

THE CHURCH MUSIC OF THE OLD ORDER AMISH AND OLD COLONY MENNONITES

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1. CONTEMPORARY USAGE

Both the Old Order Amish (hereafter referred to simply as Amish) and the Old Colony Mennonites have the traditional low-church Protestant attitude toward liturgical music: that it is an integral part of every service but secondary in importance to the preaching of the Word. The use of music is felt to be supported by the Apostle Paul's advising the Colossians to "admonish one another . . . in hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" and by the account in Matthew and Mark of Christ and His disciples singing a hymn upon completion of the first Communion service. The church music of both groups is entirely vocal, musical instruments being in the same category with automobiles and radios. The use of instruments is felt to be an ostentation unbecoming to Christian sobriety and not conducive to the spirit of humility necessary for worship. Further, no justification for the use of instruments is found in the Gospels. Both groups believe their own type of church music to be the best and would not think of using any but their own music in formal church services. A certain fondness for some of the lighter English-language hymn tunes, however, is cherished by many Amish.

Both groups also have no acquaintance with secular music outside of a relatively small number of folk songs. Here the Amish are the more tolerant of the two and do not frown on the informal use of such songs in the home and for recreational purposes. The Old Colonists theoretically disapprove of all music except church hymns. Church leaders of both groups feel that modern, popular songs are sinful and should be avoided altogether, but this attitude does not prevent the sufficiently curious from hearing them. Of "classical" art music as such, both groups are entirely unaware.

Music Among the Amish

Each large Amish settlement is divided into church "districts" which vary in population from ten to forty families. The total num-

¹ This paper is part of a master's thesis on the topic "The Music of the Old Order Amish and the Old Colony Mennonites: A Contemporary Monodic Practice," written by Charles Burkhardt in 1952 at Colorado College. Copies of the thesis are deposited in the libraries of Colorado College, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, and Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. See also his paper on "Music of the Old Colony Mennonites," *Mennonite Life*, Newton, Kansas, January, 1952.

ber of congregations in the United States is one hundred and sixty. In general, each of these has one bishop, two to four preachers, one deacon, and an average number of seventy-five members. The Amish do not have special buildings which serve as church houses but hold their services in members' homes, a practice that has survived since earliest times when the Anabaptists had to meet clandestinely to avoid persecution.

Services are held in a given district only every other Sunday and take place each time in a different home. The Amish are opposed to evening services, midweek prayer meetings, religious meetings for youth, and generally to Sunday schools and have regular services only on Sunday morning which are attended by all, young and old. Before the congregation arrives, the room in which church is to be held is cleared of all domestic furniture and special backless benches are set out on which the senior *Vorsänger*² then places the hymnbooks. Before nine o'clock the congregation begins to assemble, men and women sitting on opposite sides of the room. Meanwhile, in an upstairs room, the ministers hold a short meeting called the *Abrath* (pronounced *öp-röt*) in which the reader of the Scriptures and the preacher of the morning are decided upon and (during the summer) candidates for baptism are instructed.

At nine o'clock the service begins with the singing of a hymn.³ The second hymn of each service, which follows immediately, is always the same one: "O Gott Vater, wir loben dich" (*Ausbund*, p. 770),⁴ also known simply as the *Lobgesang*. After this hymn the ministers usually come down and take their seats, but if they do not, a third hymn is sung. (The *Vorsänger* announces all hymns except the second by page and, sometimes, by stanza.) When the ministers appear, the singing stops at the end of the line being sung. One of the ministers then rises and delivers the *Vermahnung* or *Anfang*, an exhortation of a devotional nature. The entire congregation then kneels, facing their benches, for silent prayer lasting

² *Vorsänger*, "he who sings before (the rest)," a term used by both Amish and Old Colonists to denote the song-leader. His indispensable role in the performance of church music will be described in detail below. A single Amish church may have as many as eight *Vorsänger* of varying ages who take turns leading the singing. The *Vorsänger* finds a counterpart in the "chorister" of those Mennonite groups which, like the Amish, make no use of musical instruments in church.

³ The hymns of Germanic origin used in formal church services are of chief interest here. They are called "slow" hymns by the Amish. However, as suggested previously, lighter hymn tunes of English and early American origin are not unknown among the Amish. These are designated as "fast."

⁴ *Ausbund, das ist: Etliche schöne Christliche Lieder, wie sie in dem Gefängnis zu Passau in dem Schloss von den Schweizer-Brüdern und von anderen rechtgläubigen Christen hin und her gedichtet worden*, thirteenth edition (Verlag von den Amischen Gemeinden in Lancaster County, Pa., 1949), vi & 895 pp.

several minutes, after which they stand while the first Scripture is read by the same minister.

A second minister then rises and delivers the sermon which consists of a reading or a recitation by memory of the second Scripture with "running" comment. The preacher makes almost no preparation for a particular sermon but depends wholly upon immediate inspiration.⁵ An often preached sermon is an outlining of the entire Bible story from the creation to the crucifixion and may consume an hour and a half or longer. To relieve the tedium for the very small children a bowl of cookies is sometimes passed around.

