

2021

Stylistic Development in The Fuging Tunes of William Billings

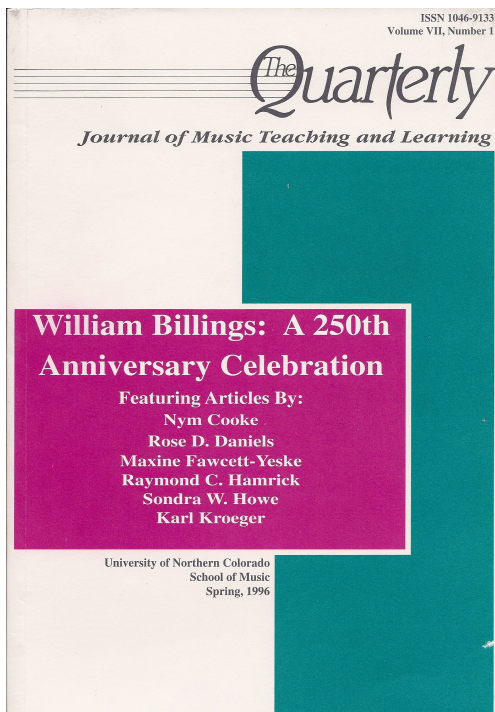
Maxine Fawcett-Yeske
University of Colorado, Boulder

Follow this and additional works at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme>

Recommended Citation

Fawcett-Yeske, Maxine (2021) "Stylistic Development in The Fuging Tunes of William Billings," *Visions of Research in Music Education*: Vol. 16 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol16/iss7/8>



Title: Stylistic Development in the Fuging Tunes of William Billings

Author(s): Maxine Fawcett-Yeske

Source: Fawcett-Yeske, M. (1996, Spring). Stylistic development in the fuging tunes of William Billings. *The Quarterly*, 7(1), pp. 32-46. (Reprinted with permission in *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 16(7), Autumn, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/>

Visions of Research in Music Education is a fully refereed critical journal appearing exclusively on the Internet. Its publication is offered as a public service to the profession by the New Jersey Music Educators Association, the state affiliate of MENC: The National Association for Music Education. The publication of VRME is made possible through the facilities of Westminster Choir College of Rider University Princeton, New Jersey. Frank Abrahams is the senior editor. Jason D. Vodicka is editor of the *Quarterly* historical reprint series. Chad Keilman is the production coordinator. The *Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* is reprinted with permission of Richard Colwell, who was senior consulting editor of the original series.

Stylistic Development In The Fuging Tunes Of William Billings

By Maxine Fawcett-Yeske

University of Colorado at Boulder

William Billings (1746-1800) was America's foremost composer of psalmody in the eighteenth century. Included in his output of over three hundred compositions is a total of forty-four fuging tunes, strophic choral compositions distinguished by the presence of textual overlap, which is often achieved through successive vocal entries.¹ While occasionally sung as part of the church service, the fuging tune grew in popularity as psalm singing became increasingly independent of worship. Singing schools, informal gatherings for recreational singing, and musical societies were the settings for which this genre apparently was intended. Billings, an active singing-master in Boston and the surrounding area, likely composed many of his fuging tunes for practical use in his singing schools.

Billings was not, as scholars of the 1930s suggested, the "originator" of the fuging tune.² Later investigation accurately has placed the emergence of the genre in England.³ Still, Billings was unmistakably its outspoken champion.⁴ He wrote, "It is an old maxim, and I think a very just one, *that variety is always pleasing*, and . . . there is more variety in one piece of fuging music, than in twenty pieces of plainsong. It has

more power than the old slow tunes, each part straining for mastery and victory."⁵ His tunes are testimony to his affinity for the form. The fuging tunes of William Billings show more originality and ingenuity than those of perhaps any other American psalmist, and stand at the forefront of the genre's emergence on American soil. Drawn from all but one of his six published collections, listed in Table 1, the Billings fuging tune repertory exhibits a remarkable development in the composer's command of formal, contrapuntal, and textual-dramatic considerations.

Stylistic development in a composer's work is often analyzed in a chronological context, but chronology is problematic in a survey of Billings's works. As he compiled his tunes for publication, Billings often would include older works along with newer ones. The fact that a particular tune is found in a later publication does not necessarily indicate that it was one of the composer's later works, so chronological reconstruction becomes highly speculative. Examination of the Billings fuging tunes within the context of the six collections, however, allows us to extrapolate general tendencies in the development of the composer's style.

