

On Performing the Music of William Billings

Part I

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During the past several years American Choral conductors have shown considerable interest in performance practices. Sessions on authentically performing music from each of the major periods have been featured at conventions. Articles concerning performance practices have appeared in abundance and our concern has blossomed into a healthy state of awareness that each style, period and, in fact each composer has certain characteristics and certain expectations which we must reveal to our singers and audiences. However, with regard to American music, sessions and articles on our native composers have been scarce. As the Bi-Centennial draws near we must turn our attention to a more accurate understanding of the intentions of our early musical traditions. This article will focus attention on the best known and first outstanding composer of our country — William Billings.

Many readers will probably be familiar with Billings through his best known pieces: *Chester*, *Modern Music*, *When Jesus Wept* and *David's Lamentation*. Others will have had the pleasure of performing some of the recently uncovered gems which have made their way into modern editions. Here will be provided information concerning performance practices which has not been generally available since the time when Billings published his instructive prefaces and music. We will attempt to let Billings speak for himself, undergirding his perceptive and humorous comments with our practical suggestions based on the delightful experience of having performed his naive and vigorously effective choral music.

One question which must be briefly but squarely faced is: "Just how authentic must a performance be?" This is largely a matter of personal taste. It is

impossible to exactly duplicate the conditions of a by-gone era no matter how hard one tries — simply because that environment and that particular frame of mind have passed on. Then too, some conductors will plead that they do not wish to suffer from the inadequacies of that era. They, in short, want the best of today, in performing the music of yesterday. But whatever one's position, it is impossible to give an honest interpretation until one knows the intentions of the composer, no matter how the interpreter may choose to bend or bow to them. While we feel it is not necessary that every detail of Billings' instructions be carried out to the letter, we do plead that the spirit which breathes through his informative words will permeate present-day rehearsals and performances of his music.

ABOUT BILLINGS AND HIS STYLE

The extant biographical date on Billings is somewhat sketchy. He was born in Boston in 1746, and was a tanner by trade. Billings became an avid and enthusiastic Singing School teacher and a composer who produced six song books filled with his own compositions. (See bibliography.) His rugged and independent ways, inspired by the early colonial environment, typify the American pioneer struggling to establish his own identity. He was a friend of Paul Revere and Samuel Adams. His famous song *Chester* became the rallying cry of the Colonial Army. In spite of his unattractive personal appearance he had a sense of humor and a vibrant personality which attracted people to his Singing School session. Though he died a pauper in 1800, he was a much celebrated composer-teacher and the best known musician of his time.

The nature of his music makes it as ideal for today's school, church and festival choirs as it was for the singers of his day. This music, which appears to be simple, is, in fact, the work of an exacting, self-taught craftsman. The **melodies**, often suggestive of folksong, contain intervals which create vitality. The rollicking **rhythms** frequently resemble dance patterns. The **harmony** is full of open fifths, parallel fifths and octaves, and occasional dissonant pungen- gencies which add attractive spiciness both to the singing and listening experience. These dissonances often result from the fact that a Billings' melody was always superior to his harmonic considerations. The **form** is rudimentary but powerful; the frequent use of repeated sections builds familiarity and a comfortable feeling of solidarity. The use of **changing meter signatures and tempi** is another feature of variety in Billings' extended compositions. His intention was to produce music which people would enjoy singing; he aimed his music not toward the sophisticated, trained musician, but to the common man who desired to learn the art of music through song.

ASSIGNMENT OF SINGERS TO THE VOCAL LINES OF THE SCORE

Billings was known to have arranged concerts and served as a church choir



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director — but primarily his music making was done in his Singing School sessions. He established rules in operating the sessions (most of which make good sense for choirs to this day) pointing out that "the well being of every society depends, in a great measure, upon GOOD ORDER." Singers were admonished to be punctual (else the clerk imposed a fine), to not whisper or laugh, to refrain from levity "both in conduct and conversation while singing sacred words". (SMA, 16-17.) (All footnotes of Billings' quotations will use the initials of the appropriate song book, followed by the page number from which the quote is taken. See bibliography.)

