**Folk It: Vernacular Traditions and the Church’s Song**

**Luke Tegtmeier & Paul Friesen-Carper**

Tuesday, July 11: 4-5pm

Wednesday, July 12: 1-2pm

**Introductions**

* Luke is an organist primarily - since high school, then degrees at Valparaiso University and Luther Seminary.
* First real gig at an Episcopal church in Excelsior, MN as organist/choirmaster
  + During sanctuary renovation, had to have an extra service “to fit everyone” in the Parish Hall. Decided to make worship Celtic-focused. Ended up with half the youth group playing fiddle/recorder/saxophone/guitar/viola/mandolin, with me on piano/accordion.
  + The service failed from an attendance point of view, but the musical group that came out of it was so much fun that it transferred to play a hymn or two most Sundays at the main service.
* Paul is a guitarist primarily, degrees at Valpo and LSTC
* First real gig at Holden Village then a rural church north of Detroit
  + Folk music happening in the community
  + Yearly joint service with UMC and UCC during the town festival when their parking lots were closed for parade - fiddle, mandolin, guitar, bass, percussion

**Demonstration**

* SLANE (793) in Two Interpretations
  + What did we do differently? Which worked better for this instrumentation?

**What is Folk Music?**

* A note on “folk” and “world” designations
  + Like “traditional” and “contemporary” these are troublesome designations
  + What you call “folk” and “world” usually depends on how you identify with the culture the music is a part of
  + We have to be thoughtful about putting music in inorganic contexts in order to avoid appropriation or exoticization.
  + For THIS workshop, we are focusing on Celtic and American traditions.
* Pete Seeger:
  + “Ha! Better people than me have tried to say. I’m no scholar. I’m no authority. All I can say is that some people think folk music has to be 300 years old, good and moldy like a cheese. Other people will say it’s anything that folks sing. I usually think it’s a quality that some songs have got more of and other songs have less of.”
* Louis Armstrong:
  + "All music is folk music; I ain't never heard no horse sing a song."
* “Folk music” is usefully understood as non-classical and non-commercial music.
* Non-classical
  + Almost entirely comprised of monody (melody and chordal accompaniment)
    - Melody - Singable and simple. (often not written - aural tradition)
    - Harmony
      * Harmonic rhythm - German chorales have one chord per note (Was Gott tut das ist wohlgetan), whereas folk music has one chord per large beat. (half note in 4/4 time, dotted half note in 3/4 time)
      * Harmonic language - keep it simple. Folk musicians can make great music with about 5 chords. If I-IV-V works with the line, then use it. This is not the place to show off your ability to reharmonize.
      * Not worried about inner voices, voice-leading
  + Not virtuoso-focused.
* Non-commercial
  + Centered around communal experience, not the performer/audience dynamic (although people listen to it)
  + Often comes from oral/aural tradition or has been submitted to the process of learning and sharing in the absence of written notation (or at least western notation)

**Demonstration**

* Early American: Holy Manna (771) *or Land of Rest (698) or Nettleton (807)*
  + Bass optional for performance, but very helpful for congregational singing.

**Instrumentation**

* Melody instruments, harmony instruments, maybe a light percussion (bodhran or cajon), bass is optional, depending on function (leading congregation or postlude?) and tradition (Celtic vs. Hispanic)
  + Accordion
    - Keyboard instrument that can do melody, melody with alto or descant, or melody with chords from the buttons.
    - A wind instrument (like the people singing), so it’s easier to sing with than the piano
    - Present in *every* western-folk music: Irish, Scottish, English, French, German, Polish, Russian, Scandinavian, as well as Hispanic-style music.
    - Breathing, like an organist, is key!
    - Unlike an organist, keep it lighter than as an organist - organist leads a whole group; accordion is one member of a band (hopefully)
    - Works better as a spice than main dish (melody only, no chords).
    - Very sexy
  + Fiddle
    - What distinguishes fiddle players from violinists and how to get violinists to play like fiddle players:
      * Fiddle players care about making people dance
        + Use bowing strategies to emphasize rhythm (June Apple demo)
        + Use ornamentation to emphasize rhythm (Kesh Jig)
        + Lilt, lift, swing
      * Fiddle players imitate folk singers and other folk instruments instead of operatic voices
        + Vibrato is used sparingly or not at all
        + Tone is more “naive,” gritty, brash
    - Remind string players (and all instrumentalists) to breathe!
  + Guitar
    - Primarily a chording instrument
    - Because of the instrument melody notes that are not in the chord don’t sound as “wrong” sometimes melodic structure and harmonic structure don’t overlap perfectly
    - Rhythmic drive, harmonic foundation
    - Fingerpicking vs strumming
    - Options, grooves
      * How to talk about this in ways guitarists will understand

**Demonstration**

* Celtic: My soul proclaims/KINGSFOLD (251) *or Will you come and follow/KELVINGROVE (798)*
  + Again, bass optional for performance, but very helpful for congregational singing.
  + Turn-around: It’s often awkward for non-sustaining instruments to manage the timing between verses. Do you hold the note for just the written length? Double it? Breathe? I like to find a way to play the last phrase again while the congregation holds the last note. This keeps the harmonic rhythm intact (important!) while also giving them time to breathe.
    - Repeat a measure or phrase while the congregation (and an instrument) hold the last note. Then the last note (after the repeated penultimate measure) is only held for the written time (minus a breath)
    - Extra half cadence or V chord or delayed cadence or suspension
    - Big rest on “3”

**So what?**

* What might we gain from this sort of music?
  + Direct participation from young instrumentalists
    - Side note: Luke has a bit of a passion for using instrumentalists in worship. Especially kids - so often they learn an instrument in school and never think to share their ability in church. This is a great way to do get them performing! And involved in church!
  + Greater appreciation for the diversity of hymnody
  + The communal spirit enlivened in a more visceral, embodied way
  + A recognition that assemblies and individuals have varied literacy levels. Using the trappings of oral/aural traditions can give permission to less literate musicians to claim their musicianhood

**Postlude**

* Jigs/Reels/Polkas from the Celtic tradition make *excellent* postludes, and in my experience, are viewed as “cool” by young instrumentalists.
  + Traditionally, one learns a new Reel by going to a pub session or three and picking the tune out by ear while drinking a pint or two. Not everyone learns music effectively that way; go buy a book or two of traditional Irish tunes.
  + String several together! Don’t be afraid to change key as you switch between different tunes! (e.g. C - F - C) But try to stay in the same rhythm.
  + Go to a Ceilidh dance and listen to the band play the same tune over and over again. Listen how they string together different tunes, just moving from one key to the next. No one ever complains! The basic rhythm stays the same throughout - they’ll never change from 4/4 to 12/8.

**Other ideas**

* Hispanic: Soul adorn yourself with gladness (489) or When we are living (639) or Take my life (583)
  + Rhythm becomes even more important here.
    - Bass guitar is essential (could also be played on piano)
    - Percussion is also needed - nothing extravagant, but very steady and clear. Subtle is actually probably better - quiet and clean.
    - The accompanying (harmony) instruments should be thought of as percussion instruments.
    - All about the groove - different concept than intellectually-centered musicians.
    - Bored with playing the melody? Add parallel thirds!
    - Anglo instrumentalists will *always* want to play this style of music too fast to sing. Latin@ musicians play these songs slower than you would expect! (I suggest playing the song at “American” speed for the postlude to let instrumentalists have their fun). Be sure you can fit all the words in!
  + Libro de Liturgia y Cantico (Augsburg Fortress 1998) is an excellent resource for Spanish-language hymnody. The accompaniment index on page 630 makes the whole book worth buying.
* Modern: Du ar helig (525) or Gather us in (532)
  + Jazz isn’t very far from Folk music, when one considers the music history path of jazz.
  + Like folk music, Jazz also places a heavy emphasis on harmonic rhythm (again, in contrast to German or English organ-based hymnody)
  + Very similar needs to that of Hispanic-style music: A strong bass instrument is essential.
* Organ-hymns as folk music: Tallis Canon
  + These take some more work, but are all the more fun.
  + “What’s the groove for this song?” - be ready with an idea before the band comes to start jamming.

**Other resources**

Iona Abbey Music Book: Songs from the Iona Abbey Worship Book. 2003, The Iona Community/Wild Goose Publications - *An excellent resource for hymnody, some of which fits into the Folk category, some not. All are great hymn tunes and texts, with a strong social justice theme.*

Heaven Shall not wait, by John Bell & Graham Maule with Wild Goose Worship Group. 1987/1989 GIA

Enemy of Apathy, by John Bell & Graham Maule with Wild Goose Worship Group. 1988/1990 GIA

Common Ground: A song book for all the churches. Edited by John Bell. 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003 St. Andrew’s Press.

In Caelo: Songs for a Pilgrim People. Edited by Liam Lawton. 1999 Veritas Publications

For fiddle ornamentation: [www.fiddlevideo.com/category/fiddle-technique-fiddle-lessons/](http://www.fiddlevideo.com/category/fiddle-technique-fiddle-lessons/)

For online resources for Irish Music: [www.oaim.ie](http://www.oaim.ie)

For a wealth of fiddle tunes: [www.thesession.org/tunes](http://www.thesession.org/tunes) & [www.tunearch.org/](http://www.tunearch.org/)

Accordion Heaven - St. Paul. Get an instrument that is dry-tuned. A good used instrument about $1200-1500. (might want to start at garage sales/eBay/Craigslist)

Evangelical Lutheran Worship - Simplified Keyboard Accompaniment and Guitar Accompaniment editions. (the harmonies line up between the two editions)

Of the Land and Seasons (revised version), by Beth Folkemer. 2013 Augsburg Fortress *- a paraphrase setting of Holy Communion using folk tunes of various origins*

Mountain Vespers, by Kent Gustavson. Self-published, available through [www.drkent.co](http://www.drkent.co) *- a setting of evening prayer for folk music ensemble*

*Questions? Call or email us!*

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