The New-England Psalm-Singer (1770)

With the publication of his *New-England Psalm-Singer*, Billings became the first American composer to release a tunebook comprised entirely of his own works. The three fuging tunes in this collection show a great

Maxine Fawcett-Yeske is a doctoral candidate for the Ph.D. in Musicology at the University of Colorado at Boulder and is on the adjunct faculty at Metropolitan State College of Denver.

Table 1. The Billings Tunebooks	
Tunebook	# of Billings futing tunes receiving initial printing in this publication*
<i>The New-England Psalm-Singer</i> [NEPS] (1770)	3
<i>The Singing Master's Assistant</i> [SMA] (1778)	10
<i>Music in Miniature</i> ** [MM] (1779)	0
<i>The Psalm Singer's Amusement</i> [PSA] (1781)	7
<i>The Suffolk Harmony</i> [SH] (1786)	3
<i>The Continental Harmony</i> [CH] (1794)	18
<p>* An additional futing tune, LANESBOROUGH (later called NORTHBOROUGH), was first printed in John Stickney's <i>The Gentleman and Lady's Musical Companion</i> (Newburyport: Daniel Bayley, 1774). Two others, THE BIRD and CRUCIFIXION, appeared in independent publications.</p> <p>** A tune supplement designed to be bound in a hymnal or psalter.</p>	

deal of uniformity and exhibit the strong influence of English parish composers, especially William Tans'ur.⁶

Probably the most striking resemblance to Tans'ur's futing tunes is the formal structure—the futing chorus design. In this bipartite structure, the entire psalm is stated homophonically in an initial A section, which usually ends with a cadence on the tonic, or sometimes on the dominant. It is then followed by B, the chorus, in which text overlap occurs, often the result of two or more voices entering successively. Typically, the futing chorus is repeated. Since the chorus was appended at the end of the psalm tune proper, it either could be included or omitted.

The contrapuntal style of early American psalmody is grounded not in the principle of counterpoint with an underlying connection by harmonic progressions, but in the more basic principle of consonant contrapuntal motion, a practice which can be traced to the church polyphony of the Renaissance. The style was assimilated by American tunesmiths largely through the writings of, again, William Tans'ur. First attempts were somewhat awkward. The polyphonic choruses of Billings's early futing tunes are quite brief; in fact, one source characterizes them as being composed with “all the abandon of a bather inching his way into fifty-degree water.”⁷ As

Example 1 demonstrates, once the fourth part has entered in the tune TAUNTON, the piece arrives at the final cadence with all possible dispatch.

Likewise, contrapuntal technique itself is rather reticent. Strict imitation of the head motive is observed among all four voices in TAUNTON. Voices enter at consistent intervals of two measures and at the same pitch level or at octaves with one another.

While Billings's text choices for these early futing tunes are varied and imaginative,⁸ (with the text for EUROPE, “Let Whig and Tory all subside,”—probably of his own pen) the application of text to music challenges the composer at this point in his development. Misalignment of metrical accent between music and text appears frequently.

Yet, even at this early stage, the composer attempted to fashion the music to the meaning of the text. Like other psalmodists of his time, Billings considered major keys to be “cheerful” and minor keys “melancholy,” and thus casts MILTON and EUROPE, with texts on “noble” and “blessed” themes, in the major mode, while TAUNTON, expressing the “longing of the soul,” is set in minor.

From these few examples⁹ we can see that, at the outset of his career, Billings possessed a willingness to try his inquisitive yet inexperienced hand at futing music, which he mod-

Example 1. TAUNTON (NEPS), fugal chorus.

15

So

So longs— my soul,— So

So longs— my soul,— O God, for Thee,— So

So longs— my soul,— O God, for Thee, So longs— my soul,— So

22

longs— my soul,— O God for Thee, And thy re - - fresh - ing grace.

longs— my soul,— O God, for Thee, And thy re - - fresh - ing grace.

longs— my soul,— O God, for Thee, And thy re - - fresh - ing grace.

longs— my soul,— O God, for Thee, And thy re - - fresh - ing grace.

Example 2. LANESBOROUGH.

