



Singing the New Song Together: MB-GC Relations in Music

By Peter Letkemann

A church that sings the same great hymns of the faith should find it easier to witness and work together.¹

The story of MB-GC relations in music begins in Russia, in the village of Gnadenfeld (Molotschna). In 1837, Lehrer Heinrich Franz introduced his students in the village school of Gnadenfeld to the practice of singing according to Ziffern.² His purpose, as stated later in the preface to his Choralbuch,³ was to improve the quality of congregational singing.

Contemporary accounts by C. Hildebrand,⁴ Heinrich Heese,⁵ and others speak of the "slow" (schleppend), "loud" and "distorted" (verzerrten) singing in the churches. A vivid description is given by Jacob Klassen in his autobiography:

Endlessly long hymns from the Gesangbuch⁶ were led by the Vorsaenger of the worshipping congregation. These hymns were sung with so many flourishes and embellishments that the melody became distorted to the point of being unrecognizable. In spite of my good ear, it was impossible for me to retain any of these strange melodies in my memory.

Lehrer Franz hoped to counter this distortion of the chorale melodies by teaching the correct melodies to his pupils, in this way preparing a new generation of congregational singers. He and his friend Friedrich Wilhelm Lange, a minister and later Aeltester of the Gnadenfeld Church, arranged the hymns of the Gesangbuch according to their poetic metre and collected the 163 melodies required to match these metres.⁹ These melodies were written out in Ziffern and copied by a whole generation of students and other teachers. In 1846, Johann Cornies made singing according to Ziffern a compulsory subject of the curriculum in his school reform, which affected all of the schools in the Molotschna Colony.¹⁰ Thus, he insured the fulfillment of Franz' aims.

The increased demand for these melodies led Franz to publish them in 1860 in his Choralbuch - Zunaechst zum Gebrauch in den mennonitischen Schulen Suedrusslands. The book was printed in Leipzig by Breitkopf and Haertel.¹¹ It became the standard music "textbook" for several generations of Mennonite students, and "transformed the congregational singing of Russian Mennonites."¹²

In the Choralbuch, all of the melodies are given in 4-part settings, a daring innovation for that time, which has had a significant long-term effect on Mennonite congregational singing to this day!

In addition to the 163 melodies of the Gesangbuch, the Choralbuch also contained an appendix of 112 "new" songs: songs like "Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe," "Schoenster Herr Jesu," and "Dort ueber jenem Sternenmeer." These and other "new" songs had been introduced to Gnadenfeld and to other "Progressive" centers through contact with non-Mennonite preachers and evangelists like John Melville and Eduard Wuest.¹³ The "new" songs played an essential role in the worship of the Mennonite Brethren Church, but did not become a regular feature of worship in the Kirchen-Gemeinde until the end of the century. Both groups, however, could draw on the Choralbuch as a tune-resource. Its 275 melodies (all in 4-part settings) could be fitted to the texts both of the Gesangbuch and of the songbooks used by the Mennonite Brethren in their worship, including Hiller's Geistliches Liederkaestlein,¹⁴ Gossner's Schatzkaestchen,¹⁵ and Julius Koebner's Die Glaubensstimme.¹⁶

The Gesangbuch used by the Kirchen-Gemeinde and the various songbooks used by the Mennonite Brethren had only very few texts in common.¹⁷ The majority of the texts in the Gesangbuch dated from the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries; while those of the MB songbooks dated more from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The latter reflected South German Pietism and the North German Erweckungsbewegung, both of which had a profound influence on the founding of the MB Church. These religious movements had little effect on the hymnody of the Kirchen-Gemeinde until the publication of a new Gesangbuch in 1892.¹⁸

The new Gesangbuch retained only 183 of the 725 hymns in the old Gesangbuch, indicating how out-of-date the older book was with the spiritual needs of late 19th century Mennonites. In fact, the Kirchen-Gemeinde had moved much closer to the Mennonite Brethren in its hymnody. The new Gesangbuch had 195 texts in common with the Glaubensstimme, and many were also borrowed from Hiller's Liederkaestlein. The new Gesangbuch used 114 melodies, 109 of which were found in the Franz Choralbuch (70 from Part I; 39 from Part II).

