

Musical Movements
NWD Model Theological Conference on Worship
Presented on April 11, 2011 by Cheryl Barrows and Mark Schultz

There are many ways to approach a topic like musical movements. We decided to proceed as a composer of music would, and have sub-titled our presentation “A Sonata on Worship Music”.

The opening movement of our sonata is going to take a look at about 500 years of music in worship, beginning with the 16th century. The Lutheran Reformation took place at a time when the world was active. Philosophy, science, exploration, and the arts were all very busy at this time. Luther grew up at a time when music was flourishing. The music used in worship was all very well prepared and consisted mostly of chants being sung for the worshipping congregation in a language the majority of them did not speak. Here is an example of Psalm 150 as it would have been sung by a boy’s choir. The congregation did not participate in the liturgy of the day.

The organ was also used differently than we use it today. During the 16th century, the organ did not accompany the singing. The organ introduced selections, and then played versettes or interludes between stanzas of chanted liturgy.

Martin Luther, being an established musician himself, wanted to put the music back in the hands of the people. He began writing hymns that were in the native language and musical style of the people. Many claim that Luther used “bar tunes” to set Christian lyrics too. This is an inaccurate description of what actually took place. It was common for people of this era to play music in their homes. No radios, mp3s, or televisions existed. Music was truly a creative art being created by many. Luther used the stylistic form from many of the German tunes when he created his hymnody. This was usually ABA form, where a phrase or two would be repeated making it easy for the people to learn and remember.

The turbulence of the time of the Reformation had passed. Germany was politically divided and the local rulers determined if their areas were to become Protestant, Catholic, or Reformed. These same rulers greatly supported the arts. Their political divisions led to the 30 Years War. This was also the time that the pilgrims, seeking religious freedom, arrived in America. The church gradually began to be separated from the ruling secular authority and secular music gained in importance. Opera emerged in 1600. Composers began to use harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic “affections” that suggested certain actions or emotions. The 17th century saw people in Lutheran congregations still participating actively in worship. Printed hymnals began appearing in more congregations. Composers were writing music that was built upon the old traditions, but also used emerging styles.

Gospel Motets were popular during the 17th century. These motets were presented in traditional polyphonic style and gave the people a chance to hear the Word being sung. Congregational singing was stimulating with stanzas being alternated between congregation and instruments or choirs. The choral music flourished with settings of chorales and Psalms being written.

The organ continued to introduce congregational and liturgical song. As time passed, the a cappella singing of the congregation began to be accompanied by the organ. This was a new feature that caused great concern among the worshipping people. The whole concept of instruments in worship was new to the people. Many early church leaders are reported to have spoken against the use of instruments in worship. Lutheran composers were influenced by the secular composers of the day. Couperin, Corelli, and Frescobaldi all wrote influential organ works during this time. The Four masters of Lutheran church music were prominent in the 17th century. Michael Praetorius, Johann Hermann Schein, Samuel Scheidt, and Heinrich Schuetz all contributed to the chorale arrangements being composed for worship. The era of new musical changes is known as the early “Baroque” era.

The 18th century was the era of a composer who was so gifted that his music has endured for centuries and is still treasured by millions of people. Johann Sebastian Bach was best known for his sacred cantatas, Passions, and organ chorale preludes, but also composed many secular works as well. Unbelievably, this was also an era of uneven support and recognition for sacred music. Bach, while working as a church musician, composed new cantatas for each Sunday of the church year, using the Boys Choir from the church school to sing them. He wrote nearly 300 cantatas, hundreds of settings of Lutheran chorales, several Lutheran Masses, settings of the Passion, motets and organ settings of chorales, preludes and fugues. During this time the role of the choir was altered in the church. The role of the choir was diminished. Congregations sang fewer of the Reformation chorales. The songs that they did sing changed in style, leaving the rugged rhythms of the Reformation era and changing to a regular, more even meter. (Use the two arrangements of A Mighty Fortress as an example)

Although Bach is highly regarded today, in his lifetime he was thought of as merely a well-respected church musician with special skills as an organist. The most prominent Lutheran composers of the time were Telemann and George F. Handel. Handel, though Lutheran in background, actually became more famous for his operas and oratorios. The greatest and most highly respected organist of the time was Dietrich Buxtehude, whom Bach greatly admired and imitated in his own organ works.