17

speak the Mon - arch nigh.

speak the Mon - arch nigh, They speak the Mon - arch nigh, Wrapt

nigh, They speak the Mon - arch nigh, They speak the Mon - arch

nigh, They speak the Mon - arch nigh, They speak the Mon - arch

eled after an English prototype. Brevity, rigidity in construction, and conservatism characterize the fugal tunes from this, Billings's earliest published effort.

A Billings fugal tune published in the interim between his first and second collections, in John Stickney's *The Gentleman and Lady's Musical Companion* (Newburyport, 1774), provides some insights into the next stage of the composer's development. Entitled LANESBOROUGH in Stickney's publication, the piece was published, with minor revisions, by Billings himself in a later collection under the name of NORTHBOROUGH.

The treatment of the fugal voices is still quite rigorous in LANESBOROUGH. What is new is the protraction of the polyphonic sec-

tion. Through the use of phrase repetition, the fuge is extended to three times the length of the initial homophonic portion. While the composer struggles to maintain independence of voices in this prolonged section, with voices often proceeding simply in parallel thirds (see Example 2, measures 17 through 20 in the bass and tenor), the fuge at this juncture has become the prominent section of the piece.

The Singing Master's Assistant (1778)

Released in four editions, *The Singing Master's Assistant* was by far Billings's most popular and widely-circulated tunebook.¹⁰ A landmark publication that marked the end of

Example 3. WASHINGTON (SMA), integrated fugging tune format.

WASHINGTON L.M.

Isaac Watts

William Billings

Lord, when thou did'st a - cend on high, Ten thou-sand an-gels fill'd the sky, Ten

7

Those

thou-sand an-gels fill'd the sky;

Those heav'n-ly guards a -

Those heav'n-ly guards a - round thee wait, Like

13

heav'n-ly guards a - round thee wait, Like char - iots_ that at - tend thy state,

Those heav'n-ly guards a - round thee wait, Like_ char - - - - iots,

round thee wait, Like_ char - iots that at - tend thy state, Like char - - - - iots,

char - iots that at - tend thy state, Like char - iots that at - tend thy state, Those

a four-year hiatus in the printing of sacred music during war time, the tunebook was the second American collection of its type, that is, featuring entirely the works of one composer (in this case, the same composer, Billings). With experience, Billings exercised much more freedom in his musical choices.

Formally, the fusing chorus design still predominates in these fusing tunes. Billings, in fact, used the fusing chorus format throughout his career, and it subsequently was adopted by two of his students, Supply Belcher and Jacob French. A few of Billings's tunes in *The Singing Master's Assistant*, however, represent the composer's attempt to incorporate the fusing section into the initial statement of the psalm. WASH-

INGTON, Example 3, is one of these integrated fusing tunes. The first two lines of the stanza are set homophonically, while the last two are set as the fuge. In this integrated structure, the section containing the verbal conflict is no longer "optional," it is an integral part of the statement of the psalm. Further, not only did Billings make the fuge a part of the psalm proper, but he has protracted it to the point that the fuge itself is 17 measures total and therefore comprises the bulk of the tune.

WASHINGTON also displays more flexibility in the counterpoint. The interval of time and pitch varies between entries, and imitation is less strict. While the tenor voice still maintains the principal role, each of the

Example 4. BENEVOLENCE (SMA), onset of the fugging section.

13

give him rest,

give him rest, The Lord shall

give him rest,

give him rest,

17

The Lord shall give him rest.

give him rest, The Lord shall give

The Lord shall give him rest,

rest, The Lord shall give him rest

other voices assumes a character of its own.

An interesting technique that Billings explores in the tune entitled BENEVOLENCE, also from this collection, involves a different method of initiating the fugal section. As Example 4 illustrates, BENEVOLENCE does not have the usual abrupt halt before the onset of the textual overlap. Instead, the end of the initial psalm verse, at "give him rest," beginning at measure 13, is staggered among the voices, resulting in verbal conflict. Subsequent repetitions of that line of the verse, "The Lord shall give him rest," which involve successive vocal entries, are clouded by this elision with the previous phrase. While offering a smooth musical transition, this technique suggests a certain willingness on the part of Billings to "bend" the form of the scriptural text, to meet the needs of the composition — a practice which he followed increasingly in his later works.

