within local groups. These displays can positively involve the transnational Sacred Harp network. The singers from Warsaw banded together in a moment of national sentiment over the collective historical memory of the destruction of their city during WWII when they traveled to sing in Bremen, Germany, where they convened in a community space originally built by Nazi

military as a bunker. However, partaking in the fellowship of Sacred Harp singing temporarily defused the meaning of the space for visiting participants.

Irish identity has been performed and expressed to the Sacred Harp social field through social media. The Cork singers host an active Facebook page, and just weeks after the Second Ireland Sacred Harp Convention in 2012, a London singer posted an originally composed limerick about Sacred Harp. The limerick—a poetic form that is internationally recognized as a marker of Irishness—was meant to demonstrate support for this intersection of Sacred Harp and national identity:

There was a young keyer from Kerry,
Whose pitching skill tended to vary,
When keying in A, the altos he'd slay,
And of his C, be particularly wary.

The Facebook post received a mass of response. Between March 27th and March 31st, singers from Ireland and elsewhere posted forty-nine limericks about individual singers' eccentricities, particular tunes in *The Sacred Harp* and the whole gamut of Sacred Harp topics. One of these even addressed the transnational growth of Sacred Harp:

This singing is transcontinental,
Which when you think of it is mental,
The folks from New York,
Who'd swum it to Cork,
Said the ocean was but incidental.

These witty limericks were used as a pathway for the national community to display ways of simultaneous belonging as Irish, and as a member of the Sacred Harp

interculture. It was also a pathway for non-Irish national singers to include themselves in Irish Sacred Harp singing communities.

Sacred Harp singers in Europe and the United States create personal and communal pathways, and find significant meaning in local, international, social media, and Sacred Harp affinity interzone spaces. These spaces do not exist apart, but inform and expand each other geographically, musically, and aesthetically. There is no local singing without international singing, and vice versa. There is no local or transnational growth without the use of social media, and there is no dispersed community consciousness without the affinity interzone.

PART 3

MEANING

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNITY, FEELING, AND RELIGION IN SACRED HARP SINGING IN EUROPE

When I write about meaning, I refer to the idea that objects such as *The Sacred Harp*, events such as traveling a pathway, and data such as the information in the Sacred Harp Minutes Book are contextualized by people who then bestow it with significance (see Turino 1999). Music is no exception, and all facets of the music process, or “musicking,” to borrow Christopher Small’s term (1998), are meaningful to its creators and listeners in some way.

However, meaning is not always consciously created. Some of it is learned from our culture. This is particularly true when the idea of “music” is separated from “musicians” or “music-making.” For example, music is a part of our everyday lives in Western society (as it is for many societies): it is on the radio, pop-up advertisements,

projected from speakers in public places, and played live or from recordings at most organized social events. In this basic sense, music is meaningful because it is expected, and culturally valued as an expectation. If it weren't present, we would miss it (though we may not miss pop-up advertisements, were they to disappear). Yet the word "musician" conjures all sorts of meaning—some of it negative—including associations with poverty, irresponsibility, selfishness, and frivolity. "Music-making" can conjure associations with noise disturbance, among other things. In this cultural sense, "musician" and "music-making" accrue meaning by virtue of broad societal understandings of music-making culture. Sacred Harp enthusiasts, however, tend to develop an acute self-awareness of Sacred Harp singing's deep cultural and personal meanings, heaped with positive associations.

Sacred Harp singers draw much meaning from all facets of the Sacred Harp singing process. The possession of one's own copy of the book, traveling to a singing, socializing with other participants, attending a convention, contemplating the memorial lesson, the texts sung, vocal timbre, etc.—all garner significance for individuals, and for the community of Sacred Harp singers as a whole. This meaning perceived by participants is precisely what makes *The Sacred Harp* more significant than the content of its pages, or its tenure as a continuously published volume.

As ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman suggests, "music accumulates its identities... from the ways in which it participates in other activities" (2000, 293). Sacred Harp enthusiasts in Europe connect immense meaning to Sacred Harp singing because of the tradition's participation in other activities and ideas, including:

community building and participation in a culture of reciprocity; an openness to emotions brought on through community singing and the existential texts associated with *The Sacred Harp*; and for many, the association with *Sacred Harp* as an expression of religious faith or personal spirituality.

Though I parse these categories out below for analytical means, these categories are not rigid, and community, feeling, and religion may continually feed into the other in terms of meaningful experiences for participants. I will elaborate on these items below, and follow with a series of ethnographic profiles of individuals and events which demonstrate the layers of meaning that Sacred Harp singing has brought to enthusiasts in Europe.

Community and Reciprocal Sacred Harp Culture

Sacred Harp singers love to contemplate and discuss the Sacred Harp singing community. In my interviews with enthusiasts, I sometimes found it difficult to obtain basic information about particular events because they preferred to steer toward talking about the community experience, rather than answer questions such as, “what new tunes did you self-discover at Camp Fasola Europe?” or, “what classes did you attend at camp?” For example, Michael Walker, a Sacred Harp superenthusiast who serves as a mentor for scores of Sacred Harp singers in Europe, immediately began

describing the community atmosphere at the first Camp Fasola Europe in 2012, unsolicited by my questioning:

...The thing that I took away from camp—I mean I liked the camp and I enjoyed all the classes and all of that—but it was extraordinarily special, and certainly the best Camp Fasola I’ve ever been to for another reason—I thought that it was actually that the human connections were so strong... It was such a harmonious group. Everybody loved each other and loved spending time with each other and there was no tension really, and it was just like we’d all died and gone to Sacred Harp heaven.⁵⁵

Michael Walker’s description is echoed in countless interactions I have had with Sacred Harp singers in Europe and in the United States in relation to dozens of events—from small living room gatherings to well-attended conventions and all-day singings. Words such as “connections,” “harmonious,” and phrases such as “Sacred Harp heaven” are frequently used by enthusiasts to describe the atmosphere within the singing community. But before I dig into the specifics of the Sacred Harp community and its meaning to participants, I will briefly construct my meaning of “community” in a broader musical context, lest this significant term and concept be taken for granted or misunderstood.

As the ethnomusicologically inclined sociologist Robert Owen Gardner forwardly suggests, “‘community’ has become a word, like art or pornography, that is clearly recognizable yet is variously defined” (2004,156). This is partly because the term has shifted meanings over the past decades, but has nevertheless undergone little public revision. Through the 1980s, “community” was used by ethnomusicologists to refer

⁵⁵ Michael Walker, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 10, 2012.

to a group of people, probably perceived as homogenous, who live in a single, definable location, and interact face-to-face on a regular basis (as referenced by McKnight 1982; Seeger 1987; Johnston 1988). Yet, the 1980s also ushered in two social science works which changed the face of “community” through to the present. The first was political scientist Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983), followed by anthropologist Anthony Cohen’s *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (1985). Both authors are credited with suggesting that community should be considered a social construct, rather than a physical thing.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw the emergence of new trends in the field of ethnomusicology which had significant effects on the concept of community. First of all, researchers began to look at the way music moves from place to place, and the concept of non-geographically fixed communities began to take hold. Jocelyne Guilbault’s 1993 publication, *Zouk: World Music in the West Indies*, is a prime ethnomusicological example (2011: 353). Secondly, this trend in the study of music and the dispersion of people lead to the rise in the study of music in urban settings. This coupling of dispersion and urbanization in the early 1990s was successfully presented by Gage Averill in his 1994 article in the journal *Diaspora*, “Musical Constructions of the Haitian Transnation.” Here, he describes a transnational field between Haiti and New York City, where musicians work, communicate, and represent the growing Haitian diaspora.

Averill’s work also presents a third issue that arose with the study of urban communities, which is the growing search for identity. These studies expanded the

concept of a musical community to include: (1) a group of people with a similar cultural background who occupy a definable geographic national or transnational field, but remain outsiders to the Western hegemony, and seek to express their shifting identity in a new location through music; and (2) a group of otherwise unrelated individuals who actively seek out acceptance in a musical subculture, and who seek to define some part of themselves in terms of their chosen affinity group.

Finally, in 2011, ethnomusicologist Kay Kaufman Shelemay made a call for scholars of music to think critically about the term “community” as it relates to our constantly shifting studies of musical collectives and musical interactions. She asserts that “rethinking the notion of community opens opportunities first and foremost to explore musical transmission and performance not just as expression or symbols of a given social grouping, but as an integral part of processes that can at different moments help generate, shape, and sustain new collectivities” (2011, 349-351).

Shelemay then goes on to respond to the issue of the term’s elusiveness by putting forth her own definition, with which I largely agree:

A musical community is, whatever its location in time or space, a collectivity constructed through and sustained by musical processes and/or performances. A musical community can be socially and/or symbolically constituted; music making may give rise to real-time social relationships or may exist most fully in the realm of a virtual setting or the imagination. A musical community does not require the presence of conventional structural elements nor must it be anchored in a single place... Rather, a musical community is a social entity, an outcome of a combination of social and musical processes, rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves. (2011:364-365)

The Sacred Harp community has grown to encompass all of these definitions. In a local context, a Sacred Harp community often constitutes a group of people who live in proximity to one another, come from a similar cultural background or upbringing, and convene for face-to-face interaction on a regular basis. Sacred Harp singing brings them together for a purpose, and in turn Sacred Harp singing becomes more meaningful because of these close interactions. Sadhbh O’Flynn from Cork recalls this importance of her local community in her development as a Sacred Harp enthusiast, claiming,

When I first heard traditional recordings, like the Alan Lomax recordings, I thought it sounded a bit awful. Socially, as we grew closer together as a group of classmates and friends, the songs just got contextualized like that, as a fellowship kind of thing. We were achieving singing these songs through learning how to sing the tradition and then also through developing relationships with each other. It made the songs take on a whole extra dimension. It was really natural, the way it became very important to us, because we were really close friends, and this is something we could do as a group of close friends. (Lyric FM)

In Warsaw also, the majority of the singers are white, speak Polish as their first language, were brought up in the Catholic Church, and live in or near the city. In previous chapters, I described them and other similarly formulated Sacred Harp enclaves as a “local Sacred Harp community.”

However, many of the Warsaw singers and the Cork singers are not satisfied with interacting merely on a local level, and they seek acceptance and fellowship with other Sacred Harp singers in Europe and the United States. Specifically, they seek international engagement with others who not only participate in the same activity,

but with others who define themselves as Sacred Harp singers—who have absorbed their participation in the activity into their personal identities. As cultural developmental psychologist Urs Fuhrer suggests, the forming of self-identity is integral to constructing the meaning of a thing or event, such as to the construction of a Sacred Harp community (2004). In this way, the Sacred Harp community is expanded to include geographically and culturally dispersed participants. Throughout this dissertation, I have referred to this larger musical collective as the “Sacred Harp community-at-large.”

The Sacred Harp community-at-large is both an imagined community (a la Benedict Anderson) and an interactive one. On one hand, not all Sacred Harp enthusiasts are familiar with each other, and they don’t all interact personally. They do, however, recognize that there are other Sacred Harp singers throughout the world, and that if they were all to convene, they could share in a musical activity which is meaningful to them, and that musical activity would more or less be performed the same way as it is performed by one’s own local cohort. This creates an imagined community of Sacred Harp enthusiasts. On the other hand, the Sacred Harp community-at-large comprises a real interactive community, in that many enthusiasts do actually engage in international travel, as well as in virtual communication with one another, and mutually share Sacred Harp as an aspect of personal identity. It is a physical and virtual collectivity “constructed through and sustained by musical processes and performances” (Shelemay 2011, 364).

When U.K. singer Hannah Land describes Sacred Harp singing to her work colleagues, she finds herself reflecting on how the music informs the experience of Sacred Harp community. She commented to me on how extreme it can appear from a community outsider's perspective:

I was trying to describe the sense of community, and I ended up talking about "The Parting Hand," the last song, and how we go around hugging each other, and they more I kept going on, I thought, "wow this sounds more and more like a cult." This is a conversation I think a lot of people have had. I was like, "you just have to be there to get what we mean." It's funny.⁵⁶

While Sacred Harp singing does indeed sustain the affinity community (without the musical activity, this particular musical community would have no reason to convene, or even to know each other), I observe that the community also circuitously sustains Sacred Harp singing. This is so for several reasons. First of all, without a community of people to bestow meaning to Sacred Harp singing, people would not feel compelled to sing it as often and with as much intention as they currently do. Secondly, Sacred Harp singing is not some genre that exists outside of its practitioners. Without singers, *The Sacred Harp* is merely ink on paper. Furthermore, the repertoire contained in *The Sacred Harp*—the repertoire that is considered by many to be the best of any shapenote compilation ever, the repertoire that has undergone twelve⁵⁷ scrupulous revisions to fulfill the needs of Sacred Harp singers—

⁵⁶ Hannah Land, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 4, 2012.

⁵⁷ Fourteen editions including the first Cooper edition in 1902, and the J.L White edition in 1909, both of which were rejected by the stream of traditional singers who eventually remained loyal to the 1911 James edition, and the subsequent Denson editions, culminating in the currently used 1991 edition.

is a direct result of a committee drawn from members of the Sacred Harp singing community.

This circular coordination between musical community and musical processes/materials echoes Noah Mark's observations in his 1998 article "Birds of a Feather Sing Together", where he argues for an, "ecological theory of musical preference" where, "people are a resource for types of music," and "niche patterns develop because musical preferences are transmitted through homophilous social network ties; similar people interact with each other and develop similar musical tastes" (453). Mark's perspective assumes a society where people are surrounded by diversity, but nevertheless group themselves based on mutual affinity, and these groups are responsible for the progression of genre and process, precisely as the Sacred Harp community-at-large propels Sacred Harp singing, and even *The Sacred Harp* book itself forward through time, popularity, and repertoire.

The Sacred Harp community-at-large is highly aware of itself, and as I mentioned above, many of its participants prioritize it before the music. For European Sacred Harp singers, the realization of the strength and supportiveness of the community-at-large is often the factor that brings a singer from someone who is interested in this perceived old-timey American religious music to someone who could be described as a Sacred Harp enthusiast—someone who travels the world-wide or European singing circuit, and is heavily involved in their local Sacred Harp community. Daire O'Sullivan, a Sacred Harp enthusiast (and sometimes superenthusiast) from Cork,

remarked to me about that personal turning point as she described her first convention experience,

...It took a while to get the hang of things like the shapes, and the music, but I think it took longer to get the hang of the rest of it. Even until the first convention, I thought—I don't know—that it was more of a music thing. But then after the first convention I was like 'Oh, this is definitely more than a music thing.'⁵⁸

For Eimear O'Donovan, she realized quickly that *The Sacred Harp* was also a marker which is recognized as a stamp of social approval, allowing one to move throughout the community-at-large, visit people, and connect on a personal level. She remarked, "Aldo [Ceresa] once at a singing school described Sacred Harp as a passport, and that's totally what it is. When you sing this music, you have a home to stay in all over the place..."⁵⁹

For Daire, the people also became the focus of her interest in both the music and the Sacred Harp culture. She describes how for her, as a classically trained violinist, the fact that a Sacred Harp singing only requires a book and some people was freeing. "You don't need much to start. You can just sing. That's all you need, some people. For orchestra, you need all these things, and all these other instruments and everything."⁶⁰ This is particularly true once participants gain intimate knowledge of the repertoire in *The Sacred Harp*, and are able to sing the solfege and the text in the correct four-part harmony without the use of the book. These days, now that Sacred

⁵⁸ Daire O'Sullivan, interview with Ellen Lueck, July 6, 2013.

