## Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

## Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Jesse P. Karlsberg Date

# Folklore’s Filter: Race, Place, and Sacred Harp Singing

# By

# Jesse P. KarlsbergDoctor of Philosophy

# Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Allen Tullos

Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Kiri Miller

Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Michael Moon

Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Walter Reed

Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

David Warren Steel

Committee Member

Accepted:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.

Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date

# Folklore’s Filter: Race, Place, and Sacred Harp Singing

# By

# Jesse P. KarlsbergM.A., Emory University, 2013M.F.A., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 2006B.A., Wesleyan University, 2003

# Advisor: Allen Tullos, Ph.D., Yale University, 1985

An abstract of

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the

James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts

2015

Abstract

# Folklore’s Filter: Race, Place, and Sacred Harp SingingBy Jesse P. Karlsberg

This dissertation examines the impact of folklorization on Sacred Harp’s associations with race and place. Although *The Sacred Harp* tunebook features music with racially diverse origins whose composers span a vast geography, scholars in the twentieth century came to associate the tunebook with Anglo-Celtic whiteness and the southern upcountry of the United States, regarding its black singers as exceptional.

I trace this perception of Sacred Harp’s race and place to George Pullen Jackson’s German Romanticism–inspired desire to identify a Scotch-Irish American folk music and to racial and institutional pressures limiting John W. Work III’s research on Sacred Harp. The racing and placing of Sacred Harp thanks to what I call “folklore’s filter” influenced white folk festival promoters who rediscovered Work’s depiction of black Sacred Harp singing in the 1960s and 1970s and attempted to stage racially mixed groups of Sacred Harp singers as evidence of progress toward racial unity.

Sacred Harp singers negotiated these narratives and popular conceptions of the style in revising *The Sacred Harp* tunebook during the twentieth century. For the tunebook’s editors in the 1910s and 1980s, reimagining the music, design, and bibliographic form of *The Sacred Harp* offered an opportunity to hash out anxieties about social change by trying to present this old music as relevant to contemporaneous practitioners. The ramifications of Sacred Harp’s whitewashing persist today, informing a narrative of Sacred Harp singing in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that emphasizes the growth of a predominantly white “revival” of Sacred Harp singing in the wake of the folk music movement. This genealogy excludes vital networks of black shape-note gospel singings unrecognizable as Sacred Harp through folklore’s filter.

This account of Sacred Harp’s print history and passage through folklore’s filter illuminates connections between music’s print culture and the networks and social movements in which it is embedded. *The Sacred Harp* and its singings and singers offer an opportunity to explore links between music’s dynamic vernacular print culture and its circulation and reception and to analyze the interactions between the civil rights movement, the folk music movement, and the diverse populations they engaged.

# Folklore’s Filter: Race, Place, and Sacred Harp Singing

# By

# Jesse P. KarlsbergM.A., Emory University, 2013M.F.A., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 2006B.A., Wesleyan University, 2003

# Advisor: Allen Tullos, Ph.D., Yale University, 1985

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the

James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts

2015

# Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the many individuals who helped me think through the ideas in this dissertation and to the institutions that supported my research and granted me access to Sacred Harp singing’s dispersed archival traces. Thanks, first and foremost, to my advisor and dissertation committee chair Allen Tullos for teaching me how to be critical of something I love, for developing with me many of the disparate themes that coalesced into this dissertation, and for reading and commenting on multiple drafts of this study. Thanks as well to Michael Moon whose useful comments on this dissertation drew my attention back to the disciplinary and theoretical contexts we identified together during a directed reading and during my comprehensive examination and prospectus processes. Thanks to Kiri Miller, an interlocutor in thinking about Sacred Harp singing even before I began my doctoral studies, for carefully reading through my dissertation and sharing many useful comments during a marathon session in Providence this Spring. Thanks to David Warren Steel for equally thorough readings of my dissertation and for the detailed comments that resulted. And thanks to Walter Reed for generous comments and useful insights on this document. I am grateful for such a knowledgeable and engaged dissertation committee.

