

William Billings

250th Birthday Celebration

William Appling Singers & Orchestra
William Appling, conducting

October 7, 1996

Christ & St. Stephen's Church, New York City

William Appling Singers & Orchestra

Michele Eaton, *soprano*
 Neil Farrell, *tenor*
 Megan Friar, *alto*
 Jonathan Goodman, *tenor*
 R.J. Hazeltine-Shedd, *bass*
 Elizabeth Henreckson-Farnum, *soprano*
 Deborah Jamini, *alto*
 Karen Krueger, *alto*
 Gregory Purnhagen, *bass*
 Walter Richardson, *bass*
 Michael Steinberger, *tenor*
 Curtis Streetman, *bass*
 Mark Wagstrom, *bass*
 Cynthia Richards Wallace, *soprano*
 Pamela Warrick-Smith, *alto*

David Bakamjian, *cello*
 Daniel Granados, *clarinet*
 Marco Granados, *flute*
 Jennifer Leshnower, *violin*
 Michiko Oshima, *viola*
 Muneko Otani, *violin*
 Bill Ruyle, *percussion*

Music of William Billings

I	Wake Ev'ry Breath Africa Mourn, Mourn	Rev. Dr. Mather Byles Dr. Isaac Watts Book of Joel / Wm. Billings
II	I Charge You, O Ye Daughters I am Come into My Garden I am the Rose of Sharon	Song of Solomon / Billings Song of Solomon / Billings Song of Solomon / Billings
III	New Boston Hingham Thus Saith the High and Lofty One Pembroke Chesterfield	Brady & Tate Dr. Watts Dr. Watts Brady & Tate Dr. Watts
IV	Rutland Retrospect	Dr. Watts Sundry Scriptures / Billings
Intermission		
V	Chester America Lamentation over Boston	Billings Rev. Dr. Byles Sundry Scriptures / Billings
VI	Euroclydon	Psalm 107 / Billings
VII	When Jesus Wept / Emmaus Thomas - Town	Perez Morton Rev. Dr. Byles
VIII	Jargon	Billings
IX	Creation Cobham Jordan	Psalm 139 / Dr. Watts Dr. Watts Dr. Watts
X	As the Hart Panteth	Psalm 42 / Billings

Please hold applause until the end of each section.
 The taking of photographs or use of recording equipment is prohibited.

William Billings

Tonight we are celebrating the 250th birthday of America's first great composer, William Billings. At a time when Americans were singing and playing almost exclusively British music, Billings wrote more than 340 hymn tunes, psalm tunes, set-pieces, canons and anthems, publishing six collections of his own works over a period of less than thirty years.

William Billings was born in Boston on October 7, 1746. Not a great deal is known of his early years, though his father was probably a shopkeeper, perhaps a tailor, who died when Billings was only thirteen. The fifth of six children, young William left school to help support his family and was apprenticed to the tanner's trade. At the same time, he was discovering a natural affinity for music, an interest which would certainly have been fostered by his churchgoing. His family belonged to New South, one of Boston's many Congregational churches, and it was here that Billings heard the psalm tunes and anthems that would form the basis for his own compositions. While his formal musical education was probably minimal, he may have taken some lessons from John Barry, a tenor in the choir at New South. It is also likely that he attended some of the singing-schools commonly held in 18th century American towns. For the most part, though, Billings was self-taught in the rudiments of music, and by the time he was twenty, his musical knowledge was the equal of any of his contemporaries.