⁵⁹ Eimear O'Donovan, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, September 30, 2012.

⁶⁰ Daire O'Sullivan, interview with Ellen Lueck, July 6, 2013.

Harp singing has gained a strong foothold in scores of enclaves around Europe, it is very common to see groups of singers huddled together, without books, singing from memory, eyes closed, *feeling* the song, and *feeling* the presence and power of other singers.

Feelings / Emotions

Feelings and emotions contribute a great deal to the meaning of Sacred Harp singing internalized by its practitioners—emotions being defined as “complex, dynamic, and integrated states of brain, body, and mind which arise in response to environmental stimuli, and both prepare the body for appropriate action and impact on the functioning of perceptual and cognitive processes” (Cross, 33). However, the use of “feelings” or “emotions” as substantive material for social-scientific research, and specifically ethnomusicological research, has been limited—in large part due to its notorious slipperiness as a definitive quality, and its lack of measurability.

Scientists have attempted to form systems for the study of emotional response to music, but each still leaves the reader (or me, at the very least) with a sense of shallowness associated with the research process—the studies can’t accommodate the nuanced scenarios in which people experience emotions from or toward music regularly. For example, in a 2008 study on emotions evoked by listening to music, psychology researchers in Geneva used musical samples from only five music genres:

classical, jazz, pop/rock, Latin American, and techno (Zentner et al 2008, 498).

Participants were asked which genre they were most inclined to respond to. Though the researchers carefully outlined their limiting definitions of these genres for the purposes of the study, the research only accounts for specifically labeled emotions towards familiar music. For example, emotions listed included “enchanted,” “amused,” “triumphant,” and “inspired.”

The study’s findings were that music heard within the context of the study sometimes caused participants to feel a certain emotion, and that sometimes music caused participants to perceive emotions from the musical content without feeling those emotions themselves. Of course, any musicologist or ethnomusicologist could concur with or without collected data. Feeling and perceiving emotion is something that happens when one listens to music. While there is surely value to having hard data helping to define a narrow relationship between music and emotion, it also seems to be much energy and research funding put toward describing what music scholars and enthusiasts observe every day.

Ethnomusicologist Judith Becker has recently presented a successful case for looking closely at emotion—though without such a systematic approach as the psychologists’ study—as a tool for research into music and trancing, or music and “deep listening” among various cultures around the world. Becker defines deep listening as a “kind of secular trancing, divorced from religious practice but often carrying religious sentiments such as feelings of transcendence or a sense of

communion with a power beyond oneself” (2004, 2).⁶¹ Sacred Harp singers regularly report these types of experiences when singing Sacred Harp, and even when listening to certain recordings.

I would further argue that for many Sacred Harp singers who identify as Christians, including traditional singers with backgrounds in the Primitive Baptist Church, deep listening, rather than trancing, is indeed linked to religious practice, as to go into a deep trancing state is highly discouraged, and indeed considered suspicious within a Sacred Harp singing context. Nevertheless, I agree with Becker that, “most of us have experienced ‘near trance,’ or at least some of the characteristics of trance at certain times in our lives, especially in relation to musical listening or musical performing” (ibid,131). According to Becker, and according to her research into neurologist Antonio Damasio’s influential work on feelings, emotion, and the body (1999), this transcendent experience of deep listening hinges on a participant’s openness to emotional stimuli (Becker 2004, 133).

Like “community,” Sacred Harp singers love to talk about their feelings and their emotional response to performances of Sacred Harp singing—sometimes via recordings, but particularly in relation to personal participation in both large and intimate Sacred Harp singing events. Participants’ first experiences singing from *The Sacred Harp* are remembered as particularly poignant for many. One singer from the U.K. recalled his first reaction to being brought into the center of the Hollow Square

⁶¹ It is important to note that other forms of real trancing that are encouraged in some Christian groups in America, including speaking in tongues, or any practice where one experiences the loss of control over one’s body, is not at all a part of traditional Sacred Harp singing communities.

with a large class present, noting that, “my insides puddled a bit, and the world shifted on its axis, and I’ve been a Sacred Harp singer ever since” (Bruce 2015). Another singer from the United Kingdom created a blog post about the powerful impact of her first experience with Sacred Harp singing, writing, “Something rather profound happened to me whilst wandering around the RCA show back in 2013... Suddenly, this choral sound filled the space—four-part harmonies with bold Southern U.S. accents boomed out these great cascading rhythms, shamelessly—and I was entranced” (Miss Hoot 2014).

The realization of the extent of the reciprocal traveling community also tends to elicit feelings of intense emotion among Sacred Harp enthusiasts. For example, when Polish singer Magdalene Gryszko described her thoughts about the first Polish Sacred Harp Convention, held in 2012, and all the people who traveled from within Europe, and from the United States, she was overwhelmed with the feelings of gratitude and profundity. She claimed, “It was one of the most beautiful experiences in my life... words cannot describe it, we felt so blessed, so grateful. We felt love. I felt one of the Sacred Harp texts we sing, ‘and break this heart of stone.’ I experienced that God was changing our hearts during this Convention...”⁶² The intense feelings brought about by Sacred Harp singing is not isolated to European participants, but is felt throughout the Sacred Harp community-at-large.

Other musical communities experience these deeply personal and transcendent emotions while engaging in music-making. The link between these emboldened

⁶² Magdalena Gryszko, Facebook interview with Ellen Lueck, September 20, 2012.

emotional events and the community setting is especially apparent among singing communities, and is frequently brought on through a combination of music and text. In *The Sacred Harp*, the texts also incorporate an explicit religious element. Furthermore, singing communities define themselves in opposition to other singing communities by negotiating and specifying what (text and repertoire) and how (style) they do and do not sing; i.e. what does and does not elicit these desirable feelings of personal upliftment and communal profundity.

Singers identify with each other through the vulnerable act of sounding their voices (or sometimes in listening) and comprehending meaning in text. However, this experience of mutual identification is triggered by the participation in and mutual appreciation for very particular styles, genres, and texts. Kiri Miller suggests that for Sacred Harp singers in the United States, the texts sung, and the interpreted meanings behind them are one of the most important sources for feelings of belonging and mutual identification among participants. She writes, “singers agree that Sacred Harp can afford relief from grief, anxiety, and feelings of alienation” (2008, 125), though not all singers agree on the means by which this relief happens.

A few of Miller’s correspondents believe that any form of community singing could have the same affect—that the act of singing with others and the physical experience that comes with that, including moving in rhythm and feeling sound vibrations through the body, could result in intense emotional output and feelings of participant unity. But Miller is quick to disagree. She states that her experience suggests, “that singers who truly come ‘for just the music’ and manage to keep the

texts pigeonholed as historical curiosities are rare,” and adds that, “A deepening relationship to song texts over time... is a near-universal aspect of Sacred Harp experience regardless of religious affiliation” (ibid, 125-126). Miller attributes this near-universal relationship to the nature of the texts found in the compiled tunebook.

The texts in *The Sacred Harp* draw on raw human experiences that go beyond Christian faith, such as the inevitability and fear of death, fear of alienation, social inadequacy, and strength in community. The fact that these texts frequently take the form of a question is important. Miller distinguishes between lines that convey private anxiety (“Is there anyone like me?”) and lines that convey collective anxiety (“Will God forever cast us off? His wrath, forever smoke?”), but claims that “the juxtaposition of these kinds of texts in the hollow square encourages a simultaneous perception of solitude and multitude... When private troubles are expressed publicly and collectively—when two hundred people sing ‘Is there anyone like me?’—one becomes inclined to identify with fellow singers” (129).

The sense among participants that there is a specialness to Sacred Harp singing is echoed among Sacred Harp singers in Europe. Sarah West, an enthusiast from the United Kingdom, expressed her disability to feel so connected when attempting to participate in other singing ensembles.

...At various other points since I’ve been singing Sacred Harp, I’ve tried getting involved with other forms of harmony singing, and I’ve found it to really be sort of vapid. I’ve not got the same feeling, not the same emotions flowing through me when I’ve done it, so there’s obviously something very special about the music to me, because other things

don't really add up, other things don't get me the same way Sacred Harp does.⁶³

This same sentiment is also expressed by Sacred Harp singers specifically in reference to the affect of stylistic musical arrangement. On a 2015 radio program featuring the Sacred Harp singers of London, Joe compared the experience of listening to an arrangement of the tune “Sacred Throne”—a Scottish tune credited to Hugh Wilson in 1827 (Steel 2012, 169)—performed at the Manchester Cathedral⁶⁴—to listening to English Sacred Harp singers perform the shapenote version. In the Manchester Cathedral recording, the arrangement takes a text from the interpretation of Psalm 42 in Tate and Brady’s *New Version*⁶⁵: “As pants the heart for cooling streams / While heated in the chase / So longs my soul, oh God for thee / And thy refreshing grace.”

A full choir sings the first verse with pipe organ accompaniment, which plays throughout the entirety of the track at roughly ninety-five quarter-notes per minute. The organ plays in a typical Western voice leading style, with completed chords—nothing about the accompaniment is surprising to anyone with ears accustomed to Western music. The second verse is sung by a solo male tenor; not too loud, and with calculated vibrato. A children’s choir performs the third verse, and at last, the full ensemble joins together again. Joe comments,

You know it’s lovely, it’s sweet, it’s pleasant... It’s a nice tune. But I think if we play [the Manchester Cathedral] one and then we play the

⁶³ Sarah West, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 6, 2012.

⁶⁴ ‘As pants the hart for cooling streams’, by Hugh Wilson, performed in Manchester Cathedral.

⁶⁵ This text is also found in *The Sacred Harp* on page 230, “Converting Grace”.

version that we sing in *The Sacred Harp*, for me, the difference—the thing that I like in [Sacred Harp] music, is that it’s ballsy, throw your head back, it’s belted out...It has the energy of punk rock. It has the full embodied experience of punk rock. (Bruce et al 2015)

The London Sacred Harp version played on the radio indeed presents a stark emotional contrast to the polished, tidy, Anglican cathedral recording. First of all, the text used in *The Sacred Harp* arrangement is different from the cathedral version. Rather than drawing from the Psalms, the text in *The Sacred Harp* draws from the apocalyptic book of Revelation: “Beneath the sacred throne of God / I saw a river rise / The streams where peace and pard’ning blood / Descended from the skies”. The Sacred Harp singers perform the song slowly, with a particular heaviness to their phrasing, clocking in at around fifty-five quarter-notes per minute. The tempo gives the song a meditative quality. The class sings with a full, loud voice, and with no vibrato. The singers do not prioritize keeping in exact time with the leader, and they seem to revel in the heterophonic texture.

The arrangement of “Sacred Throne” in *The Sacred Harp* contains many of the usual voice leading principals typical of the American shapenote style, including voice crossing between the tenor and treble lines. The chords are primarily filled in with the first, third, and fifth scale degrees, which is not particularly representative of the stark, open fifth harmonies found in so many of the tunes in the book. However, each of the four parts is clearly distinguishable in the recording, giving the piece a particular melodic sparkle which is absent in the cathedral recording. To put it

bluntly, it sounds raw, yet vigorous, like an emotional response to some dramatic news.

Granted, even on the radio, the emotional comparison between the two recorded renditions of “Sacred Throne” is subjective. Some people feel threatened by raw emotion and “punk rock energy,” and prefer nice tidy music which makes them feel nice tidy comfortable emotions. Others prefer a sweet, calculated sound. Yet, many Sacred Harp enthusiasts experience intense emotional output in the rawness, the slowness, the heterophony, the open chords found in *The Sacred Harp*. They draw meaning from these emotional experiences—the experiences where participants find themselves contemplating their personal significance in the world, the people they surround themselves with, and of the nature and existence of God.

Religion and Spirituality

The meaning of Sacred Harp singing for participants is drawn from various sources, including a sense of local and dispersed community, and emotional stimulation, which I have already introduced. Religion is yet another source, and for many participants in both the United States and Europe, the religious weight of *The Sacred Harp* is what makes it most personally meaningful. For Christian participants, the religious thread of Sacred Harp gives the community particular meaning—a worldwide community that physically and metaphorically convenes to worship God

through this music. This rings true even when Christian singers are aware that others seated in the square may not believe the same things as they believe themselves.

There is, after all, tremendous power in words (Frye 1951), and the words in *The Sacred Harp* are explicitly Christian in content. There is no way around this fact—other than far-reaching interpretations by some non-Christians who actively seek to subvert the texts’ religiosity for personal comfort (see Miller 2008). Nevertheless, the texts in *The Sacred Harp* span a wide range of theological topics, including free grace, baptism, evangelizing, and faith, among many others. The texts also represent a wide range of attitudes toward the presentation of these theological topics. In other words, there is content that speaks directly to Christians across denominational affiliations, and across geographic distance. This was indeed the intention of the tunebook’s original compilers, though they assumed a Protestant audience. Yet the lack of theological uniformity in the tunebook does not seem to deter Christian participants. This is echoed by one Polish Catholic enthusiast who states about *The Sacred Harp*, invoking its text, “I believe these words. They are very important to me, and I’ve experienced many times how these words become reality in my life. ‘We’ll join in everlasting song and crown Him Lord of all.’”⁶⁶

Sacred Harp singing provides opportunity for Christians to explore the intensity of their relationship with God and their faith privately, yet in the presence of others, and in a (mostly) judgement-free atmosphere. After all, the rules of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone suggest that all people are welcome to the square, and that

⁶⁶ Magdalena Gryszko, Facebook interview with Ellen Lueck, September 20, 2012.

singers should set aside their personal differences, conflicts, and otherwise publicly claimed beliefs before joining the square as well.

Sacred Harp scholar John Bealle suggests that this method for inclusivity contrasts many contemporary Christian institutions where they resolve difference through compromise, such as “adjusting liturgical forms to accommodate the widest possible array of beliefs” (1997, 241). Other writers on Christian worship practices have expressed similar worry about the ability for such adjustments in a Church setting to affectively reach a congregation, fearing that worship has become “dumbed down” in an attempt to fill the seats (Dawn 1995). According to Bealle, Sacred Harp singing, on the other hand, “accommodates religious faith at a personal and private level” and “points also to a communal affirmation of an unlikely collective—to an extraordinary celebration of ritual unity without explicit doctrinal consensus” (1997, 241).

To be sure, there are many American and European Sacred Harp singers who do not identify as Christians, and who adhere to other faith systems and beliefs. Several singers active in Europe identify as Jewish or secular humanist; others simply claim they are not religious. Many who self-discover Sacred Harp singing could be described as “spiritual seekers.” Nevertheless, these singers choose to put themselves in frequent communion with the completely unavoidable religious texts and history of *The Sacred Harp*, and continue to perceive extraordinary meaning from these Christian elements, though not necessarily as an act of faith. I will return to this later.