That he encouraged individuals to participate in singing may be seen from this comment: "... he who finds himself gifted with a tunable Voice, and yet neglects to cultivate it ... hides in the Earth a Talent of the highest Value ..." (NEPS, 2.) He advised his singer as to the proper part they should sing in this way:

Sing that part which gives you least pain otherwise you make it a toil of a pleasure: for if you attempt to sing a part which is almost (or quite) out of your reach, it is not only very laborious to the performer; but often very disagreeable to the hearer, by reason of many wry faces and uncouth postures, which rather resemble a person in extreme pain, than one who is supposed to be pleasantly employed. (SMA, 14.) The singers were cautioned, however, to ... submit to the judgment of the master, respecting the part they are to sing, and if he should think fit to re-

move them from one part to another, they are not to contradict, or cross him in his judgment . . . it is morally impossible for him to proportion the parts properly, until he has made himself acquainted with the strength and fitness of the pupils voices. (SMA, 17.)

Each performer was to thoroughly learn his part and be "fully qualified for a leader." (SMA, 15.)

No doubt the size of Billings' choruses varied greatly, but he made clear his expectation as to the balance within the choirs and the type of tone quality he expected of each individual voice part. Composers of this period set their vocal music in open score for a mixed chorus in four parts: Treble (Cantus), Alto (Counter), Tenor or Bass. Billings attached varying degrees of importance to each of the above parts and gave specific instructions concerning the type of sound he expected from each section.

Billings frequently indicated the tremendous importance of the Bass part.

One very essential thing in music, is to have the parts properly proportioned; and here I think we ought to take a grateful notice, that the Author of Harmony has so curiously constructed our Organs (voices), that there are about three or four deep voices suitable for the Bass to one for the upper parts, which is about the proportion required in the laws of Harmony . . . (SMA, 15.)

. . . let the Three upper Parts be Sung by the best Voices upon Earth, and after the best Manner, yet without a sufficient Quantity of Bass, they are no better than a Scream, because the Bass is the Foundation, and if it be well laid, you may build upon it a Pleasure. Therefore to have good Music, there must be Three Bass to one of the upper Parts. (NEPS, 18.)

. . . you may select one of the best tunes that was ever composed, and let the upper parts perform without the bass, the noise would be almost intolerable, but, vice versa, let one of the upper parts be taken off and the bass substituted in its stand, the concert would be agreeable, although it would be diminished from a full chorus. (CH xxx.)

He speaks also of "the Ground Bass", which apparently refers to those notes written around the bottom line of bass clef (G) and as far down as low C. Frequently these low notes are merely optional octave doublings of which singers may "choose" if the bass section is large enough.

. . . six or seven of the deepest Voices should sing the Ground Bass, which I have set to most of the Tunes in the following Work, (NEPS) and have taken Care to set it chiefly in the compass of the Human Voice, which if well sung together with the upper Parts, is most Majestic, and so exceeding Grand as to cause the Floor to tremble,* as I myself have often experienced.

*All Notes that descend below G Gamut in the Bass, occasion an agreeable Tremor. But in my Opinion double D, viz (an Octave below the Middle Line of the Bass) is the most commanding and Majestic of any Sound in Nature. (NEPS, 18.)

Billings defines Bass in his "Musical Dictionary in SMA as: "the lowest or foundational part; the most majestic, deep, and solemn." (SM,15.)

The Tenor, he calls "the second part above the Bass, the leading part in the church". (SMA, 15.) This refers to the fact that the tune or air was almost

invariably assigned to the Tenor part and not to the soprano. It seems clear that Tenors were not encouraged to sing in *faisetto*, for he discusses the "Feminine" voice and concludes that "a Man cannot sing a proper Treble without counterfeiting A Woman's Voice, which is very unnatural, and in the Ears of most Judges very Disagreeable . . ." (NEPS, 11.) This is further confirmed in his description of the Tenor voice as being: "full, bold and manly". (SMA, 15.)

The Alto (Altus) was most likely sung by men's voices in Billings' time, creating the sound of a "first tenor part" or a "counter tenor part" above the tenor melody. Hans Nathan states that, "Women normally sang only the treble. The rest of the setting was for male voices,

including the counter (the modern alto)." (CHF, xiii.) James Thompson, however, believes that "Women sang the treble and counter (alto) parts, but men often sang with the altos." (7, 70.) (Footnotes taken from sources other than Billings' song books will use this abbreviated form: 7, referring to bibliography entry number 7, 70 meaning page 70.) The range of the part is generally from middle c to b in the treble staff, which would be attainable by high male voices, especially if pitches were lower than the present-day pitch. (5, 99.) Experience has shown the authors that the part comes alive when sung by men, or men and women together. Billings seems to confirm this by saying that the Counter should be "loud, clear, and lofty". (SMA, 15.)