After the sermon the preacher asks for *Zeugnissgeben* (testimony-giving) and all the other ministers and deacons present attest in turn to the truth of the sermon preached and give their approval of it. The preacher then adds a few closing words after which all kneel while he reads from a prayer book. Following a few verses of another song all rise while the preacher reads or recites the benediction. At the words "Jesum Christum" all bow the knee. Before the dismissal, announcements are made concerning future meetings; church business, if any, is also attended to.

After the service, which ends at about twelve noon, the men and boys file out into the yard while the women of the house prepare a large but very simple meal which is then served to all present. After visiting for a while, all go to their own homes, arriving in time for "chores."

About nightfall of the same day the young people assemble at the home where church was held for the purpose of "coupling off." This custom involves a rather lengthy ritual which includes the singing of a number of hymns, both "fast" and "slow."⁶

Amish ministers make use of a list of Scripture readings and hymns which they use as a guide throughout the year. These contain minor variations from district to district and are not regarded as a rule from which no one may deviate. Readings and hymns for certain special occasions are always the same but, other than these, the minister is allowed some choice. Some of the occasions involving changes in or additions to the order of service deserve mention:

- 1) Communion: lasts into the afternoon; during the ordinance of feet-washing stanzas of "Von Herzen woll'n wir singen" (*Ausbund*, p. 692) are sung;

⁵ In many localities it is the custom for the preacher to intone his sentences on a single pitch with a dropping off of the voice on the last word, a practice reminiscent of the tenor and final of the Gregorian psalm tone. This phenomenon is also found among Old Colony preachers.

⁶ See note 3 above.

- 2) Reinstatement of fallen member: this meeting, attended only by church members, occurs after the Sunday morning service; certain Scripture verses are read, questions are asked the fallen one who professes repentance and promises faithfulness, and stanzas thirty-one and thirty-two of "Es hatt' ein Mann zween Knaben" (*Ausbund*, p. 520) are sung;
- 3) Funerals: in the afternoon of any day; special hymns are sung at the service and at the burial, e.g., "Zu sing'n hab ich im Sinn" (*Ausbund*, p. 796);
- 4) Weddings: see below.

Music plays such an important part in wedding ceremonies and in the subsequent wedding feast that more detailed descriptions of these occasions are in order.

On the wedding day, the home of the bride is the scene of much activity, and for that reason the wedding service is never held there but at the home of a neighbor. Like the Sunday service, it usually lasts from nine in the morning to noon. Three hymns instead of the usual two, "Wohlauf, wohlauf, du Gottes G'mein" (*Ausbund*, p. 508), the *Lobgesang*, and "So will ichs aber heben an" (*Ausbund*, p. 378), are sung while the bishop and ministers, in a room apart, counsel the couple on godly behavior. During the service, special Scriptures are read and the sermon includes the marriage story from the Apocryphal book of Tobias. Following the sermon is the marriage proper, performed by the minister. The closing hymn is always "Gelobt sey Gott im Höchsten Thron" (*Ausbund*, p. 712).

After the service, the entire congregation, which on this day may include friends and relatives from other districts, go to the bride's home for an elaborate wedding meal, after which all sing together for an hour or two. The first seven or eight hymns are in a definite order and include "Wachet auf! ruft uns die Stimm'," "Ich will lieben" (*Unparteiische Liedersammlung*, p. 183),⁷ a "fast" hymn to the tune of "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," and "Ermuntert euch ihr Frommen" (*ibid.*, p. 215), a "fast" hymn to the tune of "From Greenland's Icy Mountains." After these, anyone may choose any hymn.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon, the young people, the bridal couple excluded, go out to the barn to engage in "party plays" (a euphemism for "folk dances"). Some play in groups while oth-

⁷ *Unparteiische Liedersammlung zum Gebrauch beim Oeffentlichen Gottesdienst und zur Häuslichen Erbauung*, revised and enlarged fourth edition, S. D. Guengerich, editor-in-chief (Arthur, Illinois: L. A. Miller, 1940). 514 pp.

ers sing early American folk tunes such as "Skip to My Lou," "There Goes Topsy Through the Window," and "Pop Goes the Weasel." Other "plays" are "Six-handed Reel" and "O-H-I-O."⁸ At five-thirty all gather together again for supper, after which a "fast" hymn, "In der stillen Einsamkeit" (*Unparteiische Leidersammlung*, p. 242), is sung to the tune of "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." More hymns are then suggested and sung, following which toasts are offered and jokes told. At about nine in the evening, the young people return to the barn for more games while their elders gossip and occasionally sing a hymn. After the young people return to the house again, the bridal couple, followed by many of their guests, go upstairs to view their gifts. By this time it is near midnight and time for the guests to go home.⁹

Music Among the Old Colonists

Unlike the Amish, the Old Colonists have regular church buildings patterned after their old Prussian meetinghouses. Though most of their dwellings and barns are made of Mexican-style adobe bricks, their churches are sturdy frame buildings. The simple interior of an Old Colony church consists of one large room with a very small anteroom or two. The large room, in which church is held, is filled with long, wooden, backless benches. Men and women never sit together at a church service, the former sitting on the right and the latter on the left facing the pulpit. Above the men's benches are fastened long, thin beams to which short pegs that serve as hatracks are attached. At the front of the room is a platform connected with the main floor by two or three low steps. The pulpit and seats for the minister and some eight *Vorsänger* stand on the platform. The church contains no nonutilitarian adornments whatever.

