
“Nearer to the Exercises of Heaven”: Nineteenth-Century
Maritime Presbyterians and *The Choir*¹

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In your mind’s eye, transport yourself back 144 years to late October 1871 when, at the end of a busy day, you have found a few minutes to open the latest issue of your favourite monthly newspaper, *The Home and Foreign Record of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America*.² With a cup of tea in hand (probably not a stronger substance!), you flip through the pages and your eye lights on an article headed “The Choir.” You are interested – what is this, you ask – and you pause to read: “Ah, who should sing if not the christian people of this glorious christian church. Our highest efforts will fall far short of the noble words to which we attune our voices. As we sing God’s praises in God’s own words, how careful should we be to sing not slovenly, bunglingly, lazily, discordantly, carelessly, as too often happens – but earnestly, skilfully, harmoniously, heartily and sweetly. Singing God’s praises brings us nearer to the exercises of Heaven than any other service we can engage on earth.”³ You hum – ah ha – in agreement and read on. “How important then that due attention should be paid to this part of Divine Worship, and that

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at a symposium to celebrate the retirement of Nancy Vogan from Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick on 11 May 2012 and at the twenty-first annual conference of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 21 July 2013.

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² Hereafter, *The Home and Foreign Record*.

³ “The Choir,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, October 1871, 273.

our congregations should be trained intelligently to do their duty! The means are now well nigh within the reach of all. Let it not be said that these means are to be persistently and blindly rejected.”⁴

The “means” to which the author of this column referred was a new tune book, *The Choir*, printed in Edinburgh and available for sale from the publisher in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Several years in planning and preparation, *The Choir* was, as its subtitle states, “A Collection of Sacred Vocal Music for the Use of the Congregations and Families of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, B.N.A.”⁵ This volume is an example of a publishing venture motivated by a market niche and an overriding denominational desire to establish a common worship guide and to raise the quality of congregational and community singing. These motivations give informative context to the tune book but they do not fully illustrate the uniqueness of the compilation, which, in its two editions and several reprintings, was widely used throughout Nova Scotia for over twenty-five years. Why did this new tune book occupy the efforts of several prominent members of the Presbyterian Synod of the region for most of the 1860s? How were the tunes and texts in the volume selected? How did this book, containing hundreds of tunes, relate to other contemporary tune books? Why would a publisher take on the risk of producing a new tune book when others were available and might be deemed competitors?

This paper illustrates that *The Choir* was prepared to meet the unique musical interests of Maritime Presbyterians who were engaged in lively debates about innovations in church worship, such as musical instruments and the singing of hymn texts in addition to the Psalms. The Synod solicited the opinions of congregations, selected tunes from other contemporary tune books, and established new relationships between tunes and texts that were sourced almost exclusively from the Psalms. The book was initially offered by subscription, which helped to minimize the financial risk to the publisher. This paper provides an overview of the compilation and publication of the first edition of *The Choir* (see fig. 1) and describes the revisions made for the second edition, published in 1876 and reprinted four times over the next sixteen years. The paper begins with a discussion of the religious and

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *The Choir: A Collection of Sacred Vocal Music for the Congregations and Families of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, B.N.A.* (Halifax: A. & W. MacKinlay, 1871).

musical context of *The Choir* and turns to outline the efforts of the Presbyterian Synod’s Committee on Psalmody to compile the tune book, from the earliest announcement of the publisher’s intent in 1864 to the volume’s eventual release in 1871. The contents of the first and second editions are described and particular attention is given to elements of the book that illustrate the compilers’ attention to the local audience for which it was intended, including the use of local place names for tune titles, the inclusion of locally composed tunes, and the presence of fugging tunes. Fugging tunes are a type of sacred vocal music that features a musical passage with staggered entrances of the voices resulting in overlapping lines of text. Fugging tunes persisted among Maritime Presbyterians for decades after they faded from the church music repertoire in other parts of North America, and *The Choir* is among the last tune books of the period to include them.

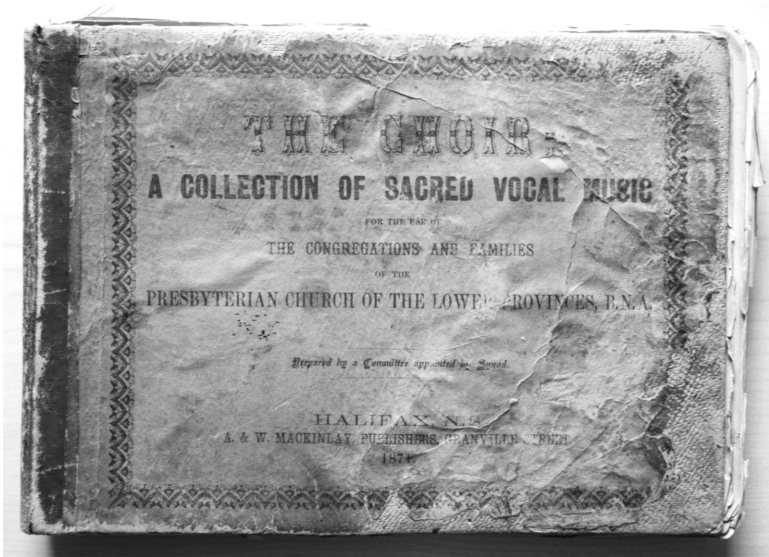


Figure 1. Cover of the first edition of *The Choir*, 1871. Photograph courtesy of Nancy Vogan, Sackville, New Brunswick.

Controversies over the Use of Music in Presbyterian Services

Music was an important element in the life of European settlers in North America. In British North America, now Canada, these settlers “brought with them a rich musical heritage – a heritage that was a

vital part of their worship” activities.⁶ Especially among Protestant Christians, singing was embraced by all participants in worship services, young or old, men and women, rural or urban, musically talented or not. Throughout the continent, hymn books and tune books were either imported or compiled and published locally for use in churches and singing schools.⁷ In the case of congregational singing, vocal styles changed over time and place, and in some instances, such as fusing tunes, the shifting preferences throughout Great Britain and North America influenced decisions about the choice of tune books used by particular churches and even decisions to compile new books to meet local interests and demands. By the 1870s, music had become integral to the worship services of most Christian denominations and the increased interest in music meant the selection of tunes and texts and the role of musical instruments in worship were, at times, hotly debated.

The Presbyterian denomination is rooted strongly in Scottish history and culture; thus, it could be expected that Scottish emigrants would shape the musical traditions of Presbyterian churches in North American communities. Thousands of such emigrants arrived in the eastern colonies of British North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,⁸ creating “a rich legacy that today is found in the remarkable renaissance of musical talent and interest in Celtic music.”⁹ In the Maritime colonies of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick, where many Scots settled, Presbyterian

⁶ “Canadian Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Church Music Prior to 1925,” Bruce R. Harding, accessed 10 March 2015, http://www.hymnology.ca/Canada_pre-1925.htm.

⁷ See, for example, Nicholas Temperley, “Worship Music in English-Speaking North America, 1608–1820,” in *Taking a Stand: Essays in Honour of John Beckwith*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 166–84; Fred K. Graham, “Methodist Hymn Tunes in Atlantic Canada,” in *The Contributions of Methodism to Atlantic Canada*, edited by Charles H.H. Scobie and John Webster Grant (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 257–68; Stephen A. Marini, *Sacred Song in America. Religion, Music, and Public Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003); and David W. Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound. Music in the Spiritual Lives of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁸ See, for example, Stephen J. Hornsby, “Patterns of Scottish Emigration to Canada, 1750–1870,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 18, no. 4 (1992): 397–416.

⁹ Bertrum H. MacDonald and Nancy F. Vogan, “James Dawson and *The Harmonicon*: Sacred Music for Victorian Maritimers,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada / Cahiers de la Société bibliographique du Canada* 38, no. 2 (2000): 33–65 (34).

churches flourished in the nineteenth century through a number of schisms and unions, which were influenced by developments in the Presbyterian denomination in Scotland.¹⁰ In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a small number of tune books were published in these colonies,¹¹ but churches relied mostly on imported music either from Britain or the American states to meet their needs.¹² In most congregations, the memory and singing ability of selected singers, who “lined out” the verses and tune, meant that copies of tune books were likely few in number. Over time, however, demand for locally produced tune books grew, and one entrepreneurial Scot, James Dawson, who operated a bookstore and small publishing venture in Pictou, launched a project in 1830 to produce a tune book that he intended to be “as extensively useful as possible.” He imported musical type and the result was *The Harmonicon*, the first printed music in Nova Scotia, which first appeared in 1838. The first edition of the volume included 219 tunes, comprising psalm tunes, hymns, fugal tunes, and anthems. MacDonald and Vogan note that of the 219 tunes in the first edition of *The Harmonicon*, “seventy-five of the selections are found in either the 1816 or 1831 editions of Humbert’s

¹⁰ The Secession Synod of Nova Scotia was established in 1817. The Synod of Nova Scotia (Church of Scotland) and the Synod of New Brunswick (Church of Scotland) were established in 1833. In 1844, the Synod of Nova Scotia split into the Free Synod of Nova Scotia and the Church of Scotland Synod. The Synod of New Brunswick split the following year. In 1860, the Secession Synod of Nova Scotia merged with the Free Synod of Nova Scotia to establish the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America. The Synod of New Brunswick joined the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America in 1866. Separately, in 1868, the Church of Scotland Synod of Nova Scotia merged with the Church of Scotland Synod of New Brunswick to form the Church of the Maritime Provinces (Church of Scotland). Most congregations in all branches of the Presbyterian denomination in Canada merged in 1875. See Neil G. Smith, Allan L. Farris, and H. Keith Markell, *A Short History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Toronto: Presbyterian Publications, n.d.) and Charles H.H. Scobie and G.A. Rawlyk, “Introduction,” in *The Contributions of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada*, edited by Charles H.H. Scobie and G.A. Rawlyk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), xix.

¹¹ See Barclay McMillan, “Tune-Book Imprints in Canada to 1867: A Descriptive Bibliography,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada / Cahiers de la Société bibliographique du Canada* 16 (1977): 31–57.

¹² See the list of music titles available in James Dawson’s Pictou bookshop given in MacDonald and Vogan, “James Dawson and *The Harmonicon*,” 44. For additional discussion of music in Nova Scotia, see Paul Martell, *Music in Nova Scotia – The Written Tradition: 1752–1893* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Museum, 1998).