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BILLINGS . . .

The **Soprano** (Treble) was sung chiefly by women, but Billings' definition raises the question of the possible participation of boy sopranos: "the 3rd Octave above the Bass adapted to feminine voices, in either sex (italics ours), confin'd to the G cliff." (SMA, 27; NEPS, 21.) Perhaps he is again referring to the matter of tenors singing soprano in falsetto, but since he specifically disapproved of this practice it seems probable that he was referring to boy sopranos. If the Singing School was composed of persons of all ages, perhaps and sons of some participants came and took part, filling out the treble line with their unchanged voices. Billings' description of the Treble as "soft, shrill, and sonorous", leaves this a plausible possibility. (SMA, 15.)

We may assume that the following text, written by the Rev. Dr. Byles, in some way reflects Billings' personal feelings about the characteristics of the various voice parts. Billings quoted it **toto**, in large print, in the introductory pages of NEPS and he set the text to music in his delightful composition, **Consonance**.
Down steers the Bass with grave Majestic Air,
And up the Treble mounts with shrill Career;
With softer Sounds, in mild Melodius Maze,
Warbling between the Tenor gently plays;
But if th' aspiring Altus join its Force,
See! like the Lark, it Wings its tow'ring Course;
Through Harmony's sublimest Sphere it flies,
And to Angelic Accents seems to rise;
From the bold Height it hails the echoing Bass,
Which swells to meet, and mix in close Embrace.
(NEPS, 10.)

Though we have drawn a clear distinction between the four sections of the choir, in fact, there was a considerable amount of flexibility as to which voices actually sang each vocal line. For example, it was common to have a few sopranos sing the tenor part an octave higher. Tenors could also sing the soprano part an octave lower. When both doublings were used, Billings felt:

a tune so sung, (although it has but four parts) is in effect the same as six. Such a conjunction of masculine and feminine voices is beyond expression, sweet and ravishing, and is esteemed by all good judges to be vastly preferable to any instrument whatever, framed by human invention. (CH, 15.)

Doubling the soprano part an octave lower with tenor voices created unwanted inversions: this doubling was to be dropped. (CH, 15.) Thus Billings expected a six-part (or five-part) texture in the performance of his ostensibly four-part music. Experience has shown the authors that the addition of a very few sopranos to the tenor part (an octave higher) is satisfying. The addition of tenors to the soprano part, however, seems merely to muddy the texture while at the same time robbing valuable tenor voices needed on the tune. Having altos sing the soprano part an octave lower gives the same general effect without weakening the tenor section. (In the NEPS Billings even suggests that some tenors may also double the **Alto** part an octave lower! (NEPS, 21.) This remark, from his first book is not retained in his subsequent

books; perhaps he abandoned this idea in later years.)

It is possible that in the imitative sections (which Billings called **fuging tunes**) that the doubling should be dropped in order to clarify the texture. Billings does "personality" as outlined above, will make many Billings passages come alive.

As a final plea to rethink choral sonority and balance when performing Billings this final, important quotation, is offered: "Suppose a company of Forty People, Twenty of them should sing the Bass, the other Twenty should be divided according to the Discretion of the Company into the upper Parts . . ." (NEPS, 18.)

CHOOSING NOTES

Beyond this six-part texture, Billings occasionally thickens the texture even more by the addition of "choosing (chusing) notes". These were most often added to the bass line, giving the appearance of a baritone and bass division. The alto part frequently had choosing notes as well, usually at cadence points. Rare instances of choosing notes occur in the treble. The tenor line, occupied with its melodic function never has such added notes. These choosing notes are not obligatory but may, as the term implies, be chosen for inclusion or not, depending on the size of ensemble and conditions of the specific performance. Billings spelled it out this way:

When you meet with two or three notes standing one over the other, they are called chusing notes, and signify that you may sing which you please, or all, if your part has performers enough, and remember that they add not to the time, but to the variety. (CH, xi.)