Musical illustration in the fusing tunes from this collection remains conservative. Special emphasis is applied to words such as “exalted,” “glory,” and “praise” through the use of melismas and dotted rhythms, and germinal

onomatopoeic connections such as repeated notes on the word "pants" in the line "So pants the hunted hart" begin to appear.¹¹

These brief examples are just a sampling of the ingenuity, growth and experimentation found in *The Singing Master's Assistant*. Billings obviously had polished his skills, which no doubt contributed to the overwhelming success of his second tunebook.

Music in Miniature (1779)

Music in Miniature is a tune supplement providing textless tunes to which any number of verses could be sung. Intended for congregational singing, this book contains no fusing tunes. Billings does, however, demonstrate quite clearly the optional nature of a fusing chorus. In *Music in Miniature*, he published five tunes from his previous tunebooks, minus their fuses, along with several tunes to which fuses are added in later publications.

For most of the 1770s, Billings cornered the market on American fugal tunes. With the exception of Amos Bull's PSALM 122 (published anonymously in 1774 in

Example 5. FRAMINGHAM (PSA).

The voice of God's e -

The —

The voice of God's e - ter - nal Son, de -

The voice of God's e - ter - nal Son, de - serves it no re -

ter - nal Son, de - serves it no re - gard? The

voice of God's e - ter - nal Son, de - serves it no re - gard, de -

serves it no re - gard? Shall wis - dom

gard, de - serves it no re - gard? The voice of God's e -

Stickney's *The Gentleman and Lady's Musical Companion*), it was not until 1778 (almost a full decade after Billings first published) that the works of other American tunesmiths, Gillet, Hibbard, Benjamin West,¹² Deaolph, Wood, Strong, and Bull appeared in print in Andrew Law's *Select Harmony*. The greatest difference between theirs and Billings's fusing tunes is contrapuntal technique. Billings, through the use of imitation, melismatic elaboration, and motivic continuity sometimes maintained counterpoint for well over 10, sometimes up to 22, measures. The fuges of his contemporaries, on the other hand, averaged slightly over six measures, and relied primarily upon imitation of a brief head motive; once it was carried out, the fuge simply ended.¹³

The Psalm-Singer's Amusement (1781)

Much as its title suggests, *The Psalm-Singer's Amusement* is designed for the "amusement" of accomplished singers. Billings is forthright in explaining: these tunes are "not designed for learners."¹⁴ The fusing

tunes included in this collection exhibit increasing complexity of formal structure. One of the tunes, ASSURANCE, begins with the fuge, eliminating the clarity of the initial statement of the text altogether. The recreational, non-liturgical, nature of these works therefore could not be more apparent.

The fuge in FRAMINGHAM, a portion of which is included in Example 5, provides an excellent illustration of the facility now characteristic of Billings's contrapuntal writing. Each line in the chorus displays an individual contour and greater lyricism. The counter's line is especially noteworthy.¹⁵ Deviating from the head motive that the other three voices assume at the outset of the fuge, the counter, at its entrance in measure 18, possesses an animated alternation between paired eighth-notes and quarter-notes, the character of which the other voices do not acquire until later in their musical discourse.

Musical illustration of the text is more prevalent at this stage and is achieved in a variety of imaginative ways. Ascending lines and high pitches characterize settings of texts such as "Now shall my head be lifted high."¹⁶

Example 6. WAREHAM (PSA).

References to God receive special emphasis through florid passages and dotted rhythms.¹⁷ Texts that are especially joyful in nature are now set to dance-like meters such as 6/4.¹⁸ In addition, timbre emerges as another element of musical depiction. For example, Billings sets a text concerning dancing and the playing of timbrels (activities typically associated with women in the Bible) as a solo for treble voices.¹⁹

Along with illustrative devices, Billings was apparently fascinated by declamatory effects, which he exploited for dramatic results. An imaginative technique adopted in WAREHAM, shown in Example 6, momentarily suspends declamation through word repetition. The “All in All” gesture, which formerly had been pervasive in the texture, is abruptly fragmented. Flanked by rests from

measures 31 through 35, the word “All” is isolated and reiterated three times. Momentum seems to come to a standstill, as the word is heralded outside the context of its poetic line and free of its previous motivic association.

