

## MUSICAL LIFE IN BOSTON IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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IT WAS a cynic who said that "history is a lie agreed upon," but his cynicism was not without justification. There are innumerable illustrations of the way in which a popular myth, first set afloat either to glorify or to discredit an individual, a group, or a cause, has been unquestioningly accepted as sober fact by credulous or lazy historians, and transmitted with heightened colors and swelling distortions through generations to come. That is the excuse for the "debunking" of history in vogue in recent years. It was used chiefly to uncover the human limitations of popular idols, and sometimes has gone so far as to strip them of well-nigh every shred of decency and honor. It has less often been applied to the rehabilitation of persons or groups who have been the victims of malicious disparagement.

In the last three-quarters of a century few groups have suffered so much in reputation from "lies agreed upon" as the Puritans who settled in New England. This is true of almost every aspect of their lives, not least in regard to their cultural standards. Thus, in the face of the documentary evidence afforded by some two hundred portraits which were painted in New England before Copley rose to fame, the histories of American art offer nothing but a medley of misinformation and prejudice in their scanty comments about all the painters who preceded Copley. And when the historians have dealt with early American music they have been, for the most part, just as ignorant, as prejudiced, and as parrot-like in their unquestioning

reiteration of the popular myth that "the Puritans hated music."

There are, of course, notable exceptions. The English writer, Mr. Percy A. Scholes, in his book "The Puritans and Music" has accumulated a mass of information about the actual place of music in the seventeenth-century life of both England and New England which, for any open mind, completely destroys the myth; and Oscar G. Sonneck, in his "Early Concert Life in America," has brought to light another group of records from the eighteenth century which carries on the story. I am largely indebted to these authors for much of what I have included in this paper.

These two authors are, however, exceptional. A typical example of the customary uncritical repetition of the popular myth, distorted into a grotesque, is to be found in Elson's "History of American Music." On the first page of the revised edition of 1925 are to be found the following statements:

The true beginnings of American music . . . must be sought in a field almost as unpromising as that of Indian music itself . . . the rigid, narrow and often commonplace psalm-tunes of New England. It may be admitted that there was civilized music on these shores that antedated psalm-tunes. There were Englishmen in Virginia almost a generation before the Pilgrims reached their destination . . . and they gave concerts long before the Pilgrims or Puritans (who would have deemed "concerts" a very heterodox thing) lifted up their voices in holy strains in New England.

And on the second page he asserts that "both Pilgrims and Puritans . . . united in a distrust of music"; that they "at first used but five tunes for their psalmody"; and that both groups used "Ainsworth's Psalter."

It would be difficult to pack a greater number of misleading statements into so few words. In the first place the psalm-tunes were not "rigid, narrow and

commonplace." Many of them were noble and moving tunes, the best of which are being recovered today for our modern hymn-books. "Ainsworth's Psalter," which was used by the Pilgrims, but *not* by the Puritans except in Salem for about a generation, contains thirty-nine tunes, half of them from Dutch and French sources. Anyone who has examined them in Prof. Waldo S. Pratt's little book on "The Music of the Pilgrims" knows that although they are cast in the musical pattern of the early seventeenth century and are often in the minor key, they are beautiful and profoundly moving. The Puritans brought with them the Psalter of Sternhold and Hopkins, of which no less than four editions with musical settings were available. These had been brought out by Damon, in 1579; by Este in 1592; by Allison in 1599; and by Ravenscroft in 1621. All these editors were competent musicians.

When "The Bay Psalm Book" was published in 1640, without music, the editors included at the end an "Admonition" calling attention to some fifty tunes in "our English psalm-books," commending especially the music in "Ravenscroft's Psalter." Thomas Ravenscroft was one of the leading English musicians of the day; he acknowledges his indebtedness to a score of other musicians of his own or the preceding generation, including Dowland, Farnaby, Morley, Tallis and Tomkins, all outstanding men; and his book remained the standard one for more than half a century, until superseded by Playford's. The authors of "The Bay Psalm Book," that is to say, were acquainted with, and recommended to the users of their book, the very best sources for psalm-tunes which England afforded in 1640.<sup>1</sup> The English in

<sup>1</sup>Elson was aware of these facts, for he says (p. 4) that by the time "The Bay Psalm Book" was published "the repertoire had now extended beyond the original 'five tunes' and more than fifty melodies were suggested," but he has no explanation of how this astonishing musical development was achieved in the few years between the first settlement and the publication of "The Bay Psalm Book." Elson's statement about the "five tunes" is, of course, a twisted quotation from Palfrey's "History of New England." What Palfrey really says is that by the *end* of the seventeenth century the ability to sing had so declined that most congregations were limited to ten tunes and some could sing only five.