While quartet performances of Billings' music was not considered the normal in his time, one of the authors has greatly enjoyed performing this music as bass in a mixed quartet (SATB). In this situation it was essential to "choose" which notes would be performed when a chord of five or more notes occurred. Barbour's suggestion with regard to the bass part seemed workable:

It is a sound rule, although not without exceptions to say that, where the intervals are not octaves, the upper choosing notes in the bass will produce a stronger effect than the lower. (1, 122.)

When the alto of the quartet had to choose between singing the third or the fifth of a final chord, we found the open fifth generally more "authentic" and satisfying. With a full choir, however, singing all of the choosing notes gives a welcome sonority. Barbour cites an example (**Hanover**) in which as many as eight parts result if all choosing-notes are sung. (1, 122.)

USE OF INSTRUMENTS

Billings does not clearly state whether or not instruments were used to accompany his compositions. Numerous writers on Billings credit him with introducing the cello into church services. Barbour suggests that the low D's which occur so frequently in bass octaves "surely needed instrumental performance". In an earlier quoted section, Billings specifically stated that the **Ground Bass** had been set "chiefly in the compass of the Human Voice" (italics ours), which implies that part of the composition did not lie in the range of the human voice. Thus, it would appear that the Bass part may have been doubled by a cello when avail-

able. Thompson suggests that: "The use of instruments during singing school sessions seems to have been a regular occurrence." (740.) Further Thompson suggested that instrumental doubling was characteristic of church situations:

Choirs were accepted generally after the Revolution . . . (and) As churches began to accept choir performances in the worship services, they began to provide space for the singers and the instrumental band that accompanied them . . . The instrumental band usually consisted of clarinet, flute, and violoncello, which was called a bass viol. (7, 190-191.)

Billings himself gives us a clue as to the possible use of instruments in his music. In "O Thou To Whom All Creatures Bow" there is a textless four measure section (tenor and bass lines only) which he marked "Sym. (Symphony) to introduce B flat." (CHF, 113.) Since this is an Ordination Anthem it may be an exception, however, for it would have almost certainly been performed in a church where an organ was perhaps available. Billings shows further awareness of instrumental possibilities when he defines the term **Symphony** as "an air, which is played, or sang without words, before the song begins, and sometimes such airs are in the middle of a peice (sic) and at the end." (SMA, 27.)

Next we must deal with the question of the possible use of organ accompaniment in present-day performance of Billings' music in light of our quest for authentic performance. In 1770 he defined the organ as "the grandest of all Wind Instruments." (NEPS, 21.) Eight years later he pays it even greater tribute by calling it "the grandest of all Musical Instruments". (SMA, 26.) Moreover, he goes to the trouble to include in his preface a definition of Voluntary: "an Air which is played on an Organ, it is performed in Church before service begins, to soothe the minds and calm the passions of the Audience, for the fit worship of God." (SMA, 27.) In discussing the pitch-pipe he comments that "most of the pitch-pipes in the country are set too high, they should be regulated by an Organ." (SMA, 26.) Finally, in his Thoughts on Music he comments: "Let all Parts close in a proper Key, and a full Organ, which will yield great delight both to the Performers and Hearers." (NEPS, 18.) (Note: Perhaps this reference means merely "full voice", for elsewhere the human voice is called an **Organ**.) (SMA, 14.)

Perhaps the most practical answer to the question of whether or not to use organ or doubling instruments will come from the individual situations of the reader. If a choir needs an organ to adequately maintain pitch, then it is probably better to use it. If a cellist or string bass player (or even a trombonist) happens to be available, use them to "beef up" the bass part. Should the conductor find that the tenor part when doubled by a trombone, bassoon, viola or English Horn it is thus given the prominence which the tune deserves, then we cannot but think that William Billings would approve.

In spite of the above evidence in favor of instrumental accompaniments the a cappella performance was probably the norm in view of Billings' frequent references to the "universally known pitch pipe." (CH, xxvi.) A well-trained choir singing his music in this manner can make instrumental doublings or the use of the organ seem quite unnecessary.

