

*St Matthew, Croydon* Roy Massey, 7.30  
*St Peter, Bexhill* Musica Antiqua of Worthing, 7.30  
*St Stephen, Chatham* David Poulter, 7.30  
*Cathedral and Abbey Church of Saint Alban* Daniel Chorzempa, 8  
*St Matthew, Northampton* George Thalben-Ball, 8  
*Gloucester Cathedral* Friends of Cathedral Music Autumn Regional Gathering  
**September 24**  
*Chipping Campden Parish Church* St Jacobi Kantorei, 3  
*Preston Parish Church, Brighton* Michael Cook, 5.30  
**September 25**  
*St Michael, Cornhill* EC3 Edward Theodore, 1  
**September 26**  
*St Peter-upon-Cornhill, EC3* Music recital, 12.30, 12.55  
*St Margaret Lothbury, EC2* William Tubbs, 1  
*St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton* Malcolm Davey, 1  
*Cheltenham Town Hall CBSO*, 7.45  
*St Bartholomew, Armley, Leeds* John Whittaker, 8  
**September 27**  
*Christ Church, Cheltenham* St Jacobi Kantorei, 7.30  
*Mansfield Parish Church* Roy Massey, 7.30  
*Wolverhampton Civic Hall* Arnold Richardson, 7.30  
*Holy Trinity, Folkestone* Kenneth Best, 8  
*St Mary's Parish Church, Weymouth* Elisabeth Thornburn, 8  
**September 28**  
*Holy Trinity Church, Sloane St SW1* Ian Le Grice, 6.15  
*Peterborough Cathedral* John Strickson, 7.30  
*St Mary, Southampton* Martin Neary, 7.30  
*Wimborne Minster* St Giles Singers, Poole College Philomusica, 7.30  
**September 29**  
*All Hallows by-the-Tower, EC3* Gordon Phillips, 12.15, 1.15

*St Andrew, Undershaft, St Mary Axe* EC3 R. J. Cruden, 12.30  
*St Stephen, Walbrook* EC4 Peter Moore, 12.30  
*Birmingham Cathedral* Paul Hale, 1  
*Dunfermline Abbey* Lindsay Sinclair, 7.30  
*St Mary the Virgin, Bentley, Hants* Gordon Phillips, 8  
*St Michael and All Angels, Sunninghill* Jonathan Rennett, 8.30  
**September 30**  
*Edwardstone Parish Church, Suffolk* William Tubbs, 3  
*Canterbury Cathedral* Nicholas King, 7  
*Chesterfield Parish Church* David Adams (violin), Gerald Wragg (piano), 7.30  
*St Alban's Church, Teddington, Middx* Paul Powell, 7.30  
*St James, West Hampstead* Maureen McAllister, 7.30  
*St Stephen, Chatham* Stephen Le Prevost, 7.30  
*Worcester Cathedral* Philomusica of Gloucestershire, 7.30  
*Birmingham Cathedral* George Malcolm (hpd), 8  
*Clitheroe Parish Church* Marilyn Mason, 8  
*Higham Ferrers Parish Church, Northants* New London Ensemble/Bradshaw, Christopher Hogwood (hpd), 8  
*St Mark, Portsmouth* Peter Stevenson, 8  
*St Peter, Staines* David Bruce-Payne, 8  
**October 1**  
*Higham Ferrers Parish Church, Northants* New London Ensemble/Bradshaw, Philip Ledger (hpd), 7.45

**Organists are reminded that announcements of forthcoming recitals must reach us by the first day of the preceding month if they are to be included in this column.**

# Kindred and Affinity in Hymn Tunes

Nicholas Temperley

Those who study folk music are aware of the existence of 'families' of tunes. This is a convenient term to cover resemblances among several tunes, where primacy cannot be established because the tunes have grown by oral tradition. *Baa baa black sheep, I had a little nut tree* and the *Rocking Carol* are so close to each other that they must be related, though each one has distinctive features that give it personality—so much so that many people do not notice the resemblance until it is pointed out. But no amount of research into the earliest written forms of the tunes is likely to reveal the nature of the relationship—that is, whether one grew from another, or all from a common origin. They all belong to a large tune family with dozens of members recorded all over Europe and America. It is almost impossible to define a family of tunes. How, exactly, does one decide whether a tune belongs to the family or not? A computer could not do it, and in many borderline cases opinions would differ. A literal counting of notes is clearly inadequate. For one thing, it takes no account of which notes of a tune are the most important ones—a point which in the long run can be determined only by a musician familiar with the idiom. Some families are not even true sets: thus tune A may resemble tune B, tune B tune C, and tune C tune D, yet tune D may have nothing in common with tune A. The same is true of some biological species (for 'resemble' read 'mate with') and it is most irritating to the tidy minds of taxonomists.