Part of this meaning in the religious content in *The Sacred Harp* for Christian and non-Christian participants lies in the feelings and emotional experiences that Sacred Harp singing elicits. For some believers, these intense emotional experiences not only confirm the existence of God (not to suggest that they were necessarily seeking confirmation), but also serve as a pathway or prayer to God directly. Magdalena Gryszko of Warsaw, a practicing Catholic, emphatically exemplified this idea when she wrote, “Sacred Harp touches me, changes me in so many spheres. It’s a prayer for me. I experience that this singing leads me to God. It’s my journey to God—that’s why I keep singing it.”⁶⁷

Some Christian singers in Europe also assume that the words, emotions, and community experienced by enthusiasts through the medium of Sacred Harp will bring non-believers closer to God. This is not to say, however, that the primary goal for Christian participants is to evangelize through Sacred Harp. I have never heard from any singer in Europe who expressed this as a direct mission. They would all, as far as I have witnessed, defend the position of the Sacred Harp community-at-large that anyone, regardless of faith or politics, be welcome in the square without question. Nevertheless, this does not stop a hopeful Christian from believing that Sacred Harp singing might direct a participant to God. One long-time English singer who identifies as a Christian recounted to me about the shift in general nation-wide-community attitudes towards the religious text in the book, and towards the tradition of holding prayers at Sacred Harp gatherings. I quote at length.

⁶⁷ Magdalena Gryszko, Facebook interview with Ellen Lueck, September 20, 2012.

I've seen people who have mellowed over the years, and I think in part because they can't sing all these words or say all these words that mention God, that mention Jesus, that mention love—you know, all these things that we sing—without it affecting you. There are people who at one point will claim to be total atheists that perhaps say they aren't so sure now. It definitely changes people. There are enough people at this point within the U.K. who want to keep those traditions and think they are of paramount importance to Sacred Harp singing, that certain things are not left out because they are religious.⁶⁸

While the vivid Christian texts in *The Sacred Harp* have certainly turned off some people who decided to give Sacred Harp singing a try (one woman in Cork reportedly claimed “It's not right for you to be putting this out into the universe” before leaving the local singing), it is the issue of public prayer at singings that continues to irk some non-religious enthusiasts in Europe. This brings up a particularly interesting issue, as the texts sung in *The Sacred Harp* are often more religiously weighty—even accusatory toward non-believers at times—than the prayers generally given by Christian participants at Sacred Harp singing events.

For example, the popular tune “Liverpool” (SH 37b) is coupled with a text in *The Sacred Harp* that reads: “Young people all attention give / And hear what I shall say / I wish your souls with Christ to live / In everlasting day. / Remember you are hast'ning on / To deaths dark, gloomy shade / Your joys on earth will soon be gone / Your flesh in dust be laid.” Another, “Lover of the Lord” (SH 124), reads: “Lovers of pleasure more than God / For you He suffered pain. / For you the Savior spilt His blood / And shall He bleed in vain? / Oh you must be a lover of the Lord / Or you

⁶⁸ Hannah Land, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 4, 2012.

can't go to heaven when you die.” These texts are rhetorically confrontational, and by themselves seek to separate out individual singers in the square—young vs. mature; hedonistic vs. righteous.

In contrast, the typical prayer given at a Sacred Harp singing tends to steer toward creating an inclusive environment. Even when the names of God or Jesus are invoked, there is an attempt to unify the square through some positive or benign message. Take this prayer given by Lutheran pastor Zack Lindahl at Camp Fasola Europe 2014: “Dear heavenly father, thank you for gathering with us in this community. Now to sing to your praise, for each other’s upbuilding and uplifting, and for having so much fun together. All those things come from you. Thank you for it. Bless our time here today. Amen.” Bridgett Hill Kennedy, a visitor from Alabama who is often called upon to give prayers at singings, gave this prayer at the end of the 2014 Poland Sacred Harp Convention:

Heavenly Father, help us to know your ways. You have drawn us here together from such diverse places, cultures, and walks of life, yet you have managed to bind us as one. You have bound us through chords of music, and you have bound us with cords of love. Lord remember us as we leave to travel to our respective homes, keep us safe and let us find our families well. Continue to enrich our lives and give us thankful hearts, so that we can recognize and appreciate your many blessings. These things we ask in Christ’s name. Amen.

Why is it that many non-Christian singers find it challenging to hear these prayers which communicate the value of the Sacred Harp singing community, but will sing or even lead a song such as “Liverpool” or “Lover of the Lord”? For these enthusiasts, the music makes all the difference. For non-Christian singers, the music-making and

affect brought on by the sonic and social stimuli is the primary activity sought within Sacred Harp, rather than worship. Still, these singers must find mechanisms to reconcile their beliefs with the unavoidable texts. One singer from Leeds, who does not identify as Christian, got to the essence of this on a 2013 blog post about her new enthusiasm for Sacred Harp singing. For her, connecting a personal sense of meaning to the music and the feelings, rather than the text, was reconciliation enough:

Some of the songs are incredibly sad, some are joyful. Some are very very Jesus Loves Me, others are more generally religious in theme. But I didn't feel in any way like I was being forced or pressured to feel like I was taking part in a religious experience or rite. There were many people there who were also not religious, and some who were, and some from other faiths. It is the music that is the thing, and the feeling you get from bringing voices together. (Haigh 2013)

Perhaps the subtle anxiety toward the religious texts gleaned from her post (for example, “very very very Jesus Loves Me”) is also, in some way, a form of reconciliation—like a diary entry, to say it is to confront it—or as the oft quoted text in *The Sacred Harp* suggests, “Speak and let the worst be known / Speaking may relieve thee.” Acknowledging anxieties about religious texts enables conflicted singers to continue singing Sacred Harp without rupturing another personal sphere of identity as a “not religious” person.

Other singers, like Sarah West, do appreciate the texts, but merely as that; as text and poetry—not as words that serve an active form of worship. She clarified her position to me, claiming,

I do think that [the text] adds to the music. I do think that it lends a bit of depth to things and it does make you think about things. Even if what

it makes you think about is people, and real life situations, as opposed to mortality and God. I do think it creates an atmosphere.⁶⁹

In my experience in talking with Sacred Harp singers in Europe who identify as generally non-religious, they take a similar approach to Sarah West. They appreciate the text as it is an important part of the music, the history, and the community-making of Sacred Harp. They find other ways of internalizing the meaning of the texts outside of the realm of religious worship. They agree that it “lends depth” and “makes them think.” From the perspective of some Christian singers, this is also partially the aim of the texts—to confront both the beautiful and more challenging aspects of faith and a relationship with God and Christ.

Yet this reconciliation with the texts in *The Sacred Harp* for non-religious singers still does not explain away anxieties over other religious codes and performative keys of Sacred Harp singing practice, such as public prayers and public devotionals. Eimear O’Donovan recalled these anxieties among some Cork enthusiasts before they traveled to the first Camp Fasola Europe in 2012.

Coming up to camp, a lot of different Cork singers in particular talked to me and were like, ‘What’s the devotional? Do we have to go to that? I think I’m just going to skip that,’ and being emphatic that, ‘We’re not interested in the religion part of it.’ There was definitely some apprehension before-hand that everyone was going to be assumed to be a Christian and people weren’t happy with that.⁷⁰

This sentiment suggests that the texts in *The Sacred Harp* do not constitute “the religion part” of Sacred Harp singing for these secular participants, but that prayers

⁶⁹ Sarah West, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, October 6, 2012.

⁷⁰ Eimear O’Donovan, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, September 30, 2012.

and community devotionals do. To put it another way, there may be tremendous power in words, but the meaning and personal interpretation of those words is altered if they are spoken publicly as a prayer, rather than sung from a tunebook.

There are various reasons for this disconnect between sung text and prayer text—or perhaps it is a disconnect between the *act* of singing Christian text vs. the *act* of participation in public prayer, rather than the words themselves. After all, people regularly sing texts which touch on topics they disagree with, topics they don't understand, or texts which have little meaning outside of a musical context.

For example, readers can surely recall the tune and text to the ubiquitous children's song "Mary Had a Little Lamb." As a song, it has cultural meaning as one of the first songs American children learn. It has become a marker of innocence and simplicity. Yet, if one were simply to recite the text: "Mary had a little lamb / whose fleece was white as snow / And everywhere that Mary went / The lamb was sure to go," it loses part of its status as a musical marker, and its meaning is reduced. Who cares about some random Mary and her white lamb? Or, to borrow from a classic ethnomusicological example, the vocables performed in sacred and secular Navajo songs are imbued with ritual meaning, but are essentially meaningless when removed from their musical context (Frisbie 1980).

Granted, as I argued above, the religious words in *The Sacred Harp* do have meaning for secular participants, though not a literal meaning. They have meaning within the context of the music, and they perhaps facilitate tapping into feelings of emotional and spiritual depth that secular lyrics can do less easily. Furthermore, it is

understood by the community-at-large that the meaning of the texts is interpreted by participants privately.

In this regard, Sacred Harp singing has become a commodity in the general “spiritual marketplace” of contemporary Western culture—a term popularized by sociologist W.C. Roof in describing the search for a diversity of spiritual connectedness among the Baby Boomer generation in the United States (1999). Sociologist Laura Clawson discusses this extensively in her 2011 Sacred Harp monograph. She draws from the work of sociologist Robert Wuthnow (1998) as she generally describes Sacred Harp singers from outside of the American South as “spiritual seekers” who come to identify with the singing community having previously been unattached to religious doctrine. Rather, these singers arrive at Sacred Harp “having been part of spiritual seeking that in various cases encompasses Eastern and New Age religions as well as therapy, other types of music, and historical research intended to connect them with their forbears” (Clawson 2011, 15). Ethnomusicologist Jeffrey Summit describes similar findings in his book, *The Lord’s Song in a Strange Land* (2000), about music and Jewish worship in the greater Boston area. In it, he describes how some university students find personal spiritual significance in the specificities and quality of Jewish liturgical music making, while continuing to identify as not particularly religious.

Yet for many Sacred Harp singers, public prayers and devotionals serve a different purpose from participation in the musical activity, a purpose which complicates their personal identities as Sacred Harp singers. From a secular

perspective, these oratory forms are there not to join the community in song, but specifically to join the community in faith and in praise of God. To ask one to give a public prayer in the hollow square is to ask one to speak on behalf of the class. When “God” and “Jesus” are invoked along with the first-person plural “we,” the secular participants fear that they are being lumped into a category which they have already rejected, the category of believers. It ruptures the “non-believer” identity of secular participants, and they sometimes seek to push back against this. For this reason, some Sacred Harp singings in Europe either forgo any sort of prayer at small and large gatherings. Others actively invite secular or atheist participants to give a “prayer” or thoughtful remark to the gathered class of singers.

These religious and faith-based tensions are best conveyed through the voices of the Sacred Harp community-at-large. A Facebook post to the “Shapenote Scotland” page about these issues sparked a thoughtful online discussion about the nature of Sacred Harp singing events as a religious or secular social space. A range of opinions and personal experiences were shared to the group which display the level of thought and consideration that many singers give to this issue, which has presumably been inherent to the Sacred Harp community from the beginning as singers were affiliated with a variety of Protestant denominations. I will end this section with a transcript of this Facebook discussion, leaving names out for privacy.

Original Post: “The words are usually (though not always) religious in nature, but people of all faiths and none sing this music, not as an act of worship but for sheer enjoyment.” —Shapenote Scotland website

Need it spelled out for my slow-witted brain guys: are these still secular events where we explore sacred music together, or are they sneaking towards religious events where we worship God together through song? If there's been a shift towards participation in singing with us = participation in a type of worship, then I need to know so I can invite the right friends who are comfortable in that and not the friends who will be uncomfortable in that- 😊(UK Singer)

Commenter 1: do you feel our singings have been getting more “overtly” religious?

Original Poster: Thanks, yeah very much so—I think that instructing people that singing Sacred Harp is an act of worship, and exhorting them to worship their own concept of God while singing, or shouting religious expressions like “hallelujah”, “Praise God”, or “Amen”, during/at the end of songs, means I'm no longer inviting my friends to come and explore sacred music together in a secular space, I'm inviting them to come and participate as worshippers in an ecumenical religious ritual. I need clarification on which one it's meant to be.

Commenter 1: Hmm, I guess I am to blame for your unease (at least in part), in which case I apologize. The LAST thing I want to do is to deter people from participating in this activity. I describe Sacred Harp as worship during introductory remarks for two reasons. Firstly, that this music was (of course) originally “designed” as worship but secondly and more importantly to emphasise that doing it “badly” doesn't matter at all. Its fundamental intention isn't aesthetic, so terms like “good singing” and “bad singing” are sort of meaningless.

I'd hoped that I was stressing that it almost immediately became a social as well as a spiritual activity, that it has never been exclusive and that basic to the practice is that it welcomes “Christians of all denominations, adherents of other religions [...] and persons of no religious affiliation.” Clearly though I'm not emphasising those aspects of Sacred Harp singing enough. If the group continues to tolerate me doing introductions I'll try to do better in future.

Personally I'm not aware of ever shouting “Praise God”, and while I admit the odd “Amen” or “Hallelujah” may occasionally pass my lips, they just come out as innocent expressions of enthusiasm. I wouldn't

belittle their religious significance but I'm using them rather like a cry of "Bravo" - by which I don't mean, "You bold Italian!"
Please continue to invite people to come and sing! 😊

Commenter 2: It is true that the majority of songs in the book we sing from have religious/Christian lyrics.

I tend to tell people that *whatever meaning or relevance they take from that is up to them.* I certainly wrestled with this issue when I started thinking about singing. For some folk, the meaning of the words is very important to them and either meshes in with their belief system or clashes with it.

For other folk, they don't pay attention to the words and just like the singing or listening of the sounds. Basically, it is up to each individual. The general rule is not to take one's politics or religion to the Hollow Square. There are a surprising number of atheists singing Sacred Harp as well as people who have a non-Christian belief system. All are welcome. At a monthly singing session, the emphasis is on having the opportunity to sing and nothing more. At an All Day singing or a Convention, though, you will find prayers to start and end the day as well as before lunch. Sometimes these "prayers" are more secular or ecumenical, depending on who is doing them. The prayers are either included out of a sense of "tradition" or because for that group of people they are considering it a form of worship.

Commenter 3: Don't over-think it. As long as no one tries to convert someone and there is no preaching, there is no reason to apologize for the origin of the tradition and the songs.

Commenter 2: Not to worry. I don't think there is any apologising. I know that it helped me to wrestle with it when others told me "it doesn't matter; just ignore it."

Commenter 4: For many people singing these songs IS an act of worship. There will be religious folks that see this as a spiritual experience, and non-religious that see it as primarily a musical experience (although for many atheists it's spiritual as well). The question isn't really "So, is it worship or is it music?", the question is, "Am I comfortable with people next to me doing this as an act of worship" and vice versa. If you're not comfortable with someone approaching the music in a different way

than you then the problem isn't really in the music and conventions, is it? Why not invite everyone and let them figure out their comfort zone by themselves?

Commenter 2: Yes [responder 5]! There's the personal relationship with the music itself (& whatever that may be for you) *and* being comfortable with others choosing a different experience for themselves...

