

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Millennial Praises: A Shaker Hymnal*. Edited by Christian Goodwillie and Jane F. Crosthwaite. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009. With accompanying CD.

*A Shaker Musical Legacy*. Compiled, with commentary, by Robert C. Opdahl and Viola E. Woodruff Opdahl. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2004.

At their peak membership before the Civil War, Shakers numbered about 6,000; today fewer than ten remain at the only active community in Sabbathday Lake, Maine. Yet the Shakers have had a large impact on the culture of the United States. Shaker furniture, architecture, and boxes have become emblematic of rural simplicity. The Shaker song “Simple Gifts,” written in 1848 by Joseph Brackett, now circulates worldwide, thanks to Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* and Sydney Carter’s hymn adaptation “Lord of the Dance.”

Music played a central role in Shaker life from the time founder Ann Lee and a small group of followers arrived from England in 1774. Songs—almost always monophonic—were used in personal devotion, religious instruction, and worship. Shakers danced in their worship services, and because instruments were forbidden until about 1870, they sang the music. Some outsiders derisively noted resemblances between Shaker melodies and secular tunes.

An enormous body of untapped primary sources on Shaker music exists. The Shakers developed systems of notation and wrote down an estimated 10,000 songs in more than 850 manuscript tune books. The vast majority of these songs have not yet been transcribed into standard notation. Among thousands of Shaker letters and diary entries are descriptions of musical practices, and several Shaker theorists produced instruction books. Daniel W. Patterson calls these sources “the richest documentation we have for any branch of American religious folksong of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” (foreword to *Millennial Praises*, ix).

Anyone studying Shaker music faces particular challenges. The first stems from the heterogeneous assortment of people who have written about Shaker culture—photographers, feminists, communitarians, religious studies scholars, history buffs, classical composers, sociologists, folk singers, and antiques dealers, to name a few. Information *about* Shakers is widely available, yet sometimes inaccurate, and references to musical practice can be incidental or imprecise. Second, the abundance of primary sources makes it challenging to define a project that is significant but focused. Third, the Shakers’ peculiar usage of certain common words and their florid nineteenth-century syntax mean that direct quotations are often lengthy and need considerable explanation. (“Unite” and “labor,” for example, have specific and complex meanings.) Finally, Shaker music is not only a historical artifact, but also a living tradition with a deeply sacred basis. Every study, recording, or performance of Shaker music takes an implicit stand on complex issues of ownership, ethics, and authenticity.

Building on the work of Edward Deming Andrews and Harold Cook,<sup>1</sup> Patterson laid out the history, genres and customs of Shaker music and compiled the authoritative catalog of manuscript tune books.<sup>2</sup> In the last twenty years various smaller studies and CD releases have expanded our knowledge of the repertoire. Two of these publications are *Millennial Praises*, a scholarly edition of a single Shaker hymn collection, and *A Shaker Musical Legacy*, a multifaceted contribution to an ongoing folk tradition. Although one is more successful than the other, both add significantly to our understanding of Shaker music.

*Millennial Praises* is a scholarly edition of a core Shaker repertoire: 140 hymns published without notation under the same title in 1812 and 1813. Drawing from the five most comprehensive Shaker tune manuscripts of the 1800s, Goodwillie and Crosthwaite have identified at least one tune for all but twelve of the texts. The scores (47–290) present the hymns in the order of the 1813 edition. The visual layout is clean and uncluttered. A heading gives each hymn's title and location in the 1813 edition, the tune's manuscript source, and any authorial attributions. The melody appears in modern notation on a single, treble-clef staff, set with several stanzas. Additional verses—up to fifteen in some cases—appear next, followed by any alternate tunes.

Goodwillie's essay "*Millennial Praises: The Birth of Shaker Hymnody*" (1–24) provides a concise summary of Shaker music history to about 1820. Formerly the curator at Hancock Shaker Village, now Curator of Special Collections and Archives at Hamilton College, Goodwillie has corrected a longstanding dating discrepancy by discovering that the book was issued in two installments, after which most copies were rebound with a new title page. Judiciously chosen facsimile photographs support his claim. His "Introduction to the Scores" (39–42) clearly explains how the tunes were located, how variants were handled, and his approaches to key, tempo, and other notational issues when transcribing tunes.

