

CLARKE UNIVERSITY

STEPHEN PAULUS: *THE ROAD HOME* (2002)
HISTORY AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
TO ITS PARENT PIECE *PROSPECT* (1833)

BY

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many of today's active composers are looking for new ways to expand the voice of modern repertoire in any idiom for which they compose. The Nationalist era (c. 1810-1970) saw a trend among composers of drawing from previous musical styles, namely folk music, to expand it. That trend, continuing now into the twenty-first century, has seen countless sources of material being utilized, and some influences have been lasting. Some notable examples of influences among composers through the Nationalist era include Chopin and his use of Polish folk songs, Ralph Vaughan Williams and traditional English melodies, and Aaron Copland and his emulation of American dance music.

Prior to Copland in the United States, however, developing an American style from American folk tradition was largely avoided by the most important of musical figures in the country (i.e. Lowell Mason) during the Nationalist era. Despite the heavy stress on national identity in post-revolutionary America, this stress was hardly, if at all, present in the arts, at least not until the Second New England School in the late nineteenth–early twentieth century.¹ Even then, the “Boston Six” were emulating European styles,² but bringing a subtle American sensibility to their work. One style in choral composition that went largely unnoticed, if not ignored, until very recently was the tradition of Sacred Harp singing, a style present most specifically in the American deep South, but throughout much of America to varying extents.

The Sacred Harp, the hymnal for which the tradition is now named, began publication

1. Gilbert Chase, *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present, 2nd Edition*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966.) Chase's historical narrative is credited with the coining of the term “Second New England School”

2. Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History*. (New York, W.W. Norton Company: 2005.) “Boston Six” refers to the major members of the Second New England School. These members are John Knowles Paine (1839-1906), Arthur Foote (1853-1937), George Chadwick (1854-1931), Amy Beach (1867-1944), Edward MacDowell (1861-1908), and Horatio Parker (1863-1919). These composers asserted that American composition could utilize European sensibilities while including more adventurous American styles.

during the height of Sacred Harp's popularity,³ but is still being published into the present. The style is also referred to as fasola singing, white spirituals, southern harmony singing, and shape-note singing, the last of which refers to the educational system which was taught through Sacred Harp hymnody. Professional American composers, compilers, and music teachers rejected shape-note singing and the American style of Sacred Harp hymnody during its “Golden Age” (1801-1865). By the time that national opinions of the American folk tradition changed with the likes of Copland and Charles Ives in the 1900s, the Sacred Harp tradition had long since become a fringe culture, as its popularity had declined in the Reconstruction era following the American Civil War. Sacred Harp has experienced a resurgence in recent years, however. The film *Cold Mountain* (2003) used Sacred Harp hymnody in the score. A film entitled *Awake, My Soul* (2006) documents its practice and style in the rural south, and modern choral composers have used Sacred Harp tunes and styles in their work. One such work, *The Road Home* by Stephen Paulus, exemplifies the potential of using Sacred Harp hymns to influence new, innovative choral music.

Sacred Harp hymns, despite their perceived flaws, namely that the Sacred Harp's proper performance practice implies use of an “untrained” sound, and its disregard of common rules of counterpoint, are appreciated by much of today's modern audiences because of their simplicity, passion of style, and for the singers' appreciation for the hymns in performance. The Sacred Harp repertoire is full of examples of singable part-writing, innovative (for the time) chord progressions, and well-constructed melodies. Despite these qualities, this repertoire has been all but untapped in most classical settings. This style could be drawn from through the performance of Sacred Harp hymns in concert settings, using the compositional theory of the Sacred Harp

3. B.F. White, E.J. King, T.J. Denson, and Paine Denson *The Sacred Harp Hymnal*. (Atlanta: Sacred Harp Publishing Company, 1991) The first publication of the Sacred Harp was in 1844.

tradition in new works, or arranging the melodies in modern styles. Stephen Paulus successfully performed the latter.

Through an analysis of *The Road Home* by Paulus, one can see some compositional techniques that stem from the use of Sacred Harp hymns. Some examples are more prominent than others. For example, it is already indicated in the score that Paulus excerpts the melody from the 1833 shape-note tune *Prospect*. While hidden in the sounds of Paulus' lush added-tone chords, the earthy sound of Sacred Harp hymnody are present in the work, and make for a piece that is technically and harmonically innovative, while still maintaining a taste for the simplicity of the American folk idiom. There is much to find in pieces such as this one. Analyzing and comparing some of these newer pieces to their traditional counterparts can be a great source for generative material for composers, performance practice for vocalists, and programmatic influence for directors/conductors.

II. Background

Stephen Paulus was born on August 24, 1949 in Summit, New Jersey. He was only two when his family moved to St. Paul. He received his Ph.D. in composition from the University of Minnesota, and from there maintained an incredible freelance career. In his lifetime, he wrote over 500 works. This massive body of works includes 13 operas, including his most well-known large work *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1982), 55 orchestral works, and over 400 stand-alone choral works.