The Mennonite Brethren produced no official hymnbook of their own in Russia. In fact, a report in the Friedensstimme¹⁹ indicates that in most MB congregations the worshippers had no songbooks at all; the hymns were

lined out by the preacher. The singing was not led by Vorsaenger, as in the Kirchen-Gemeinde, but by choirs.²⁰

According to B.B. Janz,²¹ choirs were introduced into MB worship in the early 1870's. They served both a musical and a social function. The choirs led the singing and helped to teach new songs to the congregation, and also functioned as a gathering point for the young people of the church. In fact, most Mennonite choirs in Russia were youth choirs, with members ranging between the ages of sixteen to twenty-five.²²

All choirs in Russia sang according to Ziffern. Songs were chosen from a great variety of songbooks imported from Western Europe and North America.²³ Since all of these books used notes, it was up to the choir director, or some other member of the choir who could read notes, to transcribe the songs to be used into Ziffern. Then each choir member would copy the songs into his/her own personal choirbook.²⁴ In later years this process was simplified by the use of the hectograph machine.

Beginning in 1883, Mennonites also began publishing anthologies of choral music. The following is a list of all choral music publications, together with choralbooks and school song books, published by Mennonites in Russia:

Choir Books

- 1883 Chorgesaenge (Muntau)
- 1884 Die Melodien der Frohen Botschaft
(Gnadenfeld)
- 1886 Frohe Botschaft in Liedern (H. Janz,
Halbstadt)
- Liederstrauss (H. Janz, Halbstadt)
- 1889-90 Saengerfreund (I. Born, Halbstadt)
- 1891-93 Liederperlen I
- 1894-96 Liederperlen II
- 1894 Fest-Gesaenge (Gnadenfeld)
- 1897 Fest-Gesaenge II (Gnadenfeld)
- 1897-99 Liederperlen III
- 1900-02 Liederperlen IV
- 1903-05 Liederperlen V
- 1906-08 Liederperlen VI
- 1909-11 Liederperlen VII
- 1912-14 Liederperlen VIII
- 1914 Liederalbum (J. Janzen)
- 1915 Liederperlen IX

Choralbooks/School Books

- 1859 Hamm, Choralbuch
- 1860 Franz, Choralbuch (4-part)
- 1865 Franz, Choralbuch (Melody)
- 1876 120 Kirchenlieder, Koeppenthal
- 1880 Franz, Choralbuch (4-part)
- 1896 Liedersammlung fuer die
Volksschulen (Halbstadt)
- 1897 Neufeld/Wiens, Choralbuch
- 1902 Kinder-Harfe (Alexanderwohl)
- 1909 Goosli
- 1914 Sangesblueten (Halbstadt)
Choralbuch

Of the 17 choral publications listed in the left-hand column 13 were produced by MB leaders, such as Heinrich Janz, Isaac Born,²⁵ Heinrich Jakob Braun,²⁶ and Kornelius G. Neufeld.²⁷ The other 4 publications originated from leaders in the Gnadenfeld Church, such as Wilhelm P. Neufeld²⁸ and Johannes H. Janzen.²⁹

These publications, together with the hand-copied books, provided the repertoire for MB church choirs as well as for community choirs in which both MBs and KMs (Kirchliche Mennoniten) sang. The latter were known as Dorfchor, Gesangverein or Liebhaberchor, and sang at community events like weddings or funerals, and at Saenger Feste.³⁰ From the available evidence, it seems that most KM churches, with the exception of Gnadenfeld, did not use choirs in Sunday morning worship on a regular basis until after World War I.³¹

Through the community choirs and Saenger Feste both MBs and KMs came to know and enjoy the "same" choral repertoire, a repertoire which the Russlaender brought with them to Canada in 1923. The selection and development of this repertoire was the work of a small group of well-educated and highly motivated men, men who imported songbooks from Germany, Switzerland and the U.S.A., who chose the songs suited to the needs of their singers and congregations, and who then transcribed these into Ziffern. The use of Ziffern thus acted as a filter against the wholesale introduction of non-Mennonite songs. The result is a "unique" blend of German, American and Russian music, which can truly be called a "Mennonite repertoire".