Such resemblances are often found among early hymn tunes, and because primacy is uncertain

and oral tradition plays a part, the term 'family' is apt and useful. Several families can be made out among the tunes of the English and Scottish metrical psalters of the 16th and 17th centuries. The largest of these revolves around the famous tune WINCHESTER OLD (originally named simply WINCHESTER), nowadays chiefly associated with 'While shepherds watched'—but only since *Hymns A & M* (1861). This famous tune first appeared in Este's Psalter of 1592, but no composer's name was attached to it, and it is generally said to have been derived from part of Tye's *Acts of the Apostles*. I am going to suggest that its origin is a little more complex than that, and to trace its ancestors, collaterals and descendants in a family of some 13 members.

A word of caution is advisable at the start. The psalm tune of the period was an extremely restricted form. There were only seven notes to the octave (effective chromaticism was ruled out in an unaccompanied congregational melody). The great majority of metrical psalm texts were of the same metre (C.M.). Rhythmic variety, possible in the early days of the Genevan psalter, was gradually eroded as the singing became slower and slower. Cadences were stereotyped; disjunct motion was hazardous. These restrictions inevitably produced a great similarity among all tunes of the period. Only a very strong resemblance through the greater part of the tune can justify the conclusion that there is a family relationship—that is, a relationship by derivation of one tune from another, not merely by general similarity of style. The tune WINCHESTER has conventional cadence tags for

its second and fourth lines. Its third line is little more than a scale—but a longer stretch of scale than is found in most tunes, preceded by a rising 4th which turns it into a tag that was commonly used in contrapuntal imitation. Only the first line has some individuality. Yet the first line does not play a major part in the series of resemblances I am going to describe. It is the use of the same clichés in the same places that seems to carry similarity beyond the point where it could still be due to chance.

It must be remembered that the dates given for different tunes tell us when the tunes first appeared in print, but not when they were first sung. Only the first two tunes below had a composer, and even they may have been based on earlier music. All the others are likely to have been evolved by oral tradition, and to have been printed only when they had taken on a sufficiently definite shape to be distinguished from their relatives.

What were the processes by which one tune turned into another? The following possibilities suggest themselves:

1. *Simplification.* A tune with awkward leaps, difficult rhythms and so on may have been smoothed down by the inertia of congregations singing without any effective musical leadership. Such a process probably accounts for the change in the form of ST DAVID'S between Ravenscroft (1621) and Playford (1677).<sup>1</sup> It plays little part in the changes recorded here.

2. *Elaboration.* The addition of ornament to existing tunes often led to melodies that separated from their parents. The 18th century was the classic period for this type of change, which is likely to occur when leading musicians (a choir, band or organist) are set apart from the congregation.

3. *Adaptation.* When a congregation begins to sing a tune which does not fit the words, it is compelled to adapt it by some process of give-and-take, since in a 'sacred' situation it would be unbecoming to give up and start again with a different tune. It might be thought that this would not happen often enough to create any permanent change in a tune, but there are many cases of strong resemblances between tunes of different metre, and there is direct evidence that such misappropriation of tunes was not uncommon.<sup>2</sup> It would only be necessary to sing a long metrical psalm once through with a tune of the wrong metre to establish the 'adapted' version in the memory of the singers.

4. *Confusion.* When one tune is begun, a chance resemblance to a better-known tune may lead the congregation off the track, and produce a tune that is actually a cross between two others.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>see Maurice Frost, *English and Scottish Psalm and Hymn Tunes c1543-1677* (London, 1953), tunes 234, 235; *Historical Companion to Hymns Ancient and Modern* (London, 1962), hymn 470

<sup>2</sup>To quote one example, Pepys wrote in his Diary for 5 Jan 1662: 'To church, and before sermon there was a long psalm and half another sung out . . . but the jest was, the Clerk begins the 25th psalm, which hath a proper tune to it, and then the 116th, which cannot be sung with that tune, which seemed very ridiculous'. Psalm 25 was in Short Metre, Psalm 116 in Common Metre

<sup>3</sup>William Barton, in his Preface to *The Book of Psalms in Metre* (London, 1644), wrote: 'The want of such an help as this causeth the Clerks to stumble so much upon the same tune . . . and makes the Congregation often to mistake, and fall sometimes into severall tunes at once'

This process seems to account for several of the resemblances in the WINCHESTER family. Many of the tunes seem to derive from a combination of two, or even three, earlier ones.

5. *Curtailment.* A long tune may be hard to remember, especially if it contains internal repeats, and may be curtailed; there are a number of known examples of this<sup>4</sup> and the derivation of WINCHESTER itself may be another.