Paulus, outside of being a great composer, was also a selfless advocate for young composers and a sincere supporter and proponent of the works of his colleagues. He co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composers Forum (ACF), in 1973. Since

its inception forty years ago, the ACF has become “the largest composer service in the U.S.”⁴ Paulus also served on the American Society for Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) as the Symphony and Concert representative from 1990 until his health sharply declined in 2013. Paulus passed away on October 19, 2014, from complications of a stroke which occurred on July 4, 2013.

Paulus' work was largely tonal. He was lauded for his lyricism and his innovative yet accessible style. His music maintained simplicity regarding rhythm, form, and voicing, while his innovation was most present in his unique form of tonal harmony. His harmonic style, at a glance, can be characterized by its frequent alteration between open consonant harmonies and close dissonant chords. Added-tone chords, also known as “fire chords” or “shimmer chords,” were characteristic of his style. While this is also characteristic of the work of many contemporaries, his attention to proper voice leading rules distinguishes his work from many contemporary composers. Even though the harmonic structure of his music (and much of the work of the twentieth century) does not lend itself to classical part-writing rules, his work flowed very logically in each voice, and even when his harmonic development is complex, a closer look at the individual lines reveals that they follow surprisingly accessible patterns.

One compositional technique, especially present in his choral work (including opera choruses), is his use of strophic, homorhythmic writing.⁵ He would often set two or three verses to what was essentially the same musical material. Paulus was a master of text-setting. The texts which he set are not bent to fit his work, but rather his work bends to fit the text. When the stress, rhythm, and meter of a given text shifts from verse to verse (which happens more often than not) Paulus' music does the same. What was a measure of 4/4 in the first verse could very well be a

4. Stephen Paulus, “Online Biography.” www.stephenpaulus.com (Accessed September 8, 2014.)

5. *See Additional Resources*

measure of 5/4 or 3/4 in the second. These shifts in Paulus' music set an expectation, then that expectation is broken in a way that is ear-catching, but subtle. These characteristics of Paulus' music are ideal for the adaptation of Sacred Harp music, and *The Road Home* is a strong example of how to draw from Sacred Harp hymnody in the modern era.

Before comparing *The Road Home* to music of the Sacred Harp, one must first understand commonalities across the body of Sacred Harp hymnody. Sacred Harp can trace its roots to the pilgrimage of European protestants to America in the seventeenth century. When European immigrants travelled to the Americas, nautical technology did not lend itself to transporting anything more than food and survival supplies. However, in the early Protestant tradition (at least in most traditions) hymn-singing was an essential part of worship and daily religious practice. This conflict between culture and resources often meant that early European-Americans had no physical musical resources outside of the tunebook they brought with them on the boat, though many denominations in the early Protestant reformation had already rejected the use of instruments in sacred music.⁶ While original composition in America (at least to our knowledge) would not come for another century and a half,⁷ the early musical culture in America is characterized by the compiling and printing of Protestant tunebooks. From this point, congregations would begin harmonizing to these tunes, either as they were written, or by improvising. Hymns would be sung when a song leader gave a pitch, and the congregation then joined the song leader. "Lining out" was also a popular tradition; the leader would simply sing a line of a hymn, and the congregation would repeat it in order to learn it. This hymn-singing tradition was spawned out of necessity, as music education was also very limited in early colonial life. This lack of education, the tendency of some congregations to freely harmonize,

6. Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998) 182-183, and Crawford, 20.

7. Crawford, 38

lining out, and the reliance on oral tradition were some of the root causes behind the dissolution of the European hymn-singing tradition, and the starting point for what would become Sacred Harp.

Roughly 150 years after the bulk of the early pilgrimage to the United States, the music of William Billings (1746-1800) began to see regular use in congregational settings. This is an important event in Sacred Harp history, as Billings is the first documented American composer, and his body of work became an inspiration for later American composers in the First New England School.⁸ These composers emulated his style, which contributes to his historical significance, but merely breaking ground as the first American composer was a major contribution to the rise of American composition and the Sacred Harp. His style maintained certain European sensibilities (pentatonic and major/minor tonalities, simple counterpoint), but broke many “rules” of the European style as well (frequently used parallel fifths and unequal voicing). This characteristic is not a surprising one, because after generations of European-Americans had come and gone, the “European style”⁹ had significantly morphed. Billings's style was not “well-trained,” nor did he apparently care.¹⁰ Billings's sentiment on composition is also characteristic of the later Sacred Harp tradition.

The “Golden Age” of Sacred Harp took place from about 1800 until 1865, primarily in the South.¹¹ The Sacred Harp's years of prominence can be logically enclosed between the death

8. Chase. The First New England School refers to Billings and the composers who immediately emulated his style in the early nineteenth century.

9. Crawford, 142-145. “The European style” is a broad term used in the 1800s to discuss reformation in music education. The term is primarily associated with the philosophy Lowell Mason, but not specifically accredited to him.

10 Crawford, 41-42. Billings was often criticized for his writing style, but maintained that his style had the rough and ready style that characterized America at the time.

