

Pre-publication Copy

Chapters 1 through 3

America's Musical Landscape Sixth Edition by Ferris

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*McGraw-Hill Humanities, Social Sciences, Languages,
Health & Human Performance*



PART

Music in Early North America



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The Early Years: Historical and Cultural Perspective

Scholars believe that human experience has always included music, although music's sound and its place in society have differed widely from one time and one culture to another. Even today some people differentiate between "music" and "noise"—often disagreeing, however, on which is which—whereas others deny the distinction. Some consider sounds of nature, such as birdcalls or thunder, a kind of music; others do not. For some people, music is art, and for others it is simply an integral part of their everyday experience. Speakers of some languages have no word for music at all, although music is fully integrated into their daily experience. But always, it seems, patterns of sound—one possible concept of what we mean by music—have found a meaningful place in human society.

The Beginnings of Music in America

Although today's American music is rooted in the artistic styles and experiences of European and African cultures, long before the first white settlers or black slaves touched the North American shores the people living here were making music of their own. Even though we have no firsthand knowledge of the music of the early North American Indians, Native American music traditions have evolved so slowly over vast periods of time that we may imagine their early music concepts bore a close relationship to those of today.

Native Americans Scholars generally believe that the people destined to be called North American Indians or Native Americans began coming to this continent from Asia between 18,000 and 40,000 years ago, crossing the land bridge then existing where the Bering Strait is today, and spreading south from Canada and Alaska into Mexico and Central and South America, and eastward to the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. New archaeological evidence suggests, however, that the New World may have been colonized on numerous different occasions, beginning thousands of years earlier than previously thought and by people arriving from several different regions of Europe. It is possible, for example, that the people who established an ancient campsite 45 miles south of Richmond, Virginia, recently dated at around 18,000 years old, came by sea across the Atlantic rather than by land from Asia. Still, although fascinating research continues as new discoveries occur, it appears likely that *most* of the people who first arrived on the North American continent came from Siberia by crossing the Bering Sea land bridge.

Whatever their distant heritage, all early American Indian cultures shared a close dependence upon and affinity with the natural world. However, over vast periods of time they developed a very broad linguistic and cultural diversity. Thus when Christopher Columbus arrived in the region of the Bahamas,

late in the fifteenth century, well over 300 American Indian cultures with several hundred languages inhabited what is now the United States. Today we generally recognize eight geographic areas, within each of which many tribes share cultural characteristics similar to each other's but distinct from those of Native Americans inhabiting other cultural regions (see Table on p. 00).

Today's descendants of the early Native Americans retain a strong reverence for and a sense of oneness with nature, expressed in their music as in all their arts—although the term *arts* here gives us pause, because traditional American Indian dry (sand) painting, weaving, pottery, basketry, and music all had spiritual and utilitarian significance without which they would have been meaningless. For example, magnificent buckskin shield covers, designed according to divine instruction, protect the wearer as much by the sacred design etched, incised, or painted on them as by the heavy material of which they are made. The Western separation of sacred and secular concepts has little



Fight scene painted on a Sioux shield cover. The central mounted warrior shows the manner in which shields were held.

TABLE Representative Cultures Sharing Music Style Traits			
Plains		East	
Northern	Southern	Northeastern	Southeastern
Arapaho	Comanche	Iroquois nations	Cherokee
Blackfoot	Kiowa		Creek
Cheyenne	Western Cherokee	Wabanaki	Seminole
Crow			Shawnee
Dakota (Sioux)			
Great Lakes	Southwest/ Southern California	Athapaskan	
Menomini	Hopi/Zuni/Other "mesa" pueblos	Apache	
Ojibwa (Chippewa)	Maricopa	Navajo	
Winnebago	O'odham (Papago)		
	Pima		
	Rio Grande Pueblos (from three language families)		
	Yavapai		
	Yuma		
Great Basin/Northern California	Northwest Coast	Eskimo/Inuit and Athapaskans	
Paiute	Bella Coola	Eskimos of Alaska, Canada, and Greenland	
Pomo	Kwakiutl	Northern Athapaskans (Slave, Kulchin, Dogrib)	
Shoshoni	Nootka		
Ute	Salish		
	Tlingit		

meaning among Native Americans, for whom religion, art, music, and poetry are the inseparable threads—the warp and woof—of life and culture.

Our brief survey can only generalize about important concepts generally shared by members of different Native American cultures, especially up until the early years of the twentieth century, before which time their cultural expression remained quite consistent. During the last century, acculturation brought about significant changes in Indian music, the changes varying from one region to another; yet

many basic tenets of Native American culture retain their ancient values today.

European Emigrants During the sixteenth century, Europeans began to arrive and settle on the North American continent in large numbers, bringing with them their various musical customs. Missionaries, adventurers, explorers, and settlers traversed the land stretching from Florida to the northern California coast. Maps and pictures drawn by these intrepid travelers, vividly depicting American Indians

as they appeared to the newcomers, and the great natural beauty of the newly discovered land, encouraged other Europeans to join them in the vast New World. Soon French Catholics and French Protestants (Huguenots) in the Southeast, and Spanish Catholics and Sir Francis Drake's Protestant Englishmen in the Southwest, were persuading American Indians to join them in singing Christian songs as part of their effort to convert them to Christianity.

The Pilgrims and Puritans arriving in New England early in the seventeenth century were Protestants, whose protests against the Roman Catholic church included some concerning the performance of religious music. That century also brought English Quakers (members of the Society of Friends) as well as German-speaking Protestants, such as the Mennonites and Moravians.

All these brave settlers left behind them a rich and varied cultural experience. Roman Catholics had enjoyed generous support for their arts, including music, from royalty and the church. The Protestant New England settlers, sharing simple tastes, generally avoided the extravagant characteristics of the music style (*Baroque*) then prevalent in Europe, but many of them loved art and music and made both a significant part of their life. The lyrical folk songs and rollicking dance tunes of various European cultures also traveled with the settlers to become a part of their new experience in their adopted homeland.

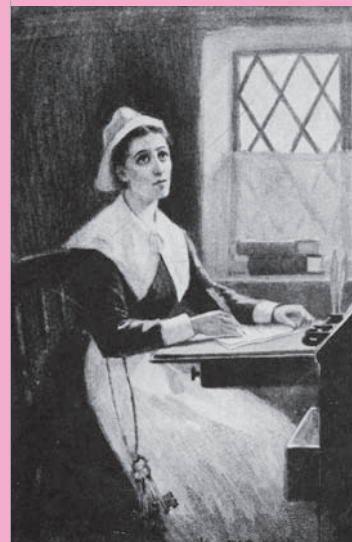
Puritan Society The more we learn about the Puritans, the more we realize how inappropriate is the stereotype of them as plain and wholly serious, for Puritan society included sophisticated men and women of keen wit and high intellect. Some brought with them their personal libraries, but the small ships carrying them to America had scarce room for such luxuries, and before long the colonists began to produce their own new literature, largely consisting of didactic religious tracts but also including memoirs, essays, and poetry.

The New World's first poet, Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672), busy wife of a colonial governor and the mother of eight, composed a significant body of poetry despite her own serious illness and the rigors

of colonial life. Though she declared her peers believed “my hand a needle better fits” (than a poet's pen), she was admired then as now for her learned and well-crafted poems. Here is an example:

*I am obnoxious to each carping tongue,
Who says, my hand a needle better fits,
A Poets Pen, all scorne, I should thus wrong;
For such despighte they cast on female wits:
If what i doe prove well, it wo'nt advance,
They'l say its stolen, or else, it was by chance.*

Although the practical early New Englanders had little use for art for art's sake and specifically excluded art from their churches, still their daily experience was rich in artistic expression. For example, the graveyards adjacent to their plainly furnished houses of worship often contained elaborately carved and decorated headstones. They furnished their homes with many functional articles of beauty, covering tables and beds with fine needlework to provide protection from cold New England drafts, while beautifully carved furniture, hand-painted dishes, and toys elaborately constructed for the delight of children lessened the severity of New England colonial life.



Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672).



Gravestone in a colonial churchyard.

Although landscape painting held little attraction for early New Englanders more inclined to tame than to admire natural wonders, portraits served the practical purpose of preserving a likeness and so were highly valued. Most portrait painters were amateur artists who earned their living as farmers, as shopkeepers, or in some other trade, and who thought of themselves simply as craftspeople producing commodities of practical worth. The rather flat or linear quality of American folk art lends it a pleasing flavor distinct from the professional products of their European contemporaries. Ironically, these early artists often painted their subjects dressed in elaborate finery, suggesting an attraction to worldly goods surprising in the staid Puritan society. But how astonished these modest people would be to know the aesthetic and monetary value their work has acquired today.

The African Experience in Early America Even before the Pilgrims' arrival at Plymouth Rock in 1620, Africans were being forcibly brought to, and made to work in, the New World. At



Elizabeth Davis, *Mrs. Hezekiah Beardsley*, c. 1785–1790.

first African slaves constituted a minuscule portion of society in New York or New England, and even in southern colonies; but after 1700 the importation of slaves greatly increased. By the time of the American Revolution, there were slaves in large numbers in the South, where their forced services made possible the great plantations that produced the coffee, tobacco, sugar, rice, and (much later) cotton on which the southern economy relied.

During the eighteenth century, a surge of humanitarian feeling gave rise to strong movements against the continuing slave trade, which finally was prohibited in the United States twenty years after the ratification of the Constitution. However, the strong protests of Quakers and other religious groups notwithstanding, antislavery sentiment had little effect in this country until well into the nineteenth century. In New England, slavery proved unprofitable and disappeared, but in the South the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 made slavery an even more integral part of the plantation system than before.

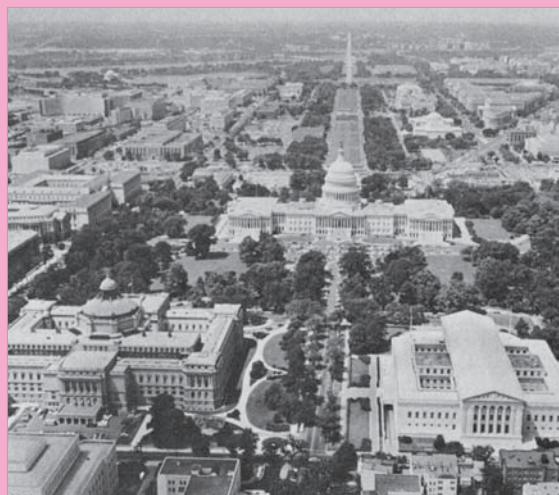
Forbidden to practice their familiar African religious rituals and to sing songs, dance, and play

musical instruments in their accustomed ways, the brutally uprooted Africans and their American-born progeny, starved for religion, attempted to adapt traditional African musical expression to worship of the white people's Christian god. Their early efforts mostly met with ridicule, because their white owners regarded them as "beasts" unfit to receive religious instruction of any kind; but here as in their fatherland, the slaves integrated music and faith into their daily lives.