The 17 choral publications listed above contain a total of 1,494 songs. Of these, about 60% are from German sources and include Chorlieder,³² Geistliche Volkslieder,³³ Volkslieder, Erweckungslieder,³⁴ and motets.³⁵ Only 20 songs are borrowed from Russian sources.³⁶ The other 40% of the repertoire consists of American Gospel Songs, Sunday School songs and Gospel Anthems.³⁷

The first and most popular collection of American Gospel Songs used in Russia was Ernst Gebhardt's Frohe Botschaft, first published in 1875.³⁸ This songbook was transcribed into Ziffern twice, first by J. Ewert in Gnadenfeld and two years later by Heninrich Janz in Halbstadt. The songs were introduced by the choir, but quickly passed over into the congregational song repertoire.

Further evidence of this transformation of choral song into congregational song can be seen in Isaak Born's Heimatklaenge, first published in 1890. This

book contained only texts; the melodies were already familiar to the congregation from the choir. Of the 237 songs in the 5. Edition (1903), 137 had previously been published in one of the choral anthologies. Over half of the 237 songs in this edition, at least 135 songs, are American Gospel/Sunday School songs.

The popularity of Frohe Botschaft, Heimatklaenge and Glaubensstimme led to their being combined, after the turn of the century, into one volume, called Der Dreiband (texts only).³⁹ This book became the unofficial hymnbook of the MB Church, and remained in use in some MB churches in Canada until 1952. The Dreiband was not used in the worship services of the KMs (later GCs), but it is probable that individual families used it (or one of its three components) in their homes. In any case, many of the songs were already familiar through their use by choirs.

Thus, MBs and KMs in Russia shared a large repertoire of hymn texts and tunes together with a large and varied choral repertoire. Through this repertoire, MBs and KMs shared common elements of faith and spirituality, and I am sure that this contributed to the good relations that developed between the two groups, especially after 1910. The Russlaender brought this repertoire and these good relations with them to Canada in the years after 1923.

II. Kanadier: 1874-1923

The Mennonites who settled in southern Manitoba in the 1870s were almost all from the Chortitza, or Old Colony, and its daughter settlements Fuerstentland and Bergthal. They brought with them the "old" Gesangbuch and the 1865 melody-edition of the Franz Choralbuch. Apparently those from the Bergthal Colony had not used the Choralbuch in Russia, and some were reluctant to accept the innovation of Ziffern-notation in Manitoba.⁴⁰ The "old Gesangbuch remained the official hymnbook of the Bergthaler Church until 1927, and as far as I know, is still being used by Old Colony Mennonites in Manitoba and Mexico. Both the Gesangbuch and the Choralbuch (melody-edition only) were reprinted several times in North America, first by the Mennonite Publishing House in Elkhart, and later by D.W. Friesen in Altona.

"New" songs were introduced as early as 1876 by Jacob Hoeppner at the school in Hochfeld.⁴¹ They included songs from Frohe Botschaft and from the

Dreiband, a collection of three American Sunday School books - Jubeltoene, Hosianna, Hallelujah⁴² - not to be confused with the Dreiband published twenty years later by the Mennonites in Russia. Much of the credit for introducing the Sunday school, harmony singing and Bible study to Manitoba Mennonites belongs to Jacob Hoeppner.⁴³

These innovations contributed to the tensions in the West Reserve that led to the church schism of 1892. A group of 60 families, under the leadership of Aeltester Funk and Jacob Hoeppner, formed what became known as the Bergthaler Mennonite Church. A larger group of 441 families formed the Sommerfelder Church.