11. Buell E. Cobb, *The Sacred Harp: A Tradition and Its Music*. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001) Pg. 62 “By the time of Billings' death in 1800, fugal tunes were already losing ground in New England.” The Northern and Southern United States were largely divided in their approach to hymnody. The South embraced

of Billings, and the end of the American Civil War.¹² During this time, Sacred Harp hymns gained most of what we now consider the genre's canon. These hymns, both ones by Billings and by his contemporaries, were used in singing schools, where the practice of shape-note writing developed.¹³ While congregational use popularized Sacred Harp in American culture, the use of the hymnody in educational settings solidified its influence through its years of prominence.

Performance practice in the Sacred Harp tradition is a style all its own. To paint with a broad stroke, the choral tradition as a whole tends to aim for purity of vowel for a ubiquitous group sound. Sacred Harp, at least in its purest form, has no such focus. Very simply put, the traditional vocal style of Sacred Harp only requires that you sing the same way that you speak. In terms of tone, the vocal quality is very bright. The bright vocal quality, combined with the overtone friendly writing of Sacred Harp hymnody made the music easy to tune. In addition to the bright tone, Sacred Harp was unique in its treatment of diphthongs, triphthongs, and quadthongs. Sacred Harp encourages blending and equal emphasis to each sound in gliding vowels. Where as classical choral styles would encourage, for example, the word “my,” to emphasize the first vowel (MAH-ee), the Sacred Harp practice is to move through the gliding vowel the same way that we do in speech (mahee). Though the sound of traditional Sacred Harp

Sacred Harp, while in the North it was only present as a fringe culture, as the “European style” was prevalent there.

12. Crawford. The Sacred Harp's rise to prominence was the result of popularization of Billings's style. Following his death, many composers began emulating his style, and the resulting hymns gained major congregational use. It's decline was a result of the assimilation of southern cultures with northern cultures during the Reconstruction era following the Confederacy's loss of the American Civil War.

13. Cobb, 65-66. Fasola singing inspired the shape-note writing systems that dominated American music education in the early nineteenth century. The two major writing systems that sent Sacred Harp into prominence in education were 1) the system created by Andrew Law, and 2) the system created by William Little and William Smith. While the attribution of the origin of shape-note writing is debatable between Law, and Smith & Little, most scholars assert that Little & Smith's system predates Law's system. The general consensus on the years of origin of each are; Little and Smith (1801), Andrew Law (1803), though this has yet to be definitively proven. Though Cobb is cited in this finding, numerous materials can be drawn upon for incite into the historical data of these two systems. Regardless of which one came first, both systems helped place Sacred Harp in a position of prominence in the first half of the nineteenth century.

singing has received criticism in the past and present, those who practice the style often find the untrained, spoken quality of the singing to aid a greater understanding of the text of the hymns.¹⁴

In traditional Sacred Harp congregational singing, singers are arranged in pews by voice part all facing a central space where the song leader stands. The song leader then gives the tempo and key by singing “fa, so” (in the fasola tradition, this is the tonic, and the dominant immediately below) in the tempo they wish to use, then continue giving the beat through the hymn. Once the performance criteria are established, the congregation sings the hymn once through using fasola solfège syllables,¹⁵ then begin the first verse. In contemporary classical settings, the performance practice of Sacred Harp is often combined with more standard performance practice. Even if the vocal style of the Sacred Harp is used in performance, choirs most often stand as they normally would on risers and receive pitch information from a pitch pipe or piano.

Sacred Harp hymnody, in regards to compositional style and theory, bears a great deal of resemblance to standard hymnody. The basics of the four-part structure of each are the same; one line sings melody, the bass line determines chord quality, and the other two lines fill in the rest of the harmonies. They both employ homophony or simple polyphony, and both are strophic. While they are similar to standard hymns, Sacred Harp hymns have a style all their own.

Sacred Harp hymns are written with four voice parts. This is different, from the traditional SATB, however, as the treble (soprano), alto, and tenor may be doubled by vocalists in different octaves. In other words, a tenor or bass could be singing the treble or alto line down an octave, and a treble or an alto could be singing the tenor line up an octave. The only part that is sung solely in the given octave is the bass line. This practice essentially produces a six to

14. Erica Hinton and Matt Hinton. *Awake, My Soul: The Story of the Sacred Harp*. (Awake Productions, 2006)

15. See figure 1.

seven voice harmony,¹⁶ which is a contributing factor to the style's lush sound.

The function of the four voices parts in the Sacred Harp is different from standard hymnody. In standard hymnody, the soprano sings the melody, but in the Sacred Harp tradition, the melody is most often voiced in the tenor line, while the treble line acts as a descant. Tenor and alto lines often serve slightly different function in filling out harmonies in both traditions. One often provides a countermelody or harmony parallel with the melody, while the other stays within a narrow vocal range and remains essentially fixed around a certain pitch, usually the fifth or tonic of the scale. In standard hymnody, the tenor often stays close to fixed so the alto line may provide parallel harmony and countermelody. In the Sacred Harp tradition, where the tenor has the melody, the alto most often stays fixed. The function of the bass line is similar in both styles, but the voice leading in Sacred Harp creates more passing tones in the bass than the voice leading in standard hymnody.