The 19th century, or the Age of Enlightenment, saw two distinct philosophies emerge that shaped the way people viewed God and the world. Enlightenment and Romanticism dominated the late 18th and 19th centuries. These philosophies saw a decrease in support for music and the church. Many skilled musicians were forced to find other jobs to support themselves. Amateurs, with little or no training began to lead the music of the church. It was not until the mid 19th century that conservatories began to appear to train musicians.

In spite of these difficulties, untrained musicians did make original contributions, particularly in congregational song. The majority of the 19th century Pietist hymns were written by amateurs. Not all the congregational music was new during the 19th century. Old hymn texts along with original versions of their tunes were rediscovered. Communities began to develop amateur choruses to perform public concerts. Since the members of these choruses were often singers from local “choir-less” churches, it was natural that many churches called on these public choruses to sing in worship.

The favorite musical forms of the 19th century were opera, sonata, symphony and concertos, and didn't really work well in the Lutheran liturgy. They were based on virtuosic performances and the compositions were often far beyond the skill levels of congregational musicians.

Recovery began as researchers studied the liturgy, history and music of the church. This study led to understanding, and restoration. When this happened, new innovations appeared. Near the end of the 19th century, composers like Max Reger produced works for the typical church musician in addition to the monumental pieces they wrote for concert halls.

The liturgical renewal continued into the 20th century. In the 20th century, Lutherans began to establish schools to train church musicians and set standards that these musicians needed to meet. Despite these schools, musicians of the 20th century face many challenges. Historic forms that had served the church well were recovered. These included the sung liturgy of the Common Service, hymns, and a renewed interest in sung psalmody.

About the mid-century, treasures of the historic tradition were made available in new musical editions. Lutheran church musicians also began to create a host of new, still musically conservative, choral and organ settings of hymns. The publishers began publishing choral anthems and settings of the liturgy.

2nd movement of the sonata: Where we are, a history of the hymnal in the LCMS

At the 2004 Synodical Convention, by an 88% positive vote of the delegates, the **Lutheran Service Book** was adopted as only the second official hymnal of the synod. LSB was published ahead of schedule in the summer of 2006, ready to begin the new church year that Advent. Quoting from the Introduction "... *each of the hymnals throughout history have not only handed on the treasures of the past, but also offered contemporary expressions of word and song in service to the Gospel.*"

Looking back at history, the first hymnal of the synod was in development even before the Synod's formation. In 1847 the **Hymnal for Evangelical-Lutheran Congregations of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession** was published, edited by the Synod's first president, C. F. Walther. The hymnal was published in German, *the language spoken in worship life in the congregation.*

It wasn't until 1912 that the first English hymnal came to be used in the LCMS, the **Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book**, published by the English Synod. By now second and third generation American Lutherans were adopting English as their primary language in every-day living.

1941 brought us the first English hymnal produced by the LCMS through the efforts of the Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgies for the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. **The Lutheran Hymnal** was authorized for use by the Synodical Conference. The short preface to TLH reads that the committee "entrusted with the task of compiling TLH endeavored to produce a hymnal containing the best of the hymnodical treasures of the Church, in accord with the highest standards of Christian Worship."

In 1965, the LCMS in convention resolved to cooperate with other major Lutheran church bodies in America in developing a hymnal for all Lutherans. In 1966, at the invitation of our synod, representatives from four other Lutheran church bodies came together to form the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW). **Worship Supplement** (WS), published in 1969, was a foretaste of the efforts from this hymnal project. The Forward to WS reads "*Much of the language of the liturgies and the hymns (in TLH) was found to be in need of revision to make it meaningful to the man of today.*" "...by meeting the demands of changing times and situations, might serve also as a modern experiment in applying timeless truths to timely needs an attempt to give voice to the cries and joys of today's Christian by means of contemporary creations."

Looking back two years, **Hymns for now**, "a portfolio for good, bad, or rotten times," was published as the Workers quarterly of the Walther League in 1967. This small book was perhaps the first taste of folk song. Yet the book referenced the songs as hymns. From the introduction are the words perhaps "ahead of the times:" "... *When David was hard pressed, he cried out in poignant poetry and song. The psalms are the result. The rich liturgical heritage with us for centuries emerged out of a time when the church was being persecuted. The agonies of the reformation gave birth to new freedoms. And people sang of them. Most favorite chorales are from that time. And it's happening again. New songs are cropping up everywhere, especially where the revolution is digging the deepest into people's inner beings.*"

The **Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)** was published in 1978. This hymnal was adopted by the LCA, ALC, and other Lutheran church bodies, most of whom now constitute the ELCA. Because of theological concerns about LBW, the LCMS, in its 1977 convention, resolved to suspend approval until a blue-ribbon committee could assess congregational concerns. The committee recommended "LBW be accepted with modifications."