In the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Durango there are nineteen such churches, each one serving several villages. The *Men-*

⁸ Besides early American folk tunes such as these, the Amish also perpetuate a number of High German and Pennsylvania Dutch folk poems, many of which are sung to one tune or another. These include lullabies, love ballads, and humorous poems, two of which, "Grummbuckliche Männle" and "Lauderbach," are sung respectively to the tunes, "Yankee Doodle" and "O Where, O Where Has My Little Dog Gone?" Though some such poems may be indigenous, many were doubtless the common property of the entire German-speaking population of early Pennsylvania. Since the Amish culture has evolved at a slower rate than that of other groups, it has preserved many such phenomena that have disappeared elsewhere.

⁹ The accounts of the Amish Sunday service and wedding given here are drawn largely from Yoder's *Rosanna's Boys* (Yoder, Joseph W., *Rosanna's Boys: A Sequel to "Rosanna of the Amish."* Huntingdon, Pa.: The Yoder Publishing Company, 1948) and are most typical of Amish communities in eastern Pennsylvania. Certainly not every community's customs are exactly alike, those in western states having been somewhat more susceptible to social change than the eastern ones.

nonite Yearbook and Directory for 1951 lists 5,679 members, three bishops, thirty ministers, and five deacons.

As in Amish communities, regular church services are scheduled for every other Sunday morning, a very few church holidays excepted. As the members take their seats, each one first offers a short, silent prayer before shaking hands with his neighbor. No small children are brought to church; they are expected to receive their religious education at home and in school. When the time to begin arrives, the *Vorsänger* enter and seat themselves on the platform according to seniority. After a hymn from the *Morgenlieder* section of the *Gesangbuch* the preacher enters from an anteroom and says in German: "The peace of the Lord be upon this house." He then makes a few opening remarks and reads the Scripture, after which all kneel for silent prayer followed by a short, spoken prayer by the minister. A long sermon is next read from one of a number of old High German sermon books, the reading being intoned in a manner similar to that of the Amish. Some ministers frequently intersperse their reading with expository comments in Plattdeutsch. Following the sermon is another prayer and final song, selected to correspond with the minister's text. The minister then closes the service and all go to their homes, usually traveling by horse and buggy or in small horse-drawn wagons furnished with seats. Though slightly simpler than Amish services, those of the Old Colonists are approximately of the same length. They begin and end somewhat earlier to allow the women time to prepare dinner by noon.

The order of the Old Colony service does not differ on church holidays except that a second, topical hymn is sung in addition to the usual *Morgenlied*. Some of the hymns traditionally sung on holidays and special occasions are listed here by their number in the Old Colony *Gesangbuch*.

Sunday before Communion:	494
Communion Sunday:	
before the ceremony:	131 or 129
at the bread-breaking:	132
at the passing of the wine-cup:	134
at the closing:	530 or 534
Sunday after Communion:	628
Baptism:	
<i>Morgenlied</i> :	122
after the ceremony:	124

Weddings:	
before the ceremony:	546 or 536
after the ceremony:	537 or 521
Funerals:	
of adults:	703, 544, or 705
of children:	704, 545, or 708
Harvest Thanksgiving:	538

English and American "gospel songs" are almost unknown by these people, though an Old Colonist who happens to hear one is usually fascinated by the harmony and lively rhythm, elements of which his own music is devoid.

The Old Colonists do not make as much of weddings as the Amish. With them, a much more important event is the *Verlaffniss*, or engagement announcement party, which is held at the home of the bride-to-be. Attended chiefly by young people, the *Verlaffniss* is often the scene of folk dancing. Here Mexican popular songs, picked up in towns, from Mexican hired hands or from the forbidden radios, are sometimes played on forbidden instruments. Such dances do not have the sanction of the church, a fact which does not make for a healthy frame of mind among the youth.

2. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

History of Amish Music

It has been suggested by Christian Hege, German Mennonite scholar,¹⁰ that the early Anabaptists sang their hymns to the then current folk tunes in the hope that such a practice might help conceal the contents of the texts from their persecutors. Hege further suggested that, as soon as the threat of persecution had abated, Anabaptist poets based their hymns on sacred melodies taken, for the most part, from the body of Lutheran and Reformed chorales. Whether or not these speculations are wholly correct, it is certain that secular folk tunes and chorale tunes provided the melodic basis for the Swiss and South German Anabaptist hymnology and that these tunes were perpetuated in some form by all Mennonites and Amish alike until the latter half of the eighteenth century. At that time the Mennonites began to adopt newer hymns and hymn tunes from other sources, leaving the Amish to carry on the ancient musical tradition alone.