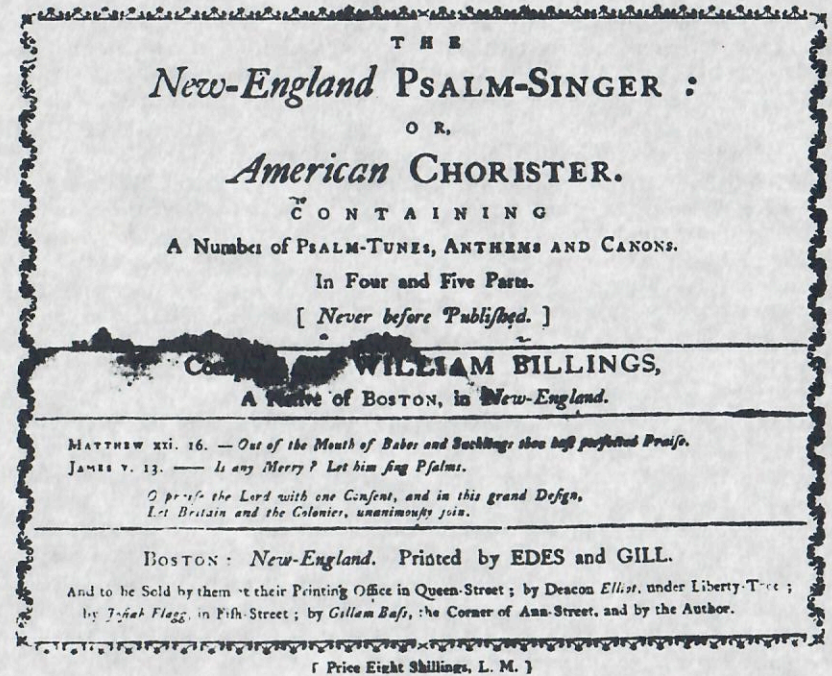
It is doubtful that Billings was ever proficient on a musical instrument, which may be due in part to his physique. While no drawings or portraits of him exist, Billings was described as "somewhat deformed in person, blind with one eye, one leg

shorter than the other, one arm somewhat withered. . ." His physical handicaps did not extend to his voice, however, which was called "magnificent" and "stentorian."

It was through his composing, though, that Billings was to gain fame. By 1770 he had written over one hundred works, which he brought together in his first published collection, *The New-England Psalm-Singer*. This volume is a landmark in the history of American music. Up to that time, barely a dozen tunes had been published by native-born Americans, as virtually all the hymns and anthems sung in the colonies were by English or other European writers. *The New-England Psalm-Singer* was the first musical collection ever published of entirely American music, as well as the first tunebook produced by a single American composer.

The title page to *The New-England Psalm-Singer* indicates that Billings was very conscious of creating an American work: *The New-England Psalm-Singer: or American Chorister. . . by William Billings, A Native of Boston, in New-England*. By proclaiming his American and New England roots in this way, he was also underscoring the growing anti-English feelings of the period. Billings supported the revolutionary cause and was close to many of its leaders: the frontispiece to *The New-England Psalm-Singer* was designed and engraved by Paul Revere, and Samuel Adams was a good friend. A number of his compositions addressed the subject of independence, most notably *Chester*, a tune which became a rallying cry for the Continental army.

The music of *The New-England Psalm-Singer* displayed Billings's equally strong belief in creative independence. While his knowledge of music theory was strong, he did not feel bound to strictly follow its rules, and wrote in the introduction:



Title page of *The New-England Psalm-Singer* (1770).

I don't think myself confin'd to any Rules for Composition laid down by any that went before me, neither should I think (were I to pretend to lay down Rules) that any who came after me were any ways obligated to adhere to them, any further than they should think proper: So in fact, I think it is best for every *Composer* to be his own *Carver*.

In addition to publishing the first musical collection of entirely American music, William Billings was also the first American to apply for copyright protection of his work. Up to this time, copyright did not exist in colonial America, and concerned that his music would be purloined by others, Billings applied to the local authorities to be granted copyright on November 7, 1770, a few weeks before *The New-England Psalm-Singer* was released. Billings's anti-loyalist positions ap-

pear to have been a stumbling block, however, and his several attempts to protect his work were fruitless. It was not until 1790 that the Congress passed federal copyright protection, too late to help Billings collect royalties on most of his music.

Shortly after publication of *The New-England Psalm-Singer*, Billings, in addition to continuing his tanning trade, began to teach singing-schools. Usually sponsored by a church, singing-schools were typically held over the course of several months, meeting two or three times a week, and were mostly attended by teenagers and young adults. Here students would learn the fundamentals of note-reading, vocal production and ensemble singing. (Supported by the radical Whig political faction, singing-schools were also said to be hotbeds of anti-loyalist activities.) Billings was a singing-master in many Massachusetts

towns, and even went as far as Providence, Rhode Island to teach. It was while conducting a school in Stoughton, Massachusetts, that Billings met Lucy Swan, a young "treble" (soprano) who was soon to become his bride. Together they had nine children, of whom six would live to maturity.