Revolution, in Classical Style

Eighteenth-century Americans of European descent reflected a strong European influence, enhanced by increased opportunities for travel and communication from one continent to the other. European artists of this time had adopted the *classical* ideals of ancient Greek sculptors and architects, who strove for perfection of form, balanced designs, and relatively restrained emotional expression. Artists on both sides of the Atlantic, in fact, from about 1750 until 1825 applied order, balance, and emotional restraint to their work, rendering the Age of Reason in social and political affairs the Age of Classicism in the arts. To distinguish eighteenth-century visual works of art rendered in this cool, reasoned manner from their ancient classical models, we call them *neoclassical* in style; but too little ancient music remains to cause confusion in terms, and the eighteenth century is known as the Classical period of music.

Paradoxically, the Age of Reason spawned several violent revolutionary movements, and Americans joined a number of European nations in firmly rejecting rule by absolute authority and establishing a republican form of government. Enlightened intellectuals—hardly impassioned fanatics—led the American Revolution, the classical influence evident, for example, in the cool, reasoned language of the Declaration of Independence, which begins "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another . . ." America's founders, led by Thomas Jefferson and



Classical influence is reflected in the orderly layout of streets and the prevalence of Greco-Roman architectural style in Washington, D.C.

influenced by outstanding French neoclassical architects, designed Washington, D.C., to be an orderly city of wide and regular streets with many grassy parks and shady trees. The simple lines and classical columns of Washington's state buildings, although not constructed until the early years of the nineteenth century, clearly represent the ideals of the Classical period during which they were planned.

Painting in Eighteenth-Century America

Although American artists during this century had more training and sophistication than the folk artists of the settlers' period, their finest works retained an innocence, honesty, and decorative sense distinguishing them from the more elegant European works of the same era. John Singleton Copley (1738–1815), America's greatest colonial artist, was largely self-taught. He developed a highly personal style rooted in the American tradition and governed by classical order and reserve. Becoming increasingly, though reluctantly, involved in events relating to the impending American Revolution, Copley sailed for Europe in 1774, intending to return to America when peace



John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Thomas Boylston*, 1766.



John Singleton Copley, *Watson and the Shark*, 1778. Oil on canvas, 72 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. \times 90 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (184 cm \times 229.5 cm). Although largely self-taught, Copley effectively captured the seething action and dramatic interplay of emotions between the desperate characters in his masterful painting.



Charles Willson Peale,
The Staircase Group, 1795.

was attained, but in fact he spent the rest of his life abroad.

In Europe, Copley studied with the famous American expatriate Benjamin West (1738–1820), who encouraged him to paint historical and heroic subjects. Although the subsequent paintings were more elegant and polished than Copley's early American portraits, they were correspondingly less distinctive and interesting. One of Copley's later paintings, *Watson and the Shark* (1778) is of great interest, however, for in it Copley produced a warm and sympathetic portrayal of an African American man attempting to assist a white man—Watson—desperately floundering in the water. The would-be rescuer has thrown a

rope, which Watson has missed, as the shark looms menacingly nearby. (Notice how the African American's outstretched arm, mirroring that of Watson, contributes to the symmetry and the drama of this strong painting.) Such a subtle and sympathetic rendering of relations between African Americans and whites was unusual in that time, and Copley's painting is in every way a masterpiece.

Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827) also studied for a time in Europe with Benjamin West, returning to America to become the leading artist in Philadelphia for many years. Peale revealed the classical thirst for knowledge in his boundless curiosity about a broad range of subjects, implementing his ideas (in the practical, classical way) by establishing the first American museum of natural history, in Philadelphia in 1802.

Peale, who fought in the American Revolution, painted fine, lifelike portraits of the leaders of the young nation. His painting *The Staircase Group*, reflecting the eighteenth-century interest in scientific measurement and optical effects, is so realistic a portrayal of Peale's sons standing on a staircase that

George Washington is said to have bowed to the boys as he passed by the painting one day.

Today we recognize the dominant effects of many cultures on the evolution of American music, but the traditions and practices of all the early inhabitants—those native to the land, the early European arrivals, and the people brought by force from their African homeland—have deeply colored the complex landscape of American music. From at least the early seventeenth century, the music heard in the widely separated inhabited regions of the continent reflected highly disparate values and sounds. Nevertheless, Indian, African, and European musics had some things in common: all were more likely to be performed by amateurs than by professionals, in intimate (inside or outside) domestic or worship settings than in a concert hall, and often (although not always) with spiritual connotation. The distinctions we draw now between sacred and secular music and between high and low art—and the difficulties we experience in finding appropriate terminology to distinguish one kind of art from another—had little meaning in the early American experience. 🎵



North American Indian Music

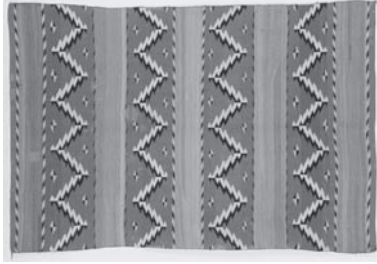
Long before European settlers arrived in the New World, North American Indians were practicing their own vital music traditions, essential and integral to their most basic daily experience. Because their music always occurred in association with other activities—dance, religious ritual, prayer, work, recreation—their languages included no word for music itself; yet for American Indians then as today, life without music was unthinkable.

Songs

Never an independent concept but always a part of dance, celebration, games, work, or prayer, Native American music essentially consists of songs imbued with strong powers to accomplish a given end, such as success in fishing, healing, gambling, or winning a bride. American Indians think of their songs not as *composed*, but as *received*, often in a dream or vision—gifts of power from the spirit world. The owner of a song may sell it or may grant someone else the right to sing it, usually in exchange for a gift; or a song may be included among the items in one's will.

Songs, which are highly valued in American Indian cultures, have been preserved through the ages not by notation but by a rich and vital oral tradition—handed down, that is, from one generation to the next through performance and memorization, stressing the necessity for completely accurate rendition. Navajos, who think of their songs as enriching experiences, sometimes count their wealth in terms of the number of songs they know. And because a basket weaver, for example, sings not only to ease the drudgery of work but more importantly to make a basket pleasing to supernatural spirits, the song must be performed and listened to with propriety.

Native American music certainly does *not* all sound the same to the discriminating ear: The songs of some tribes, for example, are low-pitched, sounding practiced or controlled, whereas songs of others lie very high in the voice, pulsing vibrantly with emotion and energy. Even within a given tribe, songs for gambling, war dances, lullabies, and healing ceremonies vary widely in their sounds.

**FIGURE 1.1**

The pleasing repetition of geometric patterns in this lovely Navajo blanket unifies the design much as melodic repetition unifies a Native American song.

Although there are as many kinds of Native American songs as there are Native American cultures, some characteristics do apply to all or most. Melodic phrases generally begin on a relatively high pitch and descend without wide leaps, approximating the inflection typical of a spoken phrase. A song often consists simply of many repetitions of one or more phrases or partial phrases, much as designs on baskets, blankets, and other Native American art often consist of repeated geometrical patterns (Figure 1.1). Such aural and visual repetition has a nearly hypnotic effect, enhancing a work's spirituality and artistic coherence, while also suggesting the ideal balance of nature for which the Native American constantly strives.

Songs are usually sung by a solo voice or by men and women singing together in **unison** (all singing the same notes at the same time). Although men's voices lie an octave lower than women's, and although **call-and-response**—a solo voice alternating with a group—sometimes leads to an overlap between the leader's and the other singers' tones, there is never harmony in the Western sense. Slightly different versions of the same melody performed simultaneously, however, produce variety in the musical *texture*.

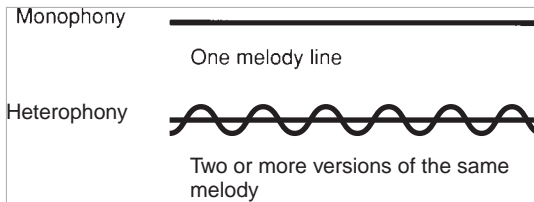
Texture Much as we describe the texture of a piece of fabric according to the way in which its threads are interwoven, so we describe the **texture** of music in terms of its “threads,” or melodic lines. The combination of lines of music may or may not achieve harmony.

Music consisting only of one line of melody, such as a Native American song or flute piece, we call **monophonic** in texture, the prefix *mono* indicating the sounding of one line of music. No matter the number of voices or instruments performing the same melody in unison, the texture of the music remains monophonic, and there are no harmonic combinations of sound.

Native American group singing, however, often involves an overlap between voices singing slightly different versions of the same melody. This musical texture, called **heterophonic**, is often heard in musics outside the Western tradition. Here, too, there is no intention to produce harmony, but simply to enrich or enhance, or to perform in the most natural and comfortable way, the melodic line. Figure 1.2 is a visual representation of monophonic texture (*monophony*) and heterophony.

FIGURE 1.2

Musical textures, monophony and heterophony.



Texts Song texts may be in a native language or, recently, in English. Some texts are simply a series of consonant-vowel clusters or **vocables**—neutral syllables, such as *hey*, *yeh*, or *neh*, which may in fact convey meaning in themselves. For example, as part of the Navajo Night Way curing ceremony, teams of young men compete in the singing of *Yeibichai* (*Yeh-be-chy*) songs while masked dancers, personifying the sacred spirits of their grandfathers (*Yei-bi-chai* means “spirits-their-grandfathers”), bring supernatural healing power to help the sick. Every one of the hundreds of *Yeibichai* songs, consisting entirely of vocables, contains the call of the *Yei*: *Hi ye, hi ye, ho-ho ho ho*, immediately identifying the song as belonging to this tradition. You will clearly hear the distinctive call in Listening Example 2, an excerpt from a *Yeibichai* chant song. Notice here the

Listening Example 2

Yeibichai Chant Song (excerpt)

On the ninth (last) night of the Night Way ceremony, *Yeibichai* appears, accompanied by masked dancers shaking their gourd rattles, and by the unearthly call of the gods.



Genre Religious dance.

Timbre Male voices, singing in unison, accompanied by the shaking of gourd rattles. The falsetto tones heard here are particularly characteristic of this and of some other Native American songs as well.

Melody Repeated high-pitched tones interspersed with even higher cries of indeterminate pitch, producing a rather florid melodic line featuring dramatic upward leaps.

Texture Monophonic.

Form Strophic. A long phrase is repeated many times, with minimal variation.

Rhythm A steady pulse marked by rattle shakes (two to the beat).

Text Vocables punctuated with the distinctive call of the *Yei*.

alternation between singing in the normal range of the voice and singing in the extremely high **falsetto** tones, lying above the normal voice range.

Sioux Grass Dance

Perhaps easiest to identify of all Native American styles is the singing of the Plains Indians, whose regions stretch from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains east to the Mississippi River and beyond, and from the Gulf of Mexico north into Canada. High in pitch, tense in quality, and harsh in tone, this sound is entirely distinct from that of European-based American music (Listening Example 3). No less is it distinct, however, from the music of other Native American cultures, and from other kinds of music (simple lullabies or intimate songs, for example) of the Plains Indians themselves.