A large fraction of the hymnody in both traditions is pentatonic,¹⁷ and while most standard hymnody that is pentatonic would be classified as such, Sacred Harp hymnody by its composers and theorists was and is always considered heptatonic. No matter what notes were included or omitted, it would always be classified in terms of the standard major and minor scale, so pentatonic and hexatonic hymns would not be classified separately from heptatonic hymns.¹⁸ While there is no confirmed reason why this unity of classification was preferred, its possible that this system of analysis was used for simplification of the fasola system of solfège, which was used in singing schools in the nineteenth century.

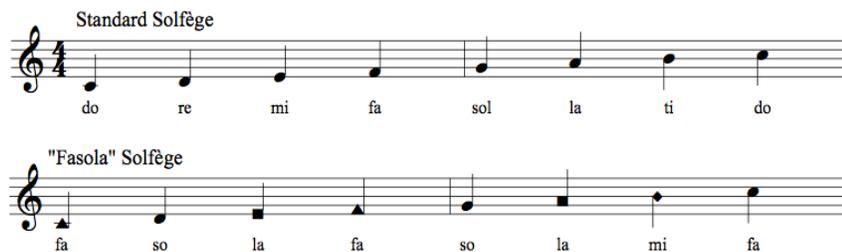
16. Having six-voice instead of seven-voice harmony is common, but neither has been deemed the norm. If a six-voice harmony is used, it's often done by subtracting the treble line in the men's octave, leaving only the alto and tenor lines doubled.

17. See *Appendix 1.2*

18. B.F. White, E.J. King, T.J. Denson, and Paine Denson, *The Sacred Harp Hymnal*. (Atlanta: Sacred Harp Publishing Company, 1991.)

The fasola system differed from the standard seven-syllable solfège because it only contains four syllables: fa, so, la, and mi. This system begins with “fa,” and the four syllables repeat after each half step in the scale (figure 1). The syllables in fasola solfège are also given differently shaped note heads (hence the nickname “Shape-note singing.” “Fa” is given a triangle, “so” a circle, “la” a square, and “mi” a diamond.

Figure 1. Comparison of standard and fasola solfège systems.



Sacred Harp also employs a uniquely simplified collection of chords which fit within standard diatonic scales. Like standard hymnody, the Sacred Harp uses the major scale a majority of the time.¹⁹ The two major differences are in their treatments of minor modes and standard chord usage. Standard hymnody often uses the melodic or harmonic versions of the minor scale, while Sacred Harp hymnody remains almost exclusively within a natural minor sonority, which especially affects the function of the dominant in composition. The Sacred Harp tradition typically contains four chords, while standard hymnody utilizes seven (figure 2).

19. See *Appendix 1.2*

Figure 2. Chord structure in standard and Sacred Harp hymnody.

Standard Hymnody: Major

Standard Hymnody: Minor

Sacred Harp Hymnody: Major Sacred Harp Hymnody: Minor

*3rd omitted

Rhythm in the Sacred Harp tradition is yet another component of the style which remains simple. Sacred Harp hymnody is most often composed in simple duple or simple triple meter. When composed in simple duple meter, the beat is seldom subdivided beyond the eighth note, though dotted eighth – sixteenth patterns have been used sparingly by some composers,²⁰ and the tact is centered around beats one and three. When written in simple triple meter, movement is typically avoided on beat two, with one being the strong beat, and three being the weak beat.

The use of “fuging tunes” (fygɪŋ tūn) is one of the few sources of rhythmic complexity in the Sacred Harp. Inspired by the fugue style in European classical music, the first known examples of fuging tunes begin with Billings himself. The fuging tune is more simplified. All other rules of the fugue, while they *might* be present, are not assumed in the fuging tune. Billings, and later Sacred Harp composers by extension, created fuging tunes by writing a subject, often no longer than two measures, and voicing them in one measure succession (figure 3). While the melody most often started with the bass, and works its way up the voice parts, fuging tunes do not have any set rules on which voice parts state the subject at a set point.

20. See *Appendix 1.7*

Figure 3. Fuging tune in “Sherburne” by Daniel Read.

The an-gel of the
Good will henceforth from

The an-gel of the Lord came down And
Good will henceforth from heav'n to men Be-

The an-gel of the Lord came down and glo-ry and
Good will henceforth from heav'n to men Be-gin and

The an-gel of the Lord came down And glo-ry And
Good will henceforth from heav'n to men be-gin And

Texts in Sacred Harp hymnody come from a variety of sources, but the most current edition of *The Sacred Harp* (1991) clearly shows a majority of the texts coming from eighteenth century poets and hymnodists,²¹ though some texts came earlier, and other texts and tunes had been written well into the twentieth century. The most common hymnodist in *The Sacred Harp* is Isaac Watts. His work is not exclusive to Sacred Harp, however, as his work has been used by standard hymnody in Catholic and Protestant denominations alike.