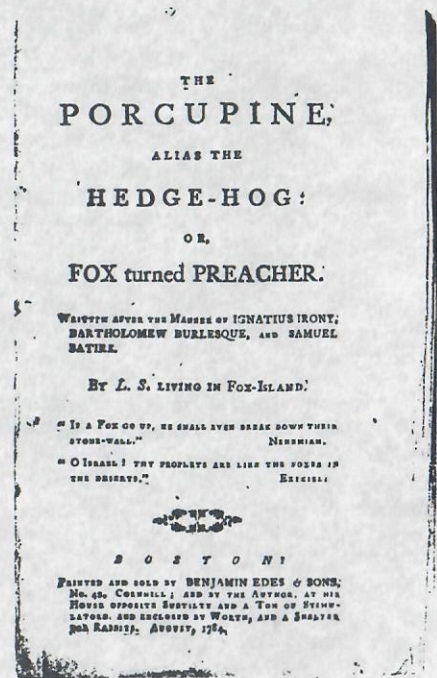
Another first for William Billings was the publication in 1778 of his second tunebook, *The Singing Master's Assistant*, the first musical work published after the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. In this collection, Billings demonstrated enormous development as a composer. The volume contains many of his finest pieces as well as revisions of several of the best tunes from *The New-England Psalm-Singer*, resulting in a volume considered by many to be the most important of all American tunebooks. It was also his most popular collection, issued in four separate editions. Billings would subsequently publish four more tunebooks during his life: *Music in Miniature*, *The Psalm-Singer's Amusement*, *The Suffolk Harmony* and *The Continental Harmony*.

In addition to his musical abilities, William Billings also had a genuine literary talent. He wrote the texts for many of his compositions, often reworking biblical passages either in verse form for psalm tunes and set-pieces, or in prose for anthems. Billings was one of the very few 18th century composers to write his own texts, as most were content to set works from the psalm books of Isaac Watts or Tate and Brady. He also wrote extensive introductions to each of his tunebooks, holding forth on his own musical philosophies and giving detailed information on all aspects of music theory and performance practice.

Billings's literary activities went beyond texts and introductions,

though, as he also published a number of "pamphlets." The only one of these which survives is entitled *The Porcupine, Alias the Hedge-Hog: or Fox Turned Preacher*, an extended fable which satirized what Billings perceived as Puritan hypocrisy. In 1783, Billings also became editor of a new literary journal, *Boston Magazine*. His tenure lasted only one issue, however, as several of the articles he selected severely offended the tastes of the "Boston gentlemen" financing the periodical.

By the early 1780's, Billings's success as composer, singing-master and tanner brought him to a position where he could purchase a home in Boston as well as become a pew-holder at the Hollis Street Church. His music had become increasingly popular, extending far beyond his native Boston. In Philadelphia, a critic proclaimed that he was "the rival of Handel" and that



Billings was the pseudonymous author of this satirical pamphlet published in 1784.

his compositions were "precious to every real friend to the noble art of music." A traveller's journal from 1788 described a devotional service in Marietta, Ohio: "The singing excellent-Billings to perfection." And in 1789, American music was published in England for the first time when the psalmodist Thomas Williams included two pieces by Billings in a London tunebook.

Unfortunately, Billings was unable to maintain his relatively high level of prosperity into the 1790's. While only fragmentary knowledge of his circumstances is available, it is likely that he experienced the same economic hardships as many of his countrymen in the newly independent United States. His plight was brought to public attention, and a benefit concert was organized to help his family in December of 1790. Still, the relief this may have brought was limited, and Billings soon had to mortgage his house and accept a number of minor municipal appointments. His musical activities also began to wane, and during this final decade he published only a single collection, *The Continental Harmony*, and a few independent works. His final years became increasingly difficult with the death of his wife Lucy in 1795, and the responsibilities of caring for six children.

William Billings died on September 26, 1800 and was laid to rest in an unmarked grave, probably in the Boston Common. Obituaries and notices were few, but Billings's passing was recorded in the diary of his friend, the Reverend William Bentley, a pioneer figure in Unitarianism and one of 18th century America's prominent intellectuals:

William Billings, aet. 60 [54], died also at Boston. This self taught man, thirty years ago had the direction of all the music of our Churches. His Reuben [*The New-*

England Psalm-Singer], as he whimsically called it, with all its great imperfections, had great fame and he may justly be considered as the father of our new England music. Many who have imitated have excelled him, but none of them had better original powers. His late attempts & without a proper education were the true cause of his inferior excellence. He taught the Singers at the Brattle street Church in 1778 with great approbation & his fame was great in the Churches. He was a singular man, of moderate size, short of one leg, with one eye, without any address, & with an uncommon negligence of person. Still, he spake & sung & thought as a man above the common abilities. He died poor & neglected & perhaps did too much neglect himself.

