



SHAKER MUSIC LIVES AGAIN

Brother Ricardo and Workshop group

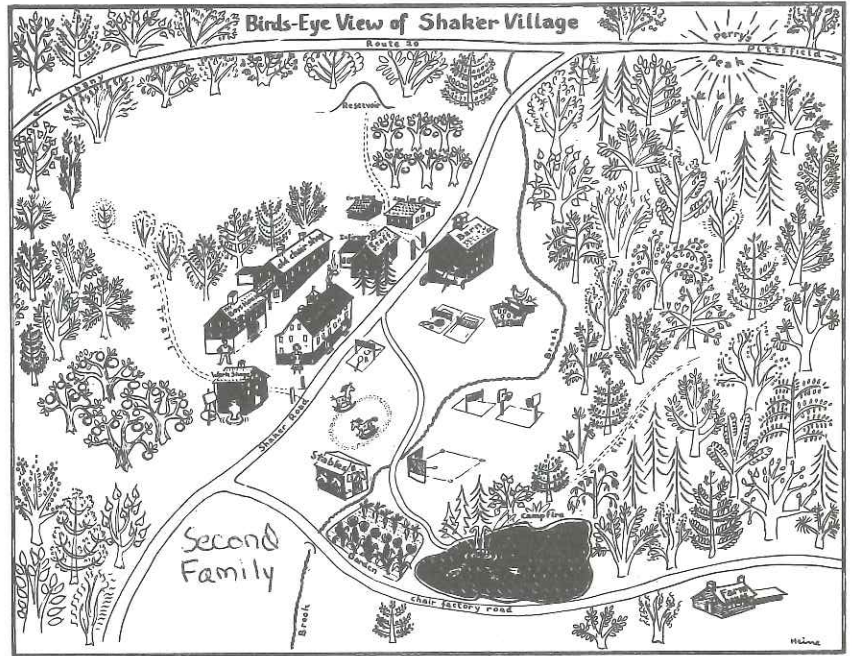


Each summer, about 90 teen-age boys and girls at Shaker Village Work Group are engaged in the restoration of the South Family section of Shaker Village on Mt. Lebanon, which is located near Pittsfield, Mass. At the same time, the teen-agers are recreating some of the early American industries that were formerly carried on there, such as hand weaving and cabinet work, for which the Shakers were famous in the nineteenth century. It is natural that they have also turned to Shaker music as one of their cultural interests and are now engaged in making the first recordings of authentic Shaker songs to be made available to the public. The venture has included extensive research, such as deciphering the key to the special system of music writing used by the Shakers and transcribing many of their songs into modern notation. The recordings will embrace about ten songs, some of which have been transcribed for the first time from recently discovered manuscripts which were hand-written by the Shakers around the middle of the last century. Research and recordings are being carried out under the supervision of Shaker Village staff members, Robert Opdahl and Bert Sonnenfeld. Mr. Sonnenfeld also carried on the research for the appended article. Several arrangements to be included in the collection were made by Harold Aks, Musical Director of the teen-age project. The recordings are soon to be available to the public through Shaker Village Work Group.

**SONGS & DANCE MUSIC
OF EARLY-AMERICAN
RELIGIOUS SECT HAVE
BEEN RE-CREATED IN
AUTHENTIC BACKGROUND**

Reprinted from
THE BERKSHIRE SKETCH

SHAKER VILLAGE WORK GROUP AT MT. LEBANON. SUCCEEDS IN DECIPHERING KEY TO THE STRANGE MUSIC OF THE SHAKERS -- NOW AT WORK ON FIRST RECORDINGS OF SONGS FOR PUBLIC RELEASE, MANY TRANSCRIBED FOR FIRST TIME.



Above is the Shaker Village Work Group, from an original drawing by Heine. At bottom, is a song from one of the rare Shaker song books, showing the strange musical patterns which have now been deciphered.