Numerous meters can be found in the texts of Sacred Harp literature. Standard iambic pentameter, long meter (8888), and common meter (8686) are most common, though an alteration of standard iambic pentameter (6686) is also popular.²²

The decline of Sacred Harp was never absolute. Even after the American Civil War ended in 1865, Sacred Harp traditions remained strong, albeit in far fewer congregations. The tradition was especially in decline in larger cities and towns, but remained nearly untouched in more secluded settlements in the Appalachian region. Jesse Bowman Aikin (1808-1900), a singing-

21. B.F. White, E.J. King, T.J. Denson, and Paine Denson *The Sacred Harp Hymnal*. (Atlanta: Sacred Harp Publishing Company, 1991) See *Appendix 1.5*

22. *Ibid.* *Appendix 1.4*

school teacher, developed the seven-syllable shape-note system which became popular during the decline as a form of cultural assimilation between the Union and Confederacy.²³ This system did not last very long, however, as the music educators of the Lowell Mason school of thought found the system, and the Sacred Harp style in general, to be too crude, and eventually phased it out through the “Better Music Movement.”²⁴

Regardless of the mass distaste with the style in America, especially in the Northeast, Sacred Harp hymns and resources have been well-maintained as a fringe culture. Publications and revisions of *The Sacred Harp*, as well as *Southern Harmony* and *Kentucky Harmony* to name a few others, have been more or less consistent from the nineteenth century until the present. The survival of this style has allowed modern composers to draw from the repertoire. Some composers have begun arranging more technically challenging versions of these hymns, and some are excerpting tunes from the Sacred Harp tradition and using them in uniquely modern ways. Stephen Paulus' *The Road Home* is an example of the latter, and visiting his work could be the first step to a new approach in American Nationalist composition and performance.

III. Analysis

The Road Home can be analyzed in numerous layers. It uses Sacred Harp techniques, and has a healthy number of similarities to its parent piece, *Prospect*. There are numerous subtle stylistic references in the piece that are easy to pass over without taking a careful look. The theory and compositional technique behind Sacred Harp can be noted in Paulus' voice leading and chord progressions. However, the similarities can be difficult to mark without also threshing

23. George Pullen Jackson. *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and "Buckwheat Notes"*. (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1966.)

24. Irving Lowens and Allen P. Britton. *The Easy Instructor (1798–1831): A history and bibliography of the first shape note tune book*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 1953)

out the aspects of the piece that are unique to Paulus' style.

In terms of basic structure, *The Road Home* remains essentially identical to *Prospect*. Both are strophic, homophonic, and have a four-stanza verse with no discernible chorus. The time signature remains constant, as both are in simple triple meter (3/4), though there is an alteration of key signature. *Prospect* is written in C major, while *The Road Home* is transposed to F major.

The text of *The Road Home*, whether intended by the poet Michael Dennis Browne or not, is topically similar to the text of *Prospect*. Both reflect a duality between the fear of the unknown, and the hope for either salvation or comfort. Both texts are composed in tetrameter, but *The Road Home* uses a complex form (a combination of anapestic and iambic), while *Prospect* is written in standard long meter (iambic). The metric feet in *The Road Home* move between sets of three syllables and two, while the iambic feet in *Prospect* only contain two syllables. *The Road Home* has three stanzas, while *Prospect* has four. Over the course of these stanzas, while *Prospect* is sacred, and *The Road Home* is secular, both authors move from acknowledging their fear of the unknown, to following the way to their happy endings.

Prospect

Why should we start and fear to die?
What timorous worms we mortals are!
Death is the gate of endless joy,
And yet we dread to enter there.

The pains, the groans, the dying strife,
Fright our approaching souls away;
Still we shrink back again to life,
Fond of our prison and our clay.

O, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed.

The Road Home

Tell me where is the road I can call my own,
That I left, that I lost, so long ago?
All these years I have wandered,
Oh when will I know
There's a way, there's road that will lead me home?

After wind, after rain, when the dark is done,
As I wake from a dream in the gold of day,
Through the air there's a calling
From far away,
There's a voice I can hear that will lead me home.

"Rise up, follow me, come away" is the call,
"With love in your heart as the only song;
There is no such beauty as where you belong.

Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.

Rise up, follow me,
I will lead you home.”

Looking into the motivic material, Paulus takes the melody from *Prospect* almost exactly as it appears in the original source. There is one addition and one alteration to note, which both serve a meaningful purpose in the modernization of the Sacred Harp tune. Observable in mm. 11-12 in *The Road Home*, and compared to mm. 7-8 in *Prospect*, Paulus exchanges the final two notes of the original melody (figure 4), resulting in a change in the melodic cadence from “re, do” to “do, re.” Whereas G was the fifth of the dominant triad (C), and F was the tonic, the cadence was altered from a hymn-like perfect authentic cadence, to a half cadence, which modern composers, at least more so than early American hymnodists, use half cadences as a way of creating forward motion. While the perfect authentic cadence was a strong choice for *Prospect*, giving a clear definition of formal contour, Paulus' decision to change the cadential figure provides an opportunity to create interest in the work, without taking away the folk-like sensibilities.