In the license he took with texts, like those observed in WAREHAM, Billings was clearly at the forefront of American psalmody. None of the British fusing tunes that had been published in America involved such techniques, nor did the works of any of Billings’s American contemporaries. Billings’s influence in this respect would later be apparent, however, in fusing tunes such as Daniel Read’s BARRINGTON, from *The American Singing Book* (New Haven, 1785), where word repetition for “effect” takes precedence over maintaining the integrity of the poetic line.

Example 7. BREST (MM) and BRATTLE STREET (SH).***

BREST (MM, p. 4, melody only)

BRATTLE STREET (SH, p. 19, melody only)

[etc. 12 more measures]

***Karl Kroeger, "William Billings's Music in Manuscript Copy and Some Notes on Variant Versions in his Pieces," *Notes*, 39, no. 2 (December 1982): 316-45.

In *The Psalm-Singer's Amusement*, Billings no doubt was amused in his efforts. Confident in his command of the musical language, Billings took liberties with form and text which he previously had not attempted to such a degree — a degree to which few of his contemporaries even aspired.

The Suffolk Harmony (1786)

In *The Suffolk Harmony*, Billings exhibits a distinct change in compositional approach. Each of the fusing tunes in this collection had appeared in some form in previous tunebooks. What Billings recognized was that some of his earlier melodies had not outlived their potential. "Newness," in terms of the fusing tunes, here meant variation.²⁰

The tune BRATTLE STREET illustrates a two-fold variation on BREST, which was originally published as a plain tune in *Music in Miniature*. Billings composed both an ornamental and a compositional variant, the results of which we find in *The Suffolk Harmony*. Karl Kroeger has examined the relationship between the principal melodies of these two pieces.²¹ As Example 7 illustrates, the ornamental variant involves the addition

of note-groups and a change in the mood of time.²² Kroeger states, "The ornamental note-groups applied to the melody of BREST to transform it into BRATTLE STREET completely change its character from a slow, chorale-like melody to one with a feeling of lilt and graceful flow."²³

To this ornamental variant, Billings added a fusing chorus. Not only did he change the fundamental nature of the tune, but he altered the overall form of the piece as well. By re-working in such a way, Billings refined and strengthened his compositions. With this new focus, moreover, he broadened his artistic perspective.

The Continental Harmony (1794)

In his sixth and final tunebook, *The Continental Harmony*, Billings compiled an anthology, representing various stages of development and revision of his work.²⁴ Formally, a number of different structures are present among the fusing tunes. Fusing choruses, integrated fusing tunes, and fusing sections incorporated into other more complex genres are all found, indicating that Billings probably did not, at any time, limit

Example 8. EGYPT (CH), the fuge.

10

In Mos-es hand he puts his

In Mos-es hand he puts his rod, And

In Mos-es hand he puts his rod, And cleaves

15

In Mos-es hand he puts his rod, And cleaves the fright - ed

rod, And cleaves the fright - ed seas, And cleaves the

cleaves the fright - ed seas, And cleaves the

the fright - ed seas, And cleaves

19

seas, And cleaves the fright - ed seas, And cleaves the fright - ed

fright - ed seas, And cleaves the fright-ed seas, And

fright - ed fright - ed seas,

the fright - ed seas, and cleaves, and

23

seas, cleaves, and cleaves, and

cleaves the fright - ed seas, and cleaves, And cleaves the fright-ed

come see the won-ders of our God, How glor-ous are his ways, In

cleaves, And cleaves the fright - ed seas, and

28

cleaves, And cleaves the fright - ed seas.

seas, And cleaves the fright - ed seas, And cleaves the fright-ed seas.

Mos-es hand he puts his rod, And cleaves the fright - ed seas.

cleaves, and cleaves, And cleaves the fright - ed seas.

himself to one standard form but thrived, as always, on variety.

Contrapuntally, voices maintain the lyricism, contour, and melodic sweep which appeared gradually throughout the middle Billings collections. In addition, each of the voices assumes greater independence and character.