Virginia had no other church music than these same psalm-tunes, either before or after the Pilgrims reached their destination. If they sang at all when they gathered for worship they must have used either "Ravenscroft's Psalter" or one of the earlier musical editions.

It is sheer nonsense to say that "there was civilized music on these shores that antedated these psalm tunes," and that "Englishmen in Virginia . . . gave concerts long before the Pilgrims or Puritans . . . lifted up their voices in holy strains in New England." Setting aside the wholly unwarranted implication that the psalm-tunes were not "civilized music," the historic facts are that the earliest European music heard upon either coast of North America above the Spanish settlements was the French psalmody sung by the Huguenots on the Carolina Coast in 1572 before their brief settlement was wiped out by the Spaniards, and the English psalmody in "Sternhold and Hopkins," sung by Drake's seamen on the California Coast in 1579. The "concerts" which the settlers in Virginia held in the bitter period of conflict, hardship, disease and starvation which beset the first twenty years after their arrival at Jamestown are a pure figment of the imagination, unless we picture the settlers as gathered round a campfire after the fashion of pioneers in their hours of ease and roaring out to the accompaniment of a few simple instruments the popular catches which they had brought with them from England. The earliest recorded performance in the North American colonies of anything that we should call a concert took place in Boston more than a hundred years later, a fact of which Mr. Elson was totally ignorant.

It is recorded by Edward Winslow that the Pilgrims, at the time of their departure from Holland, sang very well. We have no similar report of the Puritans, but they came from England at a time when that country was just passing out of a great musical epoch. There is not the slightest reason to believe that the men and

women of the first migration were any different from the people they left behind in their fondness for music or in their ability to perform it. Sonneck makes gentle fun of such an hypothesis, saying (p. 7),

When reading the histories of music in America we almost gain the impression that the emigrants of the seventeenth century detested not so much the religious, political or economic atmosphere of Europe as the musical, and we feel overawed by the constellation of mysterious motives prompting Providence to send to our shores just those few thousand beings who had no music in their souls.

The steady decline in the ability to sing which came with the passing years in all the English colonies, whether north or south, was the natural result of the hard pioneer life; of the separation of the younger generation from the cultural influences amid which their English parents had grown up; and of their segregation in small and isolated communities.

A few of the immigrants brought music-books (other than psalm-books) and musical instruments with them, for their own use and enjoyment. This fact is also denied by the popular myth. In the book entitled "The Art of Music" it is asserted,

Instrumental music was taboo to them [the Puritans]. As far as we know there was not a musical instrument in New England before 1700. If there was it has shown remarkable ingenuity in escaping detection.<sup>1</sup>

Evidence has a way of escaping detection by those who never take the trouble to look for it. This bald assertion in "The Art of Music" overlooks the well-known use of drums, trumpets and horns for summoning people to church before bells were available, to give an alarm and to assist in military training. Jews-harps were early imported in quantities; not because the Puritans were addicted to that childish instrument, nor because they superstitiously thought it sacred because of its name, but because it was in demand for trade with the music-loving Indians.

<sup>1</sup>"The Art of Music," ed. Daniel Gregory Mason, N. Y. 1915, Vol. IV. Chap. I, p. 18. The whole chapter, by W. Dermot Darby, so far from being a reliable account of the part played by music in the early life of the colonies, is nothing but a flippant misrepresentation of a period about which the author was completely ignorant.