¹⁰ Hege, Christian, "Melodien," *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, C. Hege and C. Neff, editors (Frankfurt am Main u. Weierhof, Germany: published by the editors, 1937).

In preserving this tradition, the Amish have been aided by their noteless hymnbook, the *Ausbund*, which is one of the oldest hymnbooks still in use in a Christian church. The first edition of 1564 gave no publisher's name for fear that it would be confiscated as Anabaptist literature and the publisher apprehended. The nucleus of the *Ausbund* is fifty-one hymns by German and Swiss Anabaptists who were imprisoned and finally executed at a castle in Passau, Bavaria, between 1535 and 1537. About half of these hymns are by two men, Hans Petz and Michael Schneider, the authorship of most of the rest being unknown. It is understandable that the tone of these poems is sorrowful and lonely and that they often voice protests against the wicked world. Yet they are not despairing but always include a note of hope in Christ. Besides martyr hymns, also found in the *Ausbund* are many hymns on Christian doctrine and early Anabaptist practice along with translations of eleven hymns taken from a Dutch book, *Het Offer des Heeren* (1563). All the hymns are in Middle High German.

After passing through numerous European editions, the *Ausbund* was brought to the New World by the Amish where its use has been continued to the present time. The 1949 edition is numbered as the thirteenth in America. The book has never been revised, though edited versions of some of the texts have been incorporated into other books (see below). The American editions contain one hundred and forty songs in the main part of the book and six more in an appendix. Only a small portion of these are still used in church services, the Amish having gradually dropped most of the texts of a folk nature, such as those which narrate a story, in favor of strictly devotional, spiritual texts. Herein the Amish have probably been influenced by more sophisticated religious groups.

Besides the *Ausbund*, several other smaller hymnbooks have helped to perpetuate the music of the Amish since their arrival in America. One of these, the *Unparteiische Liedersammlung*, or Nonsectarian Hymn Collection, deserves mention. This book was originally a Pennsylvania product, having first appeared in 1860 at Lancaster. The first several editions contained texts taken from the *Ausbund* as well as numerous "fast" songs drawn from the *Unpartheyisches Gesang-Buch*, then the hymnbook of the Lancaster County Mennonites. In 1892, however, the Amish in Iowa promoted a revised and enlarged edition of this book, adding more texts from the *Ausbund* (bringing the total of *Ausbund* texts to seventy-eight) and including many "fast" songs. The purposes of the Iowans were to make up for the lack of good church music for all occasions and

to preserve all traditional Amish music and hymnology. To this end they made single hymns out of fragments of different, partly forgotten texts and even altered the syllabification of certain *Ausbund* texts in order to fit them to known melodies. This revised edition, entirely noteless like the *Ausbund*, also includes a syllable-index in which all texts are grouped according to number of syllables so that all possible combinations of tune and text may readily be discovered and sung. In many Amish churches west of Pennsylvania this book is in wide use in preference to the bulkier *Ausbund*. Like its predecessor, the original *Unparteiische Liedersammlung*, which is still used in Pennsylvania, it is affectionately referred to by the Amish as the "dünne Büchle" (the thin book).

A large portion of Amish music has recently been notated for the first time by Joseph W. Yoder, a Pennsylvanian of Amish background. He induced numerous Old Order Amish *Vorsänger* to sing their hymns for him and later printed his transcriptions of these hymns in book form under the title *Amische Lieder*. His purpose was purely practical, his hope being that the Amish would adopt his book as a preservative measure. This they have not done because of their habitual fear of anything new. The book has been, however, of great musicological value.

Though the *Ausbund* contains no notation, under the title of each hymn is given the name of some well-known tune (well known in the sixteenth century, that is) to which the hymn can be sung. Typical of these tune-suggestions are "Jörg Wagners Ton," "Hildebrandton," "Rosin Farb war dein Gestalt," "Der Schlemmer," "Es ging ein Fräulein mit dem Krug," "Aus tiefer Noth," "Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott," "Nun danket Gott von Herten," etc. The relationship of these tune-suggestions to contemporary Amish music has recently been pointed out by the American musicologist and folklorist, George Pullen Jackson.¹¹

Noting that nearly every syllable of the text of an Amish hymn was sung to a melisma of from three to nine notes, Jackson counted all but the initial tone in each melisma as "embellishment," extracted all the initial tones and found that, when sung consecutively, they formed "organic . . . and intelligible melodies."¹² By comparing these melodies with early German folk songs as recorded in the *Deutscher Liederhort* of Erk and Böhme, he discovered that most of them bore more or less resemblance to one or more folk songs

¹¹ Jackson, George Pullen, "The Strange Music of the Old Order Amish," *The Musical Quarterly*, XXXI (July, 1945), 275-88.

¹² *Ibid.*, 280.

but that, with few exceptions, the Amish were no longer singing them to the tunes recommended in the *Ausbund*. Instead, tunes and texts had apparently shifted and mingled in the course of time—a phenomenon that might easily occur when singers are not bound by notation. Jackson claims, however, to have discovered eight Amish songs which are still sung to the tune-text combination called for in the *Ausbund*.