Relationship between text and music remains strong in *The Continental Harmony*. Sensitivity to prosody is expert, and imagery and word painting are found in abundance. In the tune EGYPT, Example 8, we find that Billings has melded his fascination with word painting and momentum. In the fuge, the force of the declamation builds and ebbs as the rhythmic character of a simple motive is cleverly manipulated. From a subject comprised primarily of quarter- and half-notes, emerges, in the tenor at measure 15, an animated gesture made up of dotted-eighths and sixteenths, fostering a forceful, agitated declamation in which each of the voices becomes involved. As the fuge progresses, the animation subsides, as dotted-eighths and sixteenths give way to even eighth-notes and text delivery once again approaches the arching lyricism of the early measures of the piece. Coupled with the imagery of the “frighted seas,” this gesture becomes remarkably expressive. It seems clear that for this imagery Billings envisioned a wide-sweeping declamatory effect which would develop over the course of the entire fuge. Just as a dynamic speaker varies the intensity of his or her delivery, Billings seems to have captured this ingredient, as he often did with other oratorical, dramatic, and rhetorical devices, and transferred it quite skillfully to the voices of his singers.

The last selection examined for this brief excursion into the works of William Billings is the piece entitled CREATION, Example 9. It offers a unique sampling from this volume, because the piece in itself seems to represent an “anthology in miniature.” Representative of several different stages of endeavor, CREATION, originally published as a plain tune in *Music in Miniature*, appears in *The Continental Harmony* with several adaptations. Here, it looks like two separate pieces joined

together. The first 15 measures are based upon the original psalm tune. Measures 16 through 22 are an extension of that plain tune, set at a quicker tempo. Measure 23 through the end of the piece is an integrated fusing tune on a completely different text, drawn from another source.²⁵ In sum, CREATION is a thorough pastiche of ideas.

The voices interact with ease and independence. Two distinct fusing sections grace this piece. The first fuge begins at measure 31 and sets the final two lines of the stanza of text, culminating in a pronounced cadence on the tonic at measure 44. A second fuge begins at measure 45. At measure 46, the composer juxtaposes different lines from the stanza, lines 1 and 2 (in the counter), with lines 3 and 4 (in the other voices), which have been the basis of the fuge up to that point. Here again, Billings demonstrates that, for him, musical ends outweigh poetic formula or integrity. In this case, the stanzaic form, or at least its linear progression, is disrupted as the text becomes an instrument in the melodic interplay which casts, in the counter, a melody reminiscent of the air from earlier in the piece against the spirited fuge subject that first appeared in measure 31. The juxtaposition of different lines of poetry emphasizes this process on a textual level.

Responsiveness to text is observed especially in the correspondence between poetic and musical meter. Billings's sense of the temporality of sound and the inflection of language became quite developed. Likewise, musical illustration prevails in the composer's works in his last collection. In CREATION, for example, it is present in the duration of notes used to set the word “long” in the phrase “Should keep in tune so long.” While each of the separate parts of CREATION displays an element of simplicity, characteristic of some of Billings's intermediate works, the management of music and text is indicative of the flair and command with which Billings composed in his later years.

In sum, the originality, flexibility, and sensitivity which typify so much of the music of William Billings are certainly present in his fusing tune repertoire. Billings explores the formal aspects of music, never limiting him-

Example 9. CREATION (CH).

CREATION C.M.

Isaac Watts

William Billings

When I with pleas - ing won - der stand, And all my

frame sur - vey, Lord, tis thy work, I own thy hand, Thus

built my hum - - ble clay, Lord, tis thy work, I own thy

hand, Thus built my hum - - ble clay. Our life con -

Example 9, continued.

25

tains a thou - sand springs, And dies if one be gone.

31

Strange that a harp of thou-sand strings, Should keep in tune so

Strange that a harp of thou-sand strings, Should keep in tune so long,—

Strange that a harp of thou-sand strings, Should keep in— tune— so— long,

Strange that a harp of thou - sand strings, Should keep in tune so long, Strange that a harp of

36

long, Should keep in tune, should keep in— tune so long, Should

Strange that a harp of thou-sand strings, Should keep in tune, should keep in

Should keep in tune so long, Should keep in tune so

thou - sand strings, Should keep in tune so long, Should keep in tune— so

41

keep in tune so long, Should keep in tune so long, Strange that a

tune so long,

long, Should keep in tune so long, Strange that a harp of

long, Should keep in tune so long,

Example 9, continued.