Commenter 5: That's an interesting way to put it, [commenter 4]. That was not a problem for me so I didn't see it. Very useful. But, what [original poster] appears to be getting at is: are our monthly singings (and maybe any other event we do as Shapenote Scotland) intended as religious, or non-religious events? My answer is: non-religious. We always refer to it as "singing", and invite anyone to sing with us. I don't use that word as a euphemism. We also leave prejudices at the door.

The key aspects to me are: (1) The joy of singing together. Don't know what it is. I just love it. (2) The community spirit. We work together to sing, chat, give support, encourage anyone to lead, to take the front bench, to make events happen, to sing for anyone who needs it or wants it, give traveling singers food and a bed...

Commenter 4: The thing is [commenter 5], it's not up for anyone to decide, it depends upon the people who happen to be present. If people show up at your singing, believing in the religious words and who pray the words and worship God through the songs, then it is worship for them and a religious act. That will be the case whether or not you or anyone else for that matter deem the gatherings in Scotland as non-religious or not. Again, why the need to mark it as religious or non-religious at all? Can't people just do their thing, recognize that our singings are steeped in Christian heritage, accept that we approach this heritage in different ways, and that this music and traditions still brings us together across the divides of confession?

Commenter 6: I think this is how it usually is (in my experience) and how it should be. However, it can be confusing. A few atheists have told me they didn't want to continue singing because of the religions content of the music (however in one case Mass settings were Ok with them!). I've

also had a Christian confuse hands beating time for hands raised in prayer.

Commenter 7: For me, it is what it is, and that is just wonderful!

Commenter 8: It may be worth noting that even in the American South, chock full of Baptists and Methodists, shapenote singing has been at arm's length from "organized religion". (Obviously "it's complicated".) That distance is an intrinsic part of the tradition.

Commenter 9: The key thing is mutual love & respect. We leave our politics & religious beliefs at the door. We sing together. None believers need to be respectful of the tradition & the sacredness of the music & that some people experience the singing as a form of worship. Believers need to be respectful of others at the singing who don't share their beliefs / practices. Some of the most moving prayers & memorial lessons have been from people I would class as non believers. I think a monthly singing should have maximum informality without losing respect for the music.⁷¹

As is clear from these posts, Sacred Harp singers in Europe do not all agree on the definitive meaning of a Sacred Harp gathering in terms of its relationship to religious practice. For some regular participants, including the original poster, the religiously rooted event choreography and performative keys (such as prayer) that take place at singings clearly causes internal conflict. Commenter 6 cited instances of beginners who ultimately decided that the it was the religious context of the sung texts that were too problematic. Other commenters are determined to define the religious nature of the events in accordance with how they believe singing from *The Sacred Harp* was originally intended, either as worship, or as a tool for building religiously diverse

⁷¹ These posts and comments were posted to the "Shapenote Scotland" Facebook page, February 17-19, 2016.

community. Commenter 4, on the other hand, is adamant that the Sacred Harp social code which suggest that religious and secular particularities of individuals be kept private at public singings, allowing for participants to commune together in the same activity, while defining the meaning of the event for themselves.

Moving on to Part 3: Chapter 5, I continue exploring the role of religion in Sacred Harp singing for European participants through two profiles. The first is of devotionals given at the second session of Camp Fasola Europe in September 2014. The second is a profile of a young Sacred Harp enthusiast from Sweden, Zack Lindahl, who is also a Lutheran pastor with many thoughts on the subject of religious meaning and Sacred Harp singing.

Then I turn to a profile of a young Irish woman, Daire O’Sullivan, where I explore the role of powerful emotions in Sacred Harp singing, and intersections with the far reach of the transnational Sacred Harp singing community-at-large. Lastly, I provide a profile of Harry Campbell of Glasgow. His experiences as an early Sacred Harp singer in the U.K., along with his personal philosophical stance on music-making, appropriation, and the realities of community participation, provide a stark contrast to the more common narratives I have discussed throughout the dissertation. His thoughts rightly call into question the benevolence of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone, and the limitations of the Sacred Harp affinity group for those who wish to participate in their own way.

CHAPTER 5

FOUR PROFILES

Devotionals at the Second Session of Camp Fasola Europe

The second European session of Camp Fasola took place Monday, September 22 through Friday, September 26, 2014 at Wichrowe Wzgórze, a lovely lakeside retreat center in Chmielno, Poland, near the northern city of Gdańsk. The camp is designed to disseminate Sacred Harp related musical and cultural knowledge in a concentrated period of time through the help of teachers who are considered experts. The first Camp Fasola Europe session had taken place two years prior in September of 2012. This first event, organized by the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association (SHMHA) based in Alabama, was considered a great success by the first round of European and American campers. However, SHMHA determined that the sessions of Camp Fasola Europe should take place every two years because of the costs associated with hosting the event. Another reason cited is the limited number of potential European campers compared to the number of American campers who annually fill two weeklong summer sessions in Alabama; a youth oriented session and one geared toward adults.

Despite the less frequent spacing of camp sessions, Camp Fasola Europe is essentially run and organized as it is in Alabama. Many of the same teachers flew over to Poland to take part, including David and Karen Ivey, Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg, P. Dan Brittain, Buell Cobb, Bridgett Hill-Kennedy, and others. Chris Brown, a singer from England, also gave a lesson titled, “The Man with 146 Hymns in *The Sacred Harp*” about the English

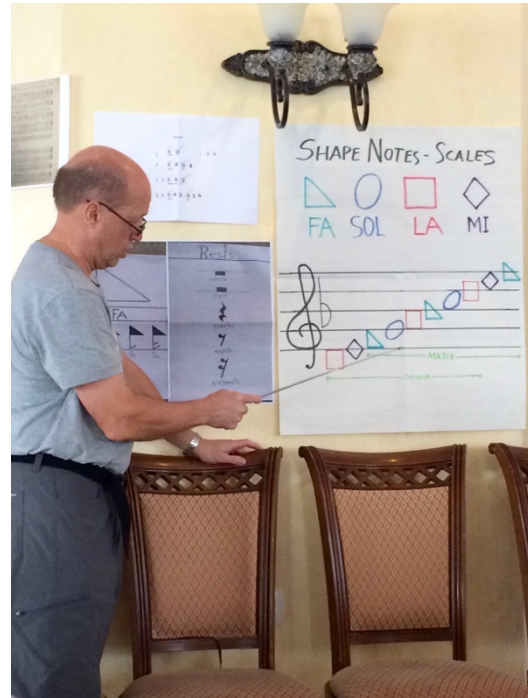


Figure 14. David Ivey teaches a class on the rudiments at Camp Fasola Europe, September, 2014

poet Isaac Watts, which is not a standard lesson offered at the camp in Alabama, but which provided a European voice to the American dominated camp lessons.

Over the course of the week, there were thirty-five Sacred Harp related classes offered, ranging from the rudiments of the musical style and notation (see Figure 14), to readings by Buell Cobb from his new book of Sacred Harp memoirs, *Like Cords Around My Heart* (2014). There were twelve recreational activities offered, which included Nordic walking, hay cart rides, lake sports, and local Kashubian pottery making. One evening’s activities even included a Kashubian culture show which featured the music and dance of the Slavic Kashubian ethnic group associated with the region, whose language and culture have historically been oppressed by dominant German, Russian, and Polish political powers.

Poland was decided to be the best location for camp because of cost factors for both SHMHA and the Polish singers themselves. SHMHA is a non-profit organization which is highly active in the Sacred Harp community as the publisher of the annual Sacred Harp Minutes Book, but the organization lacks the funds to be able to rent retreat facilities in more expensive European countries which charge in Euros or Pounds. Poland, on the other hand, which continues to use the zloty⁷² as standard currency, provides affordable camp facilities, and is convenient for the Polish Sacred Harp enthusiasts, for whom the cost of international travel is often prohibitively expensive.

Each evening, all camp participants convened together for a class singing, which was organized much like a Sacred Harp convention; an arranging committee is responsible for deciding the order of song leaders, the chairperson is responsible for hosting the class of singers, and the chaplain marks the beginning and end of the event with prayers. These evening class singings are designed to teach the campers how to conduct their own Sacred Harp conventions in their local communities in accordance with traditional practices. It is an opportunity for SHMHA to transmit the structural choreography of a singing, and hence the choreography of the socially constructed Sacred Harp affinity interzone.

One marked difference between the typical Sacred Harp convention and the class singings at camp was that each night, after the singing, a devotional was held—a

⁷² On April 7, 2016, the conversion rate between US dollars and Polish zlotys is 1USD=3.76PLN according to xe.com.

guided lesson or period of reflection which may or may not have explicit references to Christianity. I will return to these devotional events later as a distinguished element in the meaning of Sacred Harp for the campers who were present.

While the most popular youth session of Camp Fasola held annually in Anniston, Alabama is open to all, its proudest achievement is generally considered to be teaching children about Sacred Harp singing, particularly children from families whose living or deceased relatives were involved in Sacred Harp singing communities. This is an investment in the future of traditional singing. Camp Fasola Europe, on the other hand, prides itself on being able to bring traditional Sacred Harp wisdom to the growing numbers of enthusiasts on the western side of the northern Atlantic who may not have the time or means to attend the sessions in Alabama. Of course, another outcome of holding the camp in Europe is a larger variety of international attendees. International diversity has become another source of pride for Sacred Harp singing events and for the community-at-large. The week at camp can allow for strong friendships and connections to form between European and American Sacred Harp enthusiasts, which in turn perpetuates a stronger and more frequently traveled international Sacred Harp circuit.

By the evening of the first day of Camp Fasola Europe, almost all of the campers had arrived, having flown into the airport in Gdańsk, or having taken a three-hour train ride from Warsaw. We convened in a large hall overlooking Lake Kłodno, and were seated around the hollow square. David Ivey, the director of Camp Fasola, addressed the class for an introduction:

This is our twelfth year to have Camp Fasola, and this is the 21st session... I want to especially thank European singers for being a reason to have Camp Fasola Europe. Thank you for how you are enriching our new tradition... One of my favorite things to do is to cover where we are from. First of all, our ages span from nineteen to seventy-four. And we will recognize the countries. We will ask you to stand by country. I think we have eleven countries represented: Australia; Hong Kong; Czech Republic; United Kingdom; Ireland; Israel; Norway; Poland; Sweden; USA; Germany.⁷³

With each country named, its representatives stood to excited applause. It was clear to the attendees that Sacred Harp singing was indeed expanding, as several of these countries had no known active Sacred Harp singing enthusiasts or groups at the previous Camp Fasola Europe session in 2012, including Hong Kong, Israel, and Sweden.

According to those campers who were present at both sessions of Camp Fasola Europe, there were other subtle differences in the community atmosphere of the 2014 session when compared to the 2012 session. Most of all, they cited an increased openness to explicit expressions of religious sentiment. I gathered this from initial interviews made with campers in 2012 who described anxieties about religion in camp activities such as the guided devotional, which I discussed in Chapter 4.

The 2014 session, on the other hand, was attended by campers from a variety of backgrounds who were freely open about their religious affiliations. They felt that the community atmosphere at camp was accepting enough to not only express their connection to religion without causing visible discomfort to others, but was in fact

⁷³ David Ivey, recorded by Ellen Lueck in Chmielno, Poland, September 22, 2014.

open enough to incorporate religious teachings into the guided evening devotionals without community protest. The 2014 session of Camp Fasola Europe was perhaps the most outwardly religious of any Sacred Harp event I have personally encountered, with the exception of a few isolated prayers given at traditional singings I attended.

It is possible that this acceptance of explicit religiosity is due in part because the events were hosted in Poland, a culture which remains steeped in Catholic identity. However, the 2012 session, which took place in the same location, did not display religiosity so outwardly. Neither is it displayed so outwardly at camp sessions in Alabama, which not only take place in a society steeped in Protestantism, but are hosted on the grounds of Christian retreat centers. Part of what made the religious elements in the devotionals so explicit in 2014 was the direct use of verses and stories from the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments. It is also important to note that the individuals who offered devotional lessons to the class at Camp Fasola were ultimately chosen by a larger group—each night, a designated group of campers was responsible for organizing the evening class singings and the arranging for the devotional. In other words, the class sanctioned these people who were open about their thoughts on religion and Sacred Harp singing.

Explicit religious expression is something that many singers imagine will occur at traditional singings in the American South. Conversely, they expect that Sacred Harp singings outside of a traditional context will lack an overt religious atmosphere (see Miller 2008; Clawson 2011). One could generally confirm these assumptions when painting this picture of traditional vs. affinity group singings with a broad brush,

though there are multiple exceptions. This session of Camp Fasola Europe, however, stood out to me as a marked shift in this typical narrative of religious expression among the Sacred Harp community-at-large.

Below, I will provide the text for three separate evenings' devotionals. The first is given by Yotin Tiewtrakul, a music director at an English church in Germany. The second is a devotional given by Ophir Ilzetzki of Israel on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. The third is a devotional given by Zach Lindahl, a Lutheran pastor from Sweden.

Yotin Tiewtrakul, night 2:

I was assigned to share with you a devotional, and I have to admit that I haven't looked into the Bible for a quite a long time. So it's a good opportunity to look into that book again, and where to start than in the beginning? So I will read you the first versus of the Bible and share some thoughts with you, and then I'll lead you in prayer on a reflection of the day, if that's okay, yeah?

So this book starts with these verses, and you have heard them a lot of times already, but perhaps you can see if you can hear them for the first time again...

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void, and darkness covered the face of the deep. While a wind from God swept over the face of the waters, then God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. And God called the light, ‘day’ and the darkness He called ‘night’. And there was evening and there was morning. The first day” [Genesis 1: 1-5].

When I read these verses again today, I was thinking about how we usually, in our Christian tradition—when we *are* a Christian tradition—think of God creating out of nothing. That's the usual theological term

to speak of the creation. That God is just so powerful that he creates things out of nothing. But in this story, he actually finds something already, before he starts to imagine all this... So, there is already something, even if it's only a formless something. And obviously, there is some kind of water, and the story doesn't answer, "Where does this come from?"

I found a connection to this kind of creating, that often, we think that when we learn—we are here to learn—we think, 'I need first this and that before I can progress in what I want to learn.' These verses tonight invite me to think, 'What do I have already? With what can I work?' And with what I have already, I can start and go on. It's like when I cook—I don't know how you cook at home—but sometimes I have to open the fridge and see, 'Oh, what do I have here?' And then I have to work with what is in the fridge. And I really hope that these first verses in the Bible invite us to ask 'What have we got? What do I have?' And I want to appreciate what I have and continue from this. These are my thoughts. So let us pray.

God our creator, we thank you for giving us darkness and light. We thank you for giving us the day to work, to learn, to share. But also the night to rest, and to be refreshed again... You have given us this day to create things as well. And so at the end of this day, we want to give back to you what happened today. And we think back on all that really was enjoyable today... And we also think of those things which challenged us today... We think of new friends we made today... People we have met for the first time... We think of the things where we thought, 'oh yes, that really worked well'... And we also think of the things where we felt, 'oh, that hasn't been finished today'... All of this we want to lay into your hands back to your hands, and trust that you will do something with that, with the little things we come across, and bless those things. And so there is nothing else left to say except 'thank you'. Amen.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Yotin Tiewtrakul, recorded by Ellen Lueck in Chmielno, Poland, September 23, 2014.

