BOOK REVIEW

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THE HYMN TUNE INDEX: A CENSUS OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE HYMN TUNES IN PRINTED SOURCES FROM 1535 TO 1820. Nicholas Temperley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. 4 v. $550.00. ISBN 0193111500.

HYMNTUNE INDEX AND RELATED HYMN MATERIALS. D. De-Witt Wasson, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998. 3 v. $325.00. ISBN 0810834367.

Major bibliographic tools in hymnology are extremely rare. For hymn texts we have basically John Julian’s Dictionary of Hymnology (1892, revised 1907), and the projected Dictionary of American Hymnology (discussed elsewhere in this issue). For hymn tunes the most extensive indexes were Katharine Diehl’s Hymns and Tunes: An Index (1966), which covers 88 hymnals, and David Perry’s Hymns and Tunes Indexed (1980), which covers 36 hymnals. The two authoritative indexes of hymn tunes published in 1998 are major advances in the biblio-
graphical control of the field. Wasson’s Hymntune Index covers 442 hymn collections currently in use, while Temperley’s Hymn Tune Index lists over 1700 sources of hymn tunes published before 1821. Both claim practical as well as scholarly value, but Temperley’s work is more useful for specialists in early music and the origins of hymns, and it will surely stand as their authoritative source on early hymn and psalm tunes for generations to come. Wasson’s Index, though more quickly outdated by the publication of new hymnals and hymn-related materials, has immense immediate value for all church musicians and lasting value for hymnologists as the only wide-ranging source of information on hymn tunes of all denominations and historical periods.

The core of Temperley’s Index is the Tune Census in volumes 3 and 4, which lists 17,424 tunes and the pre-1821 collections in which they appear. The tunes are identified by musical incipit (the initial tones of the tune expressed in numbers representing the steps of the musical scale–do = 1, re = 2, mi = 3, fa = 4, etc.), since many tunes have no name, the same name can be used for several different tunes, and one tune can have several different names in different sources. Vol. 1 includes: historical and technical introductions; a “Bibliography of Sources” including for each tune source compiler, short title, publisher, place and date of publication, pagination, method printing, number of tunes, musical contents other than hymn tunes, comments, and tunes appearing in this source; and indexes of sources by title, composer/compiler/reviser, publisher/printer/engraver/seller, date, and location for those collections designed for local use. Vol. 2 contains indexes of tunes by musical incipit, tune name, composer, and text incipit (initial letters of the first words of hymn texts associated with the tunes).

Temperley’s research and the collections on which it is based are housed at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The printed Index lists a website (current URL is http://hti.music.uiuc.edu/), where the full tunes can be downloaded for use with the published volumes and a Hymn Tune Index Online Database is under construction.

Temperley’s Index can be used in various ways, but its primary purpose is the identification and location of early psalm and hymn tunes in older collections, a work of immense scholarship but limited use to practicing church musicians. Wasson’s Index, on the other hand, is possibly the best available source of information for scholars on hymn tunes in current hymnals, but its primary aim is to guide organists and other church musicians to materials for enriching and enlivening hymn singing through creative hymn preludes and introductions, free hymn accompaniments, and choir descants.
While several denominational publications serve similar purposes, no other work covers the range of hymn tunes and hymnals encompassed by Wasson’s Index, which includes hymnals published over 400 years (from the 1570 Ausbund still used by the Amish Menno-
nites to 1996) across the Protestant-Catholic denominational spectrum plus non-denominational evangelical and ecumenical collections. Hymn collections are in English (from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom), Spanish, German, Scandinavian languages, and even Tanzanian and include supplements, songbooks, and children’s collections, as well as standard denominational hymnals. Hymn-related materials are from many publishers, periods, and places.

Wasson begins with an “Index Key to Hymn Materials,” a listing of the 2154 collections of hymn preludes (for various instruments and ensembles), improvisations, free accompaniments, and descants that he includes in the main index, first in order by the numerical code assigned each one, then in alphabetical order by title, publisher, and composer/editor. He then lists the 442 hymnals indexed by code assigned to each one and alphabetically by title and denomination.

The bulk of the Index (vol. 2-3) is a listing by code number (essentially alphabetically) of tune names with links to related compositions. Each entry includes: date of first publication; musical incipit(s); source (composer/first publication); variant tune names; number codes of related hymn preludes, descants, etc., in the “Index Key to Hymn Materials;” other hymn-related compositions not included in the “Index Key”; concertatos (compositions for choir, instruments, and congregation); and hymnals (with hymn numbers) in which the tune appears.

Wasson also includes an index of hymn tune sources; under each composer (or collection for anonymous tunes) are listed pertinent dates and hymn tunes with codes for locating hymn-related materials in the main index. The “Melodic Index of Hymn tunes” lists tunes by musical incipit, the first four or more measure of the tune expressed in steps of the musical scale represented by letters (do = d, re = r, mi = m, fa = f, etc.). The index is then strictly alphabetical and refers to the code numbers in the main index.

The field of hymnology is fortunate to have these two recent hymn tune indexes. Music school and seminary libraries might consider investing in Temperley for scholars in their faculties, but all church musicians, especially organists, should have access to Wasson, if not in their home or church libraries, then in a local academic or public library.

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