Organs were not, of course, imported or built here until the eighteenth century. They took up too much precious space on shipboard, and were too costly, and very few indeed of the early immigrants can have been familiar with them, for their use in England was limited to the court, the cathedrals, college chapels and a few of the larger parish churches. Of the smaller instruments the bass-viol—very much like what we call a violoncello—was the most common instrument in use, but it was fragile to transport and took up precious space. Persons emigrating to the colonies had to turn their possessions into cash to pay for their passage and to buy the equipment for settlement. Only a man devoted to music would go to the expense and trouble of bringing his musical instrument with him. Such cases did occur. Nathaniel Rogers of Rowley, dying in 1664, left a “treble viall,” and Rev. Edmund Browne of Sudbury, who died in 1678, left a “bass vyol” and some books of music, and was reputed to be a good musician. Browne was past seventy-one years of age at his death and had been ordained in England some years before his emigration in 1638, so no doubt he brought his viol and music books with him. Tutor Wigglesworth of Harvard, in his “Diary,” about 1650, notes that he caught an idle student in the forenoon with ill company playing musick, though I had so solemnly warn’d him but yesterday of letting his spirit go after pleasures.<sup>1</sup>

That might be interpreted as disapproval of music, but it is more reasonable to take it as disapprobation of a lazy boy who was spending the morning hours, when he ought to have been studying, in amusing himself with undesirable companions.

Seaborn Cotton, of the class of 1651 at Harvard, was the son of Rev. John Cotton, born on the voyage over here, and himself later a minister. In his manuscript commonplace book he copied out nearly the whole of three well-known English ballads—The Lovesick Maid, the Last Lamentation of a Languishing Squire,

<sup>1</sup>Sibley, “Harvard Graduates,” I 264.

and *The Two Faithful Lovers*—with bits of others, and Elnathan Chauncey's commonplace book of the same period contains similar fragments of ballads, and a bar of music jotted down as the memorandum of a tune.

A letter which Leonard Hoar, later president of Harvard College, wrote from London on March 27, 1661, to his freshman nephew Josiah Flynt, perfectly illustrates the Puritan attitude. Josiah had written asking his uncle to send him a fiddle. Hoar replies with a very lengthy epistle of sensible advice about his studies and his conduct, which had been none too satisfactory. Near the end he says,

Musick I had almost forgot. I suspect you seek it both to soon, and to much. This be assured of that if you be not excellent at it Its worth nothing at all. And if you be excellent it will take up so much of your mind and time that you will be worth little else: And when all that excellence is attained your acqurest will prove little or nothing of real profit to you unlesse you intend to take upon you the trade of fidling. Howbeit hearing your mother's desires were for it for your sisters for whom tis more proper and they also have more leisure to look after it: For them I say I had provided the Instruments desired, But I cannot now attend the sending them being hurrying away from London<sup>1</sup> . . .

Evidently Hoar had no objection to music for the girls who would not have to go out and earn a living, but foresaw that a fiddle would only tempt Josiah to waste his time over an amusement from which he could not hope to gain a livelihood.

At the end of the century, on December 1, 1699, we find Samuel Sewall going to a shop in Boston to inquire about his wife's harpsichord, apparently left there for repairs. Obviously, instrumental music was not unknown to the Puritans, nor was it condemned by them. John Cotton in his "Singing Psalms a Gospel Ordinance," 1647, says

Nor doe we forbid the private use of any Instrument of Musick therewithall; so that attention to the instrument doe not divert the heart from attention to the matter of the song.

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<sup>1</sup>S. E. Morison, "Harvard in the Seventeenth Century," Vol. II, p. 643.

The idea that instrumental music was more prevalent in Virginia in the seventeenth century is, so far as I know, unsupported by evidence, but it is probable that in a few houses of the great planters, as they grew rich, there was a good deal more use of secular music than in New England, though not among the less prosperous people.

By the end of the seventeenth century singing had sunk to a low level in all the colonies and the ability to play instrumental music was presumably limited to a very few persons, owing to lack of available teachers. Rev. Thomas Symmes, of Bradford, who graduated from Harvard in 1689, in his discourse upon "The Reasonableness of Regular Singing: or Singing by Note," 1720, does, indeed, say that there had been singing-schools in the early days of the colony, and accounts for the decline in singing by saying, "Singing schools and singing books being laid aside, there was no way to learn." Music, he goes on,

was studied, known and approved of in our College, for many years after its first founding. This is evident from the Musical Theses, which were formerly printed; and from some writings containing some tunes with directions for *singing by note*, as they are now sung; and these are yet in being, though of more than sixty years' standing.

The papers to which he refers were presumably lost in the fire which destroyed the college library in 1764, but his statement carries back to at least 1660 the time when there was some study of music at Harvard.

Such instruction in music as there may have been at Harvard, however, reached too few persons to stay the general and rapid decline in musical culture. There was not a single "musician by trade," in Boston in 1673, if we may accept the statement found in a brief anonymous report of conditions made in that year. "The Bay Psalm Book" contained no music until the edition of 1698, which included at the end thirteen tunes, crudely engraved on wood. Be it noted that this was the first music ever printed in the North



American colonies, but by this time probably few users of the book could read music.