Union Harmony, but only one, *Nativity*, is an original composition by Humbert. Several of these items are also found in Zebulon Estey's *New Brunswick Church Harmony* published in Saint John in 1835.¹³ For over three decades *The Harmonicon* "was the music book of choice for Scottish Presbyterian communities in eastern British North America."¹⁴

By the beginning of the 1860s demand for a new tune book gained momentum, possibly generated in part by interest from the Halifax publishing firm of A. & W. MacKinlay for a song book to place in the Maritime market. At a meeting in Pictou on 1 July 1864, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America, having received notice of a "project of the Messrs MacKinlay of Halifax to publish a new collection of sacred vocal music adapted to the Presbyterian Congregations of ... [the] Province," appointed a committee "to promote the improvement of Psalmody."¹⁵ That decision put in motion the process that led to the publication of *The Choir* seven years later.

The Choir was conceived in a period rich in interest in various musical forms and styles. Throughout the nineteenth century the role of music in church settings received extensive consideration in Presbyterian circles in Scotland, England, the United States, the British North American colonies, and elsewhere. This attention was driven, in part, by the resurgent belief that music was, as David W. Stowe states in *How Sweet the Sound: Music in the Spiritual Lives of Americans*, a "means of communication with the divine: a mechanism for expressing praise and thanksgiving, for petitioning for mercy, protection, and power."¹⁶ This belief in the divine properties of music is echoed in a piece on congregational singing published in *The Home and Foreign Record* that declared "the very chairs and tables around you, our own bodies and souls, are pervaded by the principles and laws of music! We are as it were the priests of nature to give audible and

¹³ MacDonald and Vogan, "James Dawson and *The Harmonicon*," 52.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵ "Minutes of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America, held at Pictou, June and July, 1864," *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1864, 209. The original minutes of the Synod published in the *Home and Foreign Record* can be found at the United Church of Canada, Maritime Conference Archives, Presbyterian Synod Record Group, Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, Synod Minutes, Volumes I–II, Box S-8.

¹⁶ Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound*, 3.

articulate utterance to all the pervading song of praise.”¹⁷ The piece went on to ask “should not you and I, – reader, – pay more attention to this noble employment of our powers; an employment in which we have as associates saints and angels?”¹⁸ The quality and style of congregational singing was of deep importance to many members of the church, as evidenced by descriptions of singing and church music to be found in religious newspapers of the period. One account of meetings held in New Glasgow and Pictou, Nova Scotia remarked that “the singing [in New Glasgow] was less artistic than in Pictou, but it was if possible more enthusiastic and universal.”¹⁹ Laurie Stanley-Blackwell references John Murray’s account of the singing during a Communion Season Monday in the Earltown Presbyterian Church in Pictou County, Nova Scotia in the late 1850s: “He describes how the young members of the congregation, emboldened by their ‘musical proficiency’ acquired at a local singing school, started to harmonize like a choir. Their challenge to all ‘notion of propriety in the worship of God’ did not go unremarked. The congregation was aghast and stopped singing. The Precentors quickly registered their outrage that ‘the leadership’ had been ‘taken out of their hands.’ The clergyman added to the tension of the moment with his stern words: ‘You have killed my soul. I can’t preach here today.’ After delivering those lines, he strode out of the church.”²⁰ A description of an evening service in Truro, Nova Scotia commented that “all seemed to sing with the understanding and especially with heart. If I ever heard ‘Shelburne’ before, I certainly never heard it so rendered. The singing was full and joyous.”²¹ Some congregations were fortunate enough to have such high quality singing, but singing and reading music was a significant challenge among the churches and much of the attention to music was centred on improving congregational singing.

This desire to improve congregational singing is reflected in the prefaces of numerous tune books published in Canada during the

¹⁷ “Sing!,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, December 1865, 312.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ “The Late Convention at Pictou,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, October 1869, 253.

²⁰ Laurie Stanley-Blackwell, *Tokens of Grace: Cape Breton’s Open-Air Communion Tradition* (Sydney: Cape Breton University Press, 2006), 134n30. See also John Murray, *The Scotsburn Congregation, Pictou County, Nova Scotia* (Truro: News Publishing Co., 1921), 82–83.

²¹ “A Day in Truro,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, July 1870, 171. “Shelburne” is a fuging tune attributed to Reynolds and is included in both editions of *The Choir*. The tune is set to the first verse of Psalm 27.

mid-nineteenth century. For example, in the fourth edition of *Union Harmony*, published in 1840, Stephen Humbert explained that his compilation is “here recommended for church practice, in preference to such tunes as are often used, burthened with overmuch slurring and useless repetition, occupying much time without affording that pleasing melody, always found in correct simple sacred music. Should the present work meet a favorable reception, it is hoped such useless custom will be discontinued.”²² The preface of the *Presbyterian Psalmody*, published in Montreal in 1851, began with the declaration that “the singing of psalms is not an optional department of worship, but a divinely appointed ordinance” and went on to state that “there may be ‘bawling’ in the church – but there can be no true and pleasant ‘singing’ until congregations generally make this their matter and learn to sing.”²³ It is not surprising to see the compiler readily admit that “the object of the present compilation is to facilitate the cultivation of sacred music.”²⁴

Interest in congregational singing may have led to the publication of tune books like *The Choir*, but it also exposed deep divisions about two controversial “innovations” in the service of praise: the use of organs and other instruments and the singing of hymns in worship. Officially, the Synod was against both innovations. In November 1865, *The Home and Foreign Record* published a lengthy piece on the “organ question” that was intended to “point out the exact position of the church in reference to this matter.”²⁵ After outlining a lengthy historical and theological justification for the Synod’s objections to instruments in worship, the piece concluded that, “No man can pretend his conscience *obliges* him to worship God by means of organs or harmoniums, or no man can pretend that the New Testament appoints or enjoins such a mode of worship. No sane man will say that he would not be offering acceptable worship were he confined in public worship to the use of his voice and heart. Has any man or set of men then a right to agitate the church, destroy its peace and harmony, which they had solemnly vowed to promote, by a question

²² Stephen Humbert, *Union Harmony, or British America’s Sacred Vocal Music* (Saint John: Stephen Humbert, 1840).

²³ *The Presbyterian Psalmody: Being a Selection of Tunes for the Use of the Presbyterian Churches, Families, and Schools Throughout Canada* (Montreal: John C. Becket, 1851).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ “The ‘Organ’ Question,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, November 1865, 285–91.

of this kind?”²⁶ Despite the Synod’s official position, a fulsome debate about the use of instruments ensued and the desire to improve congregational singing was seized upon by both sides.²⁷ Proponents of instruments saw them as a means of aiding congregations that lacked the ability to sing and, by extension, improving the service of song throughout the congregations.²⁸ Opponents rejected this position and argued that improving congregational singing through musical training was the best way to prevent the spread of organs and other instruments in worship. One piece on the “glorious gift” of singing concluded that Synod members should “sing with loud noise skillfully,’ and then our church need never more be troubled with the innovation of instrumental music.”²⁹ Another advised that “the best possible answer to arguments and movements in favour of instrumental music in our churches is to train people to *sing* the praises of God as they ought to do.”³⁰ Some members of the church felt the Synod was not doing enough to improve congregational singing and prevent the introduction of organs into congregations. This sentiment is captured in a letter from a resident of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, published in a Presbyterian newspaper in 1868, who noted that “with the exception of continuing a Committee on Psalmody, nothing has emanated from our highest Church Court, calculated to awaken

²⁶ Ibid., 291.

²⁷ For a summary of this debate, see George Christie, *The Use of Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of God* (Halifax: James Barnes, 1867). For an announcement regarding Christie’s pamphlet, see “Instrumental Music in Churches,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, April 1867, 94–95.

²⁸ For an interesting example of this argument, see “Meeting of the St. Stephen Presbytery—The Organ Question,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, October 1868, 273–74. The Synod sent three “assessors” to a meeting of the St. Stephen Presbytery to discuss a resolution regarding the use of an organ. Hearing that the congregation “had the alternative as a last resort, however unwilling, of seceding from the connection” with the Synod, the assessors reluctantly allowed the use of the organ to continue. A resolution was passed that acknowledged the “very peculiar and exceptional state” of the congregation and concluded that the congregation “will voluntarily prefer vocal music alone when such necessity [to use an organ] ceases.” This case was not unique. Two years earlier, the Kirk session of St. John’s Church in Chatham, New Brunswick, unsuccessfully tried to withdraw from the Presbytery of Pictou over the Presbytery’s refusal to accept the organ in public worship. See “Minutes of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1866, 202–5.

²⁹ “Sing!,” 312.

³⁰ “Instrumental Music in Churches,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, April 1867, 94–95.

an interest in the cultivation and improvement of congregational singing.³¹ The author stated further that “I do fear that if the Synod acts as hitherto, and ignores the necessity of taking steps to interest and improve our people in conducting this part of our service, it will but tend to strengthen the hands of the few who favor the introduction of instrumental music into our churches.”

The singing of hymns in worship was equally, if not more, contentious. Hymns grew in popularity throughout the nineteenth century due, in part, to the varied musical metres and modernized lyrics used by hymn composers. Stowe provides an informative description of the creative possibilities of hymns: “hymns are remarkable linguistic and musical palimpsests. They are revised formally by hymnbook editors, compilers, translators, and ecclesiastical authorities. Informally they are altered by worship leaders, music directors, organists, soloists, and congregations who adapt them over time, and parodists who convert familiar songs to new, sometimes widely divergent ends. Words are often created independently of music, producing an even more complexly determined artefact. Texts are set and reset to melodies that themselves evolve over time. Sometimes hymn writers compose words inspired by particular tunes, while composers create original music for favourite texts.”³² Maritime Presbyterians were, of course, familiar with many hymns and used unsanctioned hymnals in family settings, Sabbath Schools, and even worship, but when *The Choir* was published, the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America had only unofficially sanctioned five hymns and sixty-seven paraphrases (various passages of the Bible rephrased for singing).³³ The paraphrases and hymns were compiled by a committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, which in 1781 recommended the adoption of the collection. No action was taken at the time and, as Morrison concludes, the use of the sixty-seven paraphrases and five hymns in church settings was

³¹ “Psalmody,” *Presbyterian Witness, and Evangelical Advocate*, 27 June 1868, 205.

³² Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound*, 3–4.