The 1979 convention adopted the recommendations of the hymnal review committee, and in 1982 the new hymnal for the LCMS was published under the name **Lutheran Worship**. LW was the synod's first official hymnal. Words expressed in the introduction include the following explanation, "*We are heirs of an astonishingly rich tradition. Each generation receives from those who went before and, in making that tradition of the Divine Service its own, adds what best may serve in its own day—the living heritage and something new.*"

All God's People Sing, a collection of liturgies and songs, was published in 1992 by Concordia Publishing, with the help of the Board for Parish Services of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Contents were selected especially for ages 9-14, the songbook is used in parochial schools, churches, homes, and camps. The Forward speaks of many kinds of music—chorales, changes, folk, Gospel hymns, Taize refrains—that *the variety of music reflects the richness of the Church's great treasury of song.*

Plans were announced in 1997 by the Commission on Worship, with the encouragement of President Barry, to produce a new hymnal combining the best of both official hymnals (TLH and LW), as well new material.

Hymnal Supplement '98 was published as a foretaste of the upcoming hymnal, LSB. From the introduction to HS '98, we read *"A hymnal is more than hymns, for through liturgy, psalmody, and hymnody, the Church is gathered into the very presence of the living Christ. "* and *"A hymnal serves more than today's generation, for it serves timelessly the needs of the Church in every Age. Furthermore, it offers more than we sometimes want or like because it gives voice to God's message and to our response for what we need."*

To bring us full circle we read from the Introduction to LSB. The theme in each hymnal and songbook through the years: *"In every age God also blesses his people by raising up hymn writers who have honed their craft to create rich and fresh expressions of praise."*

Later in the 20th century, new forms of worship began to emerge. Congregations began to stray away from the historical liturgy and into a more free style of worship. The historical liturgies and hymns began to be replaced by Contemporary Christian Music. Today many congregations are offering multiple styles of worship which use a wide range of musical styles.

The diversity in style of worship music is nothing new to the Lutheran church. You've just heard how there have been changing styles in every century. The Lord has given us a variety of talented musicians over the span of time to use in His church on earth. There have been problems in the past. Think of what it must have been like when hymns began to be sung to organ accompaniment for the first time. Or imagine what it would have been like to be in a church when the professional operatic style began to mix with the worship music. Today we have Contemporary Christian Music making its appearance in our churches.

All of these styles brought the same challenges to the pastors and musicians. How do we use a new style of music and still maintain our strong Lutheran theology of worship? The lyrics are far more important than the musical style. We all have strong preferences for music. Some prefer the traditional music of the 16th and 17th century, while others like the 21st century sound. I personally enjoy using both styles in worship.

The challenge today is, as it has always been, to keep our songs theologically sound and accurate. The songs and hymns we use in our worship life are statements of what we believe. As leaders of God's people on earth, we need to make every possible effort to make sure that the music used in our worship is a sound, accurate statement of what we believe.

Another issue facing us today is what I call participatory worship vs. non-participatory worship. Are our brothers and sisters in Christ really participating in corporate worship? Do they come to church and participate in the liturgy, confessions, songs and hymns, or do they simply come to hear a good performance? This is not a new problem. It has nothing to do with Contemporary music. The same thing was happening in the 16th and 17th centuries when the choirs were preparing wonderful cantatas to perform for the congregation in worship each week.

Brothers and sisters, I have seen so much bickering and fighting through the years over musical styles. It has divided many congregations and staffs. The church today faces many challenges. We cannot let our personal taste in music harm our worship life and divide us. We need to reunite and combine our skills and talents to worship the one true God together.

I would like to leave you with one more thought. When you receive a gift, it really doesn't matter how it's wrapped. The gift inside the package is the important part. When you go back to your congregations this week to worship, focus on the gift and not the package; the message and not the style. The message is eternal, the style will be changing.

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”
Col. 3:16-17 (ESV)*