Even in the "progressive" Bergthaler Church, gospel songs did not find final acceptance in Sunday morning worship until the 1920s. The "old" Gesangbuch continued in use. In 1912 the Lehrdienst of the church decided to introduce the Gesangbuch mit Noten, the hymnbook of the American General Conference Church. At the same time it was decided to introduce the Evangeliums-Leider. Both decisions, however, were reversed within a few months. The old Gesangbuch was to remain in official use, but permission was given to use the other books. The Gesangbuch mit Noten was finally accepted as the official hymnal in 1927.⁴⁴

Several years earlier, in 19 the Rosenort Church in Saskatchewan, under the leadership of Aeltester David Toews, had also introduced the Gesangbuch mit Noten as its official hymnbook.⁴⁵ It was these two churches who came together in 1903 to form what is now the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (GC). The Gesangbuch mit Noten had 296 texts in common with the Gesangbuch published by the KMs in Russia in 1892; the former even included a number of hymns by the Russian Mennonite poet and preacher Bernhard Harder.⁴⁶ The Gesangbuch mit Noten also had 177 texts in common with the Glaubensstimme, in addition to a large number of hymns by Hiller and a selection of Gospel Songs. Thus, the congregational song repertoire of GCs in Canada was closely linked with that of KMs and MBs in Russia.

Choirs were formed in southern Manitoba before the turn of the century. In 1955, Gerhard Ens reported that he had seen the Protokoll-Buch of a Gesangverein from the years 1889-90.⁴⁷ This document was destroyed in a fire at the MCI in Gretna in 1963, and no further information on this choral society has come to light. Choral singing received a great stimulus with the

coming of H.H. Ewert to Gretna in books like Frohe Botschaft, Glaubensstimme, Heimatklaenge and Der Dreiband.⁴⁸ He also introduced German-American Gospel Cantatas, like Zion by J.S. Fearis.⁴⁹ With the exception of Glaubensstimme, the repertoire was almost completely American in origin.

The choirs and congregation of the MB Church in Winkler, founded in 1888, were singing basically the same repertoire as their GC counterparts described above. It is not known when the first choir was organized in the MB Church, but the first directors were Peter Dyck, Peter Klassen, Rev. J.B. Penner and Rev. Peter H. Neufeld. From 1906 - 1941, the choir was under the leadership of J.A. Kroeker, who was assisted for many years by J.M. Elias.⁵⁰ Where Kroeker and Elias received their musical training is not known; further training and stimulus, however, came from Aron Sawatzky in Saskatchewan.

Aron Sawatzky was one of the prominent MB musical leaders in Russia.⁵¹ He came to Saskatchewan in 1903 and by 1905 had helped to organized the first Gesangfest among Canadian Mennonites. In 1906 he helped to organize the Hoerdliche Saengervereinigung der Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde on Nord Amerika (Northern Association of Mennonite Brethren Choir Directors of North America), and in the same year this association held their first choral workshop (Dirigenten Kursus).⁵²

J.A. Kroeker of Winkler attended these workshops in 1909 and again in 1911.⁵³ In 1912 he organized the first workshop in Manitoba.⁵⁴ In 1914, five choirs from Manitoba - Winkler, Winnipeg, Steinbach, Grossweide and Burwalde - joined the Noerdliche Saengervereinigung.

The repertoire of these choirs consisted largely of American Gospel songs and anthems chosen from the following books: Evangeliums-Saenger, Evangeliums-Lieder, Himmelwaerts, Die kleine Palme No. 1, 2 und 3, Palme No. 3, Zions-Lieder, Zions-Klaenge and Saenger-Bote. All except the last two, which were published by the MB Publishing House in Hillsboro, are of non-Mennonite origin. At least five of these books were also known to Mennonites in Russia, since songs from Evangeliums-Saenger, Evangeliums-Lieder, Die kleine Palme No. 1 und 2, and Palme No. 3 are found in the various volumes of Liederperlen.

While Kanadier and Russlaender MBs shared the same American repertoire, they do not seem to have sung the songs in the same way. According to Ben Horch, the Russlaender were often quite critical of the Kanadier and their "Hupslieder". Musically, this probably meant that the Kanadier sang them

in a livelier tempo with marked rhythms, while the Russlaender were more subdued and refined in their renditions.⁵⁶

Even though MBs and GCs in Canada were singing largely the same kind of repertoire during this period, there is no evidence of musical cooperation between the two groups. Since Dirigentenurse were only offered by the MBs (according to available evidence), it is quite possible that individual conductors or singers of GC choirs participated in these events. If participants were listed in the Protokoll-Buch they were usually identified only by name and by the town or village from which they came, never by denominational affiliation. The first clear indication of GC participation in an MB choral workshop is found in 1927 in the Protokoll-Buch from Winkler, after the coming of the Russlaender.