Issue might be taken with Jackson on his method of extracting the *Urtöne* of the original folk songs. Instead of extracting the *first* tone in each group, it would be more reasonable to select the *predominating* tone, that is, the tone that occurs the most times or is held the longest, be it the first or not. Jackson's method does not take into account the possibility of the first tone being a short ornament of the *Urton*, which is often the case.

Besides pointing out the source of Amish music, Jackson also offers an interesting speculation on *how* the highly embellished versions of the present developed from their relatively simpler ancestors. In his *Musical Quarterly* article¹³ he states:

“. . . it is common observation that groups sing more slowly than a solo singer. And when the group is uncontrolled (by instrument, director, or notation) it drags still more And even worse—the human vocal apparatus doesn't seem to be able to hold to a given tone very long without letting down, breaking over into some sort of pitch variation. Hence the singer, holding as best he can to any given tone while waiting till the group-mind decides to sing the *next* tune-tone, tends to waver up and down If the wobbling about remained the self-relief of one person among the many singing together, it might well be neglected by the recorder of group song. But it doesn't remain thus. The relief of the one tends to become the relief of the many. The many tend to waver along similar lines. Their vocal vagaries become fixed, stylized, incorporated with their “tunes,” and a singing *manner* is born—or evolves.”

This theory suggests that “in the beginning” there existed simple folk songs with generally only one tone per syllable, to which, in the course of time, more and more tones were added until today there are anywhere from three to eight or nine tones per syllable. As this type of “ornamentation,” or rather, “tone-addition,” increased, the *Urmelodien* tended to become more and more forgotten until finally the singers accepted the resultant ornamented forms as new melodies in their own right. Just why these departures from the originals took the direction they did is impossible to determine. Jackson's theory of the psychological process involved is probably as close as anyone can come to explaining how Amish music, and Old Colony music as well, got to be the way it is. Nor is there an

¹³ *Ibid.*, 278-79.

apparent reason why a few tones in most Amish tunes are not embellished at all, since such tones occur with such irregularity and on words of such varied importance. A scarcity of "tone-additions" throughout a given tune, moreover, suggests that that tune is relatively new to the singers or that, for some reason, it has been preserved in more or less its original form. One of these ornate Amish melodies, "Fröhlich so will ich singen," is given on page 53.

This type of "tone-addition" is called "primary" ornamentation in the remainder of this study in order to differentiate it from another type which will be discussed later. Actually, since contemporary Amish singers are quite unaware that many of the tones that they sing are additions, this phenomenon is not ornamentation in the strictest sense. The term is retained here because other writers have used it without fully defining it.

Mention should also be made of another theory of origin offered by the transcriber of the Pennsylvania Amish music, Joseph Yoder. He believes that Amish tunes descend from Gregorian chant, an opinion that is based on the observation that both Amish music and chant are monodic, melismatic, and free of a regular meter. Though Yoder fails entirely to take Jackson's findings into account, he may be (accidentally) right in so far as some German folk tunes are, in their turn, of Gregorian origin, a fact only recently established by musicological research. But the melismas of Amish music have no relation whatever to Gregorian chant, being a much more recent development.

History of Old Colony Music

When the Dutch Mennonites migrated to North Germany, they did no singing at first because of fear of intolerant authorities. Later, when they asked for permission to sing, they were not refused. Accounts mention the use of little Dutch hymnbooks. In 1724, a hymnbook was printed in Amsterdam expressly for the Mennonite churches in Prussia.

Until 1750, the Dutch language was used exclusively in the North German churches. As the change to High German took place, the need for a hymnbook in that language became increasingly apparent and in 1767 the first edition of the *Geistreiches Gesangbuch* (Spiritual Hymnbook) was published at Königsberg. This book consisted of (1) translations into German of already known Dutch hymns, (2) many hymns drawn from other Protestant hymnbooks then in use, the "Hallischen, Startgardschen, Quandt- und Rogalischen Gesangbücher" being given special mention in the preface,

and (3) a number of hymns that had "never been printed before." Subsequent editions contained various alterations.

The *Gesangbuch* contained (and still contains) hymn texts only, the melodies being perpetuated largely by rote. The melodies used were chorale tunes common to all Protestant groups in northern Europe. Since many of these chorales were of secular or Roman origin, it is understandable that the Anabaptists would be as familiar with them as anyone else. The Prussian and early Russian Mennonites sang them without instrumental accompaniment and almost certainly in unison.

The Mennonites in Russia were furnished with Prussian editions of the *Gesangbuch* until 1844, when they began to print their own. Subsequent Russian editions number six, were printed in Odessa and Leipzig, and are all practically alike. Though other hymnbooks were gradually adopted by the more progressive groups in Russia and Prussia, the Old Colonists continued to use the *Gesangbuch* exclusively. After moving to Canada, they had copies printed by John Funk of Elkhart, Indiana (1880), and by the Mennonite Publishing House of Scottsdale, Pennsylvania. In Mexico the book has been printed numerous times by G. J. Rempel of the village of Blumenort. These Mexican editions are virtually identical with the first Russian edition. Besides the Bible, the *Gesangbuch* is one of the very few books that an Old Colonist home is almost certain to have.