6. *Descant.* From organum onwards, improvised harmonizations of tunes had been popular, and they were certainly tried out by enterprising church-goers in the 16th and 17th centuries. Sometimes the result was an entirely new tune forming complete two-part harmony with the older one.<sup>5</sup> More often there was only a partial counterpoint, the new tune being sometimes in unison with the old, sometimes at an interval of a 3rd, 4th or 5th from it.<sup>6</sup>

These processes or tendencies were doubtless going on simultaneously in many places. But it is too much to suppose that unplanned evolution of this kind would have taken place independently in several places, and in each place produced the same new tune. We must assume that the actual derivation of a distinct tune was the work of a single congregation; only after it had been distinctly formed would a tune spread to other churches, and eventually be written down and printed.

<sup>4</sup>'The first Nowell' is one: see Erik Routley, *The English Carol* (London, 1958), pp.96-9

<sup>5</sup>see my article 'The Adventures of a Hymn Tune—2' in MT, May 1971, pp.488-9

<sup>6</sup>see Erik Routley, *The Music of Christian Hymnody* (London, 1957), p.52

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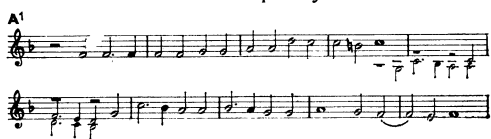
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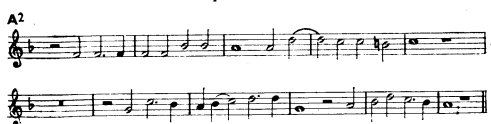
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The tunes in this particular family are listed below in chronological order, with the name as it is found in the source — which in every case is the earliest known source of the tune.<sup>7</sup> All the tunes have been printed in the key of F for the sake of easy comparison: where this involves transposition, a prefatory note shows the original pitch of the first note of the tune. Original note lengths, bars and time signatures have been preserved. The bracketed letters above the tunes point out resemblances which, in my opinion, are strong enough to suggest direct influence. All bracketed sections denote *identical* passages (apart from variation in note-lengths): but in suggesting derivation from another tune, I have also taken into account less exact resemblances in other parts of the tune, including implied harmonies.

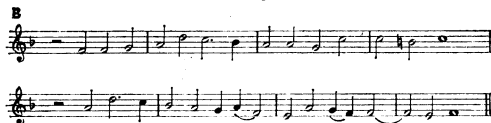
A<sup>1</sup> Tye, *Acts of the Apostles* (1553), chap. ii, 1st half. *Frost* 296. Only the Meane (top) part is given, with cues to show anticipatory imitation. D.C.M.



A<sup>2</sup> Tye, *Acts of the Apostles* (1553), chap. ii, 2nd half. *Frost* 296. Meane part. D.C.M.



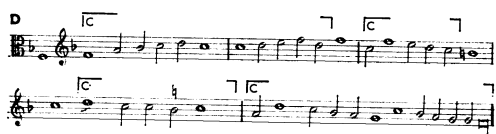
B Tye, *Acts of the Apostles* (1553), chap. viii, 2nd half. *Frost* 302. Meane part. D.C.M.



C PSALM 81, in *The whole booke of Psalmes* (London: John Day, 1562). Also set to Psalm 77, where, however, it is in a rhythm closer to duple metre. *Frost* 93, 99; *A & M* 529; *EH* 211. D.C.M. The last line seems to come from Tye.



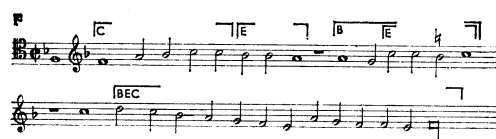
D PSALM 120, in an edition of *The whole book of psalms* with title page missing, printed by John Day in 1570. *Frost* 135; *A & M* 259; *EH* 209. 6.6.6.6.6.6. This is so close to PSALM 81 that it must surely have been derived from it by adaptation.



E WINCHESTER, in *The whole booke of Psalmes with their wonted tunes*. . . Thomas Est (1592), where it is harmonized by G. Kirby and set to Psalm 84. *Frost* 103; *A & M* 62; *EH* 30. Tenor part. C.M. The second half is virtually identical to both C and B. The first half has points of resemblance to A<sup>1</sup>, A<sup>2</sup> and B, but they are rather weak. It seems more likely that the whole tune derived from C by *descant*. The first half harmonizes the first quarter of C; the second half harmonizes the third quarter, as well as being identical to the fourth quarter. (Incidentally C is a perfect round, save for one section in unison.)



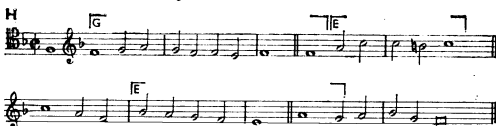
F DUKES, in *The CL. Psalmes of David* [Scottish Psalter] (Edinburgh, 1615), where it is second of the Common tunes. *Frost* 203. C.M. The first five notes resemble C, but the rest of the tune is very close to B and E. Probably a case of *confusion*.