Early in the eighteenth century, however, a revival of music began with the dissatisfaction of the ministers with the singing in church. The originator of the movement was Rev. John Tufts of Newbury, who, about 1712, published "An Introduction to the Singing of Psalm Tunes in a Plain and Easy Method; with a Collection of Tunes in Three Parts."<sup>1</sup> The early editions contain twenty-eight, the later ones thirty-eight tunes. Tufts' little pamphlet, for it is nothing more, is the first book of instruction in music to be printed in the North American Colonies. His "instructions" were derived from Thomas Ravenscroft and John Playford, but he could not have gone to better sources. Tufts reinforced his pamphlet by travelling about to lecture and to establish singing-schools. *The New England Courant* under date of September 30, 1723, notes that:

On Thursday last a Singing Lecture was held here [Boston] when the Rev. Mr. Tufts of Newbury preach'd.

The redoubtable Cotton Mather, who had repeatedly complained in his diary of the poor singing in his congregation, lent his aid. Samuel Sewall recorded on March 20, 1720/21:

At night Dr. Mather preached in the school house to the young musicians, from Rev. 14:3—no man could learn that song. House was full, and the singing extraordinarily excellent, such as hardly been heard before in Boston. Sang four times out of Tate and Brady.

In the next few years a dozen other ministers, mostly of the younger set, although cordially backed by their elders, printed discourses in support of the movement and many more, no doubt, preached and lectured on the subject. As with every attempt to improve church music, there was opposition on the part of conservative laymen who were satisfied with the old ways. The aim of the reformers was to teach the people to sing

<sup>1</sup>This is the title of the later editions from the fifth on, by which the work is best known. Neither the title nor the exact date of the first edition is known.

"by rule," that is, from printed notes, instead of by ear or "by rote." The innovation seems to us a simple and obvious one, but it did stir up a controversy. Rev. Thomas Symmes, after he had introduced "regular singing" (that is, singing "by rule") reported that "a great part of the town has for near half a year, been in a mere flame about it," and the Rev. Nathaniel Chauncey of Connecticut preached a lengthy discourse before the General Association at Hartford in 1728 in which he summed up, and answered, a long series of the objections made by the conservative deacons. One objection was that "this practice leads to the Church of England and will bring in organs quickly"; another that "the very original of this way was from the Papists"; to which he says ". . . the Gospel itself came from Rome to England, and its very probable that singing came along with the Gospel." Again an objection; "It looks very unlikely to be the right way, because the young people fall in with it; they are not wont to be so forward for anything which is good"; to which he answers:

As Old Men are not always wise, so young men are not always fools. They are generally more free from prejudices than Elderly People; their present age disposes them to Mirth, and it should be a joyful and acceptable thing unto Elderly People to see them forward to improve their Mirth according to Scripture directions.

The vogue for "regular" singing was, in truth, a youth movement, eagerly taken up by the young people. No one helped it more than Cotton Mather's nephew, Rev. Thomas Walter, who in 1721, at the age of twenty-five, brought out his "Grounds and Rules of Musick Explained," which went well beyond Tufts' pamphlet. The music was printed in modern notation with bar lines for the first time in the colonies. It ran through many editions and was the standard book for forty years.

Even more significant as showing an enlightened attitude towards music was Walter's discourse on "The Sweet Psalmist of Israel," delivered in 1722. The whole title is worth recording:

The Sweet Psalmist of Israel  
A Sermon

Preach'd at the Lecture held in Boston  
by the Society for promoting  
Regular & Good Singing  
and for Reforming the  
Depravations and Debasements  
our

Psalmody labours under,  
In order to introduce the proper and true  
*Old Way of Singing*

Now published at the Desire of several Ministers  
that heard it, and at the Request of the Society  
aforesaid.

By Thomas Walter, M. A.  
Minister of a Church in Roxbury

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Boston. Printed by J. Franklin, for S. Gerrish,  
near the Brick Meeting-House in Cornhill, 1722.

The sermon is dedicated to Paul Dudley, son of Governor Joseph Dudley and later Chief Justice, whose "young minister" Walter was.