III. MB-GC Cooperation in Music, 1923-1943

The choral workshops that began in Winkler at the MB Church in 1912 were suspended for several years during and immediately following World War I. When they resumed in 1924 they were still under the "old" leadership of men like J.M. Elias, J.A. Kroeker and Rev. J.B. Penner.⁵⁷

At the next workshop, March 5-7, 1925, the Russlaender were already in evidence. A.H. Unruh led a series of Bible studies (a new feature in the Winkler workshops!) and an Immigranten Chor, probably under the direction of K.H. Neufeld, sang at the closing program. Both A.H. Unruh and K.H. Neufeld, as well as Gerhard Reimer, were involved in the leadership of the next workshop on March 18-20, 1926.

The workshop of March 3-5, 1927 saw the participation of "old" leaders like J.M. Elias, J.A. Kroeker and A.A. Kroeker together with A.H. Unruh, G. Reimer, and K.H. Neufeld. H.H. Ewert from Gretna was also present to deliver a lecture on "Bildung und Erziehung," and John Konrad provided several violin solos. The choirs of the Winkler MB and Winkler Bergthaler churches along with the Immigranten Chor participated in the closing program. The meetings were held in the recently opened Winkler Bible School.

After this point, the workshops gradually became more sophisticated in their organization and content. The number of participants also increased. At the workshop in 1929, with guest conductor J.P. Wiebe from Herbert, Saskatchewan, participants came from Arnaud, Newton Siding, Altona, Kronsart,

Manitou, Winnipeg and Winkler. After 1931 the "old" leadership faded from the scene, and musical leadership passed into the hands of Russlaender: K.H. Neufeld, John Konrad, F.C. Thiessen and J.P. Classen (hymnologist). The location of the workshops also began to change from year to year - Niverville (1934), Morden (1935), Grunthal (1936) and Winnipeg (1937).⁵⁸ While the musical leadership was almost completely in the hands of MBs, the participants came from both MB and GC churches. Participation was not limited to the conductors, but included their respective church choirs as well. This cooperation continued up until the beginning of World War II.

Numerous cooperative ventures, such as Saenger Feste and Dirigentenkurse, also were held in Ontario in the years prior to World War II. The first Saengerfest in Ontario was held in Vineland on September 13, 1931. A second Saengerfest was held in Port Rowan the following September. Participants included the Kitchener MB Choir, Vineland MB Choir, Port Rowan MB-UM Choir and the Jugendchor, Maennerchor and Gemischter Chor from the Waterloo UM Church.⁵⁹ Another Saengerfest was held in Beamsville on October 9, 1938.⁶⁰

Joint Gesangkurse were held in 1934, with Gerhard Reimer (Winkler Bible School), and in 1939, 1940 and 1944 with K.H. Neufeld.⁶¹ All of the choirs involved shared the common choral repertoire (in Ziffern!) brought with them from Russia - this can be seen by examining the choir books of the Waterloo UM, Kitchener MB and Vineland MB Churches.⁶² The majority of the songs in these hand-written, mimeographed books are taken from the Liederperlen and other Russian Mennonite sources.

In addition to the strong cooperation of conductors and singers at the congregational level, as described above, this period saw the beginning of cooperative ventures outside the realm of the church. These were largely due to the personal initiative of leaders like F.C. Thiessen, K.H. Neufeld, John Konrad and Ben Horch. Both Konrad and Horch organized orchestras with members drawn from both MB and GC circles. In Winnipeg, Lehrer Thiessen organized an inter-Mennonite Liebhaberchor, "Eintracht", which gave several performances of Mendelssohn's St. Paul and Romberg's Das Lied von der Glocke in the mid-1930s. In Winkler, K.H. Neufeld organized the Southern Manitoba Music Festival in 1932 which has done much to stimulate musical interest among all Mennonites in southern Manitoba.

While these occasions for cooperation outside the realm of the church

continued in the next 20-year period, cooperation between MBs and GCs at the congregational level was gradually discontinued.