³³ See, for example, Duncan Morrison, *The Great Hymns of the Church: Their Origin and Authorship* (Toronto: Hart, 1890), 182–83. For local references to these restrictions, see “News of the Church: the Presbytery of Halifax,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, April 1873, 105; the article by Rev. Moses Harvey described below; and the Presbytery of Halifax’s overture regarding psalmody cited in note 39. All sixty-seven paraphrases and five hymns are listed in an “Emotional Classification of Passages” found in the front matter of *The Choir*.

a “matter of tolerance, not of sanction.”³⁴ Congregational singing was largely limited to metrical versions of the Psalms. Like the “organ question,” many arguments were advanced in favour of lifting these restrictions despite the Synod’s official position on the subject. In 1869, for example, a lengthy essay on “Christian Hymnology,” by Rev. Moses Harvey of St. John’s, Newfoundland, was published in *The Home and Foreign Record*. Beginning in January of that year and continuing in many of the monthly issues that followed, Harvey presented an informed and sophisticated account of the place of music in Christian churches, especially Presbyterian congregations. As he wrote in the opening paragraphs of the first article in the series, “It seems to me that in those branches of the Presbyterian Church in which, hitherto, the ‘Service of Song in the House of the Lord’ has been restricted to the metrical version of the Psalms sanctioned by the Church of Scotland, with the small Hymnal appended containing sixty-seven ‘Translations and Paraphrases’ and five Hymns, there is a growing conviction that the time has now arrived for enlarging and improving this meagre collection of Hymns so long in use. There are many unmistakable symptoms that the want of a fuller and richer Hymnal, for public and private worship is widely felt.”³⁵ Interest in singing, the use of hymns in congregational singing, and attention to the quality of singing dominated both Harvey’s extensive essay and a lengthy reaction piece by James Thompson from Durham, Pictou County, published over three months in 1869. Thompson’s rebuttal to Harvey defended the position against “enlarged Hymnals” and concludes that “what the Presbyterian Church wants, and what every church wants, to make her truly prosperous and to give ‘life and power,’ is not hymns, but the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,” which can only be achieved when the “service of praise” is “strictly confined to the inspired poetry.”³⁶ Nevertheless, calls for expanded hymnals continued to appear in church newspapers. At a June, 1869 meeting of the Presbytery of St. John, New Brunswick, a certain Rev. McKay moved an overture (proposal) to the Synod:

Whereas, There is keenly felt among the members of this Church the want of a hymnal suitable for the use of those who are weaker

³⁴ Morrison, *Great Hymns*, 183.

³⁵ M. Harvey, “Christian Hymnology,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, January 1869, 5–6.

³⁶ James Thompson, “Christian Hymnology: Reply to Mr. Harvey,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, April 1869, 129. Thompson is, of course, referring to the Psalms.

in capacity, and whereas in various parts of the Church, hymns are being introduced and used in Sabbath Schools with [i.e., without?] Synodic authority or supervision, and whereas this mode of procedure, while it may be necessary, is irregular and dangerous to the purity and good order of the Church – therefore
Resolved That it be humbly Overtured to the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces to appoint a Committee to whom shall be assigned the duty of selecting a collection of hymns suitable to be used in Sabbath Schools or public worship in this Church.³⁷

Rev. McKay delivered a speech to support the overture, but it was met with some objections and quashed before it could be transmitted to the Synod. The *Home and Foreign Record* reported that Mr. Robert Wood “thought the Psalms were very good and we had better stick with the old” and that Rev. James Gray “thought the subject should not be stirred up, or a discussion provoked about it, at the present time. There were too many subjects brought up upon which there was a diversity of opinion.”³⁸ The publication of *The Choir* in 1871 does not appear to have satisfied the desire for an official hymnal sanctioned by all congregations. On 11 March 1873, for example, the Presbytery of Halifax endorsed an overture to the Synod requesting that the hymnal of the Presbyterian Church of England or the Free Church of Scotland be approved for use.³⁹ The overture acknowledged that “collections of hymns, in no way sanctioned by our Synod, are used in some of our congregations and in nearly all our Sabbath Schools” and provided several justifications for such a measure. It even drew on the “organ question,” claiming that “the best way of keeping musical instruments out of our congregations, is to preoccupy the ground with good vocal music.”⁴⁰ The overture was sent to the Synod, but it was never addressed. Although *The Home and Foreign Record* reported that “the Synod’s debates and decisions on the Overture before them, will be watched with prayerful interest,” the overture was not discussed at Synod meetings in 1873 or 1874.⁴¹

³⁷ “Presbytery of St. John,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, July 1869, 190–91.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁹ “The Presbytery of Halifax,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, April 1873, 105–6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ “Postponed,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1873, 220; “Hymns,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1874, 226. The overture appears to have died with the union of 1875.

Letters and accounts of church meetings such as these reflect the tension between proponents of what is known today as Exclusive Psalmody – where congregational singing is restricted to the texts of the biblical Psalms – and advocates for the use of hymns, as well as the Psalms, in public worship.⁴² As will be illustrated through the analysis of the contents of *The Choir* below, the tune book was, in many ways, a manifestation of the Committee on Psalmody’s efforts to straddle both sides of this debate. The compilers appeased the Exclusive Psalmists by replacing many common hymn texts with texts from the Psalms, but they also included a small number of hymns and other texts to satisfy those who were more comfortable with a broader sacred music repertoire. The preface of the tune book comments on this balancing act:

In adapting, wherever practicable, the music to words from our metrical version of the Psalms, the Committee have followed a course which they hope few of the ministers and members of our Church will disapprove. As, however, at meetings for mere musical practice, there is danger that words so sacred in their character may be used irreverently, a few verses of various metres are subjoined, which may with advantage be substituted. It has been deemed advisable to include in “the Choir” a number of tunes adapted to metres not contained in the Psalms, but without which the Committee felt it would be incomplete. Though not suitable for our devotional meetings, these tunes may be practiced with great advantage in the family, and in their use in this way will greatly help to promote a taste for, and proficiency in Sacred Vocal Music.

A few good Hymns are given in full, and a small number of Anthems and other pieces are subjoined, to meet the wishes of those who desire something more varied and difficult than the Psalm tunes.⁴³

The decision to include tunes “not suitable for our devotional meetings” is significant and suggests the committee intended the tune book to be usable in a variety of settings. A common sentiment in the debates about church music was that improvements to congregational singing should be sought through Sabbath schools and other approved

⁴² This debate persisted since the earliest introduction of hymns and is widely apparent in nineteenth-century Canadian published sources. See, for example, William Annan, *Letters on Psalmody: A Review of the Leading Arguments for the Exclusive Use of the Book of Psalms*, (Philadelphia: William S. & Alfred Martien, 1859).

⁴³ *The Choir*, iv.

educational meetings organized primarily for youth, where hymns and other tunes were generally acceptable. One letter in the *Presbyterian Witness* observed that “it is among the children and young persons connected with [Sabbath schools] that the groundwork of implanting a taste for singing should be laid.”⁴⁴ Another letter bluntly stated that “Old people are not generally scholars in anything, still less are they likely to be in this [music]. Attention must therefore be specially directed to the youth. Means should be adopted in every congregation for having them taught music by note, and trained to sing together.”⁴⁵

The Synod’s Committee on Psalmody apparently agreed with this approach. At the Synod meeting in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, on 3 July 1867, the committee reported that “Sabbath School and Bible Classes and even secular schools afford an admirable field for the culture of sacred music. The youth of the Church might there be trained to take an effective part in public praise; and were the field prudently and perseveringly cultivated, there would be, in a short time comparatively few worshippers who could not take an intelligent and interesting part in the service of song.”⁴⁶ The committee also recommended that “properly qualified teachers of sacred music should be employed wherever practicable” to ensure that the “youth of the church ... be trained to take an effective part in public praise.”⁴⁷ Using Sabbath schools to improve congregational singing was an effective means of reaching a large number of young people in the church. In 1867, 10,059 pupils in 305 Sabbath schools were found in eleven Presbyteries in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. The Synod reported 70,425 “adherents,” so the Sabbath School attendance is notable. There were 1,270 teachers in these schools and 22,565 volumes distributed among the school libraries.⁴⁸ Sabbath school instructors, however, were confronted with the difficult task of selecting suitable musical material from the hymnals and music books published and marketed to the schools.⁴⁹ Charles Robson, a

⁴⁴ “Psalmody,” *Presbyterian Witness, and Evangelical Advocate*, 27 June 1868, 205

⁴⁵ “Psalmody,” *Presbyterian Witness, and Evangelical Advocate*, 20 July 1867, 226.

⁴⁶ “Minutes of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America, held at New Glasgow, June–July 1867,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1867, 235.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ “Statistical Summary for Year Ending 31st December, 1867,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, November 1868, 304.

⁴⁹ Reports of the Committee on Sabbath Schools delivered at Synod meetings often reference the selection of books for Sabbath School libraries. See, for example, “Sabbath Schools,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, January 1870, 3–4.

church elder who figured prominently in the production of both *The Harmonicon* and *The Choir* and served on the Committee on Psalmody and Committee on Sabbath Schools,⁵⁰ provided his own answer to this question. The son of a Presbyterian minister, Robson first ran a dry goods business in Pictou and then later in Halifax, where his store on Granville Street was next door to the bookselling and publishing establishment of A. & W. MacKinlay. While actively involved in the production of *The Choir*, Robson published *A Selection of Popular Hymns for the Use of Sabbath Schools* in April 1870.⁵¹ His objective in producing this volume was “a desire to place within the reach of children ... at very small cost, a selection of the most popular hymns contained in the many Sabbath-school hymn books which ... [had] been published” during the previous few years.

In 1875, the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America merged with other Presbyterian denominations to form the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Over time, the doctrine of Exclusive Psalmody gave way to the acceptance of hymns in worship and the newly formed church issued an officially sanctioned hymnal in 1880. As Maritime Presbyterians grappled with their use of music in worship, church music was gradually consolidating into what Bruce Harding has called the “core repertoire” of the three Protestant denominations that would eventually merge to form the United Church of Canada in 1925.⁵² Brownlie has shown that, for example, the Canadian *Presbyterian Book of Praise*, published in 1897, contains 435 of the 639 tunes published in the Scottish *Church Hymnary* the following year.⁵³ *The Choir* also contains many of these tunes but, as noted below, it also contains a large number of tunes that never made it into the “core repertoire” of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Nevertheless, it can be inferred from its several printings that *The Choir*, with its unique selection of tunes and preference for the Psalms, was in demand among Maritime Presbyterians long after the merger in 1875. There is little question that *The Choir* appeared in a rich musical context both in North America and in Britain.

⁵⁰ See, for example, “Committees of Synod,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, February 1867, 239.