As the 19th century began, a large number of musicians and clergymen felt it was necessary to "reform" American sacred music. European composers were declared to have far greater refinement, clarity and taste than Billings and his fellow American composers. While this reform movement had an impact, especially in Boston, many homegrown composers maintained considerable popularity with people living farther away from the centers of learning and "good taste." Throughout the 19th century, many American tunebooks included works by Billings, and he was especially popular in the southern shape-note collections. *The Sacred Harp*, first published in 1844 and the most famous of all shape-note tunebooks, continues to be published today and currently includes over a dozen pieces by Billings.

Nevertheless, the reform movement did affect how Billings was perceived by generations of American musicians. For example, it is likely that the

composer Charles Ives, one of the greatest advocates of American hymnody, never heard the music of Billings. The fact that both men were such ardent New Englanders and original, independent thinkers is an indication of how poisoned the waters had become for Billings's work. Two other American innovators, Henry Cowell and John Cage, did discover Billings and the early American psalm-modists. Cowell actually composed a series of *Hymns and Fuguing Tunes* for a variety of instrumental combinations, and Cage's *Apartment House 1776* includes versions of pieces by Billings and several contemporaries. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm of Cowell and Cage has not been shared by most other American musicians, especially those in the academic world. Even today, Billings is rarely studied in music schools, either from a technical or historical standpoint.

William Billings has prevailed, though, and the great passion, strength, energy and surpassing beauty of the music transcends any denigration of his work. With the recent publication of his complete works (the first such complete critical edition for an American composer), and ever-increasing performances, Billings's music will continue to gain the respect it deserves.

Texts

I

The canon Wake Ev'ry Breath is the composition engraved on the frontispiece to The New-England Psalm-Singer (see cover), and the first piece printed in the tunebook. In Africa, like all of Billings' hymn and psalm tunes, the lead melody is given to the tenor. Billings composed in such a way, however, that it was possible to create six parts by having some sopranos sing the tenor and some tenors the soprano (in their own range). This has been a common performance practice for his music.

Wake Ev'ry Breath

Wake ev'ry Breath, and ev'ry String,
To bless the great Redeemer King,
His Name thro' ev'ry Clime ador'd.
Let Joy and Gratitude, and Love,
Thro' all the Notes of Music rove;
And Jesus sound on ev'ry Chord.

Africa

Now shall my inward joy arise,
And burst into a Song;
Almighty Love inspires my Heart,
And Pleasure tunes my Tongue.

God on his thirsty Sion-Hill
Some Mercy-Drops has thrown,
And solemn Oaths have bound his Love
To show'r Salvation down.

Why do we then indulge our Fears,
Suspensions and Complaints?
Is he a God, and shall his Grace
Grow weary of his Saints?

Can a kind Woman e'er forget
The Infant of her Womb,
And 'mongst a thousand tender Thoughts
Her Suckling have no Room?

"Yet," saith the Lord,
"should Nature change
and Mothers Monsters prove,
Sion still dwells upon the Heart,
Of everlasting Love.

Deep on the Palms of both my Hands
I have engrav'd her Name;
My Hands shall raise her ruin'd Walls
And build her broken Frame."

Mourn, Mourn

Mourn, mourn, mourn, mourn,
Pharaoh and Ahab prevail in our Land.
Mourn, mourn, mourn, mourn,
Achans abound and trouble the Land.
Mourn, mourn, mourn, mourn,
Darkness and Clouds of awful
Shade hang pendant by a slender Thread,
waiting Commission from God,
the Upholder, to fall, fall,
fall and distress us.

Great God, avert th'impending Doom;
We plead no Merit of our own;
For Mercy, Lord, we cry.
Bow down thine Ear to our Complaints,

And hear from Heav'n, thou King of Saints;
O let thine Aid be nigh.
Then will the Lord be jealous for his Land,
and pity his People, and say,
"Behold, your Pharaohs and
Achans and Ahabs are no more."
Yea, the Lord will answer and
say unto his People,
"Behold, I will send you Corn, and Wine,
and Oil, and ye shall be
satisfied therewith."