Yotin (see Figure 15) models his devotional lesson much like a Bible study leader in a contemporary Church would model their group lesson. He begins with a modest declaration of his own shortcomings by claiming that he hasn't "looked into the Bible for quite a while," and then proceeds to offer commentary on a passage in the Bible that has recently been meaningful to him in regards to attending Camp Fasola.



Figure 15. Yotin Tiewtrakul leads at the First Germany Sacred Harp Convention, 2014

Yotin does this in the hopes that the group as a whole will also find meaning in the same passage. In Yotin's prayer, he provides substantial pauses between phrases, inviting the individuals in the class to privately reflect on their meaning for themselves. This is a common technique for guided prayer in worship services (Hoffman 1999; Hammond 2015).

He assumes that the singers in attendance are familiar with these verses—"You have heard them a lot of times already"—and then continues to link content in Genesis 1:1-5 to the process of learning and progress in Sacred Harp singing. Additionally, Yotin asserts his position that Sacred Harp singing is explicitly a Christian tradition, and in doing so, firmly justifies his use of the Bible in his devotional. These verses, the first words in the Old Testament, are indeed widely known throughout Western culture, even to people who have never had a Christian

education. In this regard, Yotin set up his Biblical-leaning devotional to be accessible and familiar to those singers who otherwise know little about Christianity.

The next devotional leader, Ophir Ilzetzki, takes a slightly different approach by reflecting on Jewish faith traditions, but also frames it to be accessible to both Christians and non-religious participants.

Ophir Ilzetzki: Night 4

Today, for those of you who don't know, is the New Year's Eve of the Jewish faith. And from this day on, and for ten days, people of the faith are required to reflect on their past year and their relationship with God. And in these ten days, they are expected to make their peace with God, until the Day of Atonement, which is ten days tomorrow. It's a day of fasting and a day of reflections, and in the spirit of that day I'd like to make this prayer.

Dear Lord, I am reminded today of your servant, Noah, who was the only person you had decided to save, after you had given up on mankind. After forty days of storm you made a covenant with Noah, and the memory of that covenant is your rainbow. The covenant was that we, mankind, shall inherit the earth, and you shall be reminded always. And what work have we done with this inheritance? When I look around, I see that mankind has still not learned to live together in peace. We see people starving, we see people at war. We see people making borders, rather than breaking them down. It seems that we have forgotten the covenant, although I do recollect having seen the rainbow in the sky. So I ask you Lord today to look down at this square. This square is made of people from different cultures and different languages who come together. They might not like each other outside of the square. They might have different opinions about many, many different things. But within the square, we are here together towards a cause. They fight together towards an end, like, one could say, an army. Or, one could say,

brothers and sisters. So I ask you Lord, please give us the strength to shine in our lives outside the square, the same way we do within, so that we can better ourselves, better each other, and indeed be true to the cause. Amen.⁷⁵

In Ophir’s devotional (see Figure 16), he begins by providing a short description of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and the High Holy Days, which end with Yom Kippur, or the “Day of Atonement”. Instead of engaging in a Bible study sort of relationship with the class, as Yotin did above, Ophir quickly transitions to a prayer where he addresses God, rather than the class directly.

Like Yotin, Ophir chooses to reflect on a story from the Old Testament that is widely known throughout Western culture, namely the story of Noah’s Ark. This points to a desire to be reverent to religious teachings in his prayer, but also make his public prayer accessible to singers without deep knowledge of Biblical stories—after all, a public prayer speaks for those present.

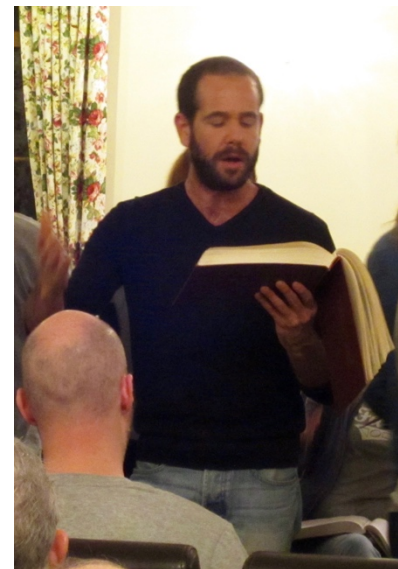


Figure 16. Ophir Ilzetzki at Camp Fasola Europe, September 2014

Rather than reflecting on issues relating to Camp Fasola exclusively, such as learning and building new skills, Ophir chooses the topic of inclusivity and acceptance in the hollow square as the focal point of his prayer. He observes that the wider world is a place where this type of acceptance is often neglected—his words

⁷⁵ Ophir Ilzetzki, recorded by Ellen Lueck in Chmielno, Poland, September 24, 2014.

perhaps contain undercurrents of criticism toward the conflicts surrounding his home country of Israel, as well as the “refugee crisis” in Europe which was just beginning, and fears of immigration control in the United States. Yet the hollow square in which singers join to participate in singing from *The Sacred Harp* is used to represent the ideal relationship between people in reverence to God. Acceptance and inclusivity in the hollow square is a frequent topic for devotionals given at Camp Fasola in Alabama, yet they are rarely buoyed by stories or passages directly from the Bible in order to avoid explicit religious representation.

Zack Lindahl, the leader of the final devotional discussed here, takes aim at yet another topic that relates to the Sacred Harp community-at-large, and does so with support from a passage in the Biblical New Testament.

Zack Lindahl, night 4:

I’m going to read from a very famous part of the scripture.

“Blessed are those who are poor in spirit; they belong to the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted. Blessed be the humble; they shall inherit the land. Blessed be those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; they shall eat their fill. Blessed be the merciful; they shall meet mercy. Blessed be the pure of heart; they shall see God. Blessed be those who keep the peace; they shall be called the sons of God. Blessed be those who are persecuted for their righteousness sake; they belong to the kingdom of heaven.” [Matthew 5:3-10]

You know, I am thinking about all these people that are supposed to be blessed, and I think, ‘Are these the kind of people that would feel blessed?’ Because all these people who are blessed seem to be people

who are sort of missing something—who are in want of something. People who are hungry. People who are meek and not assertive, who don't have the status and the prestige that we normally think is proper. And we might not either. We might not feel very blessed because of what happens in our lives, because of who we are, for whatever reasons, we all know those reasons. But we know they are blessed because they are hungry for something, and therefore can seek it and find it.

Maybe that's why we love this music, because it satisfies us in a way that few other things do. And you know, that's kind of surprising because we sing about things that are kind of uncomfortable, and that most people wouldn't be reassured or comforted by. But maybe we get something else that's really precious and I think that thing might be truth. The kind of truth that we are frail. Our bodies are frail. Our relationships can be frail, and those relationships can be destroyed by something that cannot hinder death. Maybe that's the truth, that there are realer things that we can't enjoy by ourselves. And by hearing this list... it reminds us that we really need one another because of our frailty, and that we really need God. That is why we are blessed. Not because we have something wonderful and precious, and we can show it to the world and say, 'Oh look how blessed we are.' We are blessed because of the hunger we have. Because of the wonder we have. Because of the pieces in our heart that are sort of void without something that comes from outside or from other people or from God that can fill it. Those are the people that are blessed. And we are those people. Let's pray.

Dearest God, come with your Holy Spirit that speaks truth that might not be comfortable, so that we may live truth. Let us not shy away from the truth that we might be afraid or weak... but reminds us that we need each other and that we need You. Dear God, give us peace of mind so that we do not try to change things that we can't. Give us courage to try to change the things that we can for the better. And give us reason enough to understand the difference between these two things. We ask that you bless our night's sleep so that we can wake up again, see each other, and sing more tomorrow. Help us not to number our days and

count them until their end, that we will take every day that comes as a gift. In the name of Jesus. Amen.⁷⁶

Here, Zack reflects on the challenges that the texts in *The Sacred Harp* can create for its singers—texts that confront the inevitability of death, of loneliness, and anxieties over worthiness. He also reflects on how the desire for Sacred Harp participants to pursue their affinity for the music draws them together into a community which also strengthens them individually. The ability of *The Sacred Harp* to bind people together and strengthen them is a classic rhetorical trope in the Sacred Harp community, and is also reflected in Ophir's devotional. Like Ophir, Zack provides support for this trope through the use of scripture. Like Yotin, he speaks directly to the class, as though leading a Bible study group, before ending in prayer.

These three devotional lessons diverge from the inclusive, yet vague language used by so many singing communities outside of the American South, and at other opportunities for devotionals at Sacred Harp singing events, such as Camp Fasola in Alabama.

Perhaps it is too early to make a definitive judgement about wider shifts in the acceptance of and comfort with religious statements such as prayers and devotionals by non-religious Sacred Harp enthusiasts. However, many non-religious singers sat through these Christian and Jewish prayers and devotionals at the 2016 session of

⁷⁶ Zack Lindahl, recorded by Ellen Lueck in Chmielno, Poland, September 25, 2014.

Camp Fasola Europe, seemingly without discomfort. Also, I did not hear negative feedback from non-religious campers at other informal moments in the camp schedule about the content of these prayers and devotionals. This surprised me, as most of the time when explicit religious statements are made at singings in the United States, there is small chatter and debate about it among non-religious singers after-the-fact. Yet in Poland, the devotional attendees seemed comfortable, and even contemplative.

Of course, there are many singers in Europe who were not present at these devotionals, and some of them, had they been there, may have objected to their explicit religiosity within the context of a Sacred Harp event, where codes dictate that specific religious beliefs remain private for the benefit of a spiritually diverse audience of Sacred Harp enthusiasts. Or they may have objected on some other grounds. Nevertheless, these devotional events which took place at Camp Fasola Europe were wide open to the explicit expression of religious belief and Judeo-Christian prayer, more than any other Sacred Harp event I have attended with a geographically diverse mix of singers present. Perhaps the social codes which have regulated the expression of religion in the Sacred Harp affinity interzone for decades are shifting in Europe.

Zack Lindahl's Spiritual Relationship with Sacred Harp Singing

Zack Lindahl, a Lutheran pastor in his early twenties who resides in rural Sweden, has swiftly become an active Sacred Harp superenthusiast around Europe in the past three years. Since 2013, he has attended eleven international Sacred Harp singing events within Europe. He also spearheaded a Sacred Harp singing workshop in his hometown of Uppsala this past September 2015, which attracted participants from the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States. Zack is a thoughtful conversationalist with a friendly attitude—traits which have helped him make swift connections within the European Sacred Harp community. For a while, he was the only Sacred Harp enthusiast in Sweden, which provided him a remarkable relationship with Sacred Harp singing. He has since been able to muster a small group which meets regularly.

Zack Lindahl’s introduction to Sacred Harp singing is indicative of 21st century trends in music globalization. He discovered it for himself after he heard a cover of the tune “Idumea” performed by the British experimental folk band, Current 93. He recounts, “I think that I was interested in the source of this because there were several different versions of it. So I Googled that and heard the Sacred Harp version, so that sort of got me into listening to Sacred Harp on Spotify.”⁷⁷ Spotify is a Swedish commercial music streaming service that launched in 2008, and currently boasts more than 75 million world-wide users. A Spotify search for “Sacred Harp” reveals fifteen albums of Sacred Harp music available for streaming. A search for “Idumea” alone

⁷⁷ Zack Lindahl, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, February 11, 2015.

reveals multiple commercially available field recordings of the tune performed by American Sacred Harp singers, as well as dozens of covers from a variety of ensembles.

Zack claims he continued listening on Spotify for some time, but his initial intrigue faded as he pursued other interests, such as becoming a pastor. Nevertheless, his thoughts wandered to Sacred Harp singing again a few years later in 2013, and he picked up listening to it, embarking on more thorough research into the music and practice. He used the wealth of resources available online by this time, including the Bremen Sacred Harp website, downloadable pamphlets from Fasola.org, and other sites found through Google.

I started to read about the practice—about the notes and how you’re singing and also about the hospitality, and that there are European groups... I sent an email to the Bremen group—it was Harald—and he said, ‘Oh please come stay with us and sing with us,’ So then I went, and that was a fun experience. A month after, I went to the London All-Day, and I’ve been hooked ever since.⁷⁸

According to Zack, it was the confluence of his attitude toward his personal interests at the time, and attractive qualities about Sacred Harp singing itself—including the sound of the music, the community ethos, and the religious texts—that caused him to pursue this musical activity. These elements also caused Sacred Harp to become a meaningful part of his life both as a traveling enthusiast, and as a relatively solitary individual in Sweden. I quote him at length:

Life was changing and looking forward to new things, and I was also trying to be active and pursue whatever I like. I was in a consciousness

⁷⁸ *ibid.* All quotes by Zack Lindahl in this profile are derived from this interview.

of being proactive in pursuing my interest. So when I started to really feel the urge to do this... I was attracted because of the style of singing, and because it was something new... And also how you conduct the singings, the democratic aspect of it and the creative aspects of it. This is not something that you do for other people to consume, but to just do it for the glory of God, for yourself, for all these people, to sing it.

And I think the third thing that attracted me was the words of the songs, in that the words confirmed by own spiritual experiences that I rarely find to be confirmed by other people. In my church, and the Christian community in general, people usually call me very pessimistic and cynical, and they are welcome to do that, but to take the experience of singing and fear of God and fear of death, and longing for heaven, and all those very primal religious feelings that aren't very refined—singing [Sacred Harp] sort of confirms it... I became a Christian because of sin. Because Jesus taught about the world in a very truthful manner without being condescending or trying to cheer anyone up, but just saying the truth about our sin and our need of God and all that. So I sort of felt all of those experiences [in *The Sacred Harp*]. I felt a spiritual connection to the music.

The fourth thing was that it has hospitality to it, and a community to it. I think that all of these were very important for me to start singing. I'm not sure I would have started singing if any of these were missing. But they all came together it seems.

As is clear from his assessment of his own interest, Zack Lindahl associates his identity as a Sacred Harp singer with his identity as a Christian. As a person of faith, and as a person who spends significant time contemplating his relationship with God and Christ, Zack has found deep meaning in the words found in *The Sacred Harp* and the fellowship of the transnational singing community, as well as the emotions he often experiences when singing this music. Yet, while his Sacred Harp identity is shaped by his religious identity, he is highly aware of differences between his experiences as a singer and his experiences as a religious leader in his community at

home in Sweden. For him, Sacred Harp singing fills a spiritual and worshipful position that is not always present in his professional life.

As a pastor, Zack feels responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of his congregation in Enånger. He possesses an intellectually authoritative role in his Lutheran parish, and this role, compounded with the negotiation between his authority and his youth, often prevents him from allowing his spiritually motivated emotions to flow freely. However, temporarily stepping away from his parish to sing with the Sacred Harp community—or even in private—allows him to experience these emotions. Zack explains,

Since I personally have a difficult time expressing my emotions, even though I feel them very strongly, I really feel an outlet for that kind of expression when I'm singing these songs together with people. Expressing emotion is hard for me in other contexts, but it's not hard for me in singing Sacred Harp... Singing these songs alone can become very emotional and spiritual. It is a spiritual practice, even just singing alone with YouTube. Sometimes, when singing with people, when leading a song that I have sung at home, a lot, it can become very, very intense emotionally.