THE USE OF SOLOISTS

Another perplexing question in regard to performance practices is the use of soloists. As one becomes familiar with the music of this remarkable American musical pioneer one notes the frequent occurrence of passages in which only a single voice part is engaged. Then too, "duets" and "trios" are common. The question is: did Billings intend to have these sections sung by soloists? Perhaps the "leaders" to which he makes frequent reference were indeed soloists. That there were such "leaders" is attested by this comment:

Let each performer attend critically to the strength of his own voice and strive not to sing louder than the rest of the company, unless he is in the place of a leader. (SMA, 15.)

The Musical Dictionary gives us another interesting clue about leaders with this entry: "ACCENTOR, the leader or Chorister who is expected to pronounce distinctly. (SMA, 21.) A later entry defines "SOLO or Solus" as "either part alone". (SMA, 27.) Every performer is encouraged to be "fully qualified for a leader" (SMA, 15.) and Billings goes to great lengths to warn the younger Pupils, that it is deemed a point of ill manners to invade the province of another, by singing a Solo, which does not belong to your part, . . . for you to sing, when the author forbids you singing, is both unmannerly, and ostentatious. (SMA, 16.)

The only specific comment Billings makes about solo singing is the following frequently cited quotation:

Much caution should be used in singing a Solo, in my opinion Two or Three at most are enough to sing it well, it should be sung as Soft as an Echo, in order to keep the Hearers in an agreeable Suspense till all the parts join together in a full Chorus, as smart and strong as possible. Let all Parts close in a proper Key, and a full Organ, which will yield great delight both to the Performers and Hearers.

This gentle Reader you have my Sentiments upon the Matter.

No Doubt they're Faulty, pray excuse 'em,

If you like 'em prithe use 'em, Criticks, be Tender, don't abuse 'em.

Yours, W. B.

Most writers who have used this quote have not given full quotation including the plea contained in the clever little three line poem. Perhaps too much emphasis has been placed upon the words "Two or Three at most". One must know the size of the group which Billings termed the "full Chorus" in order to determine the appropriateness of two or three soloists. And perhaps the words "at most" could even indicate that one person is enough to sing a solo. Why, one wonders, did he bother in the same Volume to include a definition of "voice solo"; "A Solo to be performed by a single Voice?" (NEPS, 21.) And does the phrase "as Soft as an Echo," merely indicate a dynamic contrast with the tutti sound of the full chorus, rather than a piano for each "solo" passage?

It is the author's opinion that when fewer than four parts are indicated the conductor should carefully consider the possibility that this was intended for "soloists" or "leaders" whether this be "two or three at most" or individual singers. As with so many aspects of performance practices, this is a matter of personal taste and each conductor

must cope with it in his own way. Two examples in which the authors feel solo voices are preferable to "two or three at most" are, *I Am the Rose of Sharon and Consonance* (Walton #2201 and #2212). In the former there seems to be a dialogue between the King and his lover which is best portrayed by individual voices. In *Consonance* a more empathetic response with the audience is created when soloists rather than small groups of singers bring to life the text of Dr. Byles as quoted above. The "tutti" entrance which follows these opening solos then does indeed sound "as smart and strong as possible".

In Psalm 93 (NEPS, 24.) there appears a passage which lends some support to the position that Billings expected some of his music to be sung by soloists or a small group. On page 32 the term *Dux* appears between the bass and tenor at the beginning of a fuguing section. *Trio* is written above the alto at this entrance and the term *Quarta* appears above the soprano entrance. (NEPS, 32.) His definitions in the same volume do not necessarily support the idea that this section is for soloists, however:

Dux — the leading Fuge or Part. (NEPS, 20.)

Tre or Trio — Three Parts. (NEPS, 21.)

Quarta — Four Parts in Score.

But the most interesting discovery in this anthem is the occurrence in two places of the term *Tutt*. This term he defines as "All Voices together". (NEPS, 21.) In each instance the word appears over a homophonic section following a fuguing section. It is tempting to conclude from this that soloists were to sing the fuguing section here and the full chorus was to enter at the word *Tutt*.

USE OF THE PITCH PIPE AND PROBLEMS OF TRANSPORTATION

Billings very definitely gave pitches by means of a pitch pipe, which he said was "so universally known and acknowledged, that it would be needless for me to engross the reader's time in proving a thing which already granted." (CH, xxvi.)

Billings' long and detailed definition of Pitch Pipe in the Musical Dictionary is worth quoting in full because of its clarity of description, its practical instructions and its comment on the pitch levels in his time.