G LINCOLN, in *The whole book of Psalmes*. . . Thomas Ravenscroft (1621), where it is set to Psalms 7, 56 and 142. *Frost* 243a, 243b; *A & M* 144; *EH* 140. Tenor part. C.M. This tune bears no resemblance to those so far described, and brings fresh blood into the 'family'.



H ST MARY'S, in *Psalms and Hymns in Solemn Musick*. . . John Playford (1671), where it is set to Psalm 103. *Frost* 243c. Tenor part. C.M. (Not to be confused with another tune named ST MARY'S by Playford in 1677: *Frost* 333a.) Frost treats this as a version of LINCOLN, which he says was 'altered by Playford thus'; but after the first line it seems much closer to WINCHESTER. Perhaps a case of *confusion*: someone tried to introduce LINCOLN in a church where WINCHESTER was already well known.

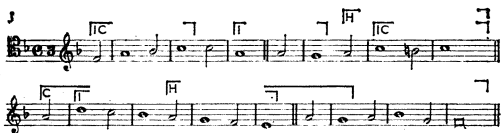


<sup>7</sup>References as follows: *Frost*—see footnote<sup>1</sup>; *A & M*—*Hymns Ancient and Modern*, revised edition (1950); *EH*—*The English Hymnal*

**I** HEREFORD, in *Psalms and Hymns* (1671), where it is set to Psalm 133. *Frost 152a*. Tenor part. C.M. Apart from the last line this is almost identical to DUKES; it is also very close to WINCHESTER.



**J** CAMBRIDGE SHORT, in *Psalms and Hymns* (1671), where it is set to Psalm 134. *Frost 154a*. Tenor part. S.M. This seems to combine H and I, with the first line of I adapted to the shorter verse metre; but the triple time suggests a throwback to C, which was still a popular tune in the mid-17th century.



**K** HEREFORD, in *The whole book of Psalms...* in three parts (John Playford, 1677), where it is set to Psalms 20, 35 and 37. *Frost 152b*. Cantus part. C.M. Though much of this tune is similar to I, also named HEREFORD by Playford, the remaining phrases do not resemble any other tune in the family.



**L** PETERBOROUGH, in *The Whole book* (Playford, 1677), where it is set to Psalms 44 and 94. *Frost 244*. Cantus part. C.M. This seems to be derived in equal measure from H and I: perhaps by *confusion*.



**M** ST PETER'S, in *The whole book* (Playford, 1677), where it is set to Psalm 45. *Frost 154b*. Cantus part. S.M. Frost states that this is derived from CAMBRIDGE SHORT, which was 'recast by Playford'. It certainly shares the same metre and time, but is more likely to have been derived from it orally by *confusion* with PETERBOROUGH.



It will be noticed that the last six tunes are on the whole distinctly inferior to their ancestors, and have not survived in modern collections. Frost and others have assumed that Playford deliberately

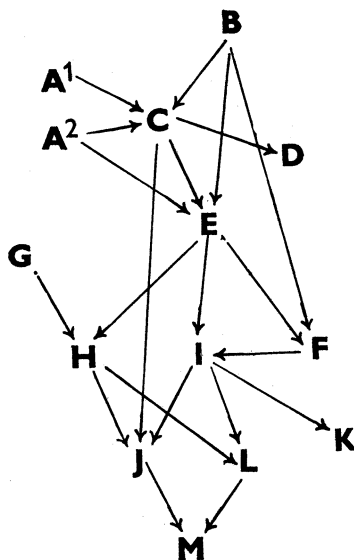
altered them, 'debasement' a great tradition of psalmody. But Playford clearly stated his policy in the Preface to the 1677 *Whole Book*:

My endeavour in this Edition is, in the plainest method I may, to set down all the old Tunes that ever were in common use in our Churches; and where any of those tunes, through long use, have met with some little variation, I have taken care to print them exactly according to present use and practice.

We may take him at his word, and assume that the changes which gradually robbed the tunes of the individuality possessed by their forbears had taken place through natural attrition, during a long period in which parochial psalmody had been neglected and left without leadership or accompaniment.

★

Although, as we have seen, the word 'family' is a useful metaphor, it is not possible to use the form of a family tree to diagram the resemblances described. Tunes may have parents, children and grandchildren like humans, and some are the offspring of a 'marriage'. But the number of parents is not limited to two, as is usually the case with human children, nor is there any bar to incestuous unions. For example tune J seems to have three parents, one of whom is the grandparent of both the others. Without consulting any professional genealogists I have thought it best to use a diagram of a less personal kind. An arrow merely shows the likely influence of one tune on another.



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