⁵¹ Charles Robson, *A Selection of Popular Hymns for the Use of Sabbath Schools* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Printing Company, 1870).

⁵² See Harding, “Canadian Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Church Music Prior to 1925.”

⁵³ John Brownlie, *The Hymn and Hymn-Writers of the Church Hymnary* (London: Henry Frowde, 1899), 333.

The Publication of *The Choir*

The Committee on Psalmody tasked with preparing the new tune book took its responsibilities seriously, but progress was slow. A year after its appointment, when the Synod next met in Halifax in 1865, the committee reported that it was considering a “manuscript copy of the volume of sacred vocal music to be called ‘The Mayflower,’” which it thought would be “well adapted to the wants of the church.”⁵⁴ While the committee might have established a tentative title for the volume – a title it did not adopt for reasons unknown – the committee felt it needed to consult the congregations in the region further. Specifically, the committee requested that a question be added to a survey used during presbytery visitations about “the state of congregational psalmody in congregations ... how the psalmody of the congregation ... [was] conducted, and what means ... [were] being used for its improvement.”⁵⁵ The Synod accepted the committee’s recommendation and added James Hepburn of Pictou to the committee roster. This appointment was noticeable because Hepburn, like Charles Robson, had been instrumental in the preparation of *The Harmonicon*, and was a knowledgeable amateur musician.⁵⁶

Except for the appointment of additional members to the committee,⁵⁷ two years passed before the Synod learned anything further of the committee’s activities. On 3 July 1867 when the Synod met in New Glasgow, the committee presented several recommendations, which highlighted the broad mandate it had

⁵⁴ “Minutes of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America, held at Halifax, June and July, 1865,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1865, 222.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ See MacDonald and Vogan, 51–52: “in the preface to the third edition Dawson names ... his nephew, James Hepburn, also of Pictou. Hepburn operated a business as a ‘saddler, harness and trunk-maker’ from at least 1830, a line of work similar to Dawson’s first undertaking, and was a member of the Prince Street Presbyterian Church, where Dawson was a long-time elder.” A photograph of the choir of the Prince Street Presbyterian Church in Pictou in 1865 shows James Hepburn holding a flute. See Judith Hoegg Ryan, *The Birthplace of New Scotland: An Illustrated History of Pictou County, Canada’s Cradle of Industry* (Halifax: Formac Publishing Company Limited, 1995), 34.

⁵⁷ At the July 1865 Synod meeting in Saint John, New Brunswick, additional members were appointed to the Committee (Rev. William Stuart, Rev. James Bennett, and Rev. George Clark). “Minutes of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America, held at St. John, N.B., July, 1865,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1866, 223.

adopted regarding “various modes of improving ‘the service of song,’ as now conducted in the church.”⁵⁸ The committee led off its recommendations by stating it was “the special aim of ministers and sessions ... to train the entire congregation in the science and art of sacred music.” Then the committee recommended “for universal adoption an edition of the Psalm Book published in Scotland, preserving, as it does the integrity of the text and rendering it in various type, so disposed as to express the natural grace and bold tones which each stanza or verse, or part of a verse, may require.” The committee concluded that this volume could be purchased at a reasonable cost for use by congregations, or if the Synod agreed the committee could explore the possibility of arranging a local edition “published in this Province or elsewhere” “with the consent of the [Scottish] publisher.”

This idea seems to have been an interim measure to meet congregational demand before the proposed new local tune book could be brought out. However, the committee clearly intended to move forward with the project for it suggested that “an equal quantity of blank music paper” be bound into the new tune book so that “leaders of music in the several congregations might transcribe, or cause to be transcribed, such a selection of tunes from books now or hereafter in use, as in their judgment would be suitable to their several localities.” Blank music paper had been bound in “The Scottish Psalmody” and was seen as a beneficial addition. The committee concluded its report in 1867 by calling for “properly qualified teachers of sacred music,” that “leaders of music in each congregation should meet with the people for practice as often as may be convenient,” and “that the Synod issue a strong injunction on all ministers and sessions to take the improvement of Psalmody of the church under their serious consideration and watchful superintendence, and that Presbyteries be enjoined to enquire diligently in the manner in which the injunction is obeyed.”⁵⁹

While the Synod did endorse all the committee’s recommendations, it would be another year before any action was reported. On 17 September 1868, the Synod paid James Barnes \$2.50 to print 150 copies of a circular for the Committee on Psalmody to solicit information

⁵⁸ “Minutes of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America, held at New Glasgow, June–July 1867,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1867, 235.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

about the number of copies of the tune book each congregation would require.⁶⁰ Responses were apparently slow to be received and a second circular was sent because “so many sessions failed to give any reply” to the first and “some of those who did gave so little encouragement.”⁶¹ Session minutes of the St. James Church in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, provide some clues about the apparent delays in responding to the committee. After James D. Murray, the moderator, read the circular at a meeting on 8 October 1868, the session “resolved that Mr. Bishop make out a list of such tunes as he thought suitable to be sung in the worship of God in our Church to be laid before the session for their approval.”⁶² In December 1868, the editors of the *Home and Foreign Record* published a brief note indicating that “we are requested to state that while the proposed Music Book will be sold at seventy-five cents per single copy, the price will be at the rate of sixty cents per copy when twelve or more are ordered by the same party.”⁶³ Yet more encouragement was needed. On 13 January 1869, the Presbytery of Halifax agreed to send a circular to all of its sessions, in part, to recommend “immediate replies to the Committee on Psalmody as to the number of copies to be purchased of the proposed new tune book.”⁶⁴ The survey (or circular) also enquired about “measures ... being carried out for the improvement of congregational singing, and what suggestions they have to offer on the subject.”⁶⁵

⁶⁰ “Synod Fund of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America, in account with Rev. P.G. McGregor, Treasurer,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, September 1870, 266. See also, United Church of Canada, Maritime Conference Archives, Presbyterian Synod Record Group, Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, Sundry Accounts from Synod, 1865–1875, Box S-10.

⁶¹ “Report of Committee on Psalmody,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, September 1869, 225. It is possible this circular was sent the following month. The records cited in the previous note indicate that James Barnes was paid again on 19 October 1868, this time \$5.00 for 300 “psalmody circulars with mailing and posting.”

⁶² Nova Scotia Archives, Saint James United Church (United Church of Canada), Session Minute Book, Microfilm Reel 11205. The session also resolved to order twelve copies of the tune book, to be paid “out of the funds of the congregation” and for “the Choir to take their place before the Pulpit as agreed at a former meeting of session.”

⁶³ “Music Book,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, December 1868, 323.

⁶⁴ “News of the Church. Presbytery of Halifax,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, February 1869, 52.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The Committee’s difficulty in ascertaining subscription numbers was not a reflection of low demand for a new tune book. By the next Synod meeting on 29 June 1869, the convener, James Bayne, reported that sixty-six sessions of the Synod responded and that subscriptions were received for 1,235 copies.⁶⁶ He also reported that “in several instances assurance has been given that a much larger demand may be anticipated if the [new tune] book prove[d] acceptable in quality and cost.”⁶⁷ Confident that sufficient quantities of the tune book would sell, the committee noted “that if authorized to continue the book, which ... [had] already entailed considerable anxiety and labour, the new tune book ... [would] be published before the next annual meeting.”⁶⁸ The Synod instructed the committee to “publish with as little delay as possible.”⁶⁹

This confidence was not misplaced, but further challenges with the physical production of the book still remained. In January 1870, *The Home and Foreign Record* reported that “the materials for the new music book ... [were] ... nearly completed, and [would be] forwarded to Edinburgh by an early mail, [so] that the stereotype plates be prepared.”⁷⁰ It was expected that this process would take about two months and shortly thereafter the book would be in the hands of subscribers. Conscious that church members might wonder why publication of the book was taking so long, the committee emphasized that “the work of preparing and arranging the tunes for publication has required much time and labour; and as the members of the Committee, by whom it was performed, could devote to it only their intervals of leisure, they trust that they will escape the imputation of having been dilatory in the execution of their task.”⁷¹

Still further hurdles arose. In July 1870, the committee reported at the Synod meetings in Charlottetown, that “delays ... had arisen ... caused by the limited number of composers qualified to set up musical characters.”⁷² In February 1871, the *Home and Foreign Record* reported that, “the concluding proof sheet of the New Music

⁶⁶ “Report of Committee on Psalmody,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, September 1869, 225.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America,” *The Presbyterian Witness, and Evangelical Advocate*, 3 July 1869, 209.

⁷⁰ “The New Music Book,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, January 1870, 24.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² “Psalmody,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1870, 227.

Book are [*sic*] to be returned to Edinburgh by the mail now closing. The stereotype plates have been prepared in the City just as fast as the corrected proof sheets were received; so that the whole will be finished immediately after the arrival of the proofs which are now being returned. Mssrs. McKinlay some time ago ordered an edition of 2,000 copies to be printed and sent out in sheets, these will probably arrive in February, and it is considered almost certain that in March they will be in the hands of subscribers.”⁷³ The plates were imposed for eight-leaf gatherings. The exact date when the first edition was released is unknown, but the Committee on Psalmody did report at the Synod meeting at St. David’s Church, Saint John, New Brunswick in late June 1871 that the “valuable Music Book [was] lately published”⁷⁴ (see fig. 2). The recto of the title page and the footer of page 215 indicate the sheets were printed by Ballantyne and Company, a Scottish publisher with offices in Edinburgh and London (see fig. 3). Seven years in production may seem lengthy in retrospect; but because of the challenges of selecting hundreds of tunes and arranging them for a range of contexts in a period of conflicting views about the role of music and the types of music appropriate for congregational and Sabbath school singing, compilation of *The Choir* was no trivial task. Members of the Committee on Psalmody grappled with numerous decisions as they brought various elements of the book together. Although the period to finalize the content of *The Choir* was drawn out over several years, similar projects confirm that the period was not unusual. For example, the *Hymn Book* published by the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland took four years to compile.⁷⁵

Given the challenges and delays experienced by the Committee on Psalmody, the committee members must have been thrilled to see that the new volume was met with what seems to have been widespread approval. A brief notice in one newspaper stated that the “admirable collection of Church Music is highly spoken of by the Halifax singers.”⁷⁶ By October 1871, the *Home and Foreign Record* predicted that church choirs will “use it throughout the whole extent

⁷³ “The New Music Book,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, February 1871, 53.

⁷⁴ “Psalmody,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, August 1871, 234.