THE fervent religious expression of the celibate Shakers found frequent and vigorous outlet in the hundreds of songs and in the shaking inspirational dance which made the movement unique among the American Christian sects in the nineteenth century. "We danced and sang to celebrate our victory over sin," Brother Ricardo Belden recently said. One of the two remaining male Shakers, Brother Ricardo added: "Nay, our songs were not solemn, they were joyful!"

The creation of the large wealth of Shaker music was a true folk process. Although the songs were created by individuals, they were used in the group expression of prayer. The early Shaker songs were spontaneous efforts shouted out during the most intense moments of the religious ritual. A Shaker Brother or Sister seeing a vision, would give vent to overwhelming religious feelings by singing a song. Visions from the spirit world were an accepted phase of the Shaker religious faith and the many "gifts" received from departed spirits included songs, as well as entire books. These were later set down in meticulous manuscripts. These "gifts" from supernatural sources also took

Who will bow and bend like a willow
 Who will turn and twist and reel
 In the gale of simple freedom
 From the house of union blowing
 Who will drink the wine of power
 Dropping down like a shower Pride and
 bondage all forgetting Mothers wine is freely
 working Oh oh I will have it
 I will bow and bend to get it
 I'll be reeling turning twisting
 I shake out all the stunch and stiffning

SHAKER MUSIC (Continued)

the form of elaborate pen-and-ink drawings of symbolic figures such as an "Emblem of the Heavenly Sphere," "Bower of Love" or "Tree of Life."

In an earlier account published in 1781, the author, Valentin Rathbun, who had joined the order and had resigned or "fleshed off" (as the Shakers put it), after an unsatisfactory membership, described Shaker singing in this fashion:

"Some will be singing, each one his own tune; some without words, in an Indian tone, some sing jig tunes, some tunes of their own making . . ." There was no actual unity in the singing, because each Brother or Sister sang only according to their personal inspiration. It was not until twenty-five years after the founding of the order in America that the first Shaker song was notated. Thus a great wealth of spontaneous folk expression had already been created when their songs were first written down in 1805 at Turtle Creek, Ohio.



SISTER SADIE Neal was the oldest Shaker when she died in 1948 at the age of 98.

The music itself came from a wide variety of sources. Folk songs, old Anglican hymn tunes and themes by symphonic composers were used in addition to the melodies created by the brethren themselves. A good example of folk material drawn upon by the Shakers is the famous German folk tune — "Hopp, hopp, hopp, hopp my birdy, hopp." This tune was set by the Shakers to the words:

Love, love, love — oh what pretty love,

*Father loves us, mother loves us,
I love you and we love one another.
Oh what pretty love, oh what good
pure love!*

Further examples include several songs obviously based on "Yankee

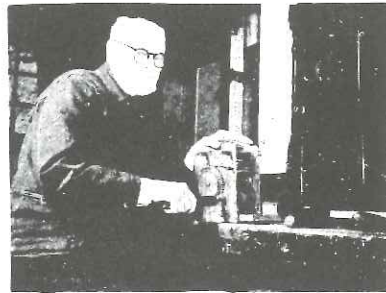
Doodle" which was popular in the early days of the Shaker movement. One of these was adapted to Shaker use with the following words:

*Awake my soul, arise and shake,
No time to ever ponder,
Keep awake, keep awake,
Lest ye be rent asunder.*

Even robust songs from "the West" were adapted for religious purposes by the resourceful Shakers as late as the eighteen fifties. Instead of the "Whoopy-ty-yi-yo" of the cowboys the Shakers sang in unison to an equally spirited, but a more hallowed purpose:

*For lo it is a happy time, a time for
making merry,
Of heavenly comforts all divine and
very cheering, very.*

The songs which carry most interest for our times, however, are these



Ricardo Belden, Shaker Brother, who assisted teen-agers in research and recordings.