There is not a single sentence in the whole discourse in disparagement of secular or of instrumental music. On the contrary he says,

Music considered alone and in itself is a *sweet and pleasant science*. The Charms of Music are a most celebrated Subject among the best Writers. And they are so various and so sweet, that it is equally impossible to number them and sufficiently to admire them. There is scarce anything in the whole Creation of God, so manifold and astonishing, as the Doctrine of Sounds and Harmony.

Naturally, however, Walter's primary purpose was to emphasize the importance of good singing in the service of worship. After various quotations from scripture and the classics, and one from "the almost Divine Milton," he goes on,

Upon the whole we may conclude, that music is not only a means provided by the God of Nature and the Author of all Religion, to dispel and drive away the evil influences of Satan, but also to prepare the Soul for the Reception of the Inspiration of the holy Spirit . . . It collects the scattered Powers

of the Mind, and so unites them, that the Soul with unwonted Vigour and Strength mounts as on the *Wings of Eagles*, pursuing the glorious Flight, till she is gotten beyond the View of mortal things, and enters the *holy of Holies* above. Then is she rais'd and transported beyond the Limits of Time and Sense, and is seated in the Lap of Eternity, where she dwells upon everlasting Themes, and becomes a sharer in the sweet and uninterrupted Bliss of Angels and glorified Saints.

The battle for "regular" singing was over by 1730, and the psalmody in the churches had been greatly improved. In the meantime the development of the singing-schools also indirectly affected the development of instrumental music. The Puritans, both in England and America, had opposed the use of instruments in church. In this, of course, they were not peculiar. To this day no instrumental music is heard in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican; or in the Russian Church; and organs were admitted into the Presbyterian Church in Scotland only in the nineteenth century. But when the singing-schools met in the schoolhouses or in private homes there was no objection to a pitch-pipe, or to a bass viol to support the singing, and as the young people became accustomed to such support they naturally wanted to have it also when they sang in church. And in the course of the century the use of the bass viol, "the Lord's fiddle," became general.

We have noted the presence in Boston of the virginal belonging to Samuel Sewall's wife, before 1700. Certainly from this time on there must have been a steady increase of musical instruments. In 1716 Edward Enstone, the recently imported organist of King's Chapel, advertised in the *Boston News-Letter* (April 16-23):

This is to give notice that there is lately sent over from London a choice collection of Instruments, consisting of Flageolets, Flutes, Haut-Boys, Bass-Viols, Violins, Bows, Strings, Reeds for Haut-Boys, Books of Instruction for all these Instruments, Books of Ruled Paper. To be sold at the Dancing School of Mr. Enstone in Sudbury Street near the Orange Tree, Boston. Note: Any person may have all instruments of Musick mended, or Virginals and Spinnets Strung and Tuned at a reasonable Rate, and likewise may be taught to Play on any of these

instruments above mentioned; dancing taught by a true and easier method than has been heretofore.

Obviously a man does not advertise to tune "Virginalls and Spinnets" in a community where such instruments do not exist, nor does he set up a music shop unless there is some demand for his wares.

The growing interest in instrumental music naturally led to the giving of concerts. It should be remembered that public concerts of instrumental music were unknown in England at the time of the first migration to Massachusetts. There was orchestral music at court, and music-loving amateurs in places like London and Oxford gathered to play chamber music, but concerts to which the public was admitted for a price did not come in until late in the seventeenth century, and were held at first in London taverns. Boston was probably not many years behind the majority of English provincial towns of the same size when the first concert was advertised in the *Boston News-Letter* of December 16-23, 1731, as follows:

On Thursday the 30th of this instant December, there will be performed a "Concert of Music" on sundry instruments at Mr. Pelham's great Room, being the House of the late Doctor Noyes near the Sun Tavern. Tickets to be delivered at the place of performance at "Five Shillings" each. The concert to begin exactly at Six o'clock, and no Tickets will be delivered after Five the day of performance. N.B. There will be no admittance after Six.

This is the earliest authentic record of any concert of instrumental music to be performed in the English colonies of North America, although it antedates by only three and a half months the first recorded concert in Charleston, South Carolina, and Mr. Sonneck, from whose book, "Early Concert Life in America," this information is derived, rightly points out that other earlier concerts, of which no record has survived, may have taken place in either town. Other concerts followed, two each in 1732 and 1733; others in 1736, in 1744 in Faneuil Hall, and again there in 1747; and after that more frequently at "The Concert Hall" until the Revolution broke. Unfortunately there is no record

of who the musicians were or of the programs played until 1771. Previous to that date the public was only assured that the program would contain "Select pieces from the best masters." During the earlier part of this period Charleston alone rivalled Boston in the number of its concerts. The earliest recorded concert in New York took place in 1736; the first in Philadelphia in 1757.

