

**Ohio Convention
February 14-15**

The Ohio State Sacred Harp Convention is held every year on the third Sunday and the Saturday before in February. The 2009 Convention will be hosted by the Cincinnati group Feb. 14th and 15th, 2009 at The Little Red Schoolhouse in Indian Hill, east of Cincinnati.

Singing will take place Saturday 10-4 and Sunday 9:30-3. There will be a traditional pot-luck meal each day. Songbooks will be provided. For more information, see

fasola.org/singings



The brick Washington Heights School was built in 1873. It is now the home of the Indian Hill Historical Society.

"I don't know. I don't even know what kind of feller I am ... I'm a stranger even to myself.

"There's so many times that I've got on the floor, seems like I've just got to say something. The Sacred Harp, and the words of the songs, that tell so much of the experience of travel, of Christian life, of being of Christ. . .

"I'm an emotional feller. Can't help it. I get so overjoyed within, lot of times, till I cry, and just get a thrill out of it. I enjoy meeting the people and I enjoy the fellowship. The fellowship is within, and without, you see, and I get joy out of it.

"I just get great joy out of it. It thrills the inward . . . well, it thrills the soul of man. Now that's the way I'd put it, sorta."

—Mac Wootten of Sand Mountain, Alabama interviewed by Cleve Callison for the

NPR documentary **Sacred Harp Singers**, 1979

(<http://homepage.mac.com/callistc/SacredHarpSingers.html>)

POSTLUDE:

GREEN STREET
(ANONYMOUS; *THE SACRED HARP* 198)

All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all.
*Bring forth the royal diadem.
And crown Him Lord of all.*

--words: Edward Perronet, 1779

MONTGOMERY

(JUSTIN MORGAN, 1790; *THE SACRED HARP* 189)

Early, my God, without delay,
I haste to seek Thy face;
My thirsty spirit faints away,
Without Thy cheering grace.
*So pilgrims on the scorching sand,
Beneath a burning sky,
Long for a cooling stream at hand,
And they must drink or die.*

--words: Isaac Watts, 1719

Calendar

February 8, 2009

Monthly meeting of the Cincinnati Shape Note group. Meets 2nd Sunday each month at Walnut Hills Christian Church. 4:30-7:30, including pot-luck.

February 14-15, 2009

Ohio Sacred Harp Convention (left).

February 22, 2009

Monthly meeting of the Dayton Shape Note group. Meets 4th Sunday of each month at Lutheran Church of Our Savior in Far Hills. 3:00-6:00 pm, including pot-luck.

Resources

FASOLA.ORG

Sponsored by the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association.

WARREN STEELES PAGE

Steele, at the University of Mississippi, has links to tunebooks, recordings, music and more:

www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/~mudws/resource/

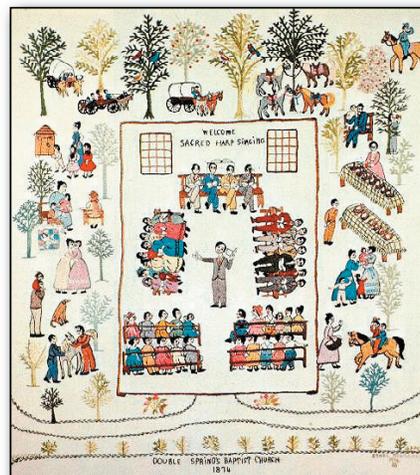
SACRED HARP IN OHIO

Links and information: users.muohio.edu/callistc/Ohiofasola.html

the Sacred Harp

Tradition comes to Holy T

Hymns and 'fuging tunes' from colonial America to the present.



Today's guest musicians will be performing hymns from the American folk tradition found in **The Sacred Harp**.

Sacred Harp singing is a type of shape-note singing, one of the oldest musical styles in the United States. Originating in the congregational hymn singing of colonial New England, shape-note music was written to allow all of the congregation to participate in singing, not just the trained choirs up front. Today it continues as a living unbroken tradition in parts of the South, but has spread to other areas (including Ohio) thanks to its power and strange beauty.

The Sacred Harp (first published 1844) is still in use today by singers such as the Cincinnati and Dayton shape-note groups. Many of the Cincinnati group have come to Holy T to provide music for today's service -- including the Prelude, Introit, Offertory, Presentation and Postlude.

'WHY DOES IT SOUND THAT WAY?'

Shape-note music stands out from more conventional choral styles in several ways:

--The **melody** is in the tenor rather than the soprano line, sung by men and women, in line with the Congregational ideal of full participation by all. So the melody can sometimes be hard to pick out.

--The **harmonies** often depend on older intervals of fourths and fifths, inherited from the folk tunes that make up the tunes of many songs.

--The **tone** is most often "straight tone", i.e. no vibrato.

--The **tempo**s are usually very lively, even when the words are somber.

--The **volume** is likewise quite loud. "Up front's where all the racket is," said one veteran singer. For shape-noters, loudness is a way of fully engaging in the songs at all times.