Figure 4. The opening melody of “Prospect” and “The Road Home”, with noted alteration.



The additional material that Paulus includes in *The Road Home* is original, but it draws from the previously written material in *Prospect*. The opening measures of *The Road Home* contain homophonic “oohs” based on the third phrase of the melody. This addition can be heard

at the beginning of the piece (mm. 1-4), between verses (mm. 20-24), and in the final measures (mm. 40-44). Paulus takes a selection of notes from this stanza, voices them in the soprano line, and writes close harmonies using the other three voices. *Figure 5* marks the notes which make up the additional material at the beginning of the piece and between stanzas as seen in *figure 6*. As noted in *figure 5*, there is also one additional note mm. 14. The marked G acts as a passing tone in Paulus' harmonization, and an A5 is used as the resolution.

Figure 5. Third stanza of *The Road Home* (mm. 12-16), notes used in new material.

All these years I have wan-dered, Oh when will I know There's a way there's a

*Notes excerpted for new material #A5 added after marked note in new material

Figure 6. *The Road Home* opening statement (mm. 1-4).

Paulus' music remains rhythmically simple throughout, adhering to the Sacred Harp rhythmic rules consistently, with a couple of exceptions. There are a few examples of Paulus altering the rhythmic pattern of *Prospect* to include melodic movement on beat 2, which is

generally avoided in Sacred Harp hymnody, but is used in this example as a rhythmic augmentation of the material from *Prospect*. Also visible in *figure 6*, m. 3 is a measure of 4/4. While this is a conservative example of mixed meter, it is still a technique that does not appear in *Prospect*, nor in Sacred Harp hymnody on the whole.

Paulus' voicing of *The Road Home*, while clearly written with a modern tonal sonority, includes the same functions of voicing as traditional Sacred Harp hymnody. In the Sacred Harp tradition, the tenor carries the melody, the treble voices a line similar to a descant, the bass outlines the chord progression, and the alto fills in the rest of the harmony while centered within a narrow vocal range. In *The Road Home*, Paulus moves the melody of *Prospect* from the tenor to the soprano, and the descant from the treble (soprano) to the tenor. This is not to say that the tenor line in *The Road Home* is the same as the descant line in *Prospect*, but rather that Paulus' tenor line fits a similar function. In fact, the tenor line in Paulus' work contains a few techniques that migrate away from the Sacred Harp style, most notably an accidental (C#) to voice a V/vi chord (*figure 7*). The tenor line also functions in a limited capacity as a faux-bass line. While outlining triads similarly to a Sacred Harp treble line, Paulus voices the tonic in the tenor more often than any other voice, including the bass.

The alto line is the least altered in terms of functionality between *Prospect* and *The Road Home*: both alto lines fill out the harmonies not voiced by the other three voices, remain centered around the fifth scale degree, and stay within narrow vocal ranges.²⁵ The alto line in *The Road Home* does add to the modern functionality of the piece in addition to its traditional elements. When Paulus adds forward motion through thetic moments in the piece, the alto line frequently voices suspensions. While suspensions are not exclusively a modern technique, it is “modern” insofar as suspensions are rare in standard Sacred Harp hymnody (*figure 7*).

25. The alto line in *The Road Home* has a range between G3–A4, and *Prospect* remains between E4–C4.

Figure 7. *The Road Home* mm. 12-16. Tenor accidental (mm. 14) and alto suspensions (mm. 12 [4-3], 15 [9-8], and 16 [9-8])

The musical score for measures 12-16 of 'The Road Home' features four vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are: 'go? All these years I have wan-dered, Oh when will I know There's a day, Through the air there's a call-ing From far a-way, There's a'. Performance markings include *mf*, *broaden*, *rit.*, *dim. . .*, *mp*, and *a tempo*. A tenor accidental is noted in measure 14, and alto suspensions are noted in measures 12, 15, and 16.

The bass, while filling in the tonic when the tenor migrates away from it, also fits an entirely new purpose. The bass line, in mm. 5-12 and 25-32, walks up the F major scale, one scale degree for each chord change. This technique gradually increases the intensity of the piece, and creates harmonic interest (figure 8).

Figure 8. *The Road Home* mm. 6-11. Diatonically ascending bassline.

The musical score for measures 6-11 of 'The Road Home' shows a diatonically ascending bassline. The lyrics are: 'road I can call my own, That I left, that I lost, So long a rain, When the dark is done, As I wake from a dream In the gold of'. The score includes a piano accompaniment with a bass line that ascends diatonically.

The Road Home has three verses. The first two verses of the piece are between mm. 4-20 with a repeat, so the musical differences between them would need to be made in performance by the rhythm of the poetry. The third verse of *The Road Home* includes an additional line, a soprano solo. Paulus frequently includes soprano solos in the final verses of his pieces,²⁶ as an effective technique for harmonic development, and as a way to bring the piece to a logical conclusion. Though this is a noticeable technique in his composition, its never placed without intentionality and thoughtfulness. In *The Road Home* particularly, the soprano solo draws from the voicing techniques of treble lines in Sacred Harp, and from descant styles in standard hymnody.