⁷⁵ See *The Free Church Hymn Book* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1886). See also, W. Barclay McMurrich, *Historical Sketch of the Hymnal Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (London: Henry Frowde, 1905?) and Brownlie, *The Hymns and Hymn Writers of The Church Hymnary*.

⁷⁶ “The Choir,” *Presbyterian Witness, and Evangelical Advocate*, 10 June 1871, 177.

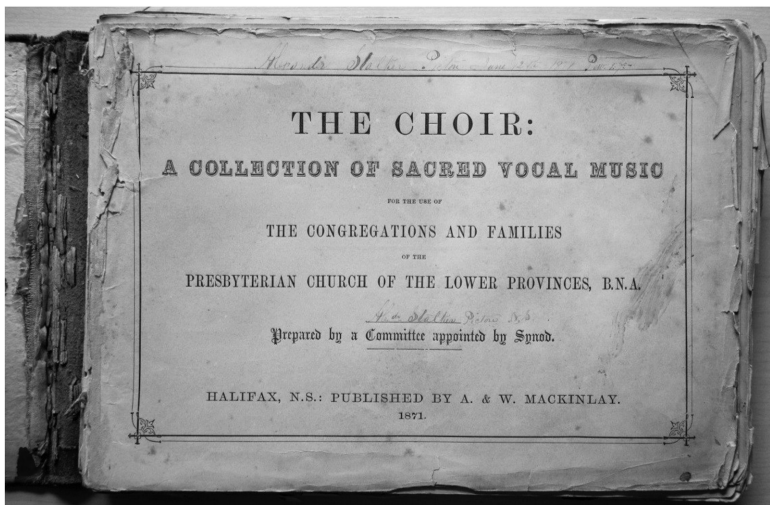


Figure 2. Title-page of the first edition of *The Choir*, 1871. Photograph courtesy of Nancy Vogan, Sackville, New Brunswick.

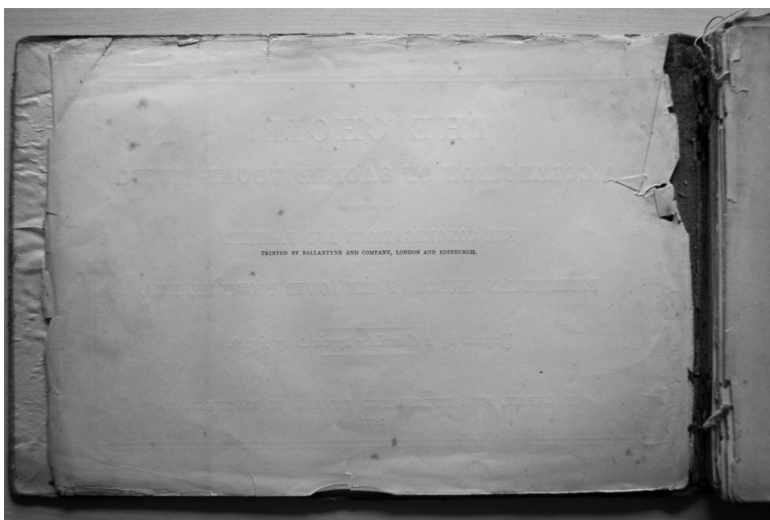


Figure 3. Verso of title-page of the first edition of *The Choir*, 1871. Photograph courtesy of Nancy Vogan, Sackville, New Brunswick.

of the Lower Provinces.”⁷⁷ In May 1873, the same newspaper reported that *The Choir* was “by far the most suitable Music Book extant for use in our congregations” and that the collection was “unique for its completeness, neatness, and cheapness.” That note also indicated that new editions will “henceforth be prefaced by 18 pages devoted to the ‘Elements of Vocal Music,’” an instructional treatise that was also published in the third edition of *The Harmonicon*.⁷⁸ “Elements” was originally published in the Boston Academy’s *Manual of Vocal Music* by Lowell Mason, an American composer regarded by many as the father of American church music and the composer of many tunes found in *The Choir*. The following summer, James Bayne reported to the Synod that A. & W. MacKinlay had “resolved to issue a new edition, improved and enlarged, of that valuable work.” It was two more years before the firm could deliver on its intentions, but in 1876, a second edition of *The Choir* was released, with Mason’s “Elements” occupying fourteen pages, not eighteen⁷⁹ (see fig. 4). The second edition contains sixty-four additional tunes.

If a new edition of *The Choir* was prompted by high demand, the publisher made no allusion to these circumstances in the second edition itself. Whereas the publisher of *The Harmonicon* revised the preface of the second edition to include reference to the glowing praise the first edition had received, the preface of the second edition *The Choir* was not revised. The MacKinlays only chose to adjust the layout of the preface so it could be printed on two pages rather than three. Unfortunately, the history of the book becomes more difficult to trace after the publication of the second edition, largely because

⁷⁷ “The Choir,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, October 1871, 273.

⁷⁸ Interestingly, the Special Collections Department of the Killam Memorial Library at Dalhousie University holds a first edition of *The Choir* that includes a copy of the *Elements of Vocal Music* stitched into the binding. The volume is part of the Ross-Thomson Music Collection and was apparently owned by a Mr. Robert Ervin of Brookfield, Nova Scotia. The original binding is broken and has been replaced with twine. It is not clear whether the *Elements of Vocal Music* stitched into this volume came from the second edition of *The Choir* or from another tune book, but the omission of the treatise from the first edition has been confirmed by consulting another first edition, with an intact binding, from the private collection of Nancy Vogan, Sackville, New Brunswick. One of the blank pages in the volume held at the Killam Library was used to transcribe a tune called “Beautiful Land,” a further indication of how the tune book was used.

⁷⁹ It is not clear from where the suggested page count originates; the “Elements of Vocal Music” spanned twenty-one pages in the third edition of *The Harmonicon*.

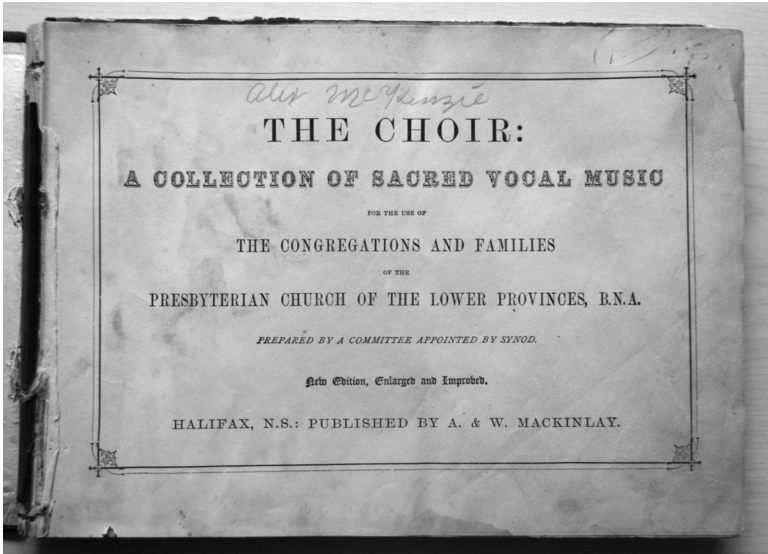


Figure 4. Title-page of the second edition of *The Choir*, 1893 imprint. Photograph courtesy of Nancy Vogan, Sackville, New Brunswick.

the governance structure of the church in the Maritimes changed in 1875 when the three Canadian branches of the Presbyterian churches merged to form the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The *Home and Foreign Record* ceased publication and the Committee on Psalmody, along with many other committees of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America, appear to have been disbanded and superseded by national committees with broader mandates. The demand for an officially sanctioned hymnal, however, did not subside, and a national hymnbook was published in 1880.⁸⁰ Despite the introduction of the *Hymnal of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, demand for *The Choir* apparently remained high throughout the end of the century; the second edition was reprinted in 1879,

⁸⁰ *Hymnal of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Toronto: James Cameron and Sons), 1880. This hymnal was followed by the *Presbyterian Book of Praise* (London: Oxford University Press), 1897. These efforts were fraught with their own challenges and delays. Collaborative efforts had occupied Presbyterian churches for decades as the debate in the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland demonstrates. See, for example, *Proceedings of the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church. Volume Fourth. 1870–1873* (Glasgow: Dunn & Wrights, 1874), 40–41.

1885, 1887, and 1893⁸¹ (see fig. 5). No reference to Ballantyne and Company is found in any of the issues of the second edition and it has not been determined where the additional plates required for the second edition were made. During the 1880s, *The Choir* continued to be marketed as “one of the best collections of Sacred Music issued”⁸² (see fig. 6).

The Selection of Tunes in *The Choir*

The first edition of *The Choir* contains 437 tunes, including psalm tunes, hymns, fugal tunes, and anthems, much like its predecessor *The Harmonicon*. Several tunes refer to local places, such as “Halifax,” “Chebucto,” “New Glasgow,” and “Shelburne.” Many other tunes are named after cities and towns throughout New England, such as Lowell Mason’s “Uxbridge” and William Billings’s “Amherst.” This attribution was common practice among hymn composers and editors in the Maritimes and elsewhere and suggests that these tunes were composed locally or inspired by those places. Graham has observed that several of the tunes of Canadian origin found in *Union Harmony*

⁸¹ Editions and issues have been determined by consulting a number of extant print copies and facsimiles of *The Choir*. A copy of the first edition has been described in note 78. A second copy of the first edition from the private collection of Nancy Vogan was also consulted. The title page of the latter copy is inscribed “Alexander Stalher Pictou June 12th 1871 Pew 1:7.” A print copy of the first issue of the second edition (1876) is available at the R.P. Bell Library at Mount Allison University. The Bell Library also has a microfilm facsimile of the 1879 issue and a print copy of the 1885 issue. A print copy of the 1887 issue held by the University of Toronto has been digitized and made available on the Internet Archive: *The Choir: A Collection of Sacred Vocal Music for the use of the Congregations and Families of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, B.N.A.* (Halifax: A. & W. MacKinlay, 1887), accessed 22 July 2015, <https://archive.org/details/choircollection00obayn>. The title-page of this copy is inscribed “Prince Street Church Choir,” which likely refers to the First Presbyterian Church in Pictou, Nova Scotia. A print copy of the 1887 issue held by Library and Archives Canada was microfilmed as part of the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM 92562) and is also available on the Internet Archive: *The Choir: A Collection of Sacred Vocal Music for the use of the Congregations and Families of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, B.N.A.* (Halifax: A. & W. MacKinlay, 1887), accessed 22 July 2015, https://archive.org/details/cihm_92562. Finally, a print copy of the 1893 issue owned by Nancy Vogan was consulted. The title-page of this copy is inscribed “Alex McKenzie.”