Crosthwaite is a professor of religion and women's studies at Mount Holyoke College. Her essay "*Millennial Praises: The Elaboration of Shaker Theology*" (25–38) explains that Shaker leadership published the hymnal to help unify doctrine among the Shaker communities. She describes the Shakers' radical beliefs in the larger context of early-nineteenth-century religious movements and social norms. We learn that Shakers were a "perfectionist" sect, believing that a person could attain Christian perfection during his or her lifetime. To this end, they renounced "worldly" possessions and "carnal" love. Their practice of celibacy endured because, following the teachings of Ann Lee, they believed it the only means to achieve biblical ideals of gender equality and perfect love. Crosthwaite supplies individual introductions to about half of the scores, illuminating the text's didactic goals and symbolism. Her contributions elegantly provide a scholarly connection between the music and text, achieving her aim to "revivify . . . ideas that were dangerous, obscure or lost" (36).

<sup>1</sup> Edward Deming Andrews, *The Gift to Be Simple: Songs, Dances and Rituals of the American Shakers* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1940); Harold E. Cook, *Shaker Music: A Manifestation of American Folk Culture* (Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University Press, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Daniel W. Patterson, *The Shaker Spiritual* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

Goodwillie and Crosthwaite's edition includes a reprint of the original hymnal's preface. Back matter consists of notes to the hymns, a clearly organized bibliography, and an index of first lines (to which titles would have been a welcome addition). Included with the book is a companion CD, which contains a sixty-year-old recording of Shaker Ricardo Belden singing selections from *Millennial Praises*. We are told that this recording is the only extant one of a Shaker singing these hymns, but further interpretation of this audio material is left to the listener.

In his foreword, Daniel W. Patterson underscores the significance of the original *Millennial Praises* publication and the importance of Goodwillie and Crosthwaite's book. Indeed, this edition is a model for scholarly treatment of Shaker music. The scope is significant, but limited enough to allow thoroughness. The intended audience is scholars and serious students with a basic ability to read music. Throughout the volume, the tone is consistent and the format uniform—welcome traits in a collaborative effort. Because it adheres to well-defined aims, namely, reuniting texts and melodies and explicating the texts' meanings and symbolism, this modern edition of *Millennial Praises* is an authoritative contribution to Shaker music scholarship.

*A Shaker Musical Legacy* is rich, fascinating, and uneven. Although the title fails to state it, the book revolves around the figure of Ricardo Belden (1870–1958), the last male Shaker at the Hancock community in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Experienced in Shaker song and dance, Belden by the 1940s had become the custodian of nine manuscript tune books. When Jerry and Sybil Count, the new owners of a nearby former Shaker community, expressed interest in preserving Shaker music and dance traditions, he was pleased to share his knowledge. From about 1948 to 1955, Belden helped teach Shaker songs and dances to the youths who attended the Counts' summer camp on the site of the former New Lebanon Shaker community. He donated the nine tune books to the owners, who later gave them to two dedicated participants, Robert C. Opdahl and Viola E. Woodruff Opdahl. The music, the dances, and memories of Belden's years of involvement with the camp form the basis of this book.

*A Shaker Musical Legacy* is an eclectic collection of sources—previously unpublished Shaker songs, essays, reminiscences, and practical instruction. The central portion of the book consists of an edition of 122 songs selected from more than 900 in the nine manuscripts. It is primarily a performing edition for folk singers, but it nonetheless contains a wealth of original material of use to scholars. First, most of the songs are not available elsewhere in modern notation. Second, a substantial number of the songs date from 1860 or later, even into the early 1900s; transcriptions of later songs are hard to find.

The body of the book contains one chapter for each manuscript. An annotated introduction to each one describes provenance, genres, notation system(s), and known uses. Each tune appears twice, on facing pages: first, in a direct transcription that preserves the key, barring, and other markings of the original; then in a performing edition that standardizes barring and other irregularities, transposes the tune into a workable vocal range (Shakers notated almost all their songs in C major, A minor, or D minor), and adds capital-letter chord symbols above the staff to facilitate instrumental accompaniment.

A tenth chapter, "Beyond the Manuscripts," combines anecdotes, detailed descriptions of individual songs and dances, and accounts of Brother Ricardo's performance style to shed further light on the Shakers' mid-twentieth-century musical life. Most remarkable are the diagrams and verbal descriptions of four dances: the Shaker Hollow Square, the Hollow C March, the Square Order Shuffle, and the Circle Dance. The practical instructions, given by the authors in consultation with folk musician Robert Stuart ("Stu") Jamieson (1922–2008), all of whom learned them from Belden, make clear the essential connection between movement and music.

The scholar may wish for more facsimiles, for better-integrated bibliographies, for an index containing titles and first lines, or for clearer overall organization (e.g., tune annotations appear three places: in the preface, the text of chapter 10, and an appendix). For a scholarly edition, selection criteria based on "auditory appeal, [and] singularity of the songs' background and music notation" may seem too subjective (xxvii). However, whereas access to all 900 tunes could enable fascinating analyses, the authors have succeeded in choosing a range of memorable songs.