--**Participation** by all singers is the goal. Although today's music is a kind of performance, singers know that Sacred Harp can't be fully understood except by singing.





Above: The National Sacred Harp Singing Convention, held each June in Alabama. Singers face each other in a hollow square. Both men and women sing treble (soprano) and tenor (melody). Men sing bass and women sing alto. Everyone present is invited to lead one or two songs. The scene is repeated at hundreds of gatherings in churches and other meeting places in the South.

PRELUDE: **AFRICA** (WILLIAM BILLINGS, 1781; *THE SACRED HARP* 178)

Now shall my inward joys arise,
And burst into a song;
Almighty love inspires my heart,
And pleasure tunes my tongue.

God, on His thirsty Zion's hill,
Some mercy drops has thrown;
And solemn oaths have bound his love
To show'r salvation down.

Why do we then indulge our fears,
Suspensions and complaints?
Is He a God, and shall His grace
Grow weary of His saints?

--words: Isaac Watts, 1709



The public TV documentary **Awake My Soul** has sparked interest in authentic traditions of Sacred Harp singings. For more information visit awakemysoul.com
A dramatic film that made use of Sacred Harp songs was 2003's **Cold Mountain**.

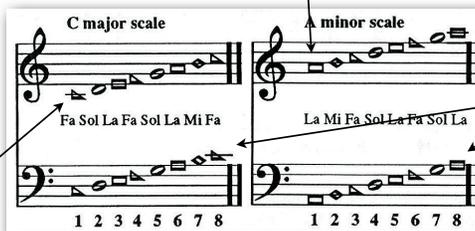
HOW ARE THE SHAPES USED?

The tonic of a minor key song is always La (a rectangle).

The melody is in the tenor rather than the soprano, and is sung by men and women.

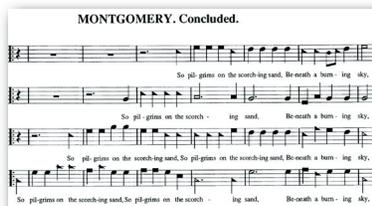
Shape-note songs are printed on regular staves. The notes appear in the same places as the familiar round notes.

The tonic of a song in a major key is always Fa (a triangle).



The last note of the bass line is always the tonic - Fa (triangle) for major; La (rectangle) for minor keys.

Singers sing the shapes through, in parts, to familiarize themselves with the tune before singing the words. We will follow that tradition today.



WHAT IS A 'FUGING TUNE'?

Fuging tune segments have voices entering at different times, in the manner of madrigals or baroque fugues. *Soar Away*, *Green Street*, and *Montgomery* (left) contain fuging sections.

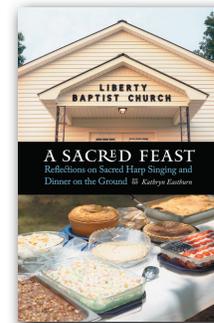
INTROIT: **BRIDGEWATER** (LEWIS EDSON, 1782; *THE SACRED HARP* 276)

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Redeemer's praise arise;
*Let the Redeemer's name be sung,
Through ev'ry land, by ev'ry tongue.*

--words: Isaac Watts, 1719

Right: Sacred Harp has attracted attention from scholars, who may even become singers. This study examines singers and food.

First time visitors to a singing are often struck by the warm bonds of friendship. The spiritual emphasis of the words and the power of the singing go hand-in-hand with the traditional 'dinner on the ground.'



Veteran singers will recognize this iconic location: the Liberty Singing near Henegar, Alabama is of one of the largest and most robust Southern gatherings.

Image from nebraskapress.typepad.com/

OFFERTORY: **SOAR AWAY** (A.M. CAGLE, 1935; *THE SACRED HARP* 455)

I want a sober mind,
An all-sustaining eye,
To see my God above,
And to the heavens fly.
*I'd soar away above the sky,
I'd fly, and fly,
To see my God above,
I'd fly, fly, fly,
To see my God above.*

I want a Godly fear,
A quick, discerning eye,
That looks to Thee, my God,
And sees the tempter fly.
Refrain.

--words: Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 1814

PRESENTATION HYMN: **ST. THOMAS** (AARON WILLIAMS, 1770; *THE SACRED HARP* 34)

Come, sound His praise abroad,
And hymns of glory sing;
Jehovah is the sovereign God,
The universal King.

He formed the deeps unknown;
He gave the seas their bound;
The wat'ry worlds are all His own,
And all the solid ground.

Come, worship at his throne,
Come, bow before the Lord,
We are His works, and not our own,
He formed us by His word.

--words: Isaac Watts, 1719



WHO DECIDES WHAT IS SUNG?

A Sacred Harp singing is nothing if not democratic. There may be an organizing committee, but anyone who signs up gets to lead one or two songs of their own choosing. Leaders range in age from small children to revered elders. Leaders choose the song, stand in the middle of the square and beat time with their arms.