Usually referred to today as a grass dance, because of the grass braids the dancers wear at their waists, this is the stirring war dance music heard, or

Listening Example 3

Sioux Grass Dance (excerpt)

To perform this stunning dance, two teams of costumed dancers enter the area, each dancer carrying a tomahawk or another weapon. Facing each other, the teams dance in place, brandishing their weapons in a threatening manner. Next, forming a circle, they move around clockwise, crouching, leaping, and yelping dramatically. Individually, the dancers simulate the motions of battle, alternately forming and breaking the original formations.



Genre Dance.

Timbre Men and women singing (approximately) in unison. Notice the tense quality of the voices and the high, falsetto tones. Some phrases are introduced by a leader's call. The insistent beat of drums and delicate shaking of rattles accompany the singers, while the yells of observers as well as participants add to the drama and excitement of the dance.

Melody Each phrase begins high in pitch and descends, much as a spoken phrase often ends lower than it began. The melody descends by narrow intervals, the only large leaps occurring from the end of one phrase to the beginning of the next.

Texture Heterophony.

Form Strophic. Each verse or stanza (or strophe) consists of a descending phrase.

Rhythm A steady, duple pulse, marked by the drums and rattles.

FIGURE 1.3

Stirring music performed in the emotional Plains Indian style enhances the drama of the traditional war dance.

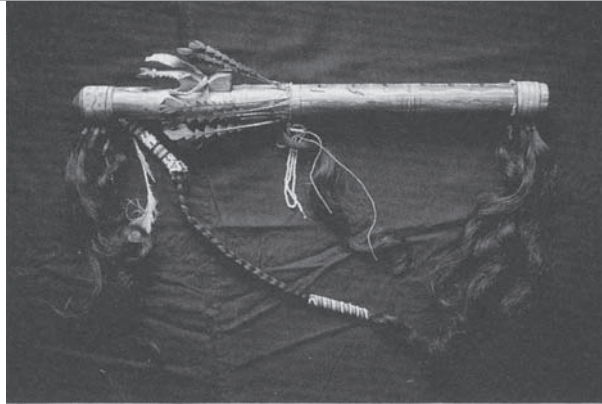


imitated, in countless western movies. The strong pulsations, the very high pitches sung in falsetto range, and the tense quality of the voices enhance the emotional intensity of this exciting music, as do the elaborate costumes and dramatic steps of the dancers (Figure 1.3).

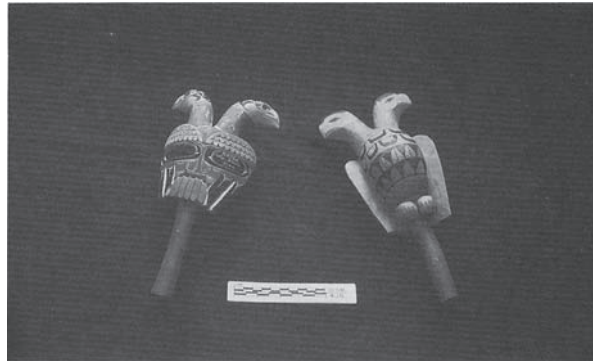
Sound Instruments

Although little music is performed by instruments alone, sound instruments, as they are called, often support or “hold up” a song. Navajo flutes, the primary melody-playing Native American instrument, are usually made of cedar wood and may be elaborately carved and decorated (Figure 1.4). Traditionally the flute was sometimes used as a courting instrument, played by a young man who trusted the wind to carry his flute-song to the woman he loved, and who hoped the sounds of his flute, by their beauty and perhaps by magic as well, would persuade her to become his bride. The Navajo flute, rarely heard during the first three quarters of the twentieth century except among families and occasionally at large intertribal gatherings called **powwows**, is frequently heard today at tribal fairs, powwows, and concerts of traditional music. It has no standard dimensions because its finger holes and air column are based on finger measurements and are therefore never the same. Each flute has its own sound and pitch. The flute repertoire now includes newly composed courting songs as well as Western-influenced classical pieces composed especially for this unique instrument. (You may hear and see Navajo flute players perform on YouTube.)

Far more common and widespread are percussion instruments, especially container rattles of several kinds: A rattle element, such as pebbles, sacred corn, or beans, placed into a gourd or pot or into a container made of hide or bark, is shaken in time to the rhythm of a song or swung in a circular motion

**FIGURE 1.4**

Decorated flute of the Northern Plains Indians. This Kiowa Indian flute with a carved wind cap is decorated with painting, feathers, and braided hair.

**FIGURE 1.5**

Two Northwest Coast carved wooden rattles from the Tlingit culture, carved with double birds' heads. These date from the late nineteenth century and come from the area around Sitka, Alaska.

to produce a continuous sound (Figure 1.5). For certain sacred ceremonies, the shaking of deer hooves or shells suspended from a stick (a suspension rattle) produces quite a different sort of rattling effect.

Rasps, percussion instruments normally made from a long stick of wood into which notches have been carved, are rubbed with another stick or a piece of bone (such as the shoulder blade of a sheep) to make a rasping sound. To amplify the sound, the rasp may be placed on an inverted basket or on a piece of hide over an open hole in the ground.

Drums, carrying great importance in Indian culture, exist in profuse variety. Most are made of wood, with one or two heads of the skin of deer or some other animal. The Zuni, Navajo, and Apache, however, sometimes use less resonant pottery vessels or drum jars. Hollowed-out logs, or *log drums*, tall and thin or short and wide, common to the Plains area, have become the powwow drum of today.

Contemporary Indian Song

The late nineteenth century and the twentieth century witnessed many changes in North American Indian music, as some cultural traditions nearly succumbed to overwhelming influences from modern American life. Among the earliest changes in traditional Native American music practice, for example, was the

development of pan-Indian song styles, which evolved as the introduction of the horse and later the automobile increased intertribal contact. Soon Native American peoples from many tribes, speaking various languages, were meeting at powwows to share their dances, songs, and ceremonies with one another and sometimes with a public audience.

The modern powwow is common not only on reservations but also in many cities across the United States. Some Native Americans follow the powwow circuit throughout the year, often traveling many miles to sing, dance, and rodeo. The use of either English or vocables is particularly convenient for singing powwow songs, which unite the people as Native Americans and also as members of a particular tribe, authenticating their ceremonies and helping keep the people in balance with nature. Powwow songs also allow visitors from other cultures not only to view but sometimes even to participate in the wide variety of music, dance, and visual splendor associated with American Indian culture.

Professional Musicians

A recent surge of interest among Native Americans concerning their own heritage, together with new appreciation among other Americans of the rich Indian cultures, has produced a wealth of research and of live and recorded performances of both traditional and new Native American music. Some Native Americans have adopted elements of contemporary popular or vernacular musics, modifying these to suit their needs and desires; and rock bands, country-western groups, and gospel quartets flourish on many reservations today.

Other Native American musicians have chosen an academic route, studying music at universities and conservatories and applying their native gifts and experience to composing and performing concert music within the Western music tradition. Among the most prominent of these is **Carlos Nakai** (b. 1946, Figure 1.6), a classically trained cornet and trumpet player who became fascinated with the haunting sounds of the Navajo-style flute and made an exhaustive study of the instrument, which he calls “a sound sculpture—a piece of art that also creates sound.” Today Nakai collaborates with musicians in many fields, finding new expression for the Navajo flute in jazz ensembles, in piano-guitar combinations, and in the concert hall. He even uses electronic techniques, including the electronic synthesizer and digital delay, together with the cedar flute. (Carlos Nakai performances are available on YouTube.)

To many American listeners, Native American music sounds more “foreign” than the music of many distant cultures. However, Americans are becoming more aware of and sensitive to the values of a music born and nurtured in this land we all share. The end-of-chapter list includes only a few of today’s many prolific and successful professional Native American musicians, but a search on the Internet for “Native American music” will yield innumerable examples of contemporary American Indian popular and concert musicians and their music, and you may follow the links that pique your interest or arouse your curiosity.

Louis Ballard, a prestigious composer, music educator, and music journalist of Cherokee, Quapaw, Scottish, French, and English heritage, once said in reference



FIGURE 1.6
R. Carlos Nakai (b. 1946–)—
Native American flutist,
composer, and educator.

to the uniqueness of each Navajo flute, “Don’t ever let ‘different’ be ‘alien.’” His comment applies as well to our approach to the music of Native Americans, who freely share the arts by which all humankind receives the most gracious blessings.

Terms to Review

unison	monophony	falsetto
call-and-response	heterophony	powwow
texture	vocables	

Key Figures

Carlos Nakai	Other Figures in Popular Music	Joanne Shenandoah
Louis Ballard	John Trudell	XIT
Other Figures in Classical Music	Black Lodge Singers	Keith Secola
Edward Wapp	Burning Sky	Karen Therese
John Kim Bell	December Wind	Clan/destine
Brent Michael Davids	Sharon Burch	

Critical Thinking

What specific characteristics of the Native American music you have heard distinguish it from the European or American classical or popular music with which you are familiar?	What influences in modern American life can you suggest that may have affected Native American music? What changes would such influences cause?
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Early Folk Music

Folk music refers to simple songs and instrumental pieces whose origin has been lost or forgotten, or to music composed in an informal style traditional in certain cultures. Unpretentious, easy to remember and to perform, folk music appeals to inexperienced listeners and sophisticated musicians alike.

The folk music of the United States springs from many ethnic and cultural sources: English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, German, and other European influences abound. Africa, too—particularly West Africa—introduced an immeasurable wealth of musical sounds and traditions to folk as well as to other musics in America. Much of the recent urban and country folk music we shall consider in Chapters 11 and 14 is deeply rooted in the traditional music introduced here.

Spanish Traditions

The Spanish founded St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565. It is the oldest European settlement in the United States, and Spanish music traditions remain strong in that area of the country. (A historian recently pointed out that not until 2055 will the flag of the United States have flown over St. Augustine as long as the Spanish flag did.) In regions of the Southwest as well, one still hears Spanish folk songs and dances and folk **hymns** (religious songs) reflecting their origins in seventeenth-century Spain or more recent Mexico. Missionary priests taught Indians to sing hymns, for example, and Spanish troops guarding forts near the Christian missions sang ballads and love songs at their work.

Vendors' songs, work songs, lullabies, and all manner of Spanish folk dances, or *bailes*, formed an ordinary part of the Spanish settlers' lives in the New World. Performed now as in years past to celebrate engagements, weddings, birthdays, and other happy social events, such rollicking *bailes* as *El cutilio* (an Online Listening Example) lighten the hearts of those who hear them—though few remember how to dance the intricate steps popular 150 years ago.



www.mhhe.com/ferrisaml6e

Alabados One of the first kinds of religious music in California, Texas, and New Mexico was the **alabado**, a Spanish hymn, or religious song (*alabado sea* means “praised be”). Alabados became part of a thriving Spanish folk tradition that survives today in remote villages of the American Southwest. Long and invariably sad, alabados project the profound loneliness of the beautiful but remote regions inhabited by those who sing them.

Some alabados, probably introduced by Franciscan priests, are related musically to the chants of the Roman Catholic church; newer alabados use major and minor scales (see p. 0). Like chant, the religious texts are sung without measure, the rhythm conforming to that of the words. Alabados performed during religious processions are sung in unison, unaccompanied except perhaps by flute figures evocative, some say, of the tears of Mary, and a twirling rattle. Alternatively, alabados may be sung by a solo voice or by a lead singer, often a priest, alternating verses with group responses. The latter method offers missionary priests, for example, a prime opportunity to teach the stories of the Bible in song.