As used today in Mexico, the *Gesangbuch* contains 725 hymn texts on all topics related to Protestant Christian practice plus indices of titles, subjects, and Biblical references. There are also lists of the various hymns grouped according to the 163 melodies to which they are sung. The fact that specific melodies were known by number long before the appearance of the first edition of the *Franz Choralbuch* (see below) suggests that the perpetuation of the music was far from a haphazard process in spite of the lack of a printed hymnbook with notes. It is likely that notated versions were available to educated individuals long before notated hymnbooks were printed and in general use.

Because the Russian Mennonites propagated their music largely by memory, many "corruptions" gradually crept into their performance, doubtless by much the same process as primary ornaments were gradually incorporated into the Amish tunes. To counteract these corruptions a Prussian named Heinrich Franz, who taught in the Ohrloff colony schools for a time, procured definitive versions of all the 163 chorale melodies called for in the *Gesang-*

buch and compiled them in a little *Choralbuch*, which was printed in 1860 and 1880 by *Breitkopf und Härtel* of Leipzig especially for the Mennonites of Russia. Both these editions gave the chorales in four-part harmonizations by Franz. More popular with the Mennonites, however, was an 1865 edition, also by *Breitkopf und Härtel*, which gave the melody-line only.¹⁴ This one-part edition and subsequent editions of the same book printed by the Mennonites themselves were long used in the Mennonite schools in Russia and tended to restore the purity of the melodies. The American editions of 1878, 1918, etc., are virtually identical with the first Russian edition. The last so far, designated as the fifth American edition, is undated and was printed by D. W. Friesen and Sons of Altona, Manitoba. The book still finds some use among the more conservative groups in Canada and the *Kleine Gemeinde* Mennonites in Mexico, but the Old Colonists have dropped it.

It is surprising that the very first Russian editions of the *Choralbuch* were accepted and used by the conservative Old Colonists. However, one of the daughter-colonies, Bergtal, did not adopt it. When both these groups migrated to Canada, the Old Colonists, under Elder Johann Wiebe, "returned to the traditional way of singing as they had become accustomed to it prior to the introduction of the *Choralbuch*. The Bergtal group, which had not accepted the *Choralbuch* . . . in Russia, did so in Manitoba."¹⁵ From this it appears that the Old Colonists had been singing in their ornamented style for many years (it is probably impossible to determine how many) before 1860, the year the *Choralbuch* came out, and that this style, or a less extreme form of it, was common to all Mennonites in Russia. Obviously the Old Colonists did not use the *Choralbuch* long enough to forget their old style. Since they migrated to Canada in 1874, they likely discarded the book before 1880.

This action of the Old Colonists is consistent with their belief that the *old* way is best and their ever-increasing desire to preserve the old at any price. At present they continue to perpetuate their old style of singing, "alte Weise," as they call it, in Mexico, the Franz *Choralbuch* with its "Ziffern Weise" singing being entirely unknown among them. Since they have forgotten much of their history, they are unaware that the "Ziffern" style (i.e., with one note per

¹⁴ All of these editions, four-part and one-part, were printed in *Ziffern* notation, or cipher notation, a simple system which employs no notes but in which the number one represents do; two, re; three, mi, etc.

¹⁵ Krahn, Cornelius, *Adventure in Conviction* (to be published in 1953).

syllable) is actually far older than their comparatively recent ornamented style.

The majority of Russian Mennonite emigrants now in Canada and the United States have long since adopted four-part, accompanied hymn-singing as well as hymnbooks printed in modern notation. These Mennonites regard the singing of the Old Colonists as tasteless and corrupt.

Transcriptions of twelve Old Colony melodies ("alte Weise") are given in Appendix A of the thesis from which this paper is taken, side by side with the chorales (copied from the *Franz Choralbuch*) from which they derive. One of these, "Jesu meine Freude," is reproduced here on page 54.

Propagation Techniques

Having to rely solely on their memories to preserve their music, both the Amish and Old Colonists stress the importance of teaching it to the young, the former through repeated hearings in church, the latter in the schools. The youth of both groups also meet from time to time in homes for singing practice led by an elder *Vorsänger*. It requires a great deal of practice for the youth to learn the hymns and few young men ever become proficient enough to lead. A young Amishman or Old Colonist with musical talent is encouraged to practice diligently so that he can eventually take his place as a *Vorsänger*.

To these direct methods should be added the already described hymnbooks which, though they contain only the texts, naturally serve as visual aids in recalling the tunes.

Neither group has any interest in notated versions of their music and do not readily consent to have it recorded.

3. PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Tone Production

All Amish and Old Colony music is monodic and sung by men and women together at the interval of an octave. In performance, neither group makes use of natural voice production; instead, their singing is nasal. This practice might be partially attributed to the fact that many do not open their mouths very wide, since they make no attempt to enunciate clearly. It could also be argued that it is the most natural way for an untutored people to sing. Since no dynamics are consciously observed, all sing at about *mezzo forte* in the middle of their range. The resulting tone quality is quite piercing and resonant.