Be glad then America, shout and rejoice.
Fear not, O Land, be glad and rejoice.
Hallelujah, praise the Lord.

II

The following three works have texts from the Song of Solomon. The first piece, I Charge You, will be performed by string quartet, without voices. While almost all his music was scored for a cappella chorus, it is virtually certain that Billings often included instruments in performances.

I Charge You, O Ye Daughters

I charge you, O ye Daughters of Jerusalem,
that you stir not up nor awake
my Love till he please.
If you see my Beloved tell him
I am sick of Love.

What is thy Beloved more than another,
O thou fairest among Women?
My Beloved is white and ruddy,
the Chief among ten thousand
and altogether lovely;
his Head is as Gold, and
his Eyes are like Doves, and
his Hair is as black as a Raven.

I Am Come into My Garden

I am come into my Garden
my Sister, my Spouse;
I have gathered my Myrrh with my Spice;
I have eaten my Honeycomb
with my Honey;
I have drank my Wine with my Milk;
eat, O Friends, abundantly, and
drink, O Friends, abundantly.

I sleep, but my Heart waketh;
it is the voice of my Beloved saying:
Open to me, my Sister, my Love, my Dove,
my undefiled, for my Head is

fill'd with Dew and my Locks with
the Drops of the Night.

I open'd to my Beloved, but my
Beloved had withdrawn himself,
and he was gone.
I sought him, but I could not find him;
I call'd him, but he gave me no Answer.

Stay me with Flagons,
Comfort me with Apples,
for I am sick of Love.
Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a
Roe or a young Hart upon the
Mountains of Spices.

I am the Rose of Sharon

I am the Rose of Sharon and
the Lilly of the Vallies.
As the Lilly among the thorns,
so is my Love among the Daughters.
As the Apple tree among the trees of the
Wood, so is my Beloved among the Sons.

I sat down under his shadow
with great delight,
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.
He brought me to the Banqueting House,
His Banner over me was Love.
Stay me with Flagons,
Comfort me with Apples,
for I am sick of Love.
I charge you, O ye Daughters of Jerusalem,
by the Roes and by the Hinds of the
Field, that you stir not up nor
Awake my Love till he please.

The voice of my Beloved,
Behold, he cometh,
Leaping upon the mountains,
skipping upon the Hills.
My beloved spake and said unto me:
rise up, my Love, my fair one,
and come away,
for Lo, the Winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.

III

For the next group of works we will add several basses. Billings felt, at least early in his career, that "in order to have good Music, there must be Three Bass to one of the upper Parts. So that for Instance, suppose a Company of Forty People, Twenty of them should sing the Bass, the other Twenty should be divided. . . into the

upper parts. [The Bass] 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." (Billings himself sang bass.)

New Boston

Ye boundless Realms of Joy,
Exalt your Maker's Fame:
His praise your Song employ
Above the starry Frame:
Your Voices raise,
Ye Cherubim
And Seraphim,
To sing his Praise.

Thou Moon that rul'st the Night,
And Sun that guid'st the Day,
Ye glitt'ring Stars of Light,
To Him your Homage pay:
His Praise declare,
Ye Heav'ns above,
And Clouds that move
In liquid Air.

Hingham

Shall we go on to sin,
Because thy Grace abounds,
Or crucify the Lord again
And open all his Wounds?

Forbid it, mighty God,
Nor let it e'er be said,
That we whose Sins are crucify'd,
Should raise them from the Dead.

Thus Saith the High and Lofty One

Thus saith the high and lofty One,
"I sit upon my holy Throne:
My Name is God, I dwell on high;
Dwell in my own Eternity."

Pembroke

Thus saith the high and lofty One,
"I sit upon my holy Throne:
My Name is God, I dwell on high;
Dwell in my own Eternity."

Chesterfield

Death may dissolve my Body now,
And bear my Spirit home;
Why do my Minutes move so slow,
Nor my Salvation come?

With heav'nly Weapons I have fought
The Battles of the Lord,
Finish'd my Course, and kept the Faith,
And wait the sure Reward.

Chesterfield: . CM. 63

Chesterfield as printed in *The New-England Psalm-Singer*.