Many examples of alabados may be heard on YouTube.

Corridos Storytelling songs or **ballads** with roots in both Mexico and parts of the southwestern and western United States, **corridos** relate the unofficial history of Mexican or Mexican American communities and their heroes. Powerful meditations on honor and bravery, corridos focus more on the stories they tell—of heroes, villains, romances, and historic events—than the music, which usually consists of a simple melody performed unaffectedly with sparse accompaniment. During the nineteenth-century Mexican war of independence and the twentieth-century Mexican revolution, corridos informed the people of newsworthy events. More recent corridos have celebrated famous leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., and César Chavez; delivered moral messages; related tales of everyday life and love, immigration, and the drug trade; and expressed nostalgia for Mexico.

Traditionally sung by a solo vocalist accompanied by a guitar, corridos have in modern times been performed, and made more complex, by popular music groups. (Los Tigres del Norte, a highly popular Mexican band, includes at least one or two corridos on each CD it produces.) Chordal accompaniment of a melody line results in the musical texture called *homophonic*.

Homophonic Texture. When a melody is accompanied by chords, we call the resulting texture **homophony**, or **homophonic texture**. The accompanying voices (instrumental or vocal) produce harmony, but are not primarily of melodic interest themselves. Hymns sung in unison by a church congregation are often accompanied by an organ or piano adding chordal harmony; a band provides harmonic accompaniment while the crowd sings “The Star Spangled Banner” at a football game; folk singers may accompany themselves by strumming chords on a musical instrument. All of these are examples of homophonic, or **chordal** texture (Figure 2.1)

FIGURE 2.1

Homophonic texture: a melody accompanied by chords.



Listening Example 4

“El corrido de Gregorio Cortez”

The story, from the early 1900s, concerns a young Mexican falsely accused of horse stealing. When captured, in self-defense he shot and killed the arresting sheriff, who had fatally wounded the young man’s brother.

(The lyrics and English translation may be found online by entering the song’s title as key words. Brief instrumental interludes separating each verse make it easy to follow the words and music.)



CD
Track
2:46

Composer Anonymous.

Genre Corrido (norteño ballad).

Timbre Male duet, singing in simple harmony, accompanied by accordion and guitar. The instruments play a brief introduction, interludes between the stanzas, and the ending.

Texture Homophonic (chordal).

Form Strophic. Versions vary from singer to singer, some having as many as twenty four-line stanzas, but recording on 78- or 45-rpm records forced singers to shorten the number of verses.

Meter Triple. Notice the **oom-pah-pah** rhythm of a waltz.

Tempo Fast.

The Texas-Mexican border performance style, called *norteño* in northern Mexico and Tex-Mex or tejano (*tay-ha’-no*) in Texas, often includes an accordion, as heard in “El corrido de Gregorio Cortez” (Listening Example 4).

British Traditions

The early English settlers who arrived in the New World around the turn of the seventeenth century brought few musical instruments with them; but in time, as violins and other, mostly stringed, instruments became available, the settlers and colonists played the fiddle tunes and dances familiar from their British

childhood. Many traditional songs acquired new words and altered melodies, reflecting American dialects and New World experience as they were handed down from one generation to the next.

These folk music traditions survive today in rural and mountain areas, where the style of singing and playing instruments is remarkably close to that of seventeenth-century Britain. Simple lullabies, such as “The Mockingbird” (“Hush, little baby, don’t say a word, Papa’s gonna buy you a mockingbird”), delightfully silly and entertaining nonsense songs, various work songs, and singing games (“Did You Ever See a Lassie,” “Go In and Out the Window”) all belong to the American folk song repertoire.

Folk Ballads British folk ballads, delivered from memory by a solo voice, with or without accompaniment, offer little background information about the stories they relate, presenting the essential elements and allowing the listener’s imagination free rein to flesh out the details. Although the events described often are of a dramatic, even tragic, nature, these ballads present them in a simple, direct, nearly emotionless manner, time and place remaining pleasantly abstract.

British ballads were a major source of entertainment in early America (Figure 2.2). Sung by amateurs for their own or their families’ and friends’ pleasure, they often included a very large number of stanzas, so that the entertainment might last as long as possible. Having survived through oral tradition, their authors unknown or forgotten, they evolved as the product of many people over long periods of time, remaining subject to alteration today. Thus ballad

FIGURE 2.2

Early Americans gather to enjoy informal music and dance.



singers often add, alter, or delete stanzas as they perform, lending a song local or timely relevance, or simply expressing the irrepressible creativity of the balladeer.

Among the most popular subjects for ballads is the ill-fated love affair, such as the one described in the very famous “Barbara Allen” (Listening Example 5). A favorite song of President George Washington, this is one of a great number of folk ballads that have survived apparently intact since their British (in this case probably Scottish) origin. Some of these very old songs seem to have been better preserved in America, in fact, than in the land that introduced them, and they have long been adopted into the American folk repertoire.

Like many folk and other simple melodies, “Barbara Allen” is based on a five-note, or **pentatonic**, scale corresponding to the five black notes within an octave on a keyboard. (Any five notes may be selected to form a pentatonic scale, but the black-key pattern is the most commonly used.) You might try playing this and many other tunes, including “Merrily We Roll Along,” “Oh! Susanna,” and “Old Folks at Home,” entirely or for the most part on the black keys of a keyboard instrument.

Listening Example 5

“Barbara Allen”

The seventeenth-century story is of young “Sweet William,” who is dying for love of “hard-hearted Barbara Allen.” She loves him, too, of course, and—remorseful for having repulsed his advances—soon joins him in death. A red rose and a green briar miraculously grow and join above the ill-fated lovers’ adjacent graves. The words vary from one performance to another, the song having been handed down through centuries by oral tradition, but the story remains the same.



Composer Anonymous. The ballad, sometimes called “Barb’ry Ellen” or another similar name, probably originated in Scotland in the early seventeenth century.

Genre Folk ballad.

Timbre Unaccompanied male singer (Pete Seeger).

Melody The melody, like the words, exists in several versions. It is based upon a pentatonic scale that uses only the tones of the five black notes of a keyboard. Many children’s songs and folk melodies are based upon this simple scale.

Texture Monophonic.

—Continued

Listening Example 5—concluded

“Barbara Allen”

Form Strophic. As in most ballads, there are several fourline stanzas, varying in number according to the particular performance.

Rhythm There is a steady underlying pulse and a general sense of triple meter. The rhythm is refreshingly irregular, and the phrases are sometimes asymmetrical, adapted to suit the informal text.

0:00	In Scarlett Town, where I was born, . . .
0:19	'Twas in the merry month of May . . .
0:39	He sent his servant unto her . . .
1:02	Well slowly, slowly got she up . . .
1:24	Then lightly tripped she down the stairs. . . .
1:45	Oh, Mother, Mother, go make my bed, . . .
2:06	They buried Barbara in the old churchyard; . . .
2:26	They grew and grew up the old church wall . . .

Early American Folk Music

Early emigrants also reflected the influence of another kind of British folk tradition, the **broadside**, written and printed on a very large sheet suitable for public display, or sometimes printed in a newspaper (Figure 2.3). As early as the seventeenth century, Americans began to alter traditional ballads to fit their new experiences, setting original words to old tunes. For subjects, some broadsides took historical or topical events, such as mine disasters, famous murders, or train wrecks; some offered moral instruction or delivered impassioned political commentary. Much like the Internet today, broadsides offered an opportunity to state one's case anonymously, often in brutally satirical terms, free from censorship or retaliation.

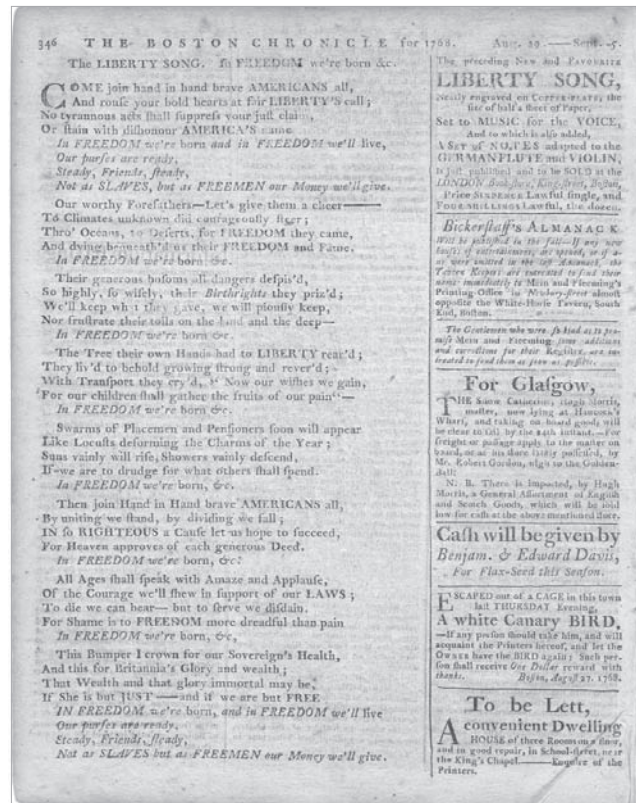
The first stanza and chorus of a famous patriotic ballad of the Revolutionary period, “The Liberty Song,” exemplify the inflammatory character of political broadsides. (Interestingly, the author of these fervent words, set to an English air called “Heart of Oak,” had urged appeasement with England and staunchly opposed revolution.)

The Liberty Song

*Come, join hand in hand,
Brave Americans all!
And rouse your bold hearts
At fair Liberty's call;*

FIGURE 2.3

In 1768 *The Boston Chronicle* printed John Dickinson's inflammatory text, which he defiantly set to the tune of a popular English patriotic song.



*No tyrannous acts shall
Suppress your just claim,
Or stain with dishonor
America's name.*

*(Chorus—repeated between the stanzas of the song)
In freedom we're born,
And in freedom we'll live!
Our purses are ready,
Steady, friends, steady;
Not as slaves, but as free men,
Our money we'll give.*

—AMERICAN WORDS BY JOHN DICKINSON

Less objective, abstract, and timeless than ancient ballads, American broadsides proved less likely to survive beyond the period that introduced them; thus few of the American folk ballads we remember and enjoy today were written before the second half of the nineteenth century. But even before that time, each geographic area of America was producing songs and instrumental pieces expressing the typical local experience. Frontier people sang songs

about freedom, equality, danger, and the beauty of nature in the wild. Ballads commemorated the opening of the Erie Canal (1825), the gold rush in California (1849), and other events of intense local concern. Slaves produced their own music, expressive of their particular loneliness and suffering. And songs of miners, farmers, railroad workers, and even outlaws also joined the American folk repertoire. Lullabies served every segment of the population, and play and party songs entertained adults as well as children. Performed in the same plain, direct manner as their British counterparts, American ballads reflect in their titles—such as “John Henry,” “Billy the Kid,” “The Erie Canal,” “The John B. Sails,” or “Casey Jones” (Listening Example 46, p. 000)—their uniquely American source and character.