which the Shakers created in the heat of their inspirations or visions. These do not conform to the melodic restriction of folk songs and hymns. These "inspired" songs were created as spontaneous expressions of great religious feeling and, since many of the Shakers had little or no musical training or talent, the music was often chaotic in rhythm and structure. The gift of extemporaneous rhyme is a very rare one and the Shakers claimed that their songs were in fancied languages such as that used on the moon or in Indian and African dialects. In the heat of the shaking, for example, a new and strange tongue would be created:

*Selei askanava, Veseven vene vi.
Veleo askana fa, fe nes veen fenefi.
O ho ho ho, haw ew of hoo.*

These were the "words" to a vision song learned by a Shaker Sis-

ter at Groveland, New York, "while visiting the moon." At other times these songs were given an interpretation after the heat of the inspiration was over. The lingual invention,

*O sa ri anti va me, I co lon se ve re
I con e lo se va ne, Se ran te lo me.*

was interpreted as:

*O Saviour wilt thou hear me, I am
poor and needy
I'll come and bow before thee, Thy
cross I'll take upon me.*

The melodies to these original songs "from other planets" were primarily chants in rhythm. The melodies were very simple, bearing the mark of spontaneity in their creation. "Indian" songs were also frequently created by the members of the Shaker community who were possessed of a greater facility in rhyme.

*This be de way shiny Mother say
me go,*

*Shake a little, turn a little, bow, low,
low.*

*Dis make me simple, dis make me
free,*

Dis make me happy you all see.

A type of tune often created by the brethren was the "gift" song. Most famous is the song, "'Tis a gift to be simple," used by Aaron Copland for the wedding scene in his ballet score "Appalachian Spring." This song is essentially the credo of the Shaker conviction that communal living—where believers were assured the basic necessities of life and were permitted to own no property—provided a rational solution to the economic evils of their times. Its most familiar lines were:

*'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift
to be free,*

*'Tis the gift to come down where
we ought to be,*

*And when we find ourselves in the
place just right*

*'T'will be in the valley of love and
delight.*

*When true simplicity is gained
To bow and bend we shan't be
ashamed.*

*To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning we come out right.*

Other gift songs were attributed to George Washington, Thomas Jef-

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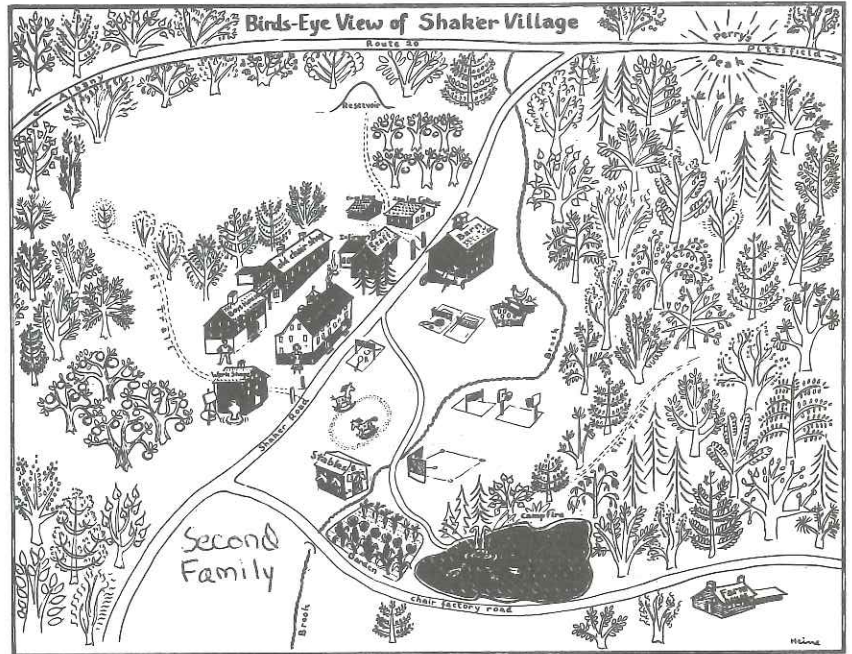
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INFORMATION ABOUT THE TEEN-AGE SUMMER PROJECT ---and how to become a member

person and other famous men who, although no Shakers on earth, were "converted to the faith" in the spirit life. The scope of Shaker faith was boundless. Other favorite post-terrestrial converts to the faith were William Penn, Queen Elizabeth and William Shakespeare. All these celebrated citizens of the hereafter inspired the brethren to create new songs in the course of their supernatural visions.