IV

Rutland

My Flesh shall slumber in the Ground,
'Till the last Trumpet's joyful Sound;
Then burst the Chains with sweet Surprise,
And in my Saviour's Image rise.

This Life's a Dream, an empty Show,
But that bright World to which I go
Hath Joys substantial and sincere.
When shall I wake and find me there?

Retrospect

Was not the Day dark and gloomy?
The Enemy said, let us draw a line even
from York to Canada.
But praised be the Lord, the Snare is broken
and we are escaped,
but Blessed be the Lord,
the Snare is broken
and we are escaped.

Hark, Hark, hear the Adjuration.
Cursed be the man that
keepeth back his sword.
Oh! Dismal! Oh! Horrible! Oh! Dismal!
My Bowels, I am pained at my very heart.
My heart maketh a noise within me.
For thou hast heard, O my Soul, the sound
of the trumpet, the Alarm of War.

See my Father, Behold my Brother,
hear him groan, see him die.
O thou sword of the Lord, how long
will it be ere thou be quiet?
Put up thyself into thy Scabbard.

Rest, rest, rest and be still.
Cause us to hear with Joy thy
Kind, forgiving Voice, that so the Bones,
which thou has broke,
may with fresh strength rejoice.
Hark, hark, hark, my Soul, catch the Sound,
my Soul, catch the sound.
Hear and rejoice.

Beat your Swords into Plowshares and
your Spears into Pruning Hooks,
And learn War no more.
How Beautiful upon the Mountains
are the feet of him that bringeth
good tidings, that Publisheth
Peace, Peace, Peace.

Peace be on earth, good will towards men.
Halleluiah, for the Lord God Omnipotent
reigneth.
Halleluiah, Amen.

V

The next three works were written (as was Retrospect) on the subject of the American Revolution. Because of his physical handicaps, Billings could not become a soldier, but Chester became the most popular of all Revolutionary War tunes, and was a rallying cry for the Continental troops.

Chester

Let tyrants shake their iron rod,
And Slav'ry clank her galling chains,
We fear them not, we trust in God,
New england's God for ever reigns.

Howe and Burgoyne and Clinton too,
With Prescott and Cornwallis join'd,
Together plot our Overthrow,
In one Infernal league combin'd.

When God inspir'd us for the fight,
Their ranks were broke,
their lines were forc'd,
Their Ships were Shatter'd in our sight,
Or swiftly driven from our Coast.

The Foe comes on with haughty Stride;
Our troops advance with martial noise,
Their Vet'rans flee before our Youth,
And Gen'ral's yield to beardless Boys.

America

To Thee the tuneful Anthem soars,
To Thee, our Father's God, and our's;
This Wilderness we chose our Seat:
To Rights secur'd by Equal Laws,
From Persecution's Iron Claws,
We here have sought our calm Retreat.

See! how the Flocks of Jesus rise!
See! how the Face of Paradise
Blooms thro' the Thickets of the Wild!
Here Liberty erects her Throne;
Here Plenty pours her Treasures down;
Peace smiles, as Heav'nly Cherubs mild.

Lord, guard thy Favours; Lord, extend
Where farther Western Suns descend;
Nor Southern Seas the Blessings bound;
'Till Freedom lift her cheerful Head,
'Till pure Religion onward spread,
And beaming, wrap the Globe around.

Lamentation over Boston

By the Rivers of Watertown we sat
down and wept, when we
remember'd thee, O Boston.
As for our Friends, Lord God of Heaven,
preserve them, defend them, deliver
and restore them unto us again.
For they that held them in Bondage
requir'd of them to take up
Arms against their Brethren.
Forbid it, Lord God, forbid that those
who have sucked Bostonian Breasts
should thirst for American Blood.

A voice was heard in Roxbury which
echo'd thro' the Continent, weeping
for Boston because of their Danger.
Is Boston my dear Town,
is it my native Place?
For since their Calamity I do
earnestly remember it still.
If I forget thee, yea, if I do not
remember thee,
Then Let my numbers cease to flow,
Then be my Muse unkind,
Then let my Tongue forget to move
and ever be confin'd;

Let horrid Jargon split the Air and rive
my nerves asunder,
Let hateful discord greet my ear
as terrible as Thunder.
Let harmony be banish'd hence
and Consonance depart;
Let dissonance erect her throne
and reign within my Heart.