Responsorial Techniques

Both groups also make use of simple responsive singing between the *Vorsänger* and the congregation. The former, who is always male, sings all the time, the latter making short pauses at specific points.

In the case of the Amish, the *Vorsänger* alone sings the first syllable of each line of the text; the congregation then joins in on the second syllable. Even if the first word of a line is polysyllabic this practice is observed. However, it is more strictly observed in some areas than in others.

In a personal interview, John Umble told the writer of two variations in the responsorial practices which are to be found in some Indiana Amish communities. A *Vorsänger* may choose to start on any stanza other than the first, in which case he sings the entire first line alone, the congregation joining in on the second. Also, some *Vorsänger* quit singing before reaching the end of a line and anticipate the next line before the congregation has quite finished the previous one. These are likely local peculiarities.

The Old Colony practice is slightly different: at the end of each line, the congregation stops singing on the first tone of the last syllable-group (see below), but the *Vorsänger* adds a few more tones of his own composition, after which the congregation, having had plenty of time to catch a new breath, begins to sing again on the first syllable of the succeeding line. Thus there is no break in the actual sound, since the *Vorsänger* waits to breathe until the congregation has begun the next line.

Tempo

Of all the elements which make up the style in question, the tempo is by far the most elusive and difficult to analyze. It can be generally said that the music of neither group is really slow, that is, contains many very long tones. However, an effect of slowness is sometimes given by the fact that a single syllable is often sung to a fairly long melisma.

Though neither music has a regular meter, the general tempo can be determined from repeated hearings. The Krahn recording¹⁶ shows that an average line of Old Colony Hymns 9b and 12 consume from seventeen to twenty seconds. Since the Amish transcriptions¹⁷ are in metrical notation, metronome numbers are given

¹⁶ Recording of two hymns by Cornelius Krahn; taken at North Newton, Kansas, 1945.

¹⁷ See Appendix A of the Burkhardt thesis referred to in footnote 1.

with some of them, but these indicate only a very general tempo. The "beat" of an Amish hymn may fluctuate a great deal within a single line.

No two performances of an Amish or Old Colony hymn are exactly alike. Even repetitions of the same line of melody within a single stanza come out slightly different. This is because both groups practice a kind of improvised ornamentation of which they are at least partially unconscious (see below). Such a practice is typical of many folk styles that are not limited by notation.

4. FORMAL AND STYLISTIC CHARACTERISTICS

Relation of Music to the Text

The texts of Amish and Old Colony hymns are rhymed, metrical German poems. Many, particularly those of the Old Colonists, are traditional Protestant chorales and most of the rest have a formal structure similar to that of the chorale.

Nearly every syllable is sung to a melisma of anywhere from three to nine tones. There seems to be no reason for some syllables receiving more florid ornamentation than others, every syllable, with the exception of the last in each line, being equally eligible for embellishment. In Amish hymns the final syllable of each line almost always receives only one tone; the same is true of Old Colony singing except for the *Vorsänger*, who inserts a short melisma between the lines.

Neither of the two bodies of music exhibits any intentional word-painting.

Secondary Ornamentation and Melodic Formulae

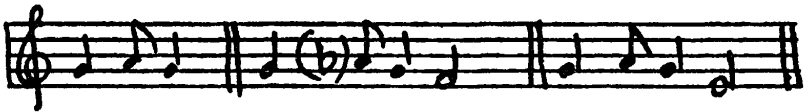
Besides the "primary" type of ornamentation already described in detail, there exists a second type which consists of quite *short* tones. Such ornaments, constituting a hallmark of the styles of both groups, are most frequently inserted by the *Vorsänger*. Because they are naturally more difficult to follow, a congregational singer may not always include as many, depending on his proximity to the *Vorsänger* and the regularity with which the *Vorsänger* sings them himself in successive stanzas and successive performances. It is very likely that they are often added unconsciously and that they are the result of a natural desire to activate what would otherwise be a relatively uninteresting musical line. It is also quite conceivable that they are included for their enjoyable, aesthetic effect, much as in art music. An Amish or Old Colony *Vorsänger*, seeing no relation-

ship between *musical* embellishment and the more obvious adornments rejected by his culture, such as jewelry and fancy clothing, may feel free to insert a little flourish here and there to beautify his otherwise rather pedestrian music. It is no coincidence that this practice is reminiscent of the liberties often taken by operatic singers. It is also of interest to note that much the same type of ornaments (though occurring less frequently) is employed by conservative Mennonite groups in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in their performances of notated versions of four-part hymns and Gospel songs.

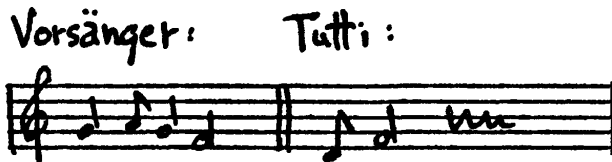
In addition to specific ornaments, the styles of both groups contain certain melodic formulae that constantly recur, many of which, particularly those of the Old Colonists, contain short ornaments. Examples of the ornaments and formulae in the music of both groups are reproduced and discussed further in Appendix C.