Sailors’ work songs or **chanteys** appeared as New Englanders became heavily involved in sea trade and traffic, and as sailors working on the rivers, too, developed songs about their trade. The origin of the hauntingly beautiful “Shenandoah” (Listening Example 6) is sketchy, but the song seems to have originated in the early nineteenth century in the areas of the Missouri and the Mississippi rivers and eventually to have made its way down the Mississippi to the open ocean, where deep-sea sailors adopted its rolling melody as their own. (Shenandoah was the name of an Indian chief living on the Missouri River.) It has remained one of America’s favorite folk songs.

Listening Example 6

“Shenandoah”

From the 1820s, this lovely, plaintive ballad tells of a white (Canadian or American) trader who courted the daughter of Shenandoah, an American Indian chieftain, and carried her off in his canoe, only to abandon her later on the banks of the Missouri River. A favorite song of sailors—some of whom must have experienced similar conquests and subsequent remorse, and who loved to sing it while away on long, lonely voyages—the song is sometimes thought of as a chantey.



CD
Track
1:48

Composer Anonymous.

Genre Folk ballad (chantey).

Timbre Solo male singer (Pete Seeger), accompanied by very sparse strumming of a few supportive guitar tones and simple chords.

Melody Based on a pentatonic scale. (The occasional use of a note not belonging to the pentatonic scale does not change the pentatonic flavor of the melody.)

—Continued

“Shenandoah”

Texture Mostly monophonic, the guitar adding little in the way of harmony.

Form Strophic; verse-refrain.

Meter Quadruple (four beats per measure).

Tempo The slow, relaxed tempo and somewhat irregular accents, closely following the natural rhythm of the text, suggest the roll of waves and the easy sway of a ship.

- 0:00 Oh Shenandoah, I love your daughter. . . .
- 0:34 Oh Shenandoah, I long to see you. . . .
- 1:12 For seven years I’ve been a rover. . . .

African Traditions

Unlike the European settlers, who arrived in the New World of their own free will, Africans were forcibly brought to America in European slave ships, beginning early in the seventeenth century—about the time the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth Rock. By 1700 slavery had become common throughout the thirteen colonies.

Many slaveholders harshly discouraged references to African gods and religions in any traditional song or dance. Especially British Protestants, who considered African music customs savage and heathen, did everything possible to eradicate their slaves’ native religion and culture. Partly to this end, the first babies born to slaves in this country (unlike those in other areas of the New World, such as Haiti, Cuba, or Brazil) often were separated from their families to be raised on other plantations. There they learned African lore and language from older Africans, of course, but they also began to accrue experience with America and with English.

Slaves in New England worked much as slaves worked in the South but were treated with more leniency, often enjoying a measure of free time in which to entertain themselves and their masters by singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments. The admiration they excited by their music was not always to the slaves’ advantage, however: Newspaper lists of slaves for sale and of runaways often referred to their outstanding musical abilities, adding to their desirability as commodities to be owned and abused.

As adults, the first generation of slaves born here began to develop their own music, rooted in African customs and sounds, but genuinely African American, expressing their new experience in a new sort of African American language.

Whereas the first slaves had sung in African dialects, work songs and other songs gradually came to be sung more in English, pronounced, however, with African rhythms. For a long time, some African words continued to be used, perhaps for the purpose of obscuring seditious meaning from white people. When even the blacks could no longer understand the African languages, meaningless but rhythmic syllables were used as well.

Field Hollers Most of the slaves forced to work on the plantations in what is now the southeastern United States came from West Africa, where they had commonly integrated music with their daily work. Particular kinds of songs became associated with certain tasks, such as fishing, weaving, hunting, or tilling their farms. In America, the familiar fishing, weaving, and hunting songs lost relevance, but slaves, such as those pictured in Figure 2.4, poured all the anguish of their new, tragic experience into **field hollers**—loud, rhythmically flexible, emotionally expressive chants or cries sung by a solitary voice. Some field hollers had words (“Where *are* you-u-u . . .?”) but most, as in Listening Examples 7 and 8, used neutral syllables easily heard over distances.

Ring Shouts Another African tradition translated to an African American experience was the religious **shout**, or **ring shout**, performed at religious services or camp meetings. The “shouters” formed a ring and shuffled energetically to the singing of a spiritual (see pp. 00–00) or hymn. Though careful to hardly lift their feet from the floor (lifting the feet would constitute dancing, a forbidden entertainment at services), the shouters, accompanied by singers and sometimes singing themselves, gradually quickened their pace, as they became caught up in an ecstasy of religious fervor that often kept them moving until they fell from sheer exhaustion.



FIGURE 2.4

In a Cotton Field. Wood engraving, drawn by Horace Bradley, 1887.

Listening Example 7

Field Holler 19th century

With hollers such as this, people established wordless but heart-warming contact with fellow workers who, hearing the poignant cries, could respond with expressive hollers of their own.



CD
Track
1:15

Timbre Solo male voice.

Melody A simple, narrow, mournful phrase on three tones, repeated.

Rhythm Free, flexible.

Text Neutral syllables, easy to sing and to hear over distances.

Listening Example 8

Father's Field Call 19th century

This father's field call or holler illustrates the high falsetto range, lying above the normal, full, chest voice, which enhanced the ability to call over long distances.



CD
Track
0:22

Timbre Solo male voice in the falsetto range.

Melody Begins with an upward leap, succeeded by a naturally falling inflection. This call is reminiscent, in fact, of the familiar "Yoo-hoo."

Rhythm Free, flexible.

Text Wordless.

Work Songs In Africa, another kind of song, the **work song**, accompanied such rhythmic tasks as rowing, hoeing, or chopping trees. Traditional work songs expressed joy and pride in hard work for one's family and land, and gratitude to the gods for their help.

In America, too, slaves made up, or **improvised**, work songs as they labored in pain and sorrow, adapting the words, however, to their tragic new condition. Work songs often accompanied American plantation slaves, setting the pace and synchronizing the movements of groups of forced laborers. The songs, strophic in form, were performed in the characteristic West African music practice known as call-and-response, in which the leading lines of each verse, sung by a single voice, alternate with a repeated phrase, or refrain, sung by the group.

Listening Example 9, “Hammer, Ring,” recorded at a state penitentiary in Texas in 1934, indicates how work songs facilitate the movements and lighten the mood of laborers working under the most difficult and depressing conditions.

Listening Example 9

“Hammer, Ring” (excerpt)

Hammer songs accompanied men driving the spikes that fastened long steel rails to wooden railroad ties. From the dramatic Bible story of Noah and the ark, the leader of this hammer song, recorded in 1934, improvises simple lines of text, to which the men—swinging 10-pound hammers freely from the shoulder in a complete circle about the head—rhythmically respond, “Hammer, ring!” The relentless rhythm and driving energy of the piece support and reinforce the regular rhythm of the hammering men.



Notice occasional variations in the inflection of the melody line, which add emphasis or emotional intensity to the delivery. Notice, too, the occasional calls, cries, or shouts of the workers. While their response is generally sung in unison, occasional flights of creativity among individuals vary the texture of their singing.

Composer The song was improvised by Jesse Bradley and a group at State Penitentiary, Huntsville, Texas.

Genre Work song (hammer song).

Timbre Male singing voices.

Melody The melody largely consists of the tones of a minor triad: The verses use *one* and *three* of the triad, and the refrain sometimes adds *five*.

Texture Monophonic/heterophonic.

Form Strophic. Each verse consists of a line of text, repeated, with the refrain “Hammer, ring!” interspersed between lines. The leader sings each line; the hammering men sing the refrain (call-and-response). Occasionally the leader repeats the introductory verse.

Meter Duple.

0:00	Won't you ring, old hammer? . . .
0:06	Broke the handle on my hammer . . .
0:13	Got to hammerin' the Bible . . .

Freedom Songs During the first half of the nineteenth century, a movement known as the Underground Railroad assisted slaves seeking escape to free states, Canada, or elsewhere. This network of abolitionists, religious groups, and other sympathizers provided fleeing individuals transportation, supplies, and safe houses along secret routes. Their dangerous work allowed a tragically small, yet significant, number of slaves to reach freedom. Songs such as “No More Auction Block for Me” (Listening Example 10) encouraged them on their perilous mission.

Musical Instruments In Africa, drums often accompanied work songs, sometimes providing two or three different underlying rhythmic patterns in a complexity difficult for Western ears even to hear. Using drums for communication

Listening Example 10

“No More Auction Block for Me”

This haunting freedom song from about 1800 expresses the determination of slaves to escape the humiliation of being sold at auction, the agony of separation from family, and the terrible physical punishment to which they were daily subjected. The melody, almost identical to a traditional West African song, inspired two twentieth-century anthems of the civil rights movement: “We Shall Overcome” and Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind,” both of which can be heard on YouTube. Solemnly sung here by **Odetta** (Odetta Holmes, 1930–2008), the song evokes the anguish of the slaves and their determination to achieve freedom.



Composer Anonymous.

Genre Freedom song.

Timbre Contralto voice (Odetta), quietly accompanied by mixed chorus.

Texture Homophonic.

Form Strophic.

Meter Quadruple.

- 0:00 No more auction block for me . . .
- 0:31 No more pint of salt for me . . .
- 1:04 No more driver’s lash for me . . .
- 1:35 No more auction block for me . . .

as well as for music, West Africans developed an extremely fine sense of changes in tone and timbre, together with truly remarkable rhythmic techniques.

Many slaves brought small drums and simple string instruments with them on the slave ships, where their captors sometimes compelled them to perform music to keep them occupied and while away the time; but slaveholders on southern plantations generally banned the use of African drums, fearing that the thrilling drumbeats might incite revolt. Slaves compensated for the loss of their drums by improvising percussive instruments from empty oil drums, metal washbasins, and whatever else might be available and by clapping, body-slapping, and stamping the rhythms of their songs and dances. Rattles or bits of shell or bone added to simple instruments further enhanced the driving beat.

West African gourd **banjos** (variously called *banjar*, *banza*, and other similar names) arrived in the American colonies by way of the slave trade in the late seventeenth century. Developed from ancient Arab prototypes, the African banjo typically had four strings, three long and one short, the short string providing a rhythmic and harmonic **drone** (a repeated tone of constant pitch). By stretching an animal skin across the open side of a hollowed-out gourd or calabash, slaves created their own primitive banjos, destined in more sophisticated form (such as the four-string banjo seen in Figure 2.5) to provide limitless entertainment for Americans and others of assorted ethnicity and culture.



FIGURE 2.5

A four string banjo.