⁸² *Presbyterian Record for the Dominion of Canada*, October 1886, 280.

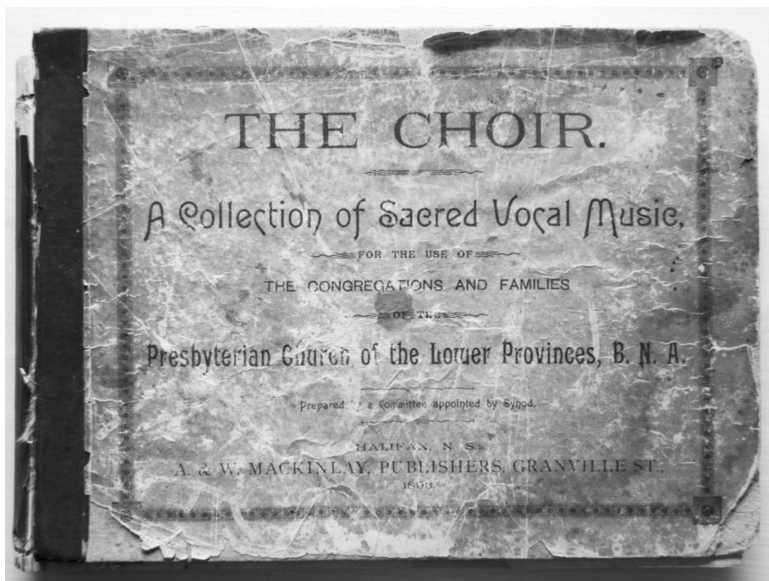


Figure 5. Cover of the second edition of *The Choir*, 1893 imprint. Photograph courtesy of Nancy Vogan, Sackville, New Brunswick.

THE CHOIR,
A MUSIC BOOK FOR CONGREGATIONS & FAMILIES,
Sanctioned by the Presbyterian Synod of the Lower
Provinces. Containing over
500 TUNES AND ANTHEMS,
being one of the best collections of Sacred Music issued.
PRICE \$1.00.
A. & W. MACKINLAY, - - Publishers.

Figure 6. Advertisement from *Presbyterian Record for the Dominion of Canada*, October 1886, 280.

“frequently pay homage to local communities” by using local place names as tune titles.⁸³ Temperley has also shown that the names of new tunes in *Union Harmony* are of “local significance” but he noted that some tunes, such as “Canada” and “Loch Lomond,” were simply renamed by Stephen Humbert.⁸⁴ Graham also cautioned that “local place names did not always ... indicate new tune material,” and both he and Temperley point to the tune “Frederickton” as another example of Humbert renaming a tune composed elsewhere. These warnings are indeed pertinent to *The Choir*: most of the tunes with attributions to local composers do not use local place names as tune titles and most of those that do use local place names as titles appear with no composer attribution. Some local place names were also used by multiple composers. For example, the unattributed tune “Halifax” that appears in *The Choir* is not the same “Halifax” that Stephen Humbert composed and published in *Union Harmony*. Nevertheless, the presence of tunes named after Maritime places is at the very least indicative of the committee’s attention to the local audience of *The Choir* and its awareness of tunes composed in the Maritimes and elsewhere that were likely to be well received.

Most of the tunes in *The Choir* were sourced from *The Harmonicon* and other well-known British tune books such as the *Bristol Tune Book* and *Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship*, which was typically referred to as the *Hymn Book of the English Presbyterian Church*.⁸⁵ In the preface to both editions, Bayne points to tunes selected from these latter sources as “models of fine harmony” and writes that the committee “faithfully restored” a number of other popular tunes of British origin that were “appropriated by American publishers” who made slight but “vicious alterations, both in melody and harmony” and “issued them under new names.”⁸⁶ This preference for British sources may have reflected the continuing influence of efforts earlier in the century to create a British identity in the North American colonies. However, as Michael Gauvreau has noted, “imperial” perspectives were a source of “conflict and fragmentation within Presbyterianism,” which led to increased emphasis on protecting “the ‘purity’ and ‘independence’

⁸³ Graham, “Methodist Hymn Tunes in Atlantic Canada,” 262.

⁸⁴ Nicholas Temperley, “Stephen Humbert’s *Union Harmony*, 1816,” in *Sing Out the Glad News: Hymn Tunes in Canada*, ed. John Beckwith (Toronto: Institute for Canadian Music, 1987), 57-89 (73-74).

⁸⁵ *Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship* (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1866).

⁸⁶ *The Choir*, iii.

of Scotland’s ethnic religious institutions from outside regulation and interference.”⁸⁷ The compilers also selected tunes from a number of tune books published in New England. For example, the tunes “Boner” and “Deane” were sourced from *The Harp of Judah*, published in Boston by Oliver Ditson and Company in 1863. The tune “Hermon” was drawn from Lowell Mason’s *Carmina Sacra*, also published in Boston.⁸⁸ Given the ongoing debate about the role of music in public worship, selecting tunes for the volume was clearly a task that required great tact and attention to regional and generational sensitivities. Not surprisingly, Bayne’s report of the Committee on Psalmody published in September 1869 indicates that the “selection of tunes [in the first edition] has been chiefly, though not exclusively determined by the returns of Sessions,” which he thanked for “the evident care, excellent taste, and marked ability displayed in the various lists forwarded.”⁸⁹ Bayne elaborated on the selection in the preface to the first edition, where he wrote that the committee had:

taken due precaution to retain all tunes which are now in general use throughout the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America. It is confidently expected that the Leaders of Church Music will find no “old favourite” omitted, while the lovers of “new style” will be gratified with such an addition as includes not only the choicest tunes of modern origin, but a goodly number from young but gifted composers within our own Church. Authors’ names will be found appended to their respective compositions. In all previous collections, not excepting the “Harmonicon,” which for many years has been extensively used in our congregations, a large amount of tunes and pieces are found which have never gained general acceptance. In the present publication, care has been taken to exclude all such, and only to insert those which are most likely to secure public favor.⁹⁰

This excerpt clearly reveals the aim of the contents of *The Choir* and the musical preferences of the local audience for which the tune book

⁸⁷ Michael Gauvreau, “The Dividends of Empire: Church Establishments and Contested British Identities in the Canada and the Maritimes, 1780–1850.” in *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions, and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America*, ed. Nancy Christie, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 234.

⁸⁸ It is quite possible, however, that many of these tunes and their attributions were copied from *The Harmonicon*.

⁸⁹ “Report of Committee on Psalmody,” *The Home and Foreign Record*, September 1869, 225.

⁹⁰ *The Choir*, iii.

was intended. The retention of the “old favourites” refers to tunes by earlier New England composers such as Billings and Daniel Read, most of which were composed nearly a century before the first edition of *The Choir* was published. Forty-five tunes are in the fusing style promulgated by Billings, where one or more passages of the tune feature overlapping lines of text produced by staggered entrances of the voices.⁹¹ Figure 7 illustrates this compositional style in the fusing tune “Lenox” by Edson Lewis. Fusing tunes had lost popularity in New England and other provinces of Canada so their presence in *The Choir* suggests, as John Beckwith has noted, that “this repertory continued to be cultivated in Maritime Canada for some decades after its disappearance from the central parts of the country.”⁹² The “new style” refers to Lowell Mason’s “better music” movement, which sought to eliminate this “crude and lewd” music of the earlier New England composers, but also to new compositions by Charles Robson, James Hepburn, and other local composers. Mason’s impact in the Maritimes seems to have grown rapidly through the mid-nineteenth century. Beckwith has stated that Mason’s “influence is surprisingly absent” from the first edition of *The Harmonicon*, but MacDonald and Vogan have shown that tunes by Mason are featured prominently in the third edition, an indication that his “better music” movement was gaining momentum in the Maritime Provinces even as the old style of singing remained popular.⁹³ These opposing streams of hymnody are also blended in *The Choir*, where tunes by Mason and his contemporary William Bradbury are juxtaposed among fusing tunes and other imitative pieces. This convergence of “old favourites” with the “new style” epitomizes the evolving musical preferences of Maritime Presbyterians during the late nineteenth century, before unification and enlarged hymnals finally eliminated fusing tunes

⁹¹ For additional definitions, see Nicholas Temperley, “Historical Introduction,” in *Fusing Tunes in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Nicholas Temperley and Charles G. Manns (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1983), 354; Maxine Fawcett-Yeske, “The American Fusing Tune: Marks of Distinction” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of American Music, Toronto, 2 November 2000); Irving Lowens, “The Origins of the American Fusing Tune,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 6, no. 2 (1953): 43–52; and Edwin Hall Pierce, “The Rise and Fall of the ‘Fugue-Tune’ in America,” *The Musical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1930): 214–28.

⁹² John Beckwith, “Tunebooks and Hymnals in Canada: 1801–1939,” *American Music* 6, no. 2 (1988): 193–234 (219).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 203; MacDonald and Vogan, “James Dawson of Pictou and *The Harmonicon*,” 57.

from the repertoire and all but ended the Exclusive Psalmody debate in the region.

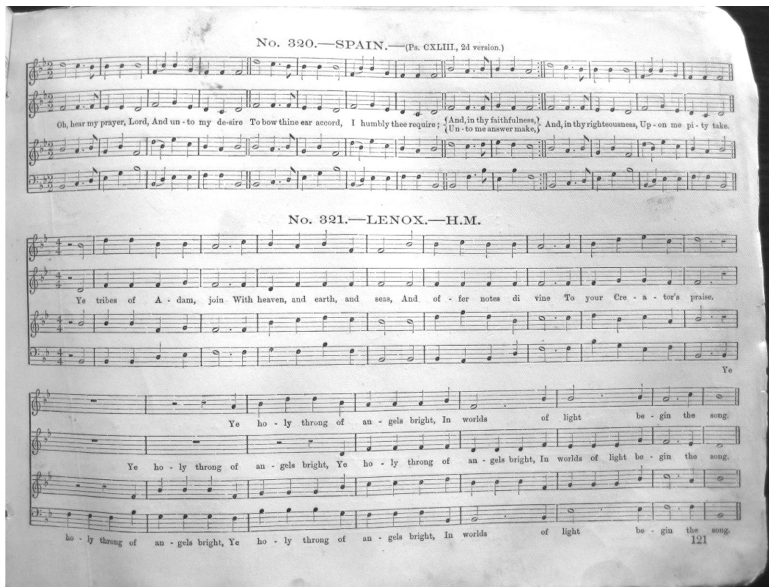


Figure 7. Fuging tune “Lenox” in the first edition of *The Choir*, 1871.