In connection with ornamentation, mention should also be made of the "mediants" sung by the Old Colony *Vorsänger* alone. As described earlier, the congregation stops abruptly on the first tone in the last syllable-group of every line, after which the *Vorsänger* moves immediately to a new tone and sings a short mediant. Of the twenty-seven examples of mediants included in the transcriptions, eleven anticipate the tone that the congregation comes in on at the start of the next line. Nearly all the rest move to a tone only one degree away from the first congregation-tone.

Sixteen different mediant formulae are found in the transcriptions. Of these, the following three occur most often:



Only the second of these could be said to anticipate the next congregation-tone. The procedure is frequently as follows:



Mediants used for the same hymn probably vary with individual *Vorsänger*. Each congregation grows accustomed to the formulae usually employed by its own men. The congregation sim-

ply makes its entrance at the proper time without the slightest bodily gesture from the *Vorsänger*, which suggests that the formulae tend to become stereotyped to the point where they serve as easily followed musical cues.

These mediants have something of a counterpart in the cadence formulae of the psalms for the Gregorian vesper service; these cadences are adapted to the first tone in the succeeding *antiphons*. It is of interest that the first two formulae quoted above are, coincidentally, exact duplicates of Gregorian cadences.

Modality

Being strictly monodic, the two musical styles in question lend themselves to modality. Of the twenty-four Amish "slow" tunes transcribed, sixteen are in the major mode and two in the natural minor. The rest are in one or more of the church modes. *Musica ficta* often occurs. Of the twelve Old Colony hymns, seven are in major, one in the natural minor, the rest employing church modes and *musica ficta*.

More often than not, leading-tones found in the *Choralbuch* versions of the Old Colony chorales have not been retained by the Old Colonists themselves, with the result that their ornamented versions are more modal. Possible explanations of this are: (1) the extensive ornamentation may blur the tonality of the *Urmelodie*, decreasing the need for leading-tone functions; (2) a natural feeling for modality on the part of the Old Colonists; (3) possible alterations for the sake of tonality by Franz of what were originally modal chorales; the Old Colonists, relatively unaffected by Franz's book, may have preserved more faithfully certain aspects of the original melody.

CONCLUSION

Besides the Amish and Old Colonists, other contemporary folk groups with no connection to the Anabaptist tradition have evolved similar ornamented styles. Each example of this phenomenon involves an attempt by the group to perpetuate specific tunes by memory over a period of many years. The original tunes become ever slower and more ornamented until they are completely obscured and forgotten. Most significant of all, this phenomenon is a reproduction in miniature of what happened over a much longer period of time to Gregorian chant, which was also subject to ever-increasing ornamentation and was perpetuated in many areas by oral tradition.

Not only does Amish and Old Colony music exhibit a monody unusual in this era of harmony, but also, it is one of the few examples of nasal singing in contemporary Western culture. Its similarity in ornamental and modal practices to Gregorian chant may also offer further support of the theory advanced by some that Gregorian chant was sung *nasally* until the introduction of natural voice production to the continent from Britain in the late fourteenth century.

54

1A1
ULS 21
AUS 385

Fröhlich so will ich singen.

J = ca. 84

Fröh- lich so will ich sing- en,
Von wun- der- lich en Ding- en,

Mit Lust ein Tz- ge- weis,
Dem höch- sten Gott zu Preis.

In Sei- nem Na- men
heb ich an,

Sein Gnad woll Er mir gönn- en.

So g'lingt mirs auf der Bahn

This Amish hymn was transcribed by the writer from a recording made by John Umble and Leland Byler in an Amish community near Kalona, Iowa, in 1939. Though beats were superimposed on the melody to facilitate the transcribing, the hymn should by no means be sung in strict time. A horizontal line over certain notes indicates that those notes should be lengthened somewhat; a slanted line between two notes indicates a *portamento*, or slide. The text is found on page 385 of the *Ausbund*.

82

GS 239
CH 141
(IF)

5. Jesus, meine Freude

Je- sus, mein- e Freud- e!
Ach! wie lang! ach lang- e

mein- es Herz- ens Weid- e! Je- us,
ist dem Herz- en bang- e und ver-

mein- e Zier! Gott- es Lamm, mein
langt nach dir!

Bräut- 1- 2m, aus- ser dir soll mit

auf Erd- en nichts sonst Lieb- er's werd- en

The upper staff of this example gives a transcription made by the writer at a live performance of the hymn in an Old Colony Mennonite home in Chihuahua, Mexico. The singers were the family of Isaac Fehr of the village of Eichenal. The notation is not metrical. The small notes in brackets are the mediant's sung by the *Vorsänger* alone. The lower staff gives the original chorale melody, that is, the melody as it was before the Old Colonists added all their ornaments. Careful comparison of the two will show an unmistakable kinship. The original version is No. 141 in the *Franz Choralbuch*. The text is No. 239 in the Old Colony *Gesangbuch*.



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