46 harp of thou - sand strings, Should keep in tune so long, so long, Our life con - tains a thou - sand springs and dies if one be gone, thou - sand strings, Should keep in tune so long, Strange that a harp of thou - sand strings, Should keep in tune so long,

51 so long, Should keep in tune so long, Should Strange that a harp of thou - sand strings, Should keep in tune so long, Should keep in tune so long, Should keep in tune so long, Strange that a harp of thou - sand strings, Should keep in tune, should

56 keep in tune so long, long, so long, Strange that a harp of thou - sand strings, Should keep in tune so long, keep in tune so long,

self to any one particular construct. In terms of stylistic progression, we witness more freedom of musical line accompanied by greater lyricism, increased cohesion between words and music, and a tendency to expand the fugal idea into the primary element of many of his compositions. Finally, there is the composer's restless and almost perfectionist imagination that leads him to revise and "revitalize" his tunes, providing the dynamic backdrop for the musical refinement which pervades his later works. Ultimately, the most striking feature of Billings's fugal tunes, and probably his greatest contribution to the American fugal tune as a genre, is his spirit of individualism — each tune is so dif-

ferent, so fresh, so new. "Variety," as he said, "is always pleasing."

Notes

This article is an expanded version of a paper presented at the 1996 National Conference of the Sonneck Society for American Music in Washington, D.C.

1. The fugal tune is in no way an attempt to emulate the Baroque fugue of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe; rather, it is simply an elaboration of a psalm tune, which involves sections of polyphony that produce verbal conflict among the voices. The archaic spelling, "fugal" or "fuge," is maintained for the discussion of

these compositions since it is consistent with definitions prevalent in England and America at the time of the genre's emergence and development. A "fuge" was considered a contrapuntal passage which generally involved some degree of imitative writing. Billings, for example, in the glossary of *The New-England Psalm-Singer*, defines "Fuge or Fuging," as "notes flying after the same." Like other genres of American psalmody, the fugging tune was usually a four-part composition with the designations treble, counter, tenor, and bass corresponding to the conventional soprano, alto, tenor, and bass configuration. The principal melody, or air, as it was called, was assigned to the tenor, except in the polyphonic sections where each of the voices assumed a mildly imitative character.

2. Edwin Hall Pierce, "The Rise and Fall of the 'Fugue-Tune' in America," *Musical Quarterly* 16/4 (October 1930): 214-228. Carl E. Lindstrom, "William Billings and His Times," *Musical Quarterly* 25/4 (October 1939): 479-497. Hamilton C. MacDougall, *Early New England Psalmody* (Brattleboro: Stephen Daye Press, 1940), 95-99.

3. Irving Lowens, "The Origins of the American Fuging Tune," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 6/1 (Spring 1953): 43-52; Nicholas Temperley, "The Origins of the Fuging Tune," *RMA Research Chronicle* 17 (1981): 1-32; and others.

4. While certainly a tenacious advocate of the form, Billings did not compose the most fugging tunes of any American tunesmith. Of the American psalmodists publishing during the period 1770 through 1820 — the period which saw the emergence, development, and heyday of the fugging tune in America — Stephen Jenks, on the basis of published tunes with positive attributions, appears to have composed the most works in this genre, with a total of 46. Billings, Read, and French follow closely with 44, 43, and 42 respectively. Only tunes whose authorship is substantiated by primary sources have been used for the calculations in this study. It is noteworthy, however, that if tunes of *likely* authorship are considered, Samuel Holyoke far exceeds his contemporaries, with a total of 83 fugging tunes (32 with positive attribu-

tion and 51 of likely authorship). Many tunes from *The Columbian Repository* (1803) and *The Vocal Companion* (1807) are thought, on the basis of style, to be Holyoke's, yet carry no attribution. Jacob French's fugging tune output, for that matter, exceeds both Jenks's and Billings's, if tunes of likely authorship are considered. French has 42 of positive attribution and 10, which stylistically suggest that they are his, for a total of 52. Billings, if those of likely authorship are considered has 45, while Jenks's total remains consistent at 46. Daniel Read's total, likewise, is unchanged at 43. The statistics for this comparison were derived from Karl Kroeger's *American Fuging-Tunes, 1770-1820: A Descriptive Catalog* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994).