Evidence of these dynamics can be found in the first fuging tune, “Derby,” which appears on page three. The tune, which is actually of British origin, appears in *The Harmonicon* set to the text “Come sing the wonders of that love, Which angels play on ev’ry chord.”⁹⁴ In *The Choir*, the tune is reprinted with no alterations but it is set to the first verse of Psalm 145. The tune “Uxbridge” by Lowell Mason appears on the very next page but with a psalm paraphrase rather than the hymn text by Isaac Watts that accompanies the tune in *The Harmonicon*.

⁹⁴ According to Nicholas Temperley, *The Hymn Tune Index* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois), accessed 22 July 2015, <http://hymntune.library.uiuc.edu/>, the tune appears in seventy-seven sources published between 1780 and 1820, the earliest being the third edition of *A Collection of Sacred Psalm Tunes for Publick Worship, Adapted to Dr. Watt’s Psalms and Hymns*, published by Rev. Stephen Addington in 1780. Only two sources set the tune to the same text that appears in *The Harmonicon*, and they are the fourth and fifth editions of *A Selection of Sacred Music* by James Steven of Glasgow, both of which were published in the early nineteenth century.

Such combinations of old and new compositional styles are found throughout *The Choir*. The fugal tune “Lisbon” by Daniel Read, for example, appears on page 113 along with the tune “Haverhill” by Lowell Mason. Elsewhere, the fugal tune “Devotion,” also by Read, appears on the opposite page of three tunes by Bradbury.

The claim in the preface that “authors’ names will be found appended to their respective compositions” was only partially followed. Many tunes in the volume are unattributed and many more are ascribed to a tune book rather than the author of the tune. It is, therefore, difficult to identify the “immediate source” for many tunes in *The Choir*.⁹⁵ Temperley notes that Stephen Humbert, publisher of *Union Harmony*, “seems to have belonged to the group that copied attributions from the sources they copied from,” rather than acknowledge the source from which the tune was actually derived.⁹⁶ Attributions in *The Choir* suggest the Committee on Psalmody took the same approach, with the exception of tunes from the *Bristol Tune Book* and *Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship*, which are credited directly to those works as “Brist. Col.” and “Eng. Presb. Col.,” respectively. There are no attributions to *The Harmonicon* but many tunes appear in *The Choir* with the same attributions as those found in *The Harmonicon*. A number of credits in both tune books are simply given as initials, such as “A.H.P.” and the even more ambiguous “W * *,” which was used by Isaac Woodbury to indicate his own compositions in the widely-used *The Dulcimer; or, The New York Collection of Sacred Music*, which he published in Boston in 1851.

The musical treatment of certain tunes provides further indication that some tunes and their attributions were copied directly from *The Harmonicon*. The tune “Hermon” by Lowell Mason, for example, was first published in *Carmina Sacra* in 1841. It appears in the third edition of *The Harmonicon* and is ascribed to *Carmina Sacra*, but is in B flat major rather than the original key of A flat major. The version that appears in the first edition of *The Choir* is also in B flat major and attributed to *Carmina Sacra* rather than *The Harmonicon*. Given the prominent role James Hepburn and Charles Robson played in both *The Harmonicon* and *The Choir*, it is rather unlikely that they

⁹⁵ Temperley describes this challenge of “immediate sources” in his study of Humbert’s *Union Harmony*. Temperley, “Stephen Humbert’s *Union Harmony*, 1816,” 63–71. See also Nicholas Temperley, “The Problem of Definitive Identification in the Indexing of Hymn Tunes,” *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 2, no. 3/4 (1993): 227–39.

⁹⁶ Temperley, “Stephen Humbert’s *Union Harmony*, 1816,” 71.

independently transposed the tune after sourcing it directly from *Carmina Sacra*. *The Choir* was not, however, a simple reprinting of the most popular tunes from *The Harmonicon*. In a few cases, such as the fugal tune “Lenox,” the committee revised the music of tunes it likely sourced from *The Harmonicon*, and most of the tunes were reset to different texts. The version of “Lenox” that appears in *The Harmonicon* is in the key of C major and set to Isaac Watts’s text “Ye Tribes of Adam, Join.” After the fugal section, the voices join together for a perfect authentic cadence. As shown in Figure 7, the version of “Lenox” in the 1871 edition of *The Choir* is also printed with the “Ye Tribes of Adam” text, but it appears in the key of B flat, perhaps because the melody in the key of C extends into singing ranges that might have been uncomfortable to untrained singers. The entire alto part is also an octave lower and both the alto and soprano parts are reharmonized. A dominant seventh is added to the final cadence in the alto part. These changes would have caused a noticeable difference in the sound of the tune but it is even more interesting that the tune retained its fugal form in the first place. In other hymn books, “Lenox” is one of the best examples of a fugal tune that was reharmonized into a standard homophonic tune with no fugal section, but the versions published in *The Harmonicon* and *The Choir* were not subject to this process.

Psalm Texts in *The Choir*

If the selection and treatment of tunes demonstrates the committee’s careful handling of the varied musical preferences and abilities found throughout the Presbyterian Church in the Maritimes, the selection and treatment of texts in *The Choir* clearly illustrates that the church was still committed to promoting psalm singing during church service. The retention of the Watts text in “Lenox” is a rare exception where hymn texts were associated with tunes that might be sung in congregational settings. The tune “Hermon” and most of the tunes sourced from other tune books were reset to psalm texts from the Scottish Metrical Psalter of 1650 when they were selected for *The Choir*. While “Hermon” appears in *Carmina Sacra* and *The Harmonicon* with a hymn text by William Wrangham, in *The Choir* it is set to verse 169 of Psalm 119. This association is not all that surprising given the longstanding Presbyterian tradition of psalm singing, but *The Choir* produced some of the only examples of fugal

tunes set to psalm texts and, in some cases, the committee deviated from long-established relationships between tunes and hymn texts. For example, all forty-four instances of Daniel Read's tune "Devotion" indexed by the Hymn Tune Index were published with Isaac Watts' text "Sweet is the Day of Sacred Rest." The tune appears in *Union Harmony* and *The Harmonicon* with the same text, but in *The Choir* it is reset to the first verse of Psalm 100: "All people that on Earth do dwell." The Hymn Tune Index also shows that one tune book, *The Northern Harmony*, published in Hallowell, Maine, in 1816, apparently entered a typographical error into the second line of the text. This error also appears in *Union Harmony* and *The Harmonicon*, which suggests that Stephen Humbert sourced the tune from *The Northern Harmony*.

The committee did not intend for these uniquely Maritime psalm settings to become exclusive and attempted to design *The Choir* to allow for psalm texts to be matched with other tunes. An "Emotional Classification of Passages" was extracted from "a little work published by T. Nelson and Sons, Edinburgh" and included in the front matter along with the standard alphabetical and metrical indices (see fig. 8). The psalms, paraphrases, and hymns are listed numerically and divided when the emotional character of the text changes. One of twenty-four descriptive terms (e.g., confidence, instruction, exultation, adoration, etc.) is provided to characterize each passage, and a "class" of tunes is recommended. The motivation behind these classifications was to provide music leaders with flexibility in selecting tunes to which a particular psalm text could be set. In the preface, Bayne claimed that psalm books that indicate "the character and change of sentiment which frequently occurs in the same Psalm, and sometimes even in the same verse" allow a tune to "be made to be the most natural exponent of the bold and triumphant, as well as the pathetic and plaintive."⁹⁷ The classes of tunes are found in a separate, emotional classification of long, common, and short metre tunes (see fig. 9). This index, which was prepared by the committee, contains six broad classes (grand, triumphant, cheerful, didactic, pathetic, and mournful), with the tunes in each class grouped by long, common, and short metre. The cheerful and triumphant classes are the largest, with eighty-seven and seventy-six tunes respectively.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ *The Choir*, iv.

⁹⁸ These figures were derived from the first edition. The second edition contains ninety tunes classified as "Cheerful" and seventy-nine tunes classified as "Triumphant."

In theory, a choir leader or precentor could determine the metre and emotional character of the psalm texts to be used in a service, identify the appropriate class of tunes, and then select from that class a different tune than that which was published with the psalm text. For example, verse 169 of Psalm 119 is characterized as “Entreaty” and printed alongside the tune “Hermon,” but it could be sung to twenty-four other common metre tunes from the “Pathetic” class under which “Hermon” is classified. The long metre and common metre versions of the first verse of Psalm 100 are characterized as “Praise” and associated with the “Cheerful” class, which contains twenty-four long metre tunes and forty common metre tunes.

Providing this level of flexibility would have been difficult at best and the committee was well aware of the shortcomings to its classification of the tunes. While the committee felt that the emotional classification of passages would be “of great value to leaders of choirs and others, whose duty it may be to select the tunes to be used in public worship,” Bayne also acknowledged that the emotional classification of tunes was published with “some misgiving” and that “in some few instances their estimate of tunes may not be sanctioned by general approval.”⁹⁹ Also, errors in some of the tune classifications occurred. The tune “Devotion,” for example, is actually found in the “Triumphant” class even though tunes from the “Cheerful” class are recommended for Verse 1 of Psalm 100. Nevertheless, the committee felt that the classification formed a “very valuable feature of “the Choir.”¹⁰⁰

The Second Edition of *The Choir*

The second edition of *The Choir*, published in 1876, was expanded to include 501 tunes. The new tunes were added in a rather peculiar manner. Only one, “Ashely,” was removed from the book. Thirty-two of the sixty-five new tunes were simply affixed to the end of the book as tunes 443–72 and 500–1 and the remaining tunes were interspersed among the original sequence of tunes. Twenty-eight tunes in the first edition were replaced with new tunes in the second edition, but, with the exception of “Ashely,” the tunes were moved to the end of the

⁹⁹ *The Choir*, iv.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

second edition and assigned new tune numbers.¹⁰¹ For example, in the first edition, the tune “Confidence” was printed on page 5, but it was moved to page 227 in the second edition and the tune “Forest” by W.B. Bradbury appears where “Confidence” was originally located. The tune “Zephon” was moved from page 14 to page 228 and the tune “Retreat” by Thomas Hastings appears in its original location on page 14. The tune “Olmsted” is found on page 72 of the first edition, but it was moved to page 230 in the second edition and the tune “Warren” by James Hepburn appears in its original place. Extra stanzas were removed from five tunes but, curiously, only two of these tunes were moved to the end of the book; the other three remain in their original location.¹⁰² This additional space allowed for five additional tunes to be inserted into the first seven gatherings of the second edition.¹⁰³ As a result, sixty-nine tunes were assigned new tune numbers, twenty-seven tunes were assigned new tune numbers and locations, and the first 215 pages of the second edition contain 442 tunes rather than 437 as found in the first edition.