As Zack suggests, Sacred Harp singing is also meaningful as a personal form of spiritual worship, and specifically as prayer. It is the combination of the texts, singing, and the emotional influence which creates the prayer—the act of communicating with God. For Zack, prayer through singing is rooted not only in feelings and emotions elicited, but also in practical Protestant teachings. Zack explains:

[Sacred Harp] is part of my spiritual life because I sing it as prayer itself. Singing this is part of my prayer life, even Martin Luther said, 'pray by

words, pray once, pray by song, pray twice.’ So I take that to heart, really... Singing this is about practicing truth. The core of the spiritual practice for me is practicing truth—the truth that our bodies are frail and that death is inevitable and that we make mistakes that can be unalterable and that can have very grave consequences for us, bodily and spiritually. And when I sing this music, I am letting truth set me free, like Jesus said.

In a video I took of Zack leading at the First Germany Sacred Harp Convention in June 2014 (see Video 3), the impact of this confluence of text, singing, and emotion is clearly visible and audible. In it, Zack is particularly taken by one of his favorite lines of religious poetry in *The Sacred Harp*, namely the third verse of “Lebanon” (SH



Video 3. Zack Lindahl leads “Lebanon” at the First Germany Sacred Harp Convention, June 2014

354), by English poet Anne Steele, which addresses God as a prayer: “O turn us, turn us, mighty Lord / By Thy resistless grace / Then shall our hearts obey Thy word / And

humbly we shall seek Thy face.” His reaction while leading in the square affects the class, who sing it with their own strength and emotional vigor.

Furthermore, Zack emphasizes that singing has always been a part of his spiritual life. *The Sacred Harp* simply became a beloved addition to his worshipful singing practices. He elaborates:

Before I sang from the Sacred Harp, I sang from the Swedish Hymnal every day. Singing hymns as devotionals has always been a part of my everyday life, a core in my prayer life. So really, I’m just using a different source for my prayer life. Using *The Sacred Harp* is like using a different prayer book.

When asked about the differences between texts in the Swedish Hymnal and *The Sacred Harp*, Zack is quick to compare them without emphasizing bias toward one or the other. Yet, he answers methodically, indicating he has spent some time considering this question:

Theologically, the lyrics and the songs collected in *The Sacred Harp* put more emphasis [than the Swedish hymnal] on the sovereignty of God, and how His Grace is irresistible. It is not up to people to say no to His saving grace or not, that is ordained. There is rarely the God of nature, but rather the God of salvation. Jesus Christ is more emphasized. And also the theme of judgement is very pronounced. The Swedish hymnal is more theologically diverse, I would say. For example, what is in the Swedish hymnal that isn’t in *The Sacred Harp* is meditations on the suffering of Christ. There are very few of those in *The Sacred Harp*, but there are a hundred in the Swedish Hymnal.

As mentioned above, the existentially weighty texts in *The Sacred Harp* particularly grabbed Zack Lindahl. The tone of these texts contrast with many contemporary Christian hymnals which seek to do away with the “doom and gloom”

of 18th and 19th century American and European Protestant poetry in favor of texts with a more inclusive outlook, and texts which emphasize God's greatness and love instead of humans' sin and fear for salvation.

For example, the most frequented song in the Presbyterian Church of my youth, "Shine, Jesus Shine," written by English songwriter Graham Kendrick in 1987, contains such comfortable text as, "As we gaze on your kingly brightness / So our faces display your likeness. / Ever changing from glory to glory / Mirrored here may our lives tell your story." A text like this would likely never find its way into *The Sacred Harp*, where Christian figures (and presumably Christian Sacred Harp singers) generally approach God as a suppliant. For Zack, his personal view of the role between people and God is more in-line with the texts in *The Sacred Harp*, and through that, he finds a spiritual comfort in it.

While Sacred Harp singing provides a clear religious outlet for Zack that is separate from his work as a Lutheran pastor, he also finds significant differences between his participation as a member of the Sacred Harp community, and as a leader in his rural parish community. He agrees that both are rooted in a type of Christian spirituality. However, he finds it easier in several respects to be a participant in the Sacred Harp community. On one hand, he finds that the endorphin rush that comes from strong, vigorous singing by enthusiasts with a genuine interest in the music binds participants in fast friendship. On the other hand, unlike his role in his parish, Zack holds no spiritual authority at a Sacred Harp singing, and he is therefore able to

worship privately and simply be himself. I conclude his profile with his own, eloquent words:

I compare Sacred Harp as a spiritual community to my parish as a spiritual community. Friendships are so easy to make in Sacred Harp for some reason. Probably because we all gather around common interests, and in that way we are similar people. But in a congregation you don't get the sharing of interests in the same way. That is a plus for the parish, but that is not a plus for Sacred Harp, because it takes a certain integrity to form a community that is bound by something else than because we like the same things. Because we have lessons together and we sing the songs, we are moved together, the community feels stronger, and it's held together over national boundaries. If only the Christians in my congregation could be as good of friends as we are here. We are very good friends, but it's not the same thing. But I am their pastor, so I believe I have another role at my parish that prevents me from just being Zack, which I get to do in Sacred Harp. And I want to deemphasize my role as a minister in Sacred Harp. I do not want to be spiritually responsible for anyone. I want to be people's friend.

Daire O'Sullivan Sings in the United States

Daire O'Sullivan is a friendly Millennial woman from Cork, Ireland with a sense of humor. Ever since she locally attended the First Ireland Sacred Harp Convention in March 2011, she has gone on to travel to dozens of Sacred Harp events throughout Europe and the United States, rapidly elevating her status to superenthusiast. She is known and loved throughout much of the international Sacred Harp community. More than most European singers, Daire has thoroughly explored and utilized the Sacred

Harp socially affiliated networks in the United States, and has helped form strong friendships that reach across the Atlantic, and strengthen bonds between distant Sacred Harp singing communities. At first, she was primarily attracted to the sound of the music itself, but this interest shifted to a secondary interest after she attended her first Sacred Harp event with international representation. For Daire, and through her experiences, the community is where Sacred Harp's meaning becomes most significant.

Daire first heard of shapenote singing in the spring of 2010 when searching through the University College Cork course catalog with her friend Eimear O'Donovan, who is now also a Sacred Harp superenthusiast and travel companion. They had been good friends for years, and had even played music together in various capacities, so they were familiar with each other's musical tastes. She recalls the encounter, and how she was first convinced to give Sacred Harp singing a try:

Eimear and I have been friends since we were twelve or thirteen in our first year of high school. And we had spent seven years being in a band together. I remember when she was choosing what classes to take, and she was going through the list and trying to tick off the boxes, and she said, 'One of them is called 'American Shapenote Music', would I do that?' and I was like, 'yeah, yeah, yeah, that sounds good, you should do that.' So I knew she was taking that class. She figured, after doing some of the singing, that it would be something I'd be interested in... We do a lot of harmonizing and vocal stuff in our band, so we would write harmonies together, and it was pretty much a logical follow-on from that. She knew I would just be interested.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Daire O'Sullivan, interview with Ellen Lueck, July 6, 2013.

As mentioned in my discussion about Ireland's pathway to Sacred Harp singing, Eimear invited Daire to attend the participatory concert put on by Professor Juniper Hill and her shapenote class in April 2010. There, the sound and vocal style particularly caught Daire's attention. She explains,

I guess it was so unlike anything I had ever heard before. And the unaccompanied thing was a departure from what I was used to. Most of my experience with music before singing was playing [violin] in a band with singers, and then playing classically in orchestras, and things like that, so it felt interesting to do something with just singers... And just the sound of it was not like anything I knew. It was such a foreign type of harmony to me. I have a very poor understanding of harmony and of how harmony works, and chordal structures and all that. I was more like, 'To my ear it sounded interesting.'⁸⁰

Daire indicates that at first, it was indeed the sound of the music that had meaningful significance to her, and not any other element of the music. To clarify, she adds,

For a long time, it was just a music thing, so I wasn't like, 'Oh my god I really love this.' It was just the sound that captured my attention... And it was definitely the sounds, and not the words, or anything like that. It was the sound for sure. Just that haunting quality it has, when you get those ringing chords.

These sounds, along with the physical exertion of singing Sacred Harp, made her feel a strong sense of emotional release and personal empowerment. These emotional experiences began adding layers of meaning for her well before she began traveling and getting involved in the Sacred Harp singing circuit.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* All quotes from Daire O'Sullivan in this profile are derived from this interview.

Even with not that many singers, there was such a loud noise. I felt kind of powerful. And the first time we went to one of the community singings it was kind of casual, and I remember after it being like, ‘Oh my god that felt great!’ and we were walking along, and it was me, Eimear, and Kira, and we said, ‘You know how all the time your head is thinking, and things are ticking away, everything is just worrying, but if you go shout off a mountain you feel really free?’ And that was what we likened it to. That’s how it feels to sing this loudly and to express yourself so loudly. It was the feeling that I got from singing, and from the powerful sound that I created.

Throughout the summer of 2009 and into the fall, she continued to meet with the small group of local participants—mostly students from Hill’s class the previous term. She enjoyed the activity enough that she often prioritized it over other aspects of her life. She remembers, “I would go to Juniper’s class sometimes, but it clashed with accounting, but I would sometimes just skip accounting because I preferred singing. Since then, I have been going pretty regularly.”

It was Daire’s experience at the first Ireland Sacred Harp Convention, hosted by her local enclave in Cork in March 2011, which finally connected her to the Sacred Harp community-at-large. There, she and Eimear were encouraged by visiting American singers to participate as a traveling enthusiast. It wasn’t long after that when they began planning their first trip to the U.S. I quote her at length:

I guess because we had so many visitors, it kind of opened up the idea that you can go and now visit these people, which is what I did. Eimear... she had been talking to Tom [from Portland, OR] afterwards, and Tom mentioned ‘You should come to America’, and she was like ‘Maybe I should.’

At the time, the two of us used to have a DJ slot every Thursday together. We would just be behind the decks for, like, four hours together... We would just make some mixed CDs, fade out and fade in. So there was a

lot of time for talking. So she was like, ‘Remember Tom Fahrbach? He said that maybe we should come to America.’ So then we started planning it. And it was really hard to plan because America is so big. We picked loads of places, Texas, Alabama, and we were like ‘Oh my god, they are so far away from each other!’ The two of us starting thinking about when we could go, when we could take off work, and those logistics. And Tom told us ‘If those are the dates you can come, you could fit in this type of thing, that type of thing.’

As they planned their first singing trip to the United States in September, 2011, Tom Fahrbach—a well-traveled Sacred Harp superenthusiast from Portland, Oregon—began contacting other U.S. singers who could help Daire and Eimear navigate their stay and help them feel welcome. They received identical Facebook messages saying something to the effect of,

‘Hey girls, my name is Blake, I am a Sacred Harp singer. My friend Tom Fahrbach told me you were coming over. I was told you wanted to sing in the South, since that’s where this music is from. I’m down here and I’d like to take you under my wing, help you find places to stay, drive you to singings, make sure that you are looked after while you are down here.’ We didn’t know this guy, but Tom knew him, and Tom got into him to mind us.

Eimear and Daire did plan to begin their trip in the American South, so Blake made arrangements for local singers to host them. They first flew into Atlanta, and then took the train to Anniston, AL, where they were picked up by Eileen Stovall, a warm and engaging woman with a long family history in Sacred Harp singing. What Eimear and Daire hadn’t counted on was arriving just after the news broke that Marie Ivey, a Sacred Harp singer from Alabama known and respected by the community-at-

large, had passed away. Yet Eileen, and many other singers in the Alabama area still found the time and enthusiasm to host their Irish visitors.

Eimear and Daire's experiences were a testament to the power of the Sacred Harp community and sense of hospitality. Even in a community crises of mourning, the local Alabama singers were prepared to engage with these two young strangers from Ireland who had learned about Sacred Harp singing a mere two to three years prior, thousands of miles away, from an ethnomusicologist.

Daire speaks about these particular memories with care, realizing both that the death of Marie Ivey is far more personally meaningful to many of Daire's now close friends, but that her passing and funeral also had a profound impact on Daire's interpretation of Sacred Harp and of the depth and reach of the Sacred Harp community-at-large, which Marie Ivey sought to cultivate in her life. Daire recounts,

Eileen picked me up and we were talking for ages, and we went dress shopping, we went for lunch, and she was having this crazy time... And it was a really kind of a strange moment because Marie Ivey had just died the day before, and Elaine really cared about this woman. This was a weird time for her to be having visitors, but she was still trying to mind us. And we knew David and Karen [Ivey], so we knew how important Marie was to them... But she still wanted to make us welcome. We stayed with her, and they made their preparations and we went singing with her.

We ended up going to Marie's funeral, which was a really strange experience—go on holiday and go to a funeral. We were advised that we could go and it would be fine. And so we did... It was a great thing to experience, as weird as that sounds. Even though it's not a good thing, not a happy occasion, it's still a very central thing that we have in Sacred Harp. We talk about death all the time, and we think about it a lot. As young people, I think we have these conversations about death that other

young people don't have because of what we end up singing about and talking about, and things like that. So it felt kind of normal to go to this person's funeral who I hadn't met, but who was connected to me and everyone in the room in whichever way.

And that was at Liberty which was packed to the rafters. I guess it's a once in a lifetime thing to see something like that, and experience the type of sendoff you get in the heart of Sacred Harp land when you are at the heart of a Sacred Harp family, so that was pretty amazing. I was standing with Henry [a singer from Alabama] and Eimear, and we were singing all these songs, and most of it was words-only, so we were trying, but mostly we were listening. That sound was incredible. It was the fullest you could possibly get. There were people standing on the side, and of course it was very emotionally charged because of the occasion. And then there were people from the family saying things... Henry was like, 'this is so and so,' and there were many lifetime singers there, so he was pointing some people out to us, and introducing people to us afterwards... Obviously it was very sad, but people were glad to be reminiscing. It was that 'painfully pleasing' thing that we sing about.

One of the songs we sang, I think it was 65 ["Sweet Prospect"], I had never heard before. Just the sound of it was incredible, and I don't know if I will ever hear that song sung the same way. It was really intense and it was so powerful. You know when you are singing, and it's really loud, and you might be giving it your all, but not for every song? But this was like everyone at Liberty and all the people who live around Liberty and they are all giving it their emotional all. It was incredible. So those were the peak moments. I feel like I'm being a little bit flippant about it. But it made me understand a lot of things about Sacred Harp, I suppose...

So as I was saying, for me it was the music first, and then Sacred Harp came later, and I understood it. It was one of those understanding moments. That was a real moment for me...

After their experience at the funeral, Daire and Eimear were able to attend two other singings in Alabama—the Mulberry River Convention at County Line Church, and the Labor Day singing at Shoal Creek Church—where they sang with many of

the people they had met at Liberty. At times, the Irish visitors were overwhelmed by hospitality, as they were continually called out by the class to stand for recognition, lead another song, or sit on the front bench of the tenor section—they were, after all, still new to Sacred Harp singing, struggling to keep up. Nevertheless, they were thrown into the proverbial deep end of the music, and the community, and made a wealth of connections to traditional singers and enthusiasts.