The music of the Shakers was essentially joyful music created of a confident sense of piety and of the joyful life where all members of a community shared equally in the work and responsibilities. Only the rarer dirges were sad; all the hymns were characterized by the joyfulness of their rhythm.

In the middle years of the order an elaborate system of music notation was devised to anotate the Shaker hymnody. The Shakers selected D as the basic note for all their minor tunes. Thus most of their minor tunes tend toward the Dorian Mode. The notes were indicated by letters with half steps indicated simply by the symbol: $\frac{1}{2}$. A system of signs for meter was also devised, although Shaker composers felt no compulsion to follow metric restrictions. There was great freedom of rhythm because there was no clear indication of individual note values. The Shakers performed their tunes in folk song style, that is, adding ad libitum, sliding rhythm delays, and other media used in folk singing.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, the Shakers, their communities already on the decline, began using standard hymn tunes in their religious rituals. The pioneering creative music ceased and the order, now staid and consisting mainly of elderly people, adopted standard Protestant music.

By unearthing the early music of the Shakers and translating their songs into modern musical notation, it will be possible for those interested in the great wealth of original Shaker songs to make use of the music for study and performance. Culture in America will gain by a wider acquaintance with this rich folk idiom.

Being A Group Member

Teen-agers who come to Shaker Village carry out their obligation to the community, including morning work projects, afternoon workshops and contribute their intelligent interest to the solution of group living problems. They take an active interest in making the Village Government an effective instrument to carry out the purposes for which boys and girls come to Shaker Village. Profiting by the freedom which villagers have, they aspire to understand and respond to the needs and rights of others and to be ready and willing to explore the art of human relations, work and new leisure interests. They aspire to sound work attitudes, competence. Teen-agers selected to become members of the Shaker Village Group are those who can obtain substantial advantage from the program in developing effective attitudes toward work, leisure and human relations which will be useful in college and the future.

Admission

From this outline of Program and Policy, it can be seen that unless an applicant has a serious interest in the objectives of Shaker Village, the program will not serve his needs. Unless he seeks to enlarge his recreational interests, while still taking part in those he already enjoys, and seeks to master the art of community living with his contemporaries, and to develop effective work attitudes, it would largely be a waste of his summer, as well as taking the place of another applicant who might benefit from these objectives. It is essential that an applicant be open-minded and receptive about the three basic ideas in the Shaker Village philosophy — first, that the true enjoyment of leisure requires the active exploration and use of the rich store of recreational, cultural and social resources; second, that human relations require mature individuals who strive to understand and respond to the needs of other people; and, third; that one's daily work should not only be the source of his livelihood, but also the means of deep satisfaction and continuous personal development. An applicant needs to be aware that carrying out this philosophy calls for the mastery of the new and difficult kind of thinking and action that is a challenge to teenager and adult, alike. Eight weeks is a short time in which to expect such important things to happen, but it can be a beginning for those who are interested in exploring new ideas and stirring experiences.

Eligibility

The group is for teen-agers only. Boys are required to be 14 to 17 years of age, as of July 1st of their first year; girls are required to be 13 to 16 years. Applicants are also considered on the basis of the extent to which the experience will aid in their own development and maturity. However, they are not required to have previous experience or skill in the various work and other fields carried on at Shaker Village. Information concerning tuition and scholarship aid will be found in the application form.

For information write:

Shaker Village Work Group,

POST OFFICE BOX

PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS