

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THOMAS
WALTER'S "GROUNDS AND RULES OF
MUSICK EXPLAINED"

BY MATT B. JONES

THOMAS WALTER, son of the Rev. Nehemiah Walter of Roxbury, Massachusetts, and his wife, Sarah Mather, daughter of Increase Mather, was born in 1696 and died January 10, 1724-5.

He had a vigorous intellect and was early destined for the ministry. Although he was a good scholar, it is said that while he was in Harvard College, from which he graduated in 1713, he was not a hard student and spent too much time in the company of the radical John Checkley to please either his father or his uncle, Dr. Cotton Mather. This association continued after his graduation and was the occasion of distress upon their part lest he should be led astray.¹ Probably the good Doctor was unduly disturbed for we soon find him expressing satisfaction with the actions of his nephew;² and by 1720 Checkley was attacking some of Walter's conservative beliefs.³

By November, 1717, Dr. Mather was confiding to his Diary that he believed his nephew to be one who might greatly aid him as an assistant in his own Church.

¹*Cotton Mather's Dairy* II, Page 348, "May 25, 1716, New Applications must be made unto my Kinsman T. W. that he may now in good earnest come into the Love of God." *Ibid.* Page 353, "May 30, 1716. Something more must be done, to rescue my Kinsman T. W. from fateful Entanglements." *Ibid.* Page 359, "July 11, 1716, I don't know what to do about my Kinsman T. W. My expectations from him seem to suffer a grievous Disappointment. I will once more admonish him; and if no Impressions be made, I will then cast him off." *Ibid.* Page 363, "Aug. 1, 1716. Miserable T. W., abandoned by the Wrath of God, into unaccountable Stupidity!"

²*Cotton Mather's Dairy* II, Page 388, "Dec. 12, 1716, My Kinsman T. W. gives Hopes of his yett coming to Good; has begun to preach publickly." *Ibid.* Page 441, "Mar. 13, 1716-17, My Kinsman T. W. gives great Hopes of his proving an useful Man."

³*Cotton Mather's Dairy* II, Page 605.

It is clear that he made the suggestion to his parishioners and was considerably disturbed that four or five of the brethren "who must always be the Rulers of all" blocked favorable action.¹ The Church at Roxbury held young Walter in higher regard, and in October, 1718, he was ordained as assistant to his father in the work of that Church.²

There appears to have been a peculiarly close bond of affection between Thomas Walter and his uncle, who refers to him with great frequency in his Diary, and constantly expresses a desire to help him in every possible way. During the smallpox epidemic of 1721 he desired to be inoculated and went to Dr. Mather's house to receive the inoculation, remaining there during the resultant illness. While there Walter was put in great danger of injury or death from a bomb which was thrown into the chamber in which he was lying in the belief that it was occupied by Mather, against whom a very strong feeling had arisen because of his advocacy of inoculation.³

The young man was apparently destined for a brilliant career, but as early as the spring of 1724 his health began to fail and it was soon evident that he was a victim of tuberculosis, of which malady he died the following January.

Among other accomplishments, Walter was much gifted "in the science of harmony" and it is not surprising, therefore, that he joined with his uncle in the controversy respecting the improvement of church singing which raged in the New England churches between 1720 and 1725. In the controversial class of literature relating to this subject he published "The Sweet Psalmist of Israel," Boston, 1722; but he performed his greatest service to the cause of improved singing by the publication in 1721 of a little book entitled:

¹*Cotton Mather's Diary* II, Pages 518-519.

²For a description of this ordination see Samuel Sewall's *Diary* III, Page 201.

³*Cotton Mather's Diary* II, Pages 653, 654, 657.

The/Grounds and Rules/of/MUSICK/Explained: Or,/An Introduction to the Art of Singing/by NOTE./Fitted to the meanest Capacities./By Thomas Walter. M.A./Recommended by several Ministers./Let every thing that hath Breath praise the Lord. Psal. 150.6./BOSTON: Printed by J. Franklin, for S. Gerrish, near the Brick Church in Cornhill. 1721.

The book is 12mo oblong. Following the title leaf, of which the reverse is blank, is "A Recommendatory PREFACE," pp. iii, dated "Boston, April 18. 1721." At the head of the list of endorsers appear the names of Increase Mather, Cotton Mather, and Nehemiah Walter, followed by those of Joseph Sewall, Thomas Prince, John Webb, William Cooper, Thomas Foxcroft, Samuel Checkley, Joseph Belcher, Benj. Wadsworth, Benj. Colman, Nathanael Williams, Nathanael Hunting and Peter Thacher. Then follows an unnumbered page containing musical characters which are omitted in the following pages because of the difficulty of inserting them in their proper places in the printed lines. This is followed, pp. 1-24, by "Some Brief/And very plain Instructions/For Singing by NOTE."

The collation is A to D in 4's, A-1 blank, followed by 16 unnumbered leaves of engraved music which have no signature marks. The first engraved leaf is entitled "Rules for tuning the Voice" and the following leaves contain 24 psalm tunes in bars.

This was the first engraved music printed in the United States, although the New England Psalms Books had previously printed music in wood-cut.

On the last page of Rev. Thomas Symmes's "The Reasonableness of Regular Singing," Boston, 1720, the publisher (Samuel Gerrish) prints the following advertisement: "There is prepared for the Press by the Rev. Mr. T. Walter, and may speedily be Published, a small book containing brief and very plain Instructions for the easy attaining of the Art of Singing Psalm Tunes regularly, with about 20 or 30 Tunes which will be Engraven on Copper Plates and is proposed to be sold to subscribers for 2s apiece single. All that have a mind to assist and encourage this Work, may send

their names to Samuel Gerrish, Book Seller, near the Brick Church in Corn Hill by whom they will be sold." It was advertised in the "Boston News Letter" for February 13, 1721/2 as "Now in the press."

The little book thus launched became immediately popular among the singing schools and choirs of New England, and continued to be a favorite for more than forty years, during which time it passed through six editions. These books must have been worn out in service for there are few American books of the period of which it is more difficult to find a complete copy, especially of the first three editions.

Extended search among public libraries and private collections has revealed only two complete copies of the first edition, one in the New York Public Library, the other in the collection of Matt B. Jones of Boston. Only five other copies, all of them incomplete in some respect, can be located, namely: Boston Public Library; Harvard College Library; Massachusetts Historical Society; Watkinson Library; and Yale University Library.

In 1723 a second edition of the book was published of the same size as the first edition. The title is as follows:

The/Grounds and Rules/of/MUSICK/Explained: Or,/An Introduction to the Art of Singing/by NOTE./Fitted to the meanest Capacities./By Thomas Walter, M.A./Recommended by several Ministers./The Second Edition./Let every thing that hath Breath Praise the Lord, Psal. 150.6./BOSTON: Printed by B. Green, for S. Gerrish, near the Brick Meeting-House in Cornhill. 1723.

The collation is A to D in 4's, and the C signature is unmarked. The printed portion of the work is followed by 16 numbered leaves of engraved music which have no signature marks.

Following the title-page, of which the reverse is blank, is the "Recommendatory PREFACE," undated, pp. iii. The order of the names of the recommending ministers is altered, and to the names printed

in the first edition are added those of John Danforth, John Hancock, Ebenezer Thayer, John Cotton, Nathanael Appleton, William Waldron, and the younger Peter Thacher. The "Instructions for Singing by Note" fill pp. 1-25, and include a "Postscript" and a column headed "Erratum," not found in the first edition, while upon an unnumbered page following p. 25 is "A Table of the Tunes," also lacking in the first edition.

It is apparent that the engraved plates of music which were prepared for use in the first edition were also used in this edition, although some changes were made in them. For example, over each bar is inserted the name of the part (Cantus, Medius, Bassus), the leaves are numbered, the pitch of "London Tune" on engraved leaf 6 is changed and the title "24 Psalm Tune" on leaf 9 is changed to read "Bella or 24 Psalm Tune." In spite of this change, leaf 9 presents strong evidence of the identity of the plates used in the two editions in the form of a crack or similar defect in the plate which appears in both editions.

The "Boston News Letter" of July 4, 1723, carried a notice by bookseller Gerrish to the effect that he had printed a collection of psalm tunes "from a copper plate curiously and correctly engraven," and this probably indicates the approximate date of publication of the second edition.

No complete copy of this edition has been located. There is a copy in the New York Public Library from which a portion of the title-page has been torn away, and which lacks about half of the second leaf of music; a copy in the collection of Matt B. Jones lacks the last leaf of music.

In 1740 there was published a third edition of "The Grounds and Rules of Musick Explained" of which the only copy located is in Harvard College Library. Unlike the other editions of the work this edition is in the ordinary 12mo form. The title is as follows:

The/Grounds and Rules/of/MUSICK/Explained: Or,/An Introduction to the Art of/Singing by NOTE./Fitted to the

meanest Capacities./By Thomas Walter, M.A./Recommended by several Ministers./The Third Edition./Let every Thing that hath Breath/praise the Lord, Psal. 150.6./BOSTON:/Printed by J. Draper for S. Gerrish/MDCCXL.

It collates A to D in 6's, D-6 blank, followed by 12 engraved leaves of music in bars without signature marks. The title page, of which the reverse is blank, is followed by the "Recommendatory PREFACE," pp. iii, and this is followed by one unnumbered page of musical characters. The "Instructions" fill pp. 1-36, a "Postscript" is printed on pp. 37-38 and "A Table of the Tunes" appears on pp. 39-40. From this table "115 Psalm Tune" was omitted but in this copy the omission is supplied in manuscript.

There are, as stated, 12 leaves of engraved music, and as these are engraved along the short dimension of the page, the engraving is much finer and there are more tunes upon a plate so that in this edition there are contained 38 tunes as compared with 24 in the first and second editions.

The publication of this edition is noted in the issues of the "Boston News Letter" for January 31, February 7, and February 14, 1740. On January 31 and February 14 it is referred to as "Just published" and on February 7 as "Now in the Press and in a few Days will be published."

In this connection it may be observed that Yale University Library has a copy of Walter's book which lacks the title-page but has a manuscript notation by a former owner to the effect that it was published in 1738. Careful comparison has shown that it is a copy of the first edition lacking the title-page, and it may be said that there is no present evidence that an edition was published in 1738.

In 1746 Samuel Gerrish issued a fourth edition in 12mo oblong form. The title is as follows:

The/Grounds and Rules/of/MUSICK/Explained: Or,/An Introduction to the Art of Singing/by NOTE./Fitted to the meanest Capacities./By Thomas Walter, M.A./Recommended

by several Ministers./Let every Thing that hath Breath praise the Lord. Psal. cl. 6./BOSTON: Printed for Samuel Gerrish, 1746.

It collates A to D in 4's, the reverse of A-1 and D-4 being blank. There are 16 numbered leaves of engraved music, which have no signature marks.

The title leaf is followed by the "Recommendatory PREFACE" dated "Boston, April 18, 1721," pp. iii, followed by the unnumbered page of musical characters. The names of the recommending ministers are the same as in the first edition, although the arrangement is somewhat different. The "Instructions" are found on pp. 1-25, but the "Postscript," "Erratum," and "Table of Tunes" of the second edition are omitted. It is obvious that the plates of music were re-engraved for this edition and the arrangement of tunes was changed, but there are still 24 tunes and the "Rules for tuning the Voice."

Complete copies of the 1746 or fourth edition have been located as follows: American Antiquarian Society; Boston Public Library; Matt B. Jones, Boston, Mass.; Massachusetts Historical Society (2); New York Public Library; Bishop Robert W. Peach, Philadelphia, Pa.; Watkinson Library; and Yale University Library.

There are incomplete copies in the American Antiquarian Society; Newberry Library (2); and Watkinson Library.