	<p>What of African Music Survives Today? Today’s African American musics are deeply rooted in African traditions that arrived in the New World with the first slaves. Call-and-response, for example, became a basic characteristic of African American vocal and instrumental music, as we shall see when we study blues, vocal and instrumental jazz, the religious folk songs called <i>spirituals</i>, and many other kinds of contemporary black music. Improvisation is inherent in the concept of jazz and colors much other music as well. Much African American music is still based on the “bent” or flexible tones of the <i>blues</i> scale (see p. 000), unheard in this country until the first West Africans arrived. Even more apparent is the emphasis in African American music on rhythm over melody, and the complexity of African rhythms compared with those of Western (European) music.</p>	
<p>Terms to Review</p> <p>folk music hymn alabado ballad corrido</p>	<p>homophony (homophonic or chordal texture) pentatonic broadside chantey field hollers</p>	<p>shout, ring shout work songs improvised banjo drone</p>
<p>Key Figure</p> <p>Odetta</p>		
<p>Critical Thinking</p> <p>What opportunities do today’s political, religious, or personal satirists have to avoid prosecution by those they attack? Compare the potential for free expression in rap lyrics, cartoons, television entertainment, movies,</p>	<p>newspapers, books, and on the web, with that of the broadsides in colonial and revolutionary America.</p> <p>In how many ways might you distinguish between African and African American music?</p>	

Religious Music in the Colonial, Revolutionary, and Federal Periods

As early as the sixteenth century, inhabitants of the New World experienced a variety of native and imported musics. These included Roman Catholic music, with which French and Spanish visitors accompanied their own worship and which they taught to Indians in Florida and in parts of the Southwest as part of their effort to convert Native Americans to Roman Catholicism.

Music at the Spanish Missions

Music had an important part in the religious training of American Indians by zealous Spanish missionaries, who taught their more or less willing converts to sing the songs and prayers of the Christian church, usually set to very simple tunes. Soon American Indians were learning to sing in choirs, play in church orchestras, and even make simple European-style musical instruments. They learned traditional Spanish music, religious praise songs or hymns, and even the more difficult Gregorian chant, traditionally sung by trained soloists and choirs. At Christmastime, they participated in musical nativity plays called *Las posadas* (The Lodgings), commemorating the struggles of Mary to find a place in which to deliver the baby Jesus.

The Spanish missions remained active in California, where missionaries and their Native American students regularly performed Catholic church music until the Mexican government ordered the missions closed in 1833. A large number of musical instruments, as well as manuscripts of Mass settings and other church music of varying levels of complexity, have been found at some of the mission sites, many of which can still be visited.

While Catholic music remained important in regions of the country inhabited by Spanish, French, or Mexican people, the Protestant custom of singing psalms and hymns dominated the religious music experience in this country. These religious songs inspired and comforted urban and rural people in the North and South, but New England's practices exerted the strongest and longest-lasting influence on American music.



Psalm Tunes

In 1517, a German Catholic cleric, Martin Luther (1483–1546), instigated the Protestant Reformation by advocating reform of certain questionable practices by the Roman Catholic church of his day. The movement thus begun stimulated a number of independent-minded people in northern European countries to form their own Protestant sects, each adhering to particular tenets of religious and secular conduct, including the place of music in worship.

Unlike Catholics, whose formal religious music was sung in Latin, Protestants sang their hymns in their vernacular, or common, language. They also preferred simple, folklike tunes, which everyday people could sing, to the elaborate Gregorian chant or complex choir pieces sung by trained Catholic monks.

The Pilgrims and Puritans arriving in New England early in the seventeenth century were Protestants, whose protests against the Roman Catholic church included some concerning religious music. People who followed the strict teachings of the Swiss reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) believed that the *only* texts suitable for singing in a worship service were those of the **psalms**, 150 inspirational verses found in the Old Testament of the Bible. Thus Calvinists forbade the singing in church of hymns, which had freely written texts not necessarily based on passages from the Bible or from church liturgy.

Although poetic in style and expression, however, the psalms as they appear in the Bible are neither metered nor rhymed and therefore do not lend themselves readily to congregational singing. Thus Calvinists retranslated all the psalms into verses having a regular number of lines, with patterns of weak and accented beats, suitable for setting to music.

The Calvinists did not intend their **psalm tunes** to stir emotions or draw attention to the music itself, because they believed the only purpose for music in a church service was to enhance expression of a religious text. Therefore, because musical instruments cannot express words, harmony increases music's sensuous appeal, and neither instruments nor harmony will serve to clarify a text, the Calvinists consistently sang their psalm tunes in church **a cappella** (unaccompanied) and in unison. It is important for us to understand, however, that the separation between sacred and secular experience typical of the modern American experience did not apply in colonial America. Thus it was quite usual for Calvinists to sing psalm tunes austere in church, but in harmony and with elaborate instrumental accompaniment in family and social gatherings at home.

The New Englanders' psalm singing became, in effect, a kind of folk tradition. Psalm tunes were of a folklike nature and generally were learned from oral experience. Strophic in form, most had four-line stanzas, as is common in much folk song, and the ornamentation and variation in the singing of psalm tunes were typical of the manner of singing songs in the folk tradition.

Psalters The newly metered and rhymed psalm verses were printed in books called **psalters** for use in congregational singing. Some psalters contained

177
Psalm. VII.
178

Psalm. VII.

1. Shigion, of David; which he sang to Jehovah upon the words of Cail, son of Ismael.

2. Jehovah my God, in thee I hope for life: save thou me from all mine persecutors, me, & deliver thou me.

3. Lest he tear in pieces like a Lion my soul: breaking, while thou art not delivering.

4. Jehovah my God, if I have done this: if there be injurious, evil in my palms,

Psalm. VII.

1. *Shigion, of David; which he sang to Jehovah upon the words of Cail, son of Ismael.*

2. *Jehovah my God, in thee I hope for life: save thou me from all mine persecutors, me, & deliver thou me.*

3. *Lest he tear in pieces like a Lion my soul: breaking, while thou art not delivering.*

4. *Jehovah my God, if I have done this: if there be injurious, evil in my palms,*

FIGURE 3.1

Pages from the *Ainsworth Psalter* (Amsterdam, 1612), showing a psalm tune and the manner in which each verse of the psalm has been retranslated into rhymed and metered verse.

notated melodies, whereas others printed no music but only the words of the psalm verses, which could be sung to widely familiar and well-remembered folk, popular, or hymn tunes (Figure 3.1).

The first collection of psalm tunes was printed in Switzerland in 1539, nearly a century before the Pilgrims and Puritans came to the New World. This early psalter included a setting of Psalm 100 (Listening Example 11), known today as “Old Hundred.”

Many of the English settlers had enjoyed playing and listening to musical instruments in their homes, but few managed to bring any instruments with them to the New World. Furthermore, because travel between the continents was costly, time-consuming, and dangerous, the settlers soon lost touch with current music events abroad. The psalters they brought with them did not provide a separate tune for each of the 150 psalms, since all verses with the same metrical pattern could be sung to the same melody. The tunes they did include, however, were often so merry in mood and lively in tempo that skeptics referred to them as “Geneva jigs” (remembering the origins of Calvinism in Geneva, Switzerland). In a similar vein, Shakespeare, in *The Winter’s Tale*, described a Puritan who “sings psalms to hornpipes.” For some time the music experience for both Pilgrims and Puritans consisted of singing psalm tunes a cappella for worship in church and in harmony and accompanied for entertainment at home.

"Old Hundred" (excerpt)

Of all the beautiful psalm tunes, this one from about 1550 has become the best known. It is often sung by congregations in Protestant churches today, sometimes with a text beginning "From all that dwell below the skies" and sometimes as the Doxology ("Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow").



Composer Louis Bourgeois (c. 1510–c. 1560).

Performers Gregg Smith Singers.

Genre Psalm tune.

Timbre A cappella singing. The choir, or chorus, sings in four-part harmony (soprano, alto, tenor, bass), with the melody in the high, or soprano, female voices.

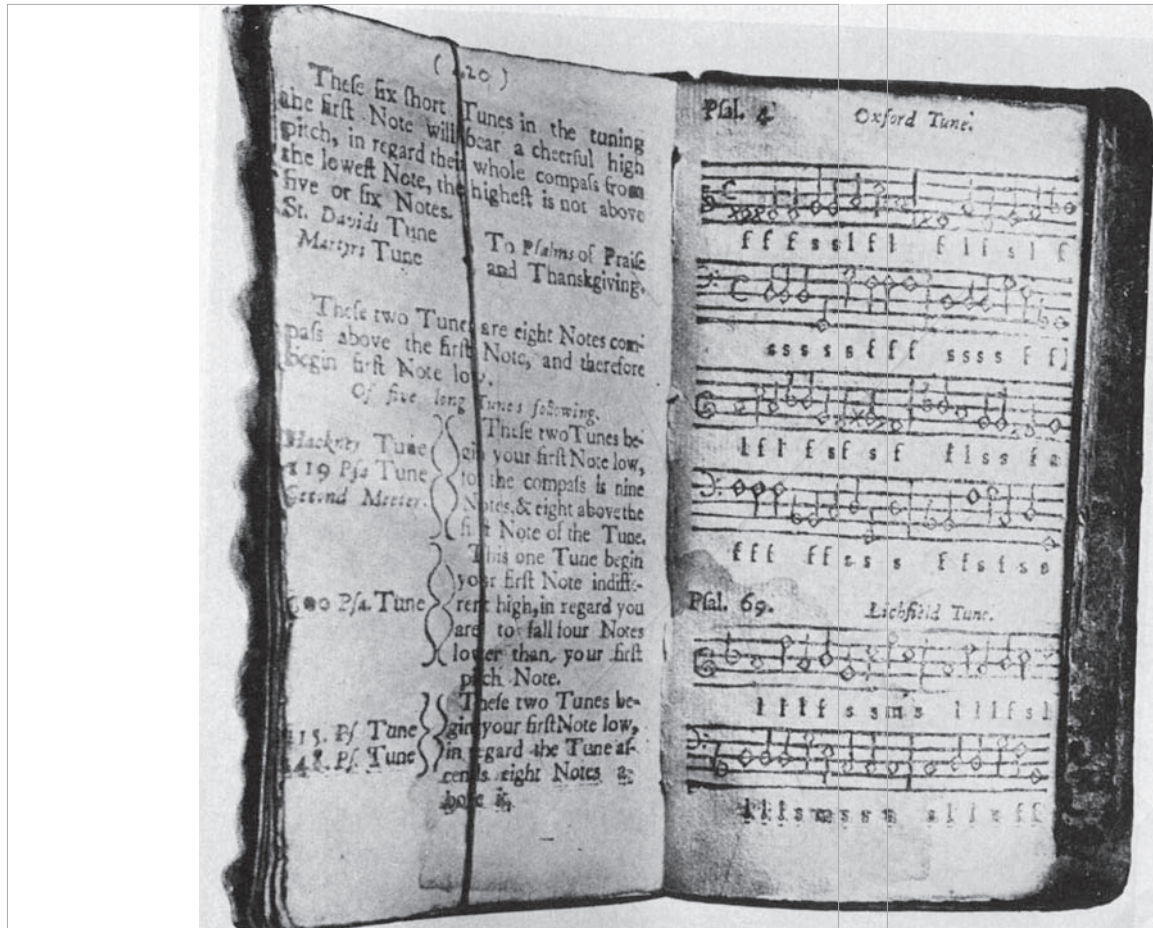
Texture Homophonic.

Form Strophic. (Only one stanza is heard on the CD.)