The Mr. Pelham in whose "great Room" the first Boston concert was held was, of course, Peter Pelham, better known for his mezzotints. In 1732 or 1733 Boston received its first visit from a European musician of note, Karl Theodor Pachelbel. He soon went on to Newport, where he assisted in setting up the organ which Bishop Berkeley had sent to Trinity Church, and thence to New York and Charleston, where he lingered. Now Pachelbel was a thoroughly trained German musician, son of a noted organist and closely associated with the family of J. S. Bach. We would give much for some record of Pachelbel's visit to Boston and to know whether he took part in a concert there. We do know that when he left he was accompanied by Peter Pelham's eldest son, Peter Jr., who went with him to study music. Peter did not return until 1743, and on May 30 of that year modestly advertised in the *Boston Evening Post* that after "nine years under the Tuition of an accomplish'd Professor in the Art of Musick" he was prepared to give lessons on the harpsichord and in the "Rudiments of Psalmody, Hymns, Anthems, etc." He became the first organist of Trinity Church in Boston, where he remained until 1749, when he went to Virginia, where in 1755 he became the first organist at Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, serving in that capacity for forty years.

The practice of holding concerts, once established in Boston, went steadily forward until interrupted by the turmoil of the Revolution. Generally the proceeds went to charity. After the concert of 1744 in Faneuil Hall the Selectmen received £205.5.0<sup>1</sup> "for the use of

<sup>1</sup>If the price of tickets was five shillings for this concert, 821 persons paid admission.

the poor of the town." In the seventeen-sixties there are records of "private" as well as of "public" concerts. Sonneck (p. 258) believes that the private or semi-public concerts indicate the existence, between 1761 and 1775, of a music society in Boston which gave concerts in "The Concert Hall" with a fair degree of regularity. After the Revolution several such organizations were formed, though none achieved permanence until the Handel and Haydn Society was founded early in the nineteenth century. The public concerts, before the Revolution, were sometimes aided by musicians from the bands of British regiments quartered on the town. Evidently by that time a music-lover in Boston had considerable opportunities to hear pretty good music of varied types.

It has already been noted that there were no organs in the colonies in the seventeenth century. The only possible exception is the chance that some of the German settlers who lived for a time in the Wissahickon Valley outside Philadelphia may have brought one in just before the end of the century. They certainly had a small one in 1703, and only a little later Dr. Christopher Witt, an Englishman who had joined them, built the first organ constructed in the colonies. Aside from these instances the earliest organ in the colonies of which there is any certain record is the one imported into Boston by Thomas Brattle not later than early in 1711. On May 29 of that year Rev. Joseph Green noted in his diary:

I was at Mr. Thomas Brattles; heard ye organs and saw strange things in a microscope.

It may be observed that Green, though a Puritan minister, had no objection to listening to "Mr. Brattle's organs" in a private house, though he would not have thought it suitable for use in a church. In 1713 Brattle died, and bequeathed his organ to the Brattle Square Church, of which he had been one of the founders, or, should the church refuse it, to King's Chapel, with the further proviso that the church

which accepted the organ should "procure a sober person that can play skilfully thereon with a loud noise." The Brattle Square congregation declined the gift, and did not install an organ until near the end of the century, so the instrument went to King's Chapel, which used it for many years. When superseded by a better organ it passed through various hands to St. John's Church, Portsmouth, where it is still preserved in usable condition. King's Chapel thus became the first church in the colonies to install an organ for regular use. The second was the Dutch Reformed Church in New York, to which Gov. Burnet presented an organ in 1726. The third was Christ Church, Philadelphia, 1728. The fourth was Trinity Church, Newport, to which Bishop Berkeley presented an organ in 1733. Thereafter the wealthier Episcopal churches imported or built organs when they could afford them and could secure organists. The first Congregational church in New England to have an organ was the one in Providence. Ezra Stiles records in his "Diary" that the organ there was first used in divine service on the first Sunday in July, 1770. The First Church in Boston had to wait for the death of Rev. Charles Chauncey in 1787 before it got one, and the Brattle Square Church imported one in 1790, and then a member of the church offered to pay for the organ and to sink it in the harbor rather than have it used.