In 1760 Benjamin Mecom published a fifth edition of the book in oblong form and somewhat larger in size than the previous editions. The title is as follows:

The/GROUNDS and RULES of/MUSICK/EXPLAINED:
Or,/An Introduction to the Art of SINGING by Note./Fitted
to the meanest Capacities./By Thomas Walter, M.A./Recom-
mended by several MINISTERS./Let every Thing that hath
Breath praise the Lord. Psalm CL. 6./BOSTON: Printed and
Sold by Benjamin Mecom at/the New Printing-Office near the
Town-House. 1760.

The printed portion of this edition collates A to D in 4's, the reverse of D-4 being blank, but there is a

variation in the number of plates of engraved music. Some copies have 20 numbered plates with signature marks running A to E in 4's. Other copies have 24 numbered plates, A to F in 4's.

Another issue of this edition has the imprint "Boston: Printed by Benjamin Mecom at the New Printing-Office near the Town-House for Thomas Johnston in Brattle Street."

This issue is undated and there are a few typographical differences (for example, the top line of the staff in the last column on the unnumbered page of musical characters), but in other respects it is identical with the Benjamin Mecom issue noted above and was without doubt published in 1760. As in the case of the "Mecom 1760" issue some copies contain 20 leaves of engraved music and some contain 24 leaves.

In both issues of this edition the reverse of the title-page contains material headed "Thoughts on POETRY and MUSICK: by Dr. Watts." The "Recommendatory PREFACE" bears the same date as in the earlier editions. The names of the recommending ministers are the same as in the fourth edition and are printed in the same order. The "Preface," pp. iii, is followed by an unnumbered page of musical characters and the "Instructions" fill pp. 1-25. Plate 1 of the engraved music, as in the other editions, contains "Rules for tuning the Voice."

It is supposed that Thomas Johnston was the engraver of the music in this edition, and that the printing of his name in the imprint of a portion of the copies indicates that he was a partner of Mecom in its publication. Plates 1-20 of engraved music are in the same style of engraving, but plates 21-24 are in a very different style, and the engraved portion of the plates is somewhat larger. Plate 23 presents definite indication of renumbering, and the F signature marks are in the same style as those on the preceding plates. It would seem that plates 21-24 are the work of a different engraver, or were made with some other use in

mind. The first 20 plates contain 32 tunes and plates 21-24 contain 8 tunes, a total of 40.

The "Boston News Letter" for March 27, 1760, advertises, "Walter's Singing Book. This day published * * * With eight tunes more than usual. Printed and sold by Benjamin Mecom, at the New-Printing Office, near the Town-House."

The reference to the number of tunes indicates quite clearly that the fifth edition was originally published with only twenty plates of music, and that plates 21-24 were added to unsold copies at a later time. This reference is also reasonably conclusive that the "Mecom for Johnston" undated imprint which also contains "eight tunes more than usual," is not an earlier edition of the work, and the fact that some copies of this imprint had twenty leaves of music while others had twenty-four, also indicates that it is an issue and not a separate edition.

Of the "Mecom 1760" imprint the following copies, complete in all respects and containing 24 leaves of engraved music, have been located: Essex Institute; Matt B. Jones, Boston, Mass.; and Massachusetts Historical Society. A copy textually complete, with leaves of engraved music 1-20, is in the library of Mr. J. Francis Driscoll, Brookline, Mass. Incomplete copies of this issue, none of which have plates 21-24; although in some cases these leaves have been supplied by photostat, are located as follows: Boston Public Library (2); Library of Congress; Yale University Library; and there is also in the latter library an incomplete copy in which engraved leaves 21-24 are present in whole or in part.

Of the fifth edition issued with the "Mecom for Johnston" imprint a copy has been located at the American Antiquarian Society, textually complete and with 24 leaves of engraved music except leaf 21. In the Library of Congress and in the Watkinson Library are copies of this issue textually complete and each containing 20 leaves of engraved music. There is

also a textually incomplete copy at the Watkinson Library containing 20 leaves of engraved music, and other incomplete copies are in the Massachusetts Historical Society and New York Historical Society.