In terms of total output (all genres of psalmody considered), fugging tunes comprise roughly only 15% of Billing's entire catalog, while they involve nearly 37% of Jenks's output, 45% of Daniel Read's, and a noteworthy 89% of Nehemiah Shumway's. According to *The Complete Works of William Billings* (Boston: The American Musicological Society and The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1977-1990), Karl Kroeger and Hans Nathan, editors; Billings's entire output numbers roughly 300, 44 of which are fugging tunes. The recent edition featuring the works of Stephen Jenks, *Stephen Jenks Collected Works*, vol. 18, *Recent Researches in American Music*. (Madison: A-R Editions, Inc., 1995); edited by David Warren Steel, indicates Jenks published 125 original tunes in tunebooks from 1799 through 1818. Forty-six of these compositions are fugging tunes. Daniel Read's total published output is listed as 94 in *Daniel Read Collected Works*, vol. 24, *Recent Researches in American Music*, and vol. 4, of *Music of the United States of America*. (Madison: A-R Editions, Inc., 1995), edited by Karl Kroeger. Forty-three of these compositions are fugging tunes. Karl Kroeger's Hymn Tune Data Base was consulted for data on Nehemiah Shumway. A relatively complete, though not exhaustive, survey of tunes published in America through 1820, this source indicates Shumway published 18 original tunes, 16 of which are fugging tunes.

5. William Billings, *The Continental Harmony* (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1794), xxviii.

6. Karl Kroeger explores the relationship between Tans'ur's works and the composing style of William Billings in "William Tans'ur's Influence on William Billings," *Inter-American Music Review* 11 (Spring-Summer 1991): 1-12.

7. David P. McKay and Richard Crawford, *William Billings of Boston: Eighteenth-Century Composer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 93.

8. The text set in MILTON is the first verse of Psalm 145 from Sternhold and Hopkins's *The Booke of Psalmes with Hymnes Evangelical, and Spiritual Songs*, commonly known as the "Old Version." Psalm 42:1 from Nicholas Brady and Nahum Tate's *A New Version of the Psalms of David* is used for TAUNTON.

9. Though we have but these three futing tunes from this early publication, it appears Billings did have others on hand at that time. He explained in the advertisement on page two of *The New-England Psalm-Singer*, "If this work should meet with encouragement, it may be the Inducement to the Author to publish another Volume, which he has in Possession, consisting chiefly of Anthems, Fuges and Chorus's, of his own composition."

10. In addition to the tunebook's circulation intact, McKay and Crawford indicate that nearly 62 percent of the compositions in *The Singing Master's Assistant* were borrowed by later compilers. *William Billings of Boston*, 78.

11. As seen in the tune DUNSTABLE.

12. Not to be confused with the British composer by the same name who flourished in the early 1760s, this Benjamin West (1730-1813) was a resident of Providence, Rhode Island.

13. Total futing measures in the 13 fuges by Billings's contemporaries during the 1770s is 82.

14. William Billings, *The Psalm Singer's Amusement* (Boston: 1781), 2.

15. The counter's line was usually the most restricted in range and musical charac-

ter of all the four voices. Often times simply contributing to a fuller sonority, the counter was the part considered most dispensable when the number of available singers was limited.

16. As seen in the tune ASSURANCE.

17. As seen in the tune ADORATION.

18. As seen in the tune ASSURANCE.

19. As seen in the tune MANCHESTER.

20. While some of the tunes

(NORTHBOROUGH, previously called LANESBOROUGH in Stickney's *The Gentleman and Lady's Musical Companion*, for example) involved only minor alterations from their initial publication, others (BRATTLE STREET and KITTEERY) represented the composer's re-working of his previous material in some detail.

21. Karl Kroeger, "William Billings's Music in Manuscript Copy and Some Notes on Variant Versions of His Pieces," *MLA Notes* 39 (December 1982): 316-345.

22. The term "moods of time" was used by Anglo-American psalmodists to describe the dual meaning held by time signatures in their music. As in the Renaissance proportional system of notation, both the quantitative contents of the measure and an implied tempo, or tactus (which the tunesmiths sometimes explained in terms of a swinging pendulum), were suggested by these designations.

23. Kroeger, "William Billings's Music in Manuscript Copy and Some Notes on Variant Versions of His Pieces," 343.

24. While no chronology can be suggested from the arrangement of Billings tunes within a collection, tendencies that seem indicative of later development which surface in this anthology are addressed here.

25. The text for measures 1 through 22 is from Isaac Watts's *Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*, Psalm 139, Part 2, C.M. version. The text for the remainder of the piece is from Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, Book 2, No. 19:3.