Rhythm Although the melody has remained unchanged for centuries, the rhythm has been altered. Modern Protestants generally sing "Old Hundred"—so called because of the tune's association with Psalm 100—in the rhythm heard here, or in another equally regular rhythmic pattern, neither pattern having the rhythmic variety, interest, or vigor of the settings enjoyed by early congregations.

Meter Quadruple. (We have considered meter as defining the number of beats per measure. In another sense, *meter* may refer to the pattern of syllables in a stanza of text. Thus each stanza of the text to "Old Hundred" has four lines, and each line has eight syllables, a pattern called *long meter*. Any meter could be sung to any long-meter tune.)

In a surprisingly short time, the settlers developed an American taste and tongue, making the language of their old psalters seem stilted and old-fashioned. Thus only twenty years after landing at Plymouth Rock, in 1640, an American psalter titled *The Whole Booke of Psalms Faithfully Translated into English Metre*, but popularly known as the **Bay Psalm Book**, was printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the first book printed in the New World. No tunes were included in the first editions of the Bay Psalm Book, but each edition after 1690 included music (Figure 3.2).

**FIGURE 3.2**

Pages from a later edition of the *Bay Psalm Book*, the first book printed in the American colonies.

Other Protestant Music

While John Calvin proscribed all music but the singing of psalm tunes in church, Martin Luther encouraged the joyful singing of simple tunes and lighthearted texts in worship, even composing some hymns of his own. Thus while Calvinists confined their worship music to the unaccompanied singing of psalm tunes, American Lutherans sang hymns, many of which (including Luther's best-known hymn, with a sturdy tune and a strong text beginning "A mighty fortress is our God") appear in hymnals currently used by many Protestant sects.

The late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century brought further waves of emigrant Protestants, including members of the English Society of Friends, known as Quakers, and Shakers, a later offshoot from the Quaker sect (so called because of the trembling induced by their religious emotion during

Listening Example 12

“’Tis the Gift to Be Simple”

This well-known piece from about 1848 was composed as a dance song, the last two lines constituting instructions for dancers to perform as part of their worship expression.



CD
Track
1:10

Composer Joseph Brackett, Jr. (1797–1882).

Genre Dance song.

Timbre Women singing in unison, a cappella (unaccompanied).

Melody Notice that the melody, in a major key, moves mostly stepwise with few leaps, winding up and down, “bending” and “turning” in a manner eminently suited to the text.

Texture Monophonic.

Form Through composed. (In this performance, each half of the song is repeated.)

Meter Duple.

Text It is probable that the words (readily available online), while describing the motions of the worship dance, also had double meanings: One should “turn” away from evil, “bow” humbly before God, and “bend” like a willow to adversity and strife.

worship). A Shaker song, “’Tis the Gift to Be Simple” (Listening Example 12), with words and music by Joseph Brackett, Jr., has become a well-known tune with both sacred and secular associations. It was composed as a dance song, the last two lines constituting instructions for dancers to perform as part of their worship expression. The American composer Aaron Copland (see pp. 000–000) included a series of variations on the tune in his composition titled *Appalachian Spring*, which has become one of the most familiar passages of American orchestral music (see the Online Listening Examples). In 1963, a British songwriter, Sydney Carter, used Brackett’s tune for his song “Lord of the Dance,” which became widely popular. More recently, “Simple Gifts” was sung at two presidential inaugurations: Ronald Reagan’s (1985) and Bill Clinton’s (1993); and film composer John Williams included the melody in his original instrumental composition “Air and Simple Gifts,” performed at the 2009 inauguration of President Barack Obama.

The form of the song is **through composed**, meaning that each line of text has its own music.



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German-Speaking Protestant Sects Responding to William Penn's policy of religious toleration, a number of German-speaking Protestants fled persecution in their homelands and came to this country to settle first in Pennsylvania, and later in other regions. Here, free from persecution, they kept much of their European culture intact, their language and religious practices largely isolating them from the Protestant Anglo-American mainstream of the thirteen colonies.

The Mennonites (of whom the Amish were a later offshoot) first arrived in 1683, mostly from Germany. They brought their own hymnals and psalters, and during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Mennonite schoolmasters also compiled tune books containing traditional texts and tunes. They decorated the title pages of their tune books with a Pennsylvania-German Mennonite folk art called *Fraktur* (meaning "broken"), a highly ornamental combination of calligraphy and script with flowers, figures, and geometric designs (Figure 3.3). However, the Mennonites preserved their lovely old hymn tunes largely by oral tradition, singing them today in versions differing widely from written sources such as student notebooks and hymnals.

Of the new immigrants, the German-speaking Moravians had by far the most significant effect upon music in America. The Moravians arrived in 1735 together with the famous Methodist missionaries and hymn writers John and Charles Wesley. Having been severely persecuted for their religious beliefs and



FIGURE 3.3

Fraktur. This beautifully illuminated manuscript of the thirty-fourth psalm, made by an anonymous artist in 1802, may have been intended to hang on the wall of a home.

practices in their homelands of Moravia and Bohemia, the Moravians wished to settle in America, where many intended to serve as Christian missionaries to African and Native Americans. Settling first in Georgia, the Moravians then moved north to found Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. They also established communities in Salem (Winston-Salem today), North Carolina, and other areas in what is today the eastern United States.

Music had been an important part of the Moravians' experience in Europe, and they continued to compose and perform beautiful music in their new land. Integrating hymn singing and other religious music into their daily lives, some Moravians also wrote secular songs and instrumental music, sophisticated and complex beyond those of other early Americans and revealing their strong German and Czech heritage.

The Great Awakening Beginning in 1735, a series of strong religious revival movements known as the (first) Great Awakening swept the eastern seaboard. The movement began in New England cities, where many Puritans perceived a lessening of moral rectitude and an increase in intellectual, as opposed to spiritual, interests. People living on small farms and plantations in remote rural areas, consumed with scratching a meager living from hard and difficult land, had largely abandoned religious customs fostered by the close communication and churchly discipline of parish life.

But the Great Awakening spread like wildfire from North to South, stirring latent religious fervor and raising concern among urban and rural folk not only for their own redemption, but for that of black slaves and Indians as well. All this religious enthusiasm further stimulated the rise of psalm- and hymn-singing in America.

Early Efforts at Musical Reform

The Moravians' musical influence was strong but limited in scope, and most colonials had no opportunity to hear or to practice good music. Although each edition of the Bay Psalm Book printed after 1698 included several notated tunes, few people knew how to read music, and as the old tunes came to be remembered differently in various towns and villages, New Englanders began to disagree as to how they should be sung. In order to learn each tune as they thought it should be rendered, some congregations adopted the practice of **lining out**, in which a more or less musically literate leader sang one line of the psalm, which the congregation then repeated in unison, performing each successive line in this awkward manner.

Lining out satisfied very few. Some of the leaders, with voices untrained and sometimes unattractive as well, began the songs too high or too low, causing people in the congregation to squeak above or grumble below their comfortable singing ranges. In the effort to improve or enliven the effect, leaders and sometimes congregational members embellished the tunes at will, grossly distorting their original sound. Becoming accustomed to such altered (in a

sense Americanized) versions of the old tunes, many people resisted all efforts to impose the regular style of singing the tunes as they were written.

The Singing School Movement As the advantages of being able to read music notation became apparent, certain better-educated ministers printed collections of tunes, prefaced by detailed instructions on how to read music notation, and set out to teach New Englanders to read the tunes printed in their psalters. Although the traditional system of music notation is quite easy to learn (you may want to refer to p. 00 of the Prelude), some amateur teachers attempted to devise even simpler methods, including one based on the four syllables then commonly used to sing pitches (*fa, sol, la, and mi*) that placed on the staff the first *letter* of each syllable (*f, s, l, or m*) instead of the traditional note heads.

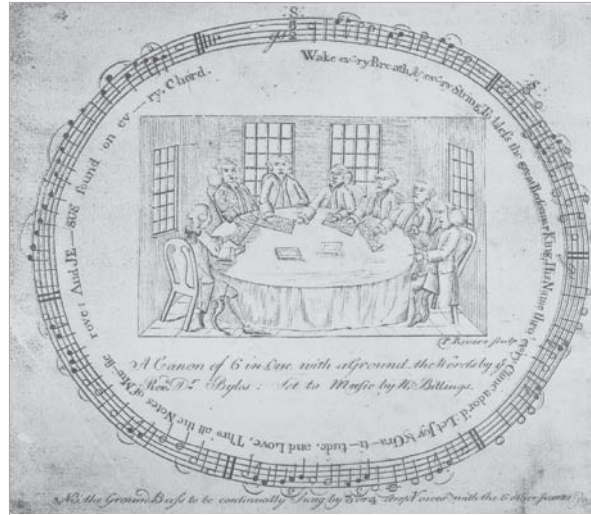
The efforts of the teaching ministers soon were supplemented, and eventually assumed, by talented amateur musicians, who became known as **singing school masters**. Some of these self-taught music amateurs, having previously earned their living as shopkeepers, merchants, or farmers, or in other practical trades, became itinerant teachers, traveling from town to town and holding informal singing schools in the local meetinghouse, church, or school for a limited period of perhaps two or three months. People welcomed the singing school masters to their towns, because singing schools became popular social as well as educational events. Interested men, women, and young people attended the singing lessons several times a week and, at the end of their instruction, gave a performance demonstrating their accomplishments to the town's proud public. Then the singing school master traveled on to another place.

The singing school movement, which began in Boston about 1720 and experienced its greatest activity throughout New England from 1760 to 1800, finally spread north into Canada and south through New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, and into the Carolinas. In fact, singing school masters offered widespread instruction and inspiration, especially in rural and remote areas, well into the nineteenth century. Necessarily hardy and independent individuals, the singing school masters devised their own teaching materials, compiled collections of familiar psalm tunes and other religious songs, and composed tunes of their own. Some wrote extensive introductions to their music primers, including information about the syllables to be sung and the elements of music. The first Americans to write music with a distinctively American (at least, non-European) sound, they are collectively referred to as members of the **First New England School** of composers.

A "school" of artists generally includes people living at about the same time, in the same geographic region, and sharing certain artistic goals and similarities of style. The First New England School composers, who lived in late eighteenth-century New England, shared the goals of teaching people to read music and to sing. Most of the simple folklike songs they composed as teaching tools had religious texts and so were also suitable for congregational singing and for private entertainment at home. The best songs of these "Yankee pioneers" were as

FIGURE 3.4

Circular notation of a canon by William Billings.



rugged, naive, and honest as the sturdy tunesmiths who made them because, untouched by the influence of their sophisticated European contemporaries, they relied upon old, familiar techniques and their own honest taste. Colonial Americans, after all, had been out of touch with European music since the early seventeenth century, when tonality first became the harmonic system of the Western world, and the singing school masters had only a rudimentary comprehension of the tonal system. More significantly, they did not feel constrained to conform to *anyone's* rules. Sometimes they turned to pretonal techniques, basing some melodies on modes or on simple pentatonic scales.