A plenitude of features surround the scores, including more than fifty pages of prefatory materials. A brief introduction to the Shakers (xxiii–xxvi) by Jerry Grant of the Shaker Museum and Library in Old Chatham, New York, is a model of clarity. Several essays by the compilers and a foreword by Jamieson tell the complicated story of the book's fifty-year genesis. (This background helps explain small oddities, such as Jamieson's mistakenly calling the book *Rise and Sing* in the foreword.) A table indicates where photographs, diagrams, and Shaker portraits appear throughout the book. One appendix of several paragraphs explains how to transcribe the "cursive letteral notation" found in one manuscript. Another paraphrases the childhood memories of a woman who visited Hancock often while Belden lived there.

The book suffers somewhat from the lack of critical distance and a consistent vision. Admittedly not professional musicians or dancers, the authors relied on a succession of consultants who had different priorities. In its aim to facilitate modern performances, two controversial issues arise: First, some Shakers and scholars balk at the idea of outsiders performing sacred Shaker dances; and second, the Shakers shunned instrumental accompaniment as "worldly" when most of these tunes were written. The compilers do note that Belden sanctioned performances by non-Shakers when done "in an empathetic way to help enlighten the world's people about the Shakers" (268). Nonetheless, one misses a direct statement of the authors' position on these issues.

In one sense, the compilers' personal connections to the material, duly disclosed, are part of the "legacy" they document. Despite its limitations, *A Shaker Musical Legacy* presents a wealth of information that is original, detailed, and reliable. Concern for accuracy and precision abounds. Claims are appropriately modest. Students of traditional music and its transmission will find a rich account of a lineage that stretches back into the nineteenth century. *A Shaker Musical Legacy* fulfills well the compilers' aims to honor those who entrusted them with the manuscripts and to make the material available to a wider audience.

*Millennial Praises* treats a single, historically significant repertoire with consistent methods and a clearly defined purpose, making it a classic for Shaker researchers. *A Shaker Musical Legacy* is a multifaceted collection of source material that provides a

link in an ongoing chain of folk tradition. Both do important work in the enormous project of transcribing, indexing, and understanding the vast body of Shaker song.

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*Dudley Buck*. By N. Lee Orr. American Composers. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008. With accompanying CD.

*Dudley Buck: American Victorian Choral Music*. Edited by N. Lee Orr. *Recent Researches in American Music*, Vol. 53; *Music of the United States of America*, Vol. 14. Middleton, Wisc.: A-R Editions, 2005.

*Dudley Buck: Selected Organ Works*. Edited by N. Lee Orr. *Recent Researches in American Music*, Vol. 63. Middleton, Wisc.: A-R Editions, 2008.

If the music of Dudley Buck (1839–1909) is not well known today, it is due as much to changes in artistic programming as to changes in taste. True, the sentimentality and naïve optimism of Victorian music strike some listeners as cloying, but this view is not nearly so prevalent as it was during the era of musical modernism in the mid-twentieth century. My experience in recent years has been that the rich harmonies and singable melodies of the best music of the era still have an elemental appeal to general audiences. Much more detrimental to his current reception is that Buck's preferred genres of concert organ works and large-scale choral/orchestral works are not as central to concert life as they were in the late nineteenth century. N. Lee Orr, Professor of Music at Georgia State University, has made it his mission to reintroduce the life and works of Dudley Buck to the U.S. scholarly community.

Orr's *Dudley Buck* (hereafter *DB*), one of the University of Illinois Press's series of concise volumes on American composers, gives an overview of the composer's life and works; *Dudley Buck: American Victorian Choral Music* (*AVCM*) is volume 14 of the *Music of the United States of America* (*MUSA*) series; and *Dudley Buck: Selected Organ Works* (*SOW*) is volume 63 of the *Recent Researches in American Music* series from A-R Editions. Taken together, these three books provide an overview of the composer's life and most significant musical works.

Buck began his studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut (his hometown), before enrolling at the Leipzig Conservatory in 1858. He followed his teacher Julius Rietz to Dresden in 1860 and subsequently studied from 1861 to 1862 in Paris. As with so many of his U.S. contemporaries from this era, Buck's European studies had a profound impact on his musical tastes and techniques. Returning to the United States in the middle of the Civil War, he began his professional career in Hartford, establishing a reputation as an organist and composer. In 1869 he moved to Chicago, where he took a position at the fashionable St. James's Episcopal Church.