The first organ built in Boston, which was also the first to be constructed in the colonies by a native-born American, was the work of young Edward Bromfield, Jr., who graduated from Harvard in 1742 and died in 1746, at the age of 23. Rev. Thomas Prince wrote of him,

As he was well skilled in music, he for exercise and recreation with his own hands, has made a most accurate Organ, with two rows of keys and many hundred pipes; his intention being twelve hundred, but died before he completed it. The workmanship of the keys and pipes surprisingly nice and curious, exceeding any thing of the kind that ever came here from England . . . And what is surprizing was, that he had but a



few times looked into the inside work of two or three organs which came from England.

During the middle and later part of the eighteenth century it is probable that, outside of the Moravian settlements in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, the best organ music in the colonies was to be heard in New York, where an English composer and organist of high quality, named William Tuckey, lived from 1753 until shortly before his death in 1781; and in King's Chapel in Boston. In passing it may be mentioned that Tuckey conducted in New York a performance of parts of Handel's "Messiah" on January 16, 1770, a date earlier than any performance on the continent of Europe. The best organist at King's Chapel was William Selby, who arrived from England in 1771, and died in 1798. He was also a harpsichordist, teacher, manager of concerts, composer and compiler. At concerts which he organized in 1772 and 1773 music by Bach and Handel was presented. In 1786 "the Musical Society" presented, under his leadership, a superb program of religious music in King's Chapel, "for the benefit and relief of the poor prisoners confined in the jail of this town." Again the music was from Bach and Handel. And in 1789, in honor of Washington's presidential visit to Boston, the entire oratorio, "Jonah," by a now forgotten composer, Samuel Felsted, was given in King's Chapel, preceded by two anthems and an organ concerto composed by Selby and by choral selections from Handel.

From 1764 on, Boston developed rapidly as a music publishing center. The first book of music to be published in the colonies after Walter's little book in 1721 was "Urania," a large collection of hymn tunes and anthems edited by James Lyon and published in Philadelphia in 1762. It was followed in 1764 by a Boston rival, Josiah Flagg's

A collection of the best Psalm Tunes, in two, three and four parts; from the most approved authors, to all measures, and approved by the best masters in Boston, New England; to which are added some Hymns and Anthems; the greater part never before printed in America.

Josiah Flagg was a musical enthusiast. In 1773 he organized the first militia band in Boston, on the model of the British regimental bands. He also managed numerous concerts of vocal and instrumental music, in which the works of Bach and Handel, as usual, held the prominent places.

Numerous collections of church music followed. There were about forty such American publications before the end of the eighteenth century, mostly printed in Boston, and many more in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The most popular and influential, though not the best, of these successors of Flagg's "Collection" were "The New England Psalm Singer," 1770, and "The Singing Master's Assistant," 1778, both by the irrepressible William Billings. He was a picturesque figure, a tanner's assistant, one-eyed, lame, slovenly, but with a stentorian voice and boundless enthusiasm. He went about New England, reviving the singing-schools by sheer contagion. He was determined that America should create her own music, and did his part manfully by composing a great number of tunes and anthems in the florid fugueing style which had come into vogue in England in the Handelian era. As he knew little and cared less for the rules of musical composition, his work today seems shockingly illiterate, but its lively, almost rollicking style was taking, and for thirty years in New England had a popularity which perhaps we may compare with that of the gospel hymns in America a hundred years later. Billings' tunes, however, were not always appreciated by his Boston contemporaries. He had a swinging sign in front of his house reading "Billings's Music." One evening some naughty boys hung two cats by their tails to the sign and ran away leaving the cats yowling and scratching. On another occasion a wag approached Billings with "a serious question"—"was snoring vocal or instrumental music?" Nevertheless, Billings rendered a real service to his time, although his tunes largely dropped out of use in Boston by 1800. They survived to a later date in rural New

England, and spread to other parts of the country, and are still to be found in the folk-hymnody of the rural South. In the Boston publications, towards the end of the century, some of which were the best collections of church music published in the colonies at that period, there was a swing back to the more sedate and musically correct type of hymn-tune. The earliest American hymn-tune which is still in use is taken from one of these collections—Oliver Holden's "Coronation," composed in Charlestown, Mass., in 1793.