Pitch Pipe, an Instrument to give tunes a proper pitch, consisting of, 1st the Chest, or hollow Tube; 2nd the Register, or Slider, on which the letters are marked, which being pushed in, or drawn out of the Chest, untill you get to the letter; then by blowing gently, you obtain the true sound. Observe not to blow too hard for that will cause a false sound; nor too weak, for that will emit no sound at all.

N.B. most of the Pitch-pipes in the country are set too high, they should be regulated by an Organ.

He has even inserted a drawing of a pitch-pipe in NEPS (p. 4) and frequently refers to this device for setting the tune in the proper pitch.

Next we must concern ourselves about the matter of transposing his music to other than the indicated pitch. It may at first seem he insisted upon having his pieces sung in the key in which he set them, but other evidence shows that he was really quite open-minded on this point.

. . . every letter (key) has its own peculiar air, which air is very much hurt if the tune is not rightly pitched . . .

The best general rule I know of, is, to set the tune on the letter the author has set it, unless he has given directions to the contrary; for it is to be supposed that any one, who has skill enough to compose a piece of music, has likewise judgment enough to set it on a proper key. But although this rule is good in general, yet it is not infallible; for oftentimes the greatest masters of composition set some of their pieces too high or low, which you will soon discover by making yourself master of the tune. (CH, xxvi.)

In his earliest book he held a much less sophisticated attitude.

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though sometimes it will bear to be set a little above and sometimes a little below the Key, according to the Discretion of the Performer; but I would recommend a Pitch Pipe, which will give the Sound even to the nicety of half a Tone. (NEPS, 18.)

In his second offering he gave a clear warning not to strain the voices by setting the pieces too high "for that takes away all pleasure in the performance, and all Music from the composition". (SMA, 15.) He even made a comment about the plan to follow in case the piece was mistakenly begun in the wrong key.

If you are so unhappy, as to set a piece too high, it is best to worry through without lowering the pitch; because that has a tendency to take away the spirit of the performers; but if you set a piece too low you may raise it according to your judgment, and that will serve to animate the performers. (SMA, 15.)

The pitch of that day was probably lower than the present day pitch. (5, 99.) In our day it seems wise to gauge the pitch of each song on the basis of the range of its tenor part as compared with the range and best tessitura of the choir's tenor section. The soprano and

tenor will often have the same top note, frequently G above the treble staff. The key of C is Billings' favorite key; this gives high G considerable prominence in some pieces, in which case a tenor section consisting of mostly second tenors may require transposing the work down a half or whole step in order to bring it off successfully. This may make the very lowest of the bass notes a bit low, but usually there are choosing notes for them and they can sing the upper octave. Rarely will a downward transposition cause the alto to go impossibly low. In the authors' experience it has not ever been necessary to raise the pitch for a more successful performance, but this is a conceivable possibility. Billings himself gives instructions for changing the printed key of C to B-flat in *An Anthem for Christmas* (Hark! Hark! hear you not?) by the statement: "N.B. Set this piece one note lower." (CH, 117.)

METER SIGNS AND TEMPI

A major concern of Billings was the matter of tempo, about which his instructions are quite explicit. The tempos in the songbooks of Billings and his contemporaries were derived proportionally from a basic pulsation of one quarter note per second. Billings calculated that in order to measure the time of one second, a pendulum must be 39 2/10 inches long. Other pendulum settings were similarly given for each of the nine moods (see chart below) which he specified for use in performing his music. He offered these instructions for constructing a pendulum:

Make a pendulum of common thread well waxed, and instead of a bullet take a piece of heavy wood turned perfectly round, about the bigness of a pullet's egg, and rub them over, either with chalk, paint or whitewash, so that they may be seen plainly by candlelight. (CH, vii.) He described each mood in detail and gave specific instructions to the singers as to how they should "best" (conduct) this mood. The students were required to beat either hands or feet in time with the music. It is uncertain what kind of conducting gestures were used by Billings himself, but perhaps he used the same gestures he described for his students. The present-day conductor will likely have better luck using the familiar contemporary conducting gestures.