IV. MB-GC Cooperation in Music, 1943-1963

The growing separation between MB and GC choirs in this period was not due to any animosity between the two groups. Cordial relationships between conductors and singers continued; but the increase in the sheer numbers of churches and members within each conference made inter-Mennonite gatherings of the kind held in the 1920s and 30s almost impossible (at least on a regular basis). One of the last joint Saenger Fest in Ontario was held in Kitchener in August of 1949, at the invitation of N.J. Fehderau and the Kitchener MB Choir.⁶³ In the 1950s both conferences organized their own annual Saenger Fest. Each year, a half-dozen or more choirs, with 200 or more singers, together with an overflow audience of several hundred listeners would crowd into the auditorium of the Eden Christian College or some other similar facility. To accommodate twice as many singers and listeners on an annual basis would have been quite a task indeed, given the facilities available in those years.

The increase in the number of congregations and members after World War II, due largely to a third wave of Mennonite immigration, was accompanied by an increase in denominational organizational structures and educational institutions.

In the Fall of 1942 the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba organized the Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization (MMYO). In discussing and deciding on its priorities, writes Schaefer, "it became clear to us that above all else there was a need for leadership in music. So conductors were appointed."⁶⁴ The conductors were K.H. Neufeld and John Konrad. Their task was to visit the local choirs and give them leadership and encouragement. Provincial youth organizations in other provinces also sponsored choral workshops and festivals.

At the same time that the MMYO was organizing the choral activities within GC churches, the leadership of the MB Church was also giving attention to the problem of education for its choir directors. In December of 1942 a group of choir directors from 12 MB churches in Manitoba met in North Kildonan to discuss the need for more systematic instruction in choral directing.⁶⁵ Out of this grew the vision of a Reisedirigent, who would annually visit all the MB Churches in Canada to organize workshops and choral festivals. This vision

became a reality in 1944 when Ben Horch accepted the invitation of the MB Conference "to work among us."⁶⁶ He agreed to spend 5 months of the year teaching at the Winkler Bible School and 5 months on the road, visiting churches from Ontario to B.C. He did this for two years, until he was appointed as Chairman of the Music Department at MBBC in the Fall of 1945.

The availability of systematic, professional instruction in music at the denominational colleges, Bible schools and high schools gradually led to a decline in the importance of choral festivals and workshops. The latter had tended to foster cooperation at the local and congregational level, but this function gradually faded away. It was not replaced by cooperation between denominational institutions. For example, there was no cooperation in music between MBBC and CMBC in this period.

Interaction between MB and GC conductors, singers and musicians did continue, but occurred more and more outside the framework of the church: through music festivals, like those in Winkler and Winnipeg; through participation in Mennonite orchestras such as those in Winnipeg (Ben Horch) and in the Fraser Valley (Walter Neufeld); through choirs such as the Ben Horch Liebhaverchor, Altona Community Choir (started by Ben Horch), Mennonite Children's Choir (Helen Litz), Mennonitischer Maennerchor (begun through the initiative of George K. Epp) and the Fraser Valley Singers (Menno Neufeld); and through attendance at music schools and conservatories, like the Konrad Conservatory in Winnipeg.

The combination of increased musical training, together with the gradual transition to the English language led to the introduction of a large new repertoire of songs, both at the congregational and choir level. The homogeneous German repertoire of the Russlaender was gradually replaced by a heterogeneous English (American)/German repertoire.

In this process, local and regional influences from non-Mennonite teachers, music stores and publishing houses often took precedence over influences from denominational institutions and organizations. Choirs and congregations which were separated by great distances, like those in B.C. and Ontario, began to learn different "new" songs. This affected relations not only between denominations, but also within the respective denominations.

This process continued into the next period, but was countered more and more by growing cooperation between MBs and GCs at the institutional level.

V. MB-GC Cooperation in Music: 1963-1983

A significant step in the development of MB-GC relations in music at the institutional level occurred in December of 1965, when the Oratorio Choirs of CMBC and MBBC sang together for the first time. This event received front-page coverage in the Canadian Mennonite a few days later under the headline: "Harbinger of Things to Come".⁶⁷ The success of this venture led to a second joint performance in the Spring of 1968.⁶⁸ Since 1970, the Oratorio Choirs have performed together on an annual basis.