As previously discussed, the treble line in Sacred Harp hymnody acts as a descant; outlining the chord structure while using larger intervallic leaps than the rest of the voices. In standard hymnody, non-chord tones are more common, and quasi-melismatic motion is used frequently, while Sacred Harp treble lines have fewer non-chord tones and stay more rhythmically aligned with the rest of the voices. The soprano solo in *The Road Home* finds a style that blends the two. For example, in m. 35, a 4-3 suspension and a neighboring tone create passing dissonance as similarly approach in standard hymnody, but from mm. 35-39, the solo returns to outlining the chords which accompany it (figure 9).

Figure 9. *The Road Home* mm. 34-39. Soprano solo and harmonic reduction.

26. See “Additional Resources”

While Paulus' individual adaptations in the Sacred Harp voicing style are simple, the resulting harmonic content is indisputably modern and original. *Prospect* is written in a major key, which would suggest a [I, ii, V, vi] chord structure. However, this particular hymn does not use the minor two (ii) chord, leaving the hymn with only three chords.²⁷ *The Road Home*, however, utilizes a much larger harmonic pallet [I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi: V/vi]. The piece also employs modern techniques in his chordal structure, including secundal (figure 6, mm. 1-4) and tertian harmony (figure 9, mm. 37-39). Paulus' work demonstrates that, even when voicing changes are slight, the resulting harmonic progression can expand the modern tonal repertoire through the lens of an older and under-utilized source, such as Sacred Harp hymnody.

In summary, *The Road Home* maintains characteristics of both Sacred Harp hymnody and modern choral works by taking the Sacred Harp voice leading theory, and reimagining it. This reimagination of the Sacred Harp includes the changing the functional purpose of the voice parts, brief derivations from standard Sacred Harp voice leading to create added-tone chords, and alterations of chord inversions. The voice leading in the piece is simple, but is not crudely composed or unimaginative, as the piece is quite the opposite. In terms of intervallic motion and overall contour, each line of *The Road Home* could become part of a standard Sacred Harp

27. See *Appendix 1.1* for full harmonic analysis of *Prospect*.

hymn, perhaps with the exception of the tenor line when it strays from the key signature. However, when each of these simple lines are placed together, the resulting harmonic progression is a textbook example of modern tonalism. This duality of folk-like simplicity and modern harmonic complexity places *The Road Home* in a versatile position, both in terms of theoretical analysis and concert programming.

IV. Defense

Two major points arise in Paulus' composition of *The Road Home*, and in the critical success of the piece; Sacred Harp hymnody is a viable, yet underused source of compositional inspiration, and it is a part of American folk culture that has potential to make a resurgence in the twenty-first century. Nationalism in the American art forms is much younger than in other Western cultures. While European Nationalism originated in the early-mid nineteenth century, American Nationalism in music was not truly developed until the work of Charles Ives (1874-1954) in the early twentieth century. Even when the work of Ives and Copland became popular in American culture, their work was largely based in the New England tradition.

While the political rationale behind Nationalism in art has dissipated, as the World Wars and the Space Race have long since passed, the legitimacy of American folk traditions in classical settings is no different. Sacred Harp is an important part of American cultural history, and something that the United States as a nation should seek to keep alive in its cultural and musical education. The Sacred Harp is the first truly American musical style. It defined religious culture in late colonial America and was eventually integrated, if only briefly, into the educational system. Letting it fade into obscurity after its recent success (in popular culture and

parts of academe) would be a disservice to American musical culture and education. Does it need to hold the same place of prominence as it did in the nineteenth century southern uplands? No, but it should be a part of the American musical canon.

Its implementation in music education would be reasonably simple. While jazz is an important American style which deserves (and thankfully maintains) a place in national culture, it is far harder to implement and maintain in education; it is an instrumental style which requires entirely separate sets of performers, and an entirely different skill set. If maintenance of jazz in education is possible, so too must be the Sacred Harp style. The Sacred Harp can be taught to and performed by choirs just like any other style. It does require some learning on the part of the conductor and ensemble in terms of educational approach and vocal quality, respectively, but it's certainly an attainable goal for a choir to perform a Sacred Harp hymn.

A major question in composition has permeated discussions throughout the twentieth, and now the twenty-first century: "How can we as composers expand the repertoire? While there is never any single answer, modern adaptation of Sacred Harp hymnody may be one answer. Paulus' work exemplifies this. The Sacred Harp idiom in Paulus' *The Road Home* is the major contributing factor to the work, and its implementation is a strong example of the possibilities of the Sacred Harp style's influence upon American Nationalism. Critical review of music in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is quick to point out over-complication in a large body of works. In order to expand the repertoire, composers often choose complexity. Paulus did not take this route, and it became a contributing factor to his incredible success.