In one of the Watkinson Library copies and in one of the Yale University Library copies typographical variances have been noted in the omission of signature marks on the E signature of the engraved music in the former case, and on the A and E signatures of the engraved music in the latter case.

In 1764 a sixth edition of the book was published by Thomas Johnston. This edition is not noted by Evans. The title is as follows:

The/GROUNDS and RULES of/MUSICK/EXPLAINED:
Or,/An Introduction to the Art of SINGING by Note./
Fitted to the Meanest Capacities./By Thomas Walter, M.A./
Recomemnded by several MINISTERS./Let every Thing
that hath Breath praise the Lord. Psalm CL.6./BOSTON:
Printed for, and Sold by Thomas Johnston, in Brattle-Street,
over/against the Rev. Mr. Cooper's Meeting-House. 1764.

This edition collates A to D in 4's, the reverse of D-4 being blank. In some copies of this book there are found 24 leaves of engraved music and in others there are 44 leaves. The first 24 leaves constitute signatures A to F inclusive in 4's and are marked. Leaves 25 to 44 inclusive are in 4's but without signature marks.

The set-up of this edition follows that of the fifth edition except that the names of Andrew Elliot, Samuel Cooper and Charles Chauncey are added to the recommending ministers.

The 24 engraved plates of music used in the 1760 edition were again used by Johnston in this edition, but it is to be noted that with one exception the plates in copies of the 1764 edition which have only 24 leaves, are identical with the 1760 edition, while in those copies which have the extra leaves of music the name "Tansur" has been engraved upon plates 23 and 24. The exception is the Yale copy which has 24 leaves with the name "Tansur" on leaf 24. In those

copies of the book which contain additional leaves of music, leaves 25-44 differ very materially from leaves 1-24 in the style of engraving, and also differ among themselves. Although numbered in sequence with the other engraved leaves, the numbering was without doubt done at some time after the plates had been engraved. The engraved portion of the plates of the additional leaves is larger than the largest plates among leaves 1-24, and they also vary in size among themselves, this variance being in some instances as great as $\frac{3}{8}$ " in the long dimension, and hardly explainable by uneven shrinkage of paper. Leaves 37-41 contain an anthem, entitled "The Beauty of Is'el is Slain upon thy high Places * * * from Wm. Knapp."

Some of the additional leaves carry the names of the authors of the tunes, as for example, "Tansur," "Tan^s," "Tan^r," "Williams," "Will^s," "Willi^s," "G. W." and "W^m. Knapp."

An examination of English and American music books in numerous collections has failed to furnish a definite solution of this problem, but it appears reasonably certain that Johnston originally issued the 1764 edition with only 24 leaves of engraved music using the same plates that were used in the 1760 edition, and that at a subsequent time, he, or perhaps some other person after his death in 1767, bound up unsold copies of the book and for good measure included music that had been prepared for some other book or books.

Of the sixth edition copies, complete as to text, but with a varying number of leaves of engraved music, have been located as follows: John Carter Brown Library; The Library of Congress; Bishop Robert W. Peach of Philadelphia, Pa.; and Yale University Library, with 24 leaves of engraved music; Boston Public Library with 44 leaves of engraved music; Harvard College Library with $39\frac{1}{2}$ leaves of engraved music, including leaf 44; Matt B. Jones, Boston, Mass., with 43 leaves of engraved music, lacking leaf 44.

Copies of the sixth edition, incomplete both as to text and engraved music, are to be found in Case Library, Hartford, Conn.; Princeton Theological Seminary Library; and Watkinson Library.

This was the last complete edition of Walter's book. In 1764 Daniel Bayley of Newburyport edited "A new and complete Introduction to the Grounds and Rules of Music in Two Books, [Evans 9598]. Book I was an abridgment of Walter and Book II was taken from Tansur's "Royal Melody." A second edition of this book was published in 1766 [Evans 10236] and a third in 1768 [Evans 10829], but thereafter, beginning in 1769, Bayley published "The American Harmony: or, Royal Melody Complete" based on Tansur's "Royal Melody."

In most of the copies of the various editions of Walter blank leaves were bound in and usually manuscript music has been entered upon them.

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