I appreciate the advice and expertise of others who read and commented on portions of my dissertation. M. Patrick Graham offered valuable feedback on drafts of chapter 1 and introduced me to the discipline of bibliography as a member of my comprehensive examination committee. Bruce Nemerov kindly reviewed the study’s third chapter. My writing group members Meredith Doster and Alan Pike read many component parts of my dissertation and offered helpful feedback on its organization and arguments. I am particularly grateful to Meredith who graciously proofread my entire manuscript at a late stage, and who served as a conversation partner throughout the process of devising, researching, and writing this dissertation. Thanks to Donald Ross, Diane Ross, Linton Ballinger, Hugh McGraw, David Ivey, and Stanley Smith, subjects of my writing who read and responded to portions of the dissertation discussing their or their family members’ work and ideas. In each case their feedback proved useful in honing my argument. Audiences at sessions of the Society for American Music, the American Studies Association, the American Folklore Society, the Music Library Association, the Nineteenth Century Studies Association, and the Southern American Studies Association also provided useful feedback on early versions of the dissertation’s various chapters.

Several individuals consented to speak with me about their personal and family histories as Sacred Harp singers, or assisted me in conducting research. Thanks for participating in oral history interviews to members of the Ballinger family (William Larry Ballinger, Conley Linton Ballinger, Robert Lomax Ballinger, Earl Riley Ballinger, Leon Homer Ballinger, Sarah Elaine Ballinger, Gravis Leslie Ballinger, Grady Linden “Buddy” Ballinger, Lisa Ballinger Geist, and Chris Ballinger); Daphene Causey and her daughter Sharon DuPriest; Velton Chafin and his daughter Brenda Chafin; members of the Creel family (Lucy Ryan Heidorn, Cynthia J. Creel Tanner, Wanda Creel Capps, Ann Creel Jett Danny Creel, Jerry Ryan, David E. Heidorn, Kenneth R. Tate, Cassie Allen, Yancey M. Jett, Emily Creel Brown, Julianna Jett, and Madison Jett); Raymond C. Hamrick; John Hollingsworth, Elsie Hollingsworth, and their son Bill Hollingsworth; members of the Ivey family (Coy Ivey, Lloyd Ivey, Nate Green, Norma Green, Eloise Wootten, David Ivey, Rodney Ivey, Toney Ivey, Deborah Morton, Jackie Tanner, Sandy Ivey, Richard Ivey, Scott Ivey, and Cheyenne Ivey Burton); Hugh W. McGraw; members of the Owen family (Curtis Owen, Edith Owen, Beverly Coates, Bruce Coates, Donald Ross, and Diane Ross); members of the Rogers and Denney families (Karen Rollins, Sherry Lovvorn, Philip Denney, Denney Rogers, and Paige Harrod); Stanley Smith, and Tommie Spurlock. Nathan Rees, Lauren Bock, Jonathon Smith, Richard Ivey, and Kelsey Ivey assisted me in conducting these interviews. This dissertation only begins to unpack the wealth of insights that emerged from our conversations. Caelan Tree Treacy transcribed several of these conversations. Danielle Pitrone scanned primary source materials I relied upon in chapters 1 and 3.

Many of the ideas in this dissertation arose out of informal conversations with numerous friends and colleagues in shape-note singing and scholarship. Thanks, in particular to Henry Johnson, Nathan Rees, Jonathon Smith, John Plunkett, Aldo Ceresa, David Ivey, Buell Cobb, Robert L. Vaughn, Jamil Drake, Erich Nunn, Daniel W. Patterson, Christopher Sawula, Hillary King, Isabella Alexander, Harry Eskew, Emma Brown, Deidra Montgomery, Riley Lee, Mark Godfrey, Leigh Cooper, Benjamin “B. M.” Smith, and Joanna Smolko for many enjoyable and edifying exchanges. John Plunkett especially, as well as Benjamin, Robert, Henry, Nathan, Aldo, and Jonathon shared materials from their private collections of Sacred Harp and shape-note songbooks, recordings, photographs, and papers. Wade Kotter also generously scanned and shared pages from his tunebook collection. Sarah Kahre, Ellen Lueck, and Timothy Eriksen shared insights and primary source materials as they pursued dissertation research on topics adjacent to my own. I am grateful to count all three as friends and collaborators. Emory faculty offered useful ideas in graduate seminars and informal conversations, including Joseph Crespino, Peggy Barlett, Bruce Knauft, Anna Grimshaw, Kevin Corrigan, Kim Loudermilk, and Angelika Bammer. The Institute of the Liberal Arts was an ideal department in which to pursue this project. I’m grateful for the opportunity to pursue my research in a collegial and intellectually stimulating environment supportive of work like mine that is interdisciplinary at its core. I’m grateful to the staff and faculty administrators of the department who supported my work and fought to convey the vital importance of our institute to graduate education at Emory.