. . . you may take this as infallible that your Hand or Foot must always be falling in the first Part or Note in a Bar, and raising in the Last Part, both in Common Time and Treble Time. In Treble Time there is a Threefold Motion required to beat a bar, viz. After this Manner, 1st, in letting your Hand fall, observe that you strike first the Ends of your Fingers, 2nd, then the Heel of your Hand, and 3rdly, raise your Hand up which finishes the Bar; be sure, that you divide these Motions into three equal Lengths of Time, not allowing more time to one than another. In that Mood of Time called three to two (3/2) this Motion beats Minims (♩), and in three from four (3/4) it beats Crotchets (♪), and in three from eight (3/8) it beats quavers (♫). N. B. One Motion serves for all these three Treble Time Moods only one quicker than the other, in proportion to the Rule laid down by Pendulums. (NEPS, 15.)

These rules show that each specific "Mood of Time" had a specific metronome marking (in our present-day terms) which was determined by swinging a

pendulum of such specific lengths as 22 and 1/20", 9 and 8/10", and 4' 2 and 2/10". Billings tells us that

Four Pendulums, properly managed, will be sufficient to regulate the Time of the seven Moods commonly used in Psalmody. A Crochet (♪) in the Adagio Mood, which seems to be the Theme or Root from whence all the other six are derived, is to be sounded the length of one second of Time, or the Sixtieth part of a Minute . . . (NEPS, 15.)

It is a simple matter to determine the exact speed that Billings had in mind if one can be certain that the editor of the edition in use was faithful to the original by showing the correct meter signature. For example: every time one encounters Allegro (which Billings indicated simply by using the meter signature ♩; then the tempo is to be ♩ equals 60. Always 2/4 time is to be ♩ equals 120. A chart can be constructed to illustrate his desires in this matter.

TEMPO IN PERFORMING BILLINGS' MUSIC

(Based on CH, vii-x.)

Sign	Term to describe	Resultant Metronome Marking
C	Adagio	♩=60
♩	Largo	♩=80
♩	Allegro	♩=60
♩	Two from Four	♩=120
♩	Six to Four	♩=80 (60 in SMA)
♩	Six from Eight	♩=80
♩	Three to Two	♩=60
♩	Three from Four	♩=80
♩	Three from Eight	♩=57

Occasionally composers set a "quick or slow term" (*affettuoso*, for example) over a particular section of music. Only then should a performer modify a given tempo signature, according to Billings.

I don't know what other authors may intend, but I should be glad to have such strains, performed one fourth part quicker or slower . . . (CH, xxi.)

In as much as the fundamental pace of life has changed so greatly since the 1790's when Billings gave these instructions, it may well be that the modern conductor and his singers and audiences may find some of these tempi painfully slow. In the author's opinion it is, therefore acceptable to take slightly faster tempi in present-day performances of some of Billings' pieces — but above all, the relationships between tempi must be maintained as Billings indicated. That is, if a half note is quickened from 60 to 66 in an Allegro section (♩) then a 2/4 section which follows must be exactly twice as fast, or 132 (not 120). It seems likely that Billings had singers who kept the pendulums swinging while they sang and that at least two and perhaps as many as four were swinging at one time in order to give the many meter and tempo changes which characterize some of his longer anthems.

Dr. Terrance A. Anderson, whose definitive study of the baroque composer Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck's life and works is due for fall publication, has been named assistant professor of choral studies at Texas Christian University at Fort Worth. In addition to teaching courses offered in choral conducting, Anderson will direct the A Cappella Choir and the University Chorus.

ACDA DIVISIONAL CONVENTION SCHEDULE

EASTERN DIVISION

February 22-23, 1974
Copley Plaza Hotel
Boston, Massachusetts

NORTH CENTRAL DIVISION

February 8-9, 1974
Hotel Fort Des Moines
Des Moines, Iowa

NORTHWESTERN DIVISION

February 22-23, 1974
Ridpath Hotel
Spokane, Washington

SOUTHERN DIVISION

February 28, March 1-2, 1974
White House Inn
Charlotte, North Carolina

SOUTHWESTERN DIVISION

March 8-9, 1974
Royal Coach Inn
Dallas, Texas

WESTERN DIVISION

January 25-26, 1974
Hotel del Coronado
San Diego, California

ACDA NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chase Park Plaza Hotel
Saint Louis, Missouri
March 6-8, 1975