After an illuminating time in Alabama, Eimear and Daire flew to Portland, Oregon to meet up with Tom Fahrback, and attend the Cape Meares Singing, an all-day event on the Pacific coast near Tillamook Bay. They also managed to attend some local Portland singings, and sang plenty from *The Sacred Harp* and other sources in small socializing groups throughout their week-long stay. Having traveled from Alabama, Daire couldn't help but compare her experiences there to her experiences in Oregon, noting essential differences and similarities between the communities.

She recognized that the Portland enclave tends to emphasize the community element of Sacred Harp singing, and downplay—though not erase—the religion aspect. She nevertheless met several young singers in Portland who outwardly express their Christian identities. Daire remembers the distinctions:

It was very different from the South where it's about 'tradition; family passed down from generations; death and dying.' And up in Portland it tended to be about 'community; egalitarian'... More hippies and things like that... It was far less religious, I suppose. There was still the traditional format of an opening blessing and few words, but less overtly religious and more community being pushed. In their flyers, I noticed straight away the contrast... At the same time, I remember there being a very conservative family of nine children [in Portland]. They all have biblical names and plain dress... Everyone was catered to, but they

stood out a little bit. But in the South, it's generally assumed that you are religious... But I guess it wasn't assumed as much, or emphasized as much from what I noticed in Portland.

Mostly, though, she was struck by the social connections that had already been forged between the community in Portland and the singers in Alabama, and she began to see the reach of the social connections that are made through the Sacred Harp singing network:

Well, there was some of the same people there [in Alabama and Oregon]. Bea Aaron was someone who came from Alabama... I met her at Shoal Creek and I was talking to her there... Anyway, she was like, 'Oh! I'm also going to Cape Meares.' I thought it was kind of unusual that she would be going there, but she was with her granddaughter. So people knew each other. You know the way we [Sacred Harp singers] are, we gossip. So there was the same gossip. I said, 'Oh I just came from Alabama,' and everyone was like, 'Oh, how's Eugene? How's so and so?' People would ask after each other, so there was a sense of, 'we are all the same group'. People were asking after the Iveys.

She also recalled how helpful it was to have been prepped by Alabama singers on who she might meet in Oregon, which alleviated some of the stress of meeting so many new people at once. This also expressed how invested many traditional singers are in the community-at-large, and the importance many of them place on knowing singers outside their immediate realm:

I guess you hear of singers before you meet them. Especially when you are asked where you are traveling and what singings you will be attending. When I said I was going to Portland, everyone was like, 'Oh you will meet my friend Katy, she is really nice,' and they would tell you stuff, so you would meet somebody, and be like 'Oh! I've heard about you.' Or you might hear that somebody has a really strong treble voice, and then you go to the singing, and you are like, 'Oh! She is clearly the one with the strong treble voice.'

Though Daire perceived differences between the singers in Portland and Alabama—namely the differences in emphasis on religion—she found that her trip opened her up to the importance of the Sacred Harp network, and how it reaches beyond these differences. Instead of recognizing Sacred Harp’s meaning as stemming solely from traditional singing communities in Alabama, she found meaning in the community-at-large, in the reciprocity of participation and affection among dispersed singers.

Her conception of this meaning is in-line with the aims of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone to create a structure for singing which is uniform no matter what space Sacred Harp singing occupies—a uniform structure which accommodates difference.

Daire concludes:

Most of it is the same. The format of the singing is the same. The memorial lesson was done in the same way—we remembered the Ivey family in our thoughts that day. I guess it’s less significant stuff that is different. Even though it’s different types of people that go, they have the same understanding of what’s important. They put the same value on the same thing, so it doesn’t really matter if they are different types of people because it’s for everyone anyway. The stories of how we came to singing are different. For some it’s, ‘My grandmother brought me to singings when I was a little girl.’ That’s more like what I saw in the South. And then in the Pacific Northwest, people would be like, ‘I came because my boyfriend had a band that played folk music and one of the guys who played bongos was like, ‘You guys should try this singing.’ Even though how we got there was different, what you come to value is the same, and that’s the main thing.

Harry Campbell Wants Independence

Harry Campbell of Glasgow, an outspoken generation X-er, has made a career in harmony singing (see Figure 17). This pursuit initially opened his ears to shapenote music over fifteen years ago, and he has been singing it and using it as source material ever since. He is the founder and organizer of a number of active a cappella ensembles in his city, and he works within a wide range of repertoire, member ability, and performance levels. His ensemble, Muldoon's Picnic, comprises a small number of professional singers who perform "traditional unaccompanied harmony from around the world,"⁸¹ including songs from the American shapenote repertoire. His other ensemble, Voicebeat, which advertises itself as "Glasgow's world music community choir," is open to all adults, holds no auditions, and teaches repertoire without music notation. Similar to the call used by Sacred Harp community builders in the U.S. and Europe, Voicebeat is simply "aimed at anyone who enjoys singing with others."⁸²

Of all the Sacred Harp participants I have encountered in the United Kingdom, Harry Campbell seems to be the most closely aligned with the Natural Voice Movement recently monographed by ethnomusicologist Caroline Bithell (2014)—another singing community with similar yet distinct values from the Sacred Harp singing community. Unsurprisingly then, Harry Campbell's introduction to shapenote

⁸¹ Muldoon's Picnic website: <http://freespace.virgin.net/harry.campbell/muldoonspicnic/>

⁸² Voicebeat website: <http://www.voicebeat.org>

singing came about through his interest in Larry Gordon's Northern Harmony, the American vocal ensemble from Vermont with a similar Natural Voice philosophy, which has a history of engagement with shapenote sources and was indeed responsible for Sacred Harp's spread to the United Kingdom (see Part 1: Chapter 2).

Campbell describes his initial entry point into shapenotes: "I started listening to Northern Harmony's recordings of traditional songs and other stuff that people were writing, like Toby Tenenbaum, and Don Jameson, and Seth Houston and those sorts of people."⁸³ Tenenbaum, Jamison, and Houston are professional American composers and choral conductors who have participated in Sacred Harp singing. They have also compiled their own slim volumes of shapenote and shapenote inspired compositions such as *Mountain Harmony* (Tenenbaum 2004) and *Far Heaven* (Jamison 1998). Campbell continues,

And I still listen to those recordings and think they are brilliant, I'm a huge fan of Northern [Harmony]. So then when my group Muldoon's Picnic started around 2000, one of the main things I wanted to do was sing shapenote songs, but in a small group, which is obviously a long way from the traditional sound.⁸⁴

Harry Campbell is quick to point out the differences between the ways he prefers to engage with shapenote singing and the ways that established Sacred Harp communities in the U.S. and Europe engage in the Sacred Harp affinity interzone. Harry is reluctant to abide by the performative keys and social codes expected by participants in the affinity interzone, and at times he actively rejects them. This

⁸³ Harry Campbell, Skype interview with Ellen Lueck, August 29, 2013.

⁸⁴ *ibid.* All quotes by Harry Campbell in this profile are derived from this interview.

shapes his interpretation of the meaning of Sacred Harp singing to be solely about the music, rather than community, emotions, or religion. His experiences and opinions provide a counter example to the socially eager attitudes found in the other profiles.

Like Larry Gordon, Harry was already deeply embedded in this other performance-oriented singing community, so for him, shapenote music was another body of repertoire to draw from, rather than a prescriptive community to join. He has a deep respect for the traditions which have carried Sacred Harp singing through time and across space, but he holds steadfast to his beliefs that shapenote singing, and specifically *The Sacred Harp* repertoire, should not necessarily be confined to its namesake community practitioners. He takes the subheading from *The Sacred Harp* at face value to derive his interpretation of the tunebook's meaning, which reads, "The Best Collection of Sacred Songs, Hymns, Odes, and Anthems Ever Offered the Singing Public for General Use," with insightful emphasis on "singing public" and "general use."

Also like Larry Gordon, Harry's position has caused some tension between his efforts to promote "shapenote music" (this term is often rejected by Sacred Harp enthusiasts both for its inclusion of sources other than *The Sacred Harp*, and for its inherent deemphasis of the music's sacred qualities) and the Sacred Harp



Figure 17. Harry Campbell at the Scotland All-Day Singing, July 2013

community's interest in promoting and enforcing the Sacred Harp affinity interzone at all related events. This tension has caused Harry Campbell frustration regarding his involvement with activities in Glasgow, as he comes from a musical and ideological position outside of the Sacred Harp community-at-large. His reading of the situation also illuminates potential factors for why the Sacred Harp community and the Natural Voice community in the U.S. and the United Kingdom don't overlap more frequently and with more friendliness, given their similarities as inclusive, a cappella focused, transnational musical communities.

Harry's first practical encounter with Sacred Harp singing was well outside of the Sacred Harp affinity interzone at the 2001 Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow, a generally progressive music festival which has become popular among locals and tourists since its founding in 1994.

There is a guy in Inverness—quite a well-known folksy—called Bob Pegg, and he has a sort of slight knowledge of the music. And he did this very unfussy, very tradition-free workshop at Celtic Connections... And there he just taught a few of the songs. "Garden Hymn" was the first one I remember... He explained a little bit about the solmization, but he didn't attempt it...

In 2001, there were a few Sacred Harp singing enclaves scattered around England, but none in Scotland or anywhere else in Europe. At the time, practical issues such as 'singing the shapes' (the solmization mentioned above) were not a concern for Harry. It is specifically the music that draws him in as an enthusiast. He says that "the social scene is totally secondary to the music for me." Rather, it is "the actual notes and harmonies, especially the 18th century stuff—the fact that there are all these

undiscovered gems.” Harry grew up in Wales, and sang a lot of Welsh hymns as a child. With this he adds,

And there are some cracking amazing tunes that you never hear outside of Wales. They don’t sing them in the English churches. It’s the same ten times over with shapenote music. There are just a few shapenote hymns that have made it into British hymnals, but really, hardly any. And it just seems surprising. You discover another and another, and you think ‘this has got to be the best song in the book,’ and then you find another and think ‘no, this is the best song in the book.’ And, god, there are so many.

Harry struggled at first to form a Sacred Harp community in Glasgow, as so many new Sacred Harp groups do. Starting in 2007, he organized several local workshops a year, which attracted between ten and twenty-five people each session.

We gradually built up a small core of people who would come every time. But [these workshops] weren’t anything we would call a singing school... They were very much for complete beginners, explaining a lot of the background, and teaching songs by ear quite slowly so that by the end of it, you could sing the song right, as opposed to the ‘throw yourself at it and see what happens’ technique, which is obviously more traditional... We’ll spend the last hour trying to capture the atmosphere of the proper thing by doing the songs we’ve learned... We’re mostly not readers, so it’s slow progress... I do try to give a lot of background about the history and the cultural stuff at the workshops, which I don’t think you usually get at a traditional singing school.

Harry also attributes some of the difficulty in gathering a dedicated Sacred Harp community to the conservative intellectual atmosphere at Glasgow University. He compares the situation in Glasgow to that of Cork, where a university was so vital to the flourishing of the Sacred Harp community in Ireland.

It has been massively different from the experience of Cork, which I think is an interesting contrast... I think the main reason is that in Cork,

it started in the University. Me and Katy [a bandmate] and people are extremely strong in the University, but Glasgow University people are not into that kind of thing. There's not ethnomusicology people as there are in Cork. They are sort of more classical people... Because of that we relied on a tiny selection of followers of our workshops to survive.

In 2007, Harry also traveled to the United Kingdom Sacred Harp Convention, where he experienced the Sacred Harp affinity interzone for the first time. However, he generally finds it difficult to travel on weekends. His reasons also illuminate why there are few career musicians who are regularly active Sacred Harp participants.

You know, I haven't been to that many singings because the kind of people in Muldoon's Picnic don't have that much time to do that sort of thing because they've got their finger in all these music requirements. So they don't really have the opportunity to become really dedicated shapenote singers and go to all these singings in distant places.

Feeling disconnected from the singing circuit that often hosts traveling enthusiasts, he adds, "As soon as you stay the night, your costs go through the roof."

Unfortunately for Harry, his inability to travel and participate in international and national Sacred Harp events feeds into the tensions between him and Sacred Harp communities in the U.K.—they likely view Harry as irreverent and unwilling to learn, and Harry in turn views them as micromanaging.

When asked how he describes Sacred Harp to people who have never heard it before, Harry reveals his general desire to distance the music from its explicitly Christian connections.

Well, if you tell them it's hymns, they get the wrong impression because they think it's very churchy and reverential. So you have to include something with the word 'folky.' Then you have to think of your pitch, what's one sentence that will explain what this music is. So I end up

going for words like ‘fiery’ and ‘vigorous’ and ‘raw’ and that kind of thing. I don’t push the fact that it is sacred music, because it makes some people feel uncomfortable... Mainly I just say that you have to experience it once... You never know who will bight, who will come back.

Aside from a general anxiety about dissuading newcomers by emphasizing the religious nature of *The Sacred Harp*, Harry also agrees that it is the right thing to do for his particular community, and for a Scottish singing community in general. He refers to the Scotland All-Day singing, which he was involved in, and which took place in August 2013:

We decided to not have a lot of religion in it, which I was expecting conflict for, but they were actually okay with it. So we had a sort of grace, but not a religious one. I quite like the idea that we can prioritize the singing of songs for their musical content—not to prevent anyone from singing them from a religious intent if they want to—but not having that slightly play-acting thing that can happen when you are in a room and everyone has to pretend to do a prayer.

Quick to further defend his position, he adds,

You can’t have some carbon copy of what a traditional singing in Alabama would be like because it’s a different culture, really different. And there, it’s not overtly religious because everyone there is, at least overtly, part of a religious society... But Scotland is a country that has had its difficulty with religion, shall we say. It has been a force for divisiveness, rather than a uniting force, so we play down the token religion.

Harry Campbell became somewhat of a reluctant community leader of Sacred Harp singing activity in Glasgow around 2007 when he started teaching Sacred Harp workshops with Muldoon’s Picnic at local and regional folk festivals. His reluctance stemmed from differing opinions between him and several outspoken English Sacred

Harp community leaders about proper participation in Sacred Harp. These differences in opinion were magnified when English Sacred Harp enthusiasts—some of whom had travelled to traditional singings in Alabama and Georgia—began to show up to his folk festival events, insisting that he conduct them according to [what they imagine to be] traditional Southern practices.

For the first time, people in the English scene came to us because they happened to be at this festival, and they showed up with copies of *The Sacred Harp* in hand, a thing I had never seen happen before... But they were showing up expecting to do it properly, and worrying about whether the tenors were sitting in the right place—that kind of stuff. And at that stage, we didn't know the fine details of where the tenors should sit, whether they should sit by the door or whatever.⁸⁵ And I kind of feel like that doesn't matter so much, to be honest. To know the traditions is a good thing, but to make a sort of god with it, like some people do, is a bit silly.

Even now in 2016, while Sacred Harp enclaves have blossomed all over the United Kingdom—many of them practicing elements that aren't deemed “traditional”—Harry continues to face opposition from a few particular English enthusiasts. He holds back little when voicing his frustrations, citing valid inaccuracies in logic about authenticity, and about the nature of cultural preservation of Sacred Harp singing by these English participants:

I have a huge beef about the purists and the dogmatic way that some people interpret the music. Especially since half the music wasn't written for the book anyway. Some of the best tunes were written in round notes by people who never saw a shapenote... So it's fine for the

⁸⁵ Because Sacred Harp events traditionally took place in small churches, the tenor section (which is generally the largest section) was seated with their backs facing the door, where the congregation would sit during a service. Many singings still follow this general organizational method, though it is not considered particularly important or seen to necessarily enhance a singing.

book to collect from all these sources, its healthy. But then to say ‘This is our special tradition and these are our songs’ ... some of them are, but by no means all...