Let us review the development of music in Puritan Boston of the eighteenth century by summarizing what might have been the experience of a music-lover who was born there just as the century dawned and who lived to be past ninety. As a boy he had sung out of "The Bay Psalm Book," and had learned to read the music of the tunes which, for the first time in the colonies, had been printed in the back of the book two years before his birth. In the Brattle Square Church, in which he was brought up, they sang the tunes straight through, but in most other churches the psalms had been lined out, which broke up the singing badly. He did not like "lining-out," and was glad that he had lived to see the old custom disappear.

He had been taught to read music by his grandfather, who had a bass-viol and some of the music books printed by John Playford in London during the Protectorate. After the Restoration grandfather had migrated to Boston, bringing these things with him. He had taught his grandson to play the viol, which he had bequeathed to him. Knowing how to read music had stood him in good stead when Rev. Mr. Tufts and the other young ministers opened the campaign for "regular" singing and had organized singing-schools in almost every town. At twenty he had joined the young musicians whose singing in the schoolhouse, where they sang four times out of "Tate and Brady," had won the praise of Judge Sewall. He had liked "Tate and Brady" better than "The Bay Psalm Book" because their book contained the very latest new

tunes, like Hanover, and St. Anne by Mr. Croft. The singing-schools had brought a great improvement in psalm-singing in the churches, and had been very good fun as well, because there the young people could sing music not used in the churches, though not, of course, the ribald "catches" sometimes heard in the sailors' taverns. He had fallen in love with his wife at singing-school because of her enthusiasm and her sweet voice.

And then, when he was thirty-one, came the first concert in Boston, in Mr. Pelham's "great Room." He played the viol well enough to take part with other gentlemen-players, and the whole affair was arranged in the latest London fashion. A year or two later a great musician had come to town, and he had seen and heard and talked with Mr. Pachelbel, who had revealed a new world of music by what he told of concerts in Germany and who talked about his kinsman, J. S. Bach. Our Bostonian had thought pretty well of his own performance on the bass-viol until he met Pachelbel, but after that he realized that he had learned only the rudiments of music. Throughout his whole middle life he went to concerts whenever he could. There was a public one at least every two or three years, some years there would be several; and he played with his friends at little private concerts quite often. After he was seventy he had heard the militia band organized by Mr. Josiah Flagg. Naturally it did not play as well as the British regimental bands, but it was a start in the right direction.

When James Lyon's "Urania" had reached Boston from Philadelphia, with its great collection of new hymn-tunes and anthems, he had bought a copy, though it was very expensive. But he took greater pride in Josiah Flagg's Boston "Collection," with the music engraved by Paul Revere on paper actually made in the colony. And he followed with enthusiasm the career of the tanner William Billings, who gave the singing-schools a new lease of life. Billings, of course, was an odd stick, but he made people sing as they had never sung before. And Billings had taught the sing-

ing-schools to sing better music than his own. Our Bostonian in his ninetieth year had been driven out by his grandson to Dorchester to hear the singing contest between the singers of the First Parish and the Stoughton Musical Society. The Dorchester singers had had the support of a bass-viol, but the Stoughton singers had won the contest when they had sung Mr. Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" without an instrument and without books. That, he reflected, was a great advance over the performance of the young musicians with whom, at twenty, he had sung from Tate and Brady.

Our Bostonian remembered the heated discussion in his boyhood about Mr. Brattle's organ. He had wished that the Brattle Square Church had accepted it, though he had lived to see an organ installed there at last. He had sometimes slipped into King's Chapel to hear the organ, when some recital of sacred music had been given there. The climax had been the oratorio when George Washington had made his presidential visit to Boston in 1789.

So, in great old age, our 18th century Bostonian looked back over the music he had heard. As he remembered his boyhood he marvelled at the growth of musical opportunities and appreciation in his native town. He had seen two revivals of singing; the introduction of concerts, and of organs into some of the churches; and in the last thirty years the growth of a flourishing business in the publication of church music. He had never travelled, but he understood that he could not have had better opportunities to enjoy music in any other of the colonies—except among the Moravians at Bethlehem in Pennsylvania; indeed, he could not have done much better in most of the provincial towns in England. So, as he lay dying, he bequeathed his grandfather's bass-viol to his own grandson, and told him that if he too lived to be ninety he might see the coming of a new music in Boston, surpassing anything that the eighteenth century had known.

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