Changes to the layout of the music were also introduced. All of the tunes carried into the second edition retain the first edition’s open-score a4 format with the melody in the tenor, but half of the sixty-four new tunes, including several by Charles Robson and other local composers, are printed in a short-score format with the melody in the soprano. These short-score tunes are the new tunes added at the end of the book. The other thirty-two new tunes – those inserted into the original sequence of tunes – are printed in open-score

¹⁰¹ These tunes are scattered throughout the first edition but appear as a block of tunes in the second edition, numbered 473–99.

¹⁰² The tune “Staffa” occupies all of page 139 in the first edition. In the second edition, it appears in the same location but additional verses found in the first edition are omitted to make room for “Carmel” and “Doane.” The tune also appears with new text from *Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship*. Additional verses were also removed from the tunes “Melta” and “Sutton,” which appear on page 146 of both editions, to make room for the tune “Clifton.” The tune “Happy Day” appears on page 182 of the first edition but is found on page 233 of the second edition, without the additional verses found in the first edition. The tunes “Praise,” “Ripley,” and “Lowell,” appear on page 182 of the second edition. The tune “Alps” appears on page 147 of the first edition but it also was moved to page 233 of the second edition, without the additional verses found in the first edition.

¹⁰³ Removing the additional verses allowed for six new tunes to be inserted into the original sequence of tunes, but the total number of tunes only increased by five due to the removal of “Ashely.”

a4 format.¹⁰⁴ The approach to these changes allowed the compilers to make significant revisions to the tune book while only adding one signature; the first edition was printed on fourteen signatures and the second edition was printed on fifteen. The signature letter “J” is skipped in both editions.

The revisions for the second edition also provide further indication of the compilers’ attention to the local audience and of the direction of the debates about music in the church. Fifty of the sixty-five new tunes are attributed to the *Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship*, the popular hymnal that the Presbytery of Halifax petitioned the Synod for permission to use in its services. Oddly, some tunes bear the attribution “Eng. Presb. Col.,” other tunes simply provide hymn numbers corresponding to the numbers in the English Presbyterian hymnal, and several tunes provide both. Other tunes from the first edition, such as “Portuguese Hymn” and “Edinburgh,” were updated with alternative versions of the tunes sourced from the *Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship*. Lowell Mason and W.B. Bradbury are prominently featured among the new tunes, but several of the new tunes are original compositions or reharmonizations from local members of the church. Charles Robson, for example, reworked several new tunes sourced from the *Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship*, including “Soon, and Forever,” “Worship,” and “Comfort.” Texts from the Psalms are less emphasized but, in the case of the tune “Come Ye, Disconsolate,” a second instance of the tune is included and set to verse from the third Psalm. *The Choir* was clearly designed to suit the evolving musical needs of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, an audience with unique musical preferences in comparison to other contemporary tune books that would have been available throughout the Maritime region and elsewhere.

Conclusion

To understand the composition of tune books compiled primarily for use in Canadian Presbyterian church contexts in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is necessary to appreciate several intersecting

¹⁰⁴ Beckwith, unknowingly, describes these features of the second edition when he says “the first 442 of the more than 500 tunes are given in open score a4 with the melody in the tenor part, while half of the remainder are in short score with the melody in the treble.” Beckwith, “Tunebooks and Hymnals in Canada: 1801–1939,” 219.

influences. Hymnals and other sacred music books were issued during a period of intense debate about the role and suitable types of music in worship that was influenced by events in Scotland and England. These events encompassed political aspirations for the role of churches in the British North American colonies, which in the case of Presbyterians, resulted in a tendency for “upholding ... a Scottish ethnic separateness.”¹⁰⁵ Compilers of these tune books aimed to meet the needs of a religious audience with a wide variety of musical preferences and abilities. In some cases, they needed to cater to local or regional cultures while also providing a resource to raise musical standards. Compilers had to contend with limited local capacity to print music, and the resulting tune books were intended for a niche market. Such projects were exceptionally complicated. At the same time, some Presbyterian churches participated in a trend toward unification, a process that led to the consolidation of church music repertoire in addition to governance and organizational structures.

All of these factors contributed in varying ways to the composition and history of *The Choir*. The tune book was created during a period of great attention to the role of instruments and hymns in worship, a debate that was overshadowed by a series of broader unions and schisms within Presbyterian churches in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. The selection of tunes in *The Choir* encompasses the diverse array of musical styles available to nineteenth-century congregations, but is also a reflection of the unique tastes of the Maritimers for whom the book was intended. Although responsibility for the manufacturing of the plates and the printing of the second edition is uncertain, *The Choir* is an informative example of how publishers in nineteenth-century Canada dealt with printing music for local use. *The Choir* was certainly used. Inscriptions in extant copies of *The Choir* and other evidence confirm its use in church settings.¹⁰⁶ Repeated advertisements and reprintings show that

¹⁰⁵ Gauvreau, “The Dividends of Empire,” 233.

¹⁰⁶ Laurie Stanley-Blackwell drew our attention to the following paragraph in W. Allen MacLeod, *MacLeod Family History* (privately printed, 2001), 13: “The first reference to a Precentor at Durham church that we have record of is of Maxwell McLeod of Rockfield, this writer’s great-grandfather, who was Precentor for a number of years. Gordon still has two pitch-pipes in his possession in the museum on the farm. The songbook ‘Harmonicon’ published in 1838 in Pictou was possibly the first published book of words and music used locally, as a copy of this book was in the possession of Maxwell McLeod, when he used his pitch-pipe. Then the ‘Old Choir’ book published in 1871 was written for four-part singing, with four separate lines of notes. At what point congregational

the tune book was in demand until the end of the nineteenth century when church unification nationally and other musical trends overcame the uniquely Maritime preferences for which *The Choir* was intended.

Now, in your mind's eye, transport yourself back over a century ago, to a Sunday service at a Presbyterian church somewhere in the Maritime provinces. The church has just placed copies of the latest printing of *The Choir* in every pew, and to celebrate the occasion a special service of music has been planned. The service begins with Isaac Watt's hymn text "Ye Tribes of Adam, Join," which calls on a holy throng of angels to "begin the song," set to the tune "Lenox." You are directed to turn to page 121 to find the tune and as you are flipping through the crisp new paper, you come across the remarks that appear on the last page of the front matter. Here, you are reminded that singing "should, if possible, be sung by the whole congregation. But if there are any who cannot, or will not *learn* to sing, they ought not to mar the devotion by *attempting* to sing in public." Also, "no person who is profane or vicious should be permitted to abuse the worship of God by taking a place in the choir." Finally, after the singing, we must be careful not to "disturb the remaining exercises, by turning over [our] books, reading, whispering, &c. &c." What better advice could be appended to a collection of sacred vocal music, you think to yourself. But just before you turn the page to find "Lenox," you notice that the remarks conclude with the text of the Doxology, preceded by the following instructions: "Sing then. There is cause for joy."¹⁰⁷

singing locally moved to a choir is not known, but Stanley Graham recalls his parents, while still a young couple, in the early 1900's, learning to sing four-part harmony and enjoying it immensely."

¹⁰⁷ Acknowledgements. Numerous archivists, librarians, and researchers have assisted in identifying and locating information about the history of *The Choir*. We wish to acknowledge David Mawhinney at Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, Sarah Wallace at the Maritime Conference Archives, United Church of Canada, and archivists at the Nova Scotia Archives. Nancy Vogan, Sackville, New Brunswick, was particularly helpful in providing photographs and access to personal copies of *The Choir*. Karen Smith, Special Collections Librarian at the Dalhousie University Libraries, provided helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. In addition, we are grateful to Laurie Stanley-Blackwell, St. Francis Xavier University, for drawing our attention to evidence of singing in Presbyterian churches.

SOMMAIRE

Le chant, plus particulièrement le chant de psaumes, est une tradition très ancienne au sein des églises chrétiennes. Les églises tout comme les écoles de chant utilisaient des hymnes et des chants qui étaient diffusés à travers les pays et les océans par le biais de la transmission orale et, de plus en plus, par le biais de livres imprimés. Les instructions relatives au chant, les chants eux-mêmes et les hymnes étaient imprimés, réimprimés et modifiés afin de satisfaire la demande locale. Des styles musicaux qui perdaient la cote dans certains pays continuaient d'être populaires dans d'autres contrées. En Nouvelle-Écosse, le premier livre de chants, *The Harmonicon*, a été publié en 1838 à une époque où l'Église presbytérienne était dominante. Trois décennies plus tard, la demande pour un nouvel ouvrage de chants a incité la synode de l'Église presbytérienne des basses provinces de l'Amérique du Nord britannique à publier *The Choir*, une compilation conçue pour satisfaire «le sain goût de la musique sacrée». Publié pour la première fois à Halifax en 1871, *The Choir* a été l'ouvrage de référence pour les congrégations presbytériennes des Maritimes pendant le reste du siècle. Les auteurs de cet article retracent l'histoire de la publication du *Choir*, ouvrage qui a été compilé par le Comité de chant de l'Église presbytérienne. Tous les détails concernant les éditions et les réimpressions du livre sont fournis et expliqués par les auteurs. Ces derniers concluent leur article par une analyse des contenus de l'ouvrage. Ils se penchent plus spécifiquement sur les éléments textuels qui montrent que les compilateurs ont porté une attention particulière au public local à qui cet ouvrage était destiné. Parmi ces éléments, mentionnons l'utilisation des noms de lieux locaux pour les titres des chants de même que l'inclusion d'hymnes composés par des habitants de la Nouvelle-Écosse et de «fuging tunes» (un hymne qui ressemble à une fugue, avec différentes voix (soprano, alto, etc.) chantant le même texte à des moments décalés). De tels hymnes étaient d'ailleurs composés pour un style de chant vieillot qui était toujours en vogue dans les Maritimes, bien longtemps après qu'il est disparu du répertoire de la musique religieuse ailleurs en Amérique du Nord et au Royaume-Uni.