The idea that they are protective of the music. As if someone in England who discovered the music ten years ago can have the arrogance to think that they are protecting an American tradition that goes back two hundred years or something...

Indicating his high esteem for the music itself, he added “Its burn-proof, you can do what you want with it.”

Ideally, Harry Campbell wishes that the Sacred Harp community he helped cultivate in Glasgow could remain a local affair, where he could continue to give workshops for beginners using his own methods described above, continue to prioritize the music over the performative expectations and traveling community, and continue to deemphasize the religious elements without worrying about social tensions building between the Glasgow singers and particular Sacred Harp communities in England. However, he notes that even the English community leaders that disagree with him are now having to get used to a whole new crop of young singers who don’t necessarily participate in Sacred Harp singing in the narrowly defined manner that the “purists” would like. He mentions that the early English Sacred Harp community “was very underground. I don’t think they would like it as much if it were mainstream. But nowadays, they’ve got no choice, because they are overwhelmed with young people coming in.”

He seems to long for the days before there was bustling traffic in the Sacred Harp network; when he didn’t need to adhere to what Harry refers to as the “out-of-the-box

singing”; when he was free to define the meaning of Sacred Harp for himself as something not necessarily community, emotionally, or religiously driven. He is sure to have the last word on the subject: “To be totally honest, I think, in a way, we’ve been subsumed into the circuit, that’s an agenda set by the English crowd, and while I’m totally fine by that and I enjoy singing as much as anyone else, I still feel that’s only one way of singing the music.”

My aim in these profiles is not only to demonstrate the ways in which community, emotions, and religion or spirituality are used by European enthusiasts to draw meaning from participation in Sacred Harp singing, but also to draw attention to the importance of various aspects of pathways and spaces in the singing experiences of participants in Europe. The main focus of the Camp Fasola devotionals profile, along with Zack Lindahl’s profile, is the relationship between currently active enthusiasts and their attitudes toward the religious nature of Sacred Harp singing. Both demonstrate an openness towards an explicit embrace of Judeo-Christian codes while operating within the Sacred Harp affinity interzone, perhaps more so than was previously demonstrated by enthusiasts in the United States and in the earlier years of Sacred Harp singing in Europe. Zack’s profile also highlights the meaning of emotional impact that Sacred Harp singing can have for its practitioners. But these profiles also underscore other elements discussed throughout this dissertation.

For example, the Sacred Harp Music Heritage Association's commitment to operating Camp Fasola in Poland creates a direct pathway between traditional Sacred Harp singing structures and the affinity community in Europe, and it encourages the ubiquitous dissemination of performative keys and codes which fill the affinity interzone. It is also a space where international identity, national identity, as well as the identity of the community-at-large are placed before local singing identity. Zack's profile, on the other hand, demonstrates how media disseminated through in Internet can create pathways for the self-discovery of Sacred Harp singing, and how the internet can further be used to connect with other singers for eventual face-to-face music-making.

Daire's profile acts primarily as an example of the reach of the international community, and how the reciprocal culture of Sacred Harp singing can bestow layers of meaning for its traditional and enthusiast participants. Her anecdote about Marie Ivey's funeral also demonstrates how emotional impact can create meaning. She references the importance of physical space in her description of Liberty Church, and its relationship to meaningful sound and emotional response. However, Daire's story also describes a pathway that was carved between Ireland and the United States, a pathway that has only widened with continual, frequent use since Daire's and Eimear's first visit to sing in the South and Pacific Northwest.

Finally, Harry Campbell's profile describes a different perspective on meaning bestowed to Sacred Harp singing from the majority of my European enthusiast collaborators' perspectives. For Campbell, the primary meaning drawn from Sacred

Harp singing lies in its musical contents, which he holds in the highest regard. The community, emotions, and spirituality that are so often associated with performing the music are purely secondary. In fact, Campbell describes the singing community as being somewhat of a hindrance to *The Sacred Harp*'s potential meaning for him, as well as the performative keys and social codes associated with the genre.

Nevertheless, Campbell's story also describes one of the earlier contemporary pathways for the spread of Sacred Harp singing to Europe. Additionally, he brings up the issue of a desire for a distinct national space and national identity in regards to Sacred Harp singing, and identity which he seeks to cultivate separately from the rest of the United Kingdom, and Europe more broadly.

In the following closing thoughts, I will also consider how Camp Fasola, Zack Lindahl, Daire O'Sullivan, and Harry Campbell have contributed to my understanding of the role of mobility in the success of the widespread Sacred Harp singing affinity group.

FINAL THOUGHTS
ON GLOBALIZATION,
THE PRIVILEGES OF AFFINITY GROUPS,
AND THE FUTURE OF SACRED HARP SINGING

Sacred Harp singing has traveled to many corners of the world and created new pathways, spaces of identity, and meanings for groups of people that Sacred Harp advocates thirty years ago never imagined would become a part of such a community of singers. One could argue that Sacred Harp singing has become a global phenomenon. But could Sacred Harp singing ever be truly globalized? Could it survive outside of places where people have freedom of mobility, freedom to express their layered identities, and freedom to appropriate meaning from another culture's music? Or is it reliant on privilege to be able to do these things—a privilege that is not universal? Does Sacred Harp singing's spread have limits?

The participatory format of the music is, after all, reliant on the ability for participants to be able to move around. A Sacred Harp convention requires that enthusiasts travel, either by car, train, bus, plane—in Pennsylvania, some participants even continue to travel to singings by horse and cart. This freedom of mobility is in turn reliant upon some degree of expendable income, time, a sense of safety outside

of one's immediate community, and in today's international landscape, a passport from a nation in good international standing. All of the countries in which Sacred Harp singing is present currently fit this description, all of them being Western nations, with the exception of South Korea and Hong Kong which are modern economic powerhouses.

The pathways of Sacred Harp singing, described in Part 2, illuminate this need for mobility—not only mobility of the tune book, or recordings, or information through the internet—but mobility of people.

The desire for greater freedoms—economic, educational, religious, academic, and experiential freedoms—has encouraged the voluntary crossing of the northern Atlantic by white Americans and Europeans for centuries. This has indeed shaped the course of Sacred Harp singing into the present. 17th and 18th century Europeans came to America for religious and economic freedom. They created a frenzy of evangelical culturally expressive forms, such as the fusing tunes popularized in New England, singing schools lead by itinerant (i.e. mobile) singing masters and composers, and the camp meeting, the contents of which became influenced by African American worship styles as well. These forms of cultural expression eventually influenced the repertoire in *The Sacred Harp* and the culture which surrounds it. A few of these evangelizers had the freedom of mobility to cross the northern Atlantic again and bring the American styles of evangelical worship, including music, back to Europe. The 18th century English poetry of Isaac Watts was freely sold in America, as ships

-serving economic advancement were freely mobile. Likewise, American music was sold abroad.

The 20th century gave rise to new opportunities for locational and economic mobility for Southerners who found themselves singing from *The Sacred Harp* in new places such as Cooper Union in New York City, and San Diego, California. New crops of enthusiasts from outside traditional Sacred Harp singing regions—enthusiasts in places such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Chicago—found enjoyment in the activity, and eventually exercised their freedom of mobility to travel to traditional singings. Then traditional singers returned the favor and traveled to sing in places like Middletown, Connecticut. These pathways created the vibrant national Sacred Harp network found today.

In the late 20th and early 21st century, new opportunities arose for Sacred Harp enthusiasts to travel abroad, again spreading the music to new groups of people. Larry Gordon took his vocal ensemble on tour to the United Kingdom, giving workshops. Juniper Hill, an ethnomusicologist from California, took an academic job in Cork. Magda Zapędowska-Eriksen of Poland learned of Sacred Harp singing through her academic appointments in the United States, and later used her connections in Poland to invite Tim Eriksen to conduct a workshop there. Today, European Sacred Harp enthusiasts continue the spread of these singing networks through their own opportunities for mobility, founding singing enclaves in new cities around the world—Sydney, Budapest, Hong Kong, Busan, Seoul—as they seek economic and educational opportunities abroad in an ever globalizing market.

Singers like Daire O’Sullivan take advantage of their freedom of mobility and travel for the sole purpose of Sacred Harp singing. In doing so, Daire discovered the depth of the Sacred Harp community—how it cares for its participants, and how it connects individuals on a personal level across vast areas. Zack Lindahl understands the importance of mobility in the Sacred Harp community perhaps better than anyone, as he endured being an isolated enthusiast in Sweden for well over a year before he was able to build a local enclave in his town of Uppsala. He was entirely reliant on his ability to travel freely throughout Europe to enjoy the face-to-face Sacred Harp experience, which in turn required at least some expendable income and the ability to take time away from work.

A group’s lack of mobility has already proven to be a hindrance to participation in Sacred Harp singing by a number of traditional and contemporary enthusiasts. African American Sacred Harp singers living in the American South during the Jim Crow era often faced threats to their safety if they traveled outside of their local communities, inhibiting their ability to participate in Sacred Harp’s reciprocal traveling culture. This threat is not necessarily absent today either. As Harry Campbell mentions in the last profile, professional musicians often find it difficult to make the time and money to travel to Sacred Harp singings, as musicians are often working on weekends, or their gig schedule requires them to travel for more lucrative opportunities. The average citizen of a developing nation such as Indonesia, for example—a country and culture I am familiar with—may have no opportunities for international travel because of the financial burden, and also because of the difficulty

of obtaining a travel visa to a country like the United States, therefore limiting the potential for Sacred Harp singing to successfully take hold there.

The mobility of Sacred Harp participants also relies on the freedom of participants to create their own spaces of identity, and the freedom to pursue their affinity, presumably without the threat of ostracism from their families and immediate local communities. First of all, to perform Sacred Harp as it is intended, participants must be able to congregate in mixed gendered groups. They must be able to pursue a musical form with Christian roots and explicitly Christian texts. Yet they must also be free to associate with people who believe differently from them because the Sacred Harp community-at-large, as well as the ideological contents of the tunebook, are denominationally and spiritually diverse. Participants must be able to accept outsiders into their local community, at least temporarily. They must be able to accommodate a socially constructed space such as the Sacred Harp affinity interzone, where there is esteem in keeping personally held beliefs and political opinions to one's self.

To the average Westerner, the freedom to congregate and pursue their affinity is given without a second thought. In fact, for those that are freely given these privileges, these ubiquitous Sacred Harp structures and codes inherently create an inclusive environment where these privileges can be exercised to their fullest. Women and men can freely mingle, as can participants whose gender identity fits outside of this binary. An enthusiast who identifies as Jewish, such as Ophir Ilzetzki, can freely give a devotional to a spiritually diverse class of international participants which sings music steeped in Christian tradition. Just as Yotin describes creating new things

from what one already has, Westerners have the privilege of expressing whatever identities they wish from what they can access, or what they can imagine. In Western culture, worldliness is generally a revered trait, and hosting international visitors is looked on as a source of pride for many local communities. None of these exercises in personal and societal freedoms are even considered particularly radical these days.

But could a Sacred Harp singing enclave in a place that does not allow for these freedoms truly join this international network of Sacred Harp fellowship? There are some places where it would obviously be impossible given the current state of affairs—North Korea, Al-Raqqa Syria, for example. But does the ubiquitous choreography of Sacred Harp singing—the choreography that, in a way, allows for the international network to move and perform freely in the West and in economically powerful nations—hinder Sacred Harp’s potential ability to take hold in places where freedoms are restricted, either because of culture or government structure? I think so. As mentioned above, and as detailed by Jesse Pearlman Karlsberg, Sacred Harp singing has already experienced the near disappearance of traditional African American singing communities because of the lack of privileges that participation in Sacred Harp singing assumes.

This assumed privilege makes Sacred Harp different from other types of music that have become forms of cultural expression in all realms of social strata around the world. Hip-hop, for example, can be found almost everywhere, performed by the wealthy and the disadvantaged alike. But hip-hop, unlike Sacred Harp singing, is an open-ended musical form. It has no set choreography, no set repertoire, no ubiquitous

social codes, no specific language, and no specific content. Hip-hop's meaning for its dispersed creators may have no connection to its origins in The Bronx. Hip-hop can completely conform to the needs and wishes of its cultural surroundings, as controversial as this might be. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, the meaning of Sacred Harp can be somewhat varied for its international practitioners, but these meanings are still limited just as the repertoire and text are limited.

My aim in this critique is not to disparage Sacred Harp singing, but to put forth a cautiously optimistic prediction for its future as such a ubiquitous activity. As I mentioned in the introduction, in 1982, Alan Lomax gleefully predicted that hundreds of thousands of people would be singing from *The Sacred Harp* in America—an extreme overestimation—while singer Phil Summerlin sat beside him, concerned that he might be right. In corresponding with Neely Bruce, he has estimated that there may be 10,000 Sacred Harp singers world-wide, and perhaps 1,000 or more in Europe. Today, many singers are excited about the prospect of Sacred Harp singing's spread to more and more areas of the world. There may be more places to visit, new people to meet, new people to teach, a wider international network forming an idealized representation of diverse fellowship and intercultural cooperation through song. Currently, organizations like the Sacred Harp Publishing Company and the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association, as well as individual enthusiasts, are able to effectively disseminate the intended uses for *The Sacred Harp* according to traditional customs.

Should *The Sacred Harp* continue to spread to new pockets of the world—pockets where society is organized so differently from the West—how will its associated cultural and social codes be disseminated? How will singers who thrive in the affinity interzone react when a Sacred Harp singing enclave actively rejects wholesale the pathways, spaces, and meanings that are currently associated with the tunebook? How might such an enclave organize their relationship to *The Sacred Harp*? It's hard to say what this would look like. It could be small alterations, such as sitting on the ground in a circle instead of chairs in a square, or separating out the voice parts by gender, bass and tenor for men only, and alto and treble for women only. Instrumental accompaniment could be regularly added. Or the changes could be much more dramatic, beyond my predicting imagination. These sorts of arrangements have been made in the context of choral arrangements of Sacred Harp tunes, and in cases of experimental performances which draw from *The Sacred Harp*, but these instances are generally one-off performances, rather than decisive actions by those who would define themselves as Sacred Harp enthusiasts or enclaves.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, the potential cultural adjustments to Sacred Harp singing by those appropriating from a hegemonic power is an interesting prospect. Yet for the participants in the international singing network, and for traditional singers in particular, this prospect has the potential to undermine the great investments they have made in this network, and in the ubiquity of the Sacred Harp convention. Still, whether or not Sacred Harp singing moves beyond the borders of privileged nations, Sacred Harp singing will continue to change, just as it has since its

first publication in 1844. Who will be responsible for these changes is to be determined. Whatever the outcome, we can be confident that George Pullen Jackson's predictions of Sacred Harp singing's 21st century demise were misguided. It seems that Sacred Harp singing is not only here to stay, but growing.

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