William Billings (1746–1800) William Billings, a tanner of hides who became famous as a singing school master and composer, was the first American to produce a book of tunes all of his own composition (Figure 3.4). Billings's *New England Psalm Singer* was printed (by Paul Revere) in 1770. Although Billings had attended singing school himself and continued to study music throughout his career, he considered "nature" the best teacher and confidently judged the quality of a piece according to how much he liked it. Well aware, for example, of the conventional relationships between consonant and dissonant sounds (see Prelude, p. 0), Billings and other composers of the First New England School often remained independent of such rules, making refreshingly unorthodox musical decisions to please their own ears. (Annoyed at criticism of his music by certain less adventurous listeners, Billings flaunted his unconventional ideas by writing a song titled "Jargon," with flagrantly outrageous harmonies sure to offend the sensibilities of delicate taste.) Considered by his contemporaries to be eccentric but talented above the ordinary, Billings had many admirers; but he failed to realize much profit on his tune books, because there was no effective copyright law in his day. Forced to work as a street cleaner late in life, this remarkable early American composer died a poor man.

Listening Example 13

“Chester”

Popular in Billings's day, “Chester” (from 1770) continued to be reprinted in the tune books of other compilers and was the principal marching song of the New England troops during the Revolutionary War. It continues to serve in the twenty-first century as the basis for orchestral, choral, and solo compositions.



Composer William Billings (1746–1800).

Genre Patriotic song.

Timbre A cappella four-part chorus.

Melody The strong tune, which lies within the range of an octave, begins with the last four notes of the ascending major scale and ends with the complete descending major scale.

Texture Basically homophonic, though the bass and soprano certainly have strong melodic interest. Billings said that he first wrote the melody, then each of the other voices to fit the melody and one another. The chordal sense is enhanced by the words occurring simultaneously in all of the voices. Here the melody lies in the tenor or next-to-the lowest voice, as was the custom in homophonic vocal music of the eighteenth century. Accustomed as we are to hearing the melody of a song in the soprano (highest) voice, with the lower voices providing harmony, we must listen carefully to distinguish the melody line from the other voices.

Form Strophic.

Meter Quadruple.

Text Billing's text, stirring in spirit and martial in mood, indicates that nonbiblical texts, formerly proscribed in sacred tune books, were now becoming accepted.

0:00 Let tyrants shake their iron rod, . . .

0:27 The Foe comes on with haughty stride, . . .

0:54 What grateful off'ring shall we bring, . . .

A nationalist, in the sense that he wrote to suit his own American tastes and made no attempt to imitate European sounds, Billings produced a number of stirring patriotic songs, some of which describe specific events of the American Revolutionary War. “Chester” (Listening Example 13), a favorite of the Revolutionary period, is sometimes referred to as the first American popular

song, because it was widely sung and played by bands and by solo instrumentalists for general pleasure and entertainment. “Chester” appeared with its first verse in the collection printed in 1770, but Billings added defiant topical stanzas after the war broke out.

Unlike most of the music we have studied so far, consisting of one line of melody without harmonic accompaniment, “Chester” was written and is usually performed in chordal, or homophonic, texture (see Prelude, p. 0). In other words, Billings wrote not only the tune, but also its accompaniment. People had long enjoyed singing harmonized versions of their religious songs at home if not in church; and by the time of the First New England School, harmony was no longer excluded from music in the worship service.

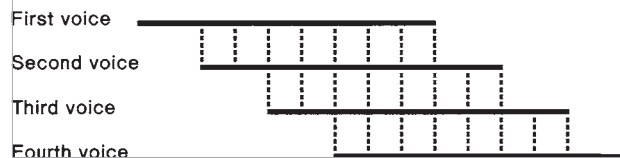
In our Listening Example, “Chester” is sung a cappella, but it might have been accompanied by one or more instruments doubling the voice parts. The belief that church music must enhance—never detract from—worship had caused strong prejudice against the instrumental accompaniment of church music, since instruments could not express a text but simply added a sensuous dimension to the sound. But, as noted above, this prejudice began to lessen about the time of the First New England School, as some churches accepted accompaniment of congregational singing by organ or by string or wind instruments. The violin, associated with popular dancing and widely condemned as the “devil’s fiddle,” gained acceptance only slowly, but the bass viol, flute, clarinet, and bassoon increasingly accompanied singing or were even used to play short instrumental passages.

Canons A **canon** is a melody that forms meaningful harmonies when performed with “staggered entrances”—that is, when successive voices begin the same melody at later times (Figure 3.5). Each voice continues to the end of the melody, simply dropping out at the end of the tune while any remaining voices continue until they drop out in turn. (Here “voice” refers to a line of music, whether sung or played by musical instruments.) Although the voices indeed form harmony when sung together, each line is *melodically* conceived—there is no chordal concept—and so we call this texture **polyphonic**, meaning two or more melodic lines are performed together. In the case of a canon, each melodic line is the same, but because they are performed starting at different times, they produce combinations of different tones (harmony).

“When Jesus Wept” (Listening Example 14), one of Billings’s best-known and best-loved songs, is a circular canon, or **round**, which continues to make harmonic sense when repeated any number of times.

FIGURE 3.5

A canon. Each voice enters in turn, singing the same melody. The resulting combination of tones produces attractive harmonies.



Listening Example 14

“When Jesus Wept”

This haunting melody from the late eighteenth century, exquisite in its simplicity and beauty, expresses the essence of the poignant text. When performed “in canon”—that is, with each of four voices entering in turn, continuing to the end, and perhaps repeating the whole—it becomes a harmonic as well as a melodic treasure.



Composer William Billings (1746–1800).

Words Billings wrote the words (readily available online) as well as the music.

Genre Canon.

Timbre Here, mixed chorus (soprano, alto, tenor, bass). The canon may be performed by any combination of voices.

Melody The melody, in minor mode, is written so as to form meaningful harmonies when performed in canon, or with “staggered entrances.”

Texture Monophonic when performed in unison; polyphonic when performed in canon.

Form A four-part circular canon, or round. There are four phrases, any two or more of which form harmony when performed together.

Meter Triple.

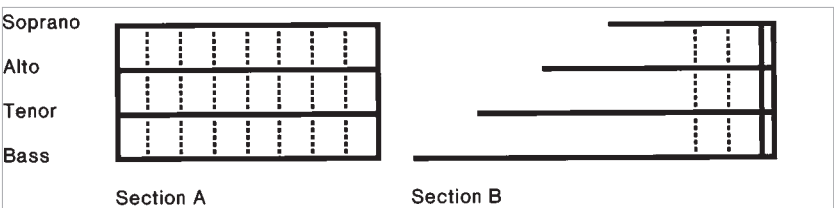
Text The ending is particularly effective, as the last voices sing the moving words in unison, the other voices having dropped out in turn.

*When Jesus wept, the falling tear
In mercy flow'd beyond all bound.
When Jesus groan'd, a trembling fear
Seiz'd all the guilty world around.*

Fuging Tunes Late in the eighteenth century, a new kind of song called a **fuging tune** became very popular, and by 1810, about 1,000 of these had been written. A fuging tune consists of two sections, which we will call **A** and **B** (Figure 3.6). The first section (**A**) is chordal, or homophonic, in texture, the

FIGURE 3.6

A fugal tune. Section A is homophonic in texture, as represented by the dotted vertical lines. Section B begins with staggered entrances (polyphonic texture) but ends with chords. Section B is repeated.



melody lying in one voice (usually the tenor) while the other three (soprano, alto, and bass) provide chordal harmony.

The second section of a fugal tune (**B**), which begins with staggered entrances, gives each voice melodic interest; thus the texture is polyphonic. But unlike a canon, in which each voice performs the *same* melody, entering and dropping out in turn, a fugal tune has four similar but *independent* lines of music, which finally end together on a chord. The second section is repeated, rendering the form of a fugal tune **ABB**.

Fugal tunes were fun to sing, offering everyone an interesting and varied part and challenging housewives, farmers, shopkeepers, tavern owners, young people—all those who enjoyed music—to put to use their hard-won singing school skills. “Sherburne” (Listening Example 15) by **Daniel Read** (1757–1836), another well-known member of the First New England School of composers, was an immensely popular fugal tune in late-eighteenth-century

Listening Example 15

“Sherburne”

This 1785 piece uses words from a famous Christmas hymn written in 1770 by Nahum Tate.

Composer Daniel Read (1757–1836).

Genre Fugal tune.

Timbre Mixed chorus (soprano, alto, tenor, bass). While the voices in this performance do not sound untrained, they sing in a plain, straightforward, unaffected manner appropriate to this singing tradition.

Melody The notes are those of the major scale, but the melody has a folklike flavor heard in early tunes, conceived before the tonal (major-minor) system was adopted.



—Continued

Listening Example 15—concluded

"Sherburne"

Texture Homophonic and polyphonic. The first section (**A**), consisting of the first two lines of text, is homophonic in texture (all four voices singing the same words at the same time imply chordal texture). The second section (**B**, the third and fourth lines) is mostly polyphonic: It begins with "staggered entrances," each melodic line imitative of, but not identical to, the others. (Here, different words in different voices enhance our ability to hear in a linear fashion, aware of each individual line of music.) The last few syllables are sounded simultaneously in all the voices, and the section ends on a chord.

Form Fuging tune: **ABB**.

Meter Duple. You may notice a pause, however, on the word *night*. Such irregularities are characteristic of this simple tradition.

Text

*While the Shepherds watched their flocks at night
All sealed on the ground
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.*

AU: Edit not clear,
please check.

America. A comb maker who also owned a general store and taught singing school, Read probably was the most popular composer of fuging tunes. "Sherburne" remained widely known until the Civil War period and still is sung in parts of the country today.

Besides Billings and Read, many singing school masters composed psalm tunes, hymns, canons, and fuging tunes for the edification and enjoyment of their pupils. Although these practical men conceived of their music as teaching material rather than art, we value it today as strong, beautiful, and genuinely American in character, much as we appreciate the work folk artists of the period produced, functional in purpose but beautiful in its own right. (Figure 3.7). Recent American composers have used the tunes of the First New England School composers and their contemporaries as inspiration and source material for music of our own period. (Notably, William Schuman, a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer with strong national interests, wrote a symphonic concert piece titled *New England Triptych* based on three of Billings's songs, including "When Jesus Wept" and "Chester." See Listening Example 79.)

FIGURE 3.7
The Sargent Family, American School, 1800, canvas, 0.974 cm x 1.280 cm. Folk artists, like the singing school masters, accomplished highly attractive art in their efforts to provide a practical service—here, to preserve the likenesses of this young American family.



Terms to Review

psalms
psalm tunes
a cappella
psalter
Bay Psalm Book

through composed
lining out
singing school masters
First New England School
canon

polyphony (polyphonic texture)
round
fuging tune

Key Figures

William Billings

Daniel Read

Critical Thinking

Why do you think twentieth-century American composers such as Henry Cowell, William Schuman, and Otto Luening found fuging tunes a fertile source of inspiration for the composition of concert music?

In what ways might you describe the music of the singing school masters as folk art?

Why do you think many eighteenth-century American Protestants enjoyed singing fuging tunes more than psalm tunes?

Why do you think some of the psalm tunes (including “Old Hundred”) remain so well-known and well-loved today?