I appreciate the help of staff members at libraries and archives who made their collections accessible, and to the institutions that supported my research. Harry Rice, John Bondurant, and the rest of the staff of the Berea College Appalachian Sound Archive assisted me during a week conducting research with the William H. Tallmadge Baptist Hymnody and Symposium on Rural Hymnody collections. I am grateful for the support for this trip and for the oral history interviews I conducted that Berea provided through their Appalachian Sound Archives Fellowship program. Thanks as well to Kent Gilbert for hosting and feeding me during my delightful week in Berea. The staff of UCLA’s Charles E. Young Research Library granted me access to George Pullen Jackson’s card catalog and collection of tunebooks. A James and Sylvia Thayer Short-Term Research Fellowship from UCLA supported this research. The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada awarded me a grant from the McElrath-Eskew Research Fund in support of my research at the Sacred Harp Museum in Carrollton. Thanks to Charles Woods, Karen Rollins, Nathan Rees, and Charlene Wallace (the last three my colleagues on the Sacred Harp Publishing Company’s museum committee) for access to and permission to reproduce pages from the museum’s unparalleled collection of *Sacred Harp* and related tunebook editions and Sacred Harp–related correspondence and other papers. Thanks to Jeff Place and the rest of the staff at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, for their assistance examining audio recordings, photographs, and papers from Sacred Harp singers’ trip to the 1970 Festival of American Folklife. Thanks to Todd Harvey for assisting me during a short trip to the Library of Congress’s American Folklife Center, where I learned how to use a reel-to-reel tape player, and listened to the Alan Lomax and George Pullen Jackson Collection of Sacred Harp Music. Thanks to Gregory Reish and Rachel K. Morris at Middle Tennessee State University’s Center for Popular Music (CPM) for reproducing and permitting me to use photographs from the John W. Work III Collection, and to Grover Baker and Lucinda Cockrell for assisting me during a trip to the center to examine gospel songbooks featuring the music of Sacred Harp composers. Emory University’s Laney Graduate School’s Professional Development Support enabled me to visit the Smithsonian and Library of Congress in Washington, to travel to the CPM, to conduct fieldwork at Sacred Harp singings, and to attend the Virginia Rare Book School at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, where a course on the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century typography and printing taught by Katherine McCanless Ruffin and John Kristensen contributed to my analysis of Sacred Harp editions in chapters 1 and 2. Christine Wilt assisted me in locating a copy of a painting of Joseph Stephen James at the Douglas County (Georgia) Public Library and permitted me to reproduce it. At Emory’s Pitts Theology Library Debra Madera, Robert Presutti, Bo Adams, Brandon Wason, and Margaret Peddle assisted me during several visits to examine books in the extraordinary English and American Hymnody and Psalmody Collection, and correspondence, old newsletter issues, and other treasures contained in the Raymond C. Hamrick Papers. Pam Helms permitted me to review correspondence of her grandfather, George Pullen Jackson, in her private collection and she and her cousins Jo Pendleton and Ellen Jackson generously permitted me to reproduce a matrix of photographs by their grandfather. Thanks to the Sacred Harp Publishing Company and the Sacred Harp Book Company for permission to reproduce tunes from editions of *The Sacred Harp* tunebook and to Angela Burton and Laurie Matheson at the University of Illinois Press for permission to reproduce the book cover of *Makers of the Sacred Harp*.

Three mentors and friends cultivated my love of Sacred Harp singing, composing, and scholarship, and in doing so shepherded me along the path toward undertaking this study. Neely Bruce introduced me to Sacred Harp singing and encouraged my early interests in shape-note composition and history. George Seiler, who died just after I moved to Atlanta for doctoral studies, taught me how to support Sacred Harp singings and to sing bass. Raymond C. Hamrick, who died at age ninety-nine while I was drafting this dissertation, served as a gracious and humble model for combining enthusiasm for Sacred Harp singing and composing with research into its history and practices. The Atlanta and Decatur singing classes and the Sacred Harp singers of Georgia and Alabama served as a network akin to family. Singing with them once or twice a week sustained me during the exciting but sometimes arduous process of developing this study. My partner in life Lauren Bock helped me work through each idea in this dissertation as a patient and generous interlocutor, accompanied me on numerous trips to singings, agreed to join me in a move away from family to embark on this work, and supported me during the ups and downs of the research and writing process. Thanks to her, and, finally, to my parents Mark Karlsberg and Linda Pearlman Karlsberg, who instilled in me a love of learning and creativity, encouraged my curiosity, and supported me in following my passions.