VI

The term "Euroclydon" refers to a stormy east or northeast wind which, according to Christian tradition, was responsible for the shipwreck of St. Paul on Malta (A.D. 60). Billings used Psalm 107:23-30 as the basis of his text and added lines of his own to create one of his most remarkable works.

Euroclydon

They that go down to the Sea in Ships,
and occupy their Business in great
Waters; these Men see God's Wonders,
his great and mighty
Wonders in the Deep.

For he commanded the stormy Winds
to blow, and he lifted up the
Waves thereof.
They are mounted up as it were into
Heav'n, and then down into the Deep;
and their Souls melt away with Trouble.
They reel and stagger, they stagger to and

54 Euroclydon An Anthem Psalm 107 for Mariners

they that go down to the Sea in Ships & occupy
they that go down to the Sea in Ships & occupy
they that go down to the Sea in Ships & occupy
they that go down to the Sea in Ships & occupy
occupy their Business in great Waters these men see these men see

The anthem Euroclydon as printed in *The Psalm-Singer's Amusement* (1781).

fro like a drunken Man,
and are at their Wit's End.
Then they cry unto God in their Trouble,
and he bringeth them
out of their Distresses.
He maketh the Storm a Calm,
so that the Waves are still.

Then they are glad because they are quiet;
and He bringeth the Vessel into Port.
And all huzza, huzza, huzza.
Their Friends assembl'd on the Wharf
to welcome them on Shore.
Welcome here again, welcome Home.

VII

When *Jesus Wept* and *Emmaus* are two separate works set to the same text, the former a canon from *The New-England Psalm-Singer* and the latter a hymn tune from *The Singing Master's Assistant*. *Thomas-Town* will be performed with instruments alone.

When Jesus Wept / Emmaus

When Jesus wept, the falling Tear,
In Mercy flow'd beyond all Bound;
When Jesus groan'd a trembling Fear,
Seiz'd all the guilty World around.

Thomas-Town

Great God, how frail a Thing is Man!
How swift his Minutes pass!
His Age contracts within a Span;
He blooms and dies like Grass.

And must my Moments thus decline,
And must I sink to Death?
To thee my Spirit I resign,
Thou Maker of my Breath.

VIII

Jargon was written by Billings in response to critics of his harmonic vocabulary. In an elaborate address "To the Goddess of Discord," Billings sarcastically begs forgiveness for writing such consonant music, and offers the extremely dissonant *Jargon* as reparation. In the final paragraph, he gives the following performance instructions: "In order to do this piece

ample justice... let it be performed in the following manner, viz. Let an ass bray the Bass, let the fileing of a saw carry the Tenor, let a hog who is extream hungry squeal the Counter [alto], and let a cart-wheel, which is heavy loaded, and that has been long without grease, squeek the Treble [soprano]; and if the Concert should appear to be too feeble you may add the cracking of a crow, the howling of a dog, the squalling of a cat, and what would grace the Concert yet more would be the rubbing of a wet finger upon a window glass: this last mentioned instrument no sooner salutes the drum of the ear, but it instantly conveys the sensation to the teeth; and if all these in conjunction should not reach the cause you may add this most inharmonic of all sounds, 'pay me that thou owest.'" While Billings may not have actually attempted (or intended) to perform *Jargon* with these elements, through the miracle of modern technology we have been able to sample the sounds he called for and play them back on the pitches and rhythms of the piece. For our performance, you will first hear the singers and instruments perform *Jargon*, followed by a version for braying ass, "fileing" saw, squealing hog, and squeeking cart-wheel; this will be followed by a version for cracking crow, squalling cat, howling dog, and "rubing" finger on glass (with ass and pig on bass). The fourth time through all non-human sounds will be combined, and the final time we add humans to the mix. We believe this will be the premiere performance of *Jargon* with Billings's performance "instructions" carried out, and thank Steve Elson, Dan Evans Farkas and Michael Kirchberger for their assistance in its realization.

Jargon

Let horrid Jargon split the Air,
And rive the Nerves asunder,
Let hateful Discord greet the Ear,
As terrible as Thunder.

IX

Creation

When I with pleasing Wonder stand,
And all my Frame survey,
Lord 'tis thy Work, I own; thy Hand
Thus built my humble Clay.