Linda Hoeschler, a former American Composer's Forum executive and colleague of Paulus, said "The composer's music was accessible even as he explored new ideas."²⁸ Marie Spar

28. Dan Olson, "Stephen Paulus wrote and shared glorious music." Minnesota Public Radio News.

Dymit, a former soprano with the Dale Warland Singers said, “One of the many things I love about Stephen's music is that he is not afraid to just make a very simple and yet elegant setting too. It's not all [music that is] just unbelievably difficult.”²⁹ These kinds of descriptions of Paulus' work are common, and his drawing from various folk idioms helped to identify this simplistic innovation.

The idea that complexity is the route to finding new music often leads to a gap between what the composer wants, and what a performer can do. This is not to say that there is no validity in complex music, but simply it is not the only valid source of innovation. The analysis of *The Road Home* provides insight into how the composition community can draw upon simple sources, in this case Sacred Harp singing, that are innovative because they are relatively untapped resources, thus being innovative and accessible if adapted into modern composition.

V. Conclusion

The Road Home is a wonderful piece that has received critical acclaim in both compositional and choral communities.³⁰ The strength of this piece is not limited to its stand-alone beauty, but it also provides a great example of twenty-first century American Nationalism that exemplifies the beauty of simplicity, and the untapped potential of America's first original musical genre. Any technique discussed above about this piece could easily be used as generative material for composers looking to expand the repertoire of choral music in a similar way. Drawing from the Sacred Harp body of work would serve both as a logical expansion of the repertoire, and as a reference to the repertoire that shaped colonial America. Sacred Harp hymnody deserves a place in the American canon, both as a style in and of its own, and as a

29. Dan Olson, “Stephen Paulus wrote and shared glorious music.” Minnesota Public Radio News.

30. Dan Olson, “Stephen Paulus wrote and shared glorious music.” Minnesota Public Radio News.

source of folk traditions in the American Nationalist style.

The Road Home maintains an interesting duality. One that takes a deceptively long time to truly analyze. From a pure listener's standpoint, it is clearly within the realm of modern tonalism, and perhaps one of the strongest examples of the current era. There is something more though. It is not *just* a modern tonalist piece. *The Road Home* combines nineteenth and twenty-first century styles in a nearly seamless fusion that separates the piece, and most of Paulus' work, from much of the rest of the twenty-first century choral repertoire. Emulating this style, or even approaching less familiar folk music in a similar way, could provide a plethora of untapped material for composers in order to create fresh and interesting work.

Sacred Harp hymnody is not necessarily the end-all be-all answer to novel ideas in music, but it is a part of American history and culture that should not be abandoned. The work of Lowell Mason and the “Better Music Movement” paved the way for music for centuries, and of course we are still seeing the fruits of their labor active in choral music (both in terms of performance and education) in the present, but their work led to the decline of a style that is distinct, interesting, and innovative for its time. Society is not beholden to styles that are not successful or important, but the survival of Sacred Harp through the years proves its importance in the American canon, and deserves a place in American music education, culture, and composition.

Annotated Bibliography

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An obituary for the composer, Stephen Paulus. It provides more firsthand accounts of the life of the composer, the opinions of his life and work from colleagues and contemporaries, and insight on his initial biographical information.

Appendix

1.1 – Harmonic analysis of *Prospect*

30

PROSPECT. L.M.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." -- Rev. 14:13.

C Major Isaac Watts, 1707.

Graham, 1835.

1. Why should we start and fear to die? What tim'rous worms we mor-tals are! Death is the gate to end-less joy, And yet we dread to en-ter there.

2. The pains, the groans, the dy-ing strife, Fright our ap-proach-ing souls a way; And we shrink back a-gain to life, Fond of our pris-on and our clay.

3. O if my Lord would come and meet, My soul would stretch her wings in haste, Fly fear-less through death's i-ron gate, Nor feel the ter-rors as she passed.

4. Je-sus can make a dy-ing bed Feel soft as down-y pil-lows are; While on His breast I lean my head, And breathe my life out sweet-ly there.

C: I vi V I vi V vi V vi V I vi V I vi I vi I V I vi V I
 (6/4) (5/3) (6) (5/3) (6/4) (6/4) (5/3) (6) (5/3) (6) (5/3) (6/4) (6/4) (5/3) (5/3) (5/3) (6/4) (6) (5/3) (6) (5/3) (6) (6/4) (5/3) (6/4) (6/4) (5/3) (5/3)

1.2 – Keys in hymns from *The Sacred Harp* (King)

Major Keys											
C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B

Minor Keys											
Cm	Dbm	Dm	Ebm	Em	Fm	Gbm	Gm	Abm	Am	Bbm	Bm

1.3 – Time Signatures in *The Sacred Harp*

1.4 – Poetic Meters in *The Sacred Harp*

1.5 – Hymnodists/Lyricists in *The Sacred Harp*

1.6 – Composers of *The Sacred Harp*

1.7 – Metric subdivisions in *The Sacred Harp*

Additional Resources

Additional Paulus pieces following the form of *The Road Home*.

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