Probably a more important cooperative event is the bi-annual Church Music Seminar in Winnipeg, which brings together several hundred conductors and singers from MB and GC churches across Canada. The first of these weekend Seminars was held in January of 1975, with Dr. Eric Routley as guest lecturer.⁶⁹

The Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools (CAMS) has also made a valuable contribution to MB-GC relations by bringing together hundreds of students from Mennonite high schools and Bible schools across Canada for regional and national choral festivals.

While cooperation between MB-GC musicians outside of the church at the individual and professional level, in Community choirs and orchestras, as well as at the institutional level has increased significantly in recent years, this has not been matched by cooperation at the congregational level. It is encouraging, therefore, to see churches like the Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church and the Portage Avenue MB Church begin a series of regular choir/pastor exchanges on Sunday mornings.

As a result of this increased contact and cooperation between conductors and singers, the repertoire of both MB and GC choirs has again achieved a greater degree of uniformity. Greater uniformity in the congregational song repertoire has also been achieved, both within and between the denominations, by the introduction of the Worship Hymnal (MB) and the Mennonite Hymnal (GC-OM), which have over 40% of their contents (276 hymns) in common.

This uniformity, however, is already being challenged by the introduction of "new" songs from many different directions. The "New" Mennonites of French Canadian, Indian, Asian and Spanish backgrounds are bringing a new multi-cultural dimension to our congregations, and American "popular" Christian music is having a tremendous impact on the youth of both denominations. This musical multi-culturalism presents all of us with the dilemma of not knowing quite how

to embrace such a wide diversity of musical styles. At the same time it presents us with the exciting possibilities of reaching many people, of different cultures, with the message of the Gospel!

Given this situation, I believe that our goal of sharing the Good News will be furthered and that we will benefit by working together more closely in the next 20-year period than we have in the last two. I would like to conclude by suggesting 4 areas in which such a working together could be beneficial:

1. Formation of a Mennonite Choral Association (Saengervereinigung), to encourage contact not only at a professional level between conductors, but also between congregational choirs...
2. Publication of Mennonite music periodical to provide information and inspiration for conductors and singers...
3. Publication of Mennonite Choral repertoire by Mennonite composers...
4. Publication of a joint hymnal to provide congregations with a common repertoire of songs to sing unto the Lord...

"O magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together" (Psalm 33:3).

Footnotes

- ¹J.A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 215.
- ²The most comprehensive description of the history of Ziffern is found in Johannes Wolf, Handbuch der Notationskunde (Leipzig, 1919), II, 387-419. See also P.F. Engstfeld, Kurze Beschreibung des Tonziffernsystems (Essen, 1825).
- ³Heinrich Franz, Choralbuch: Zunaechst zum Gebrauch in den mennonitischen Schulen Suedrusslands (Leipzig, 1860), iii.
- ⁴C. Hildebrand, "Ein Sonntag von anno 1840 auf der Insel Chortitza", Mennonitisches Jahrbuch X (1913), 59-60.
- ⁵P.M. Friesen, The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (Fresno, 1978), 111, 113.
- ⁶Gesangbuch worin eine Sammlung geistreicher Lieder befindlich, originally entitled Geistreiches Gesangbuch... See Mennonite Encyclopedia (hereafter ME) III, 448, 876-77.
- ⁷ME I, 565-566.
- ⁸Jacob Abraham Klassen, "Autodiktat: Errinerungen aus meinen Leben" (typescript, written 1914-17), 12 (CMB Archives).
- ⁹In several cases more than one melody is given for a given metre, as in numbers 10-14 (8.8.8.8.) and numbers 97-98 (7.6.7.6.6.7.7.6.).
- ¹⁰Franz Isaac, Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten (Halbstadt, 1908), 290.
- ¹¹All Mennonite music publications up to 1886 were printed by Breitkopf & Naertel, including all editions of the Franz Choralbuch, Chor-Gesaenge, Melodien der Frohen Botschaft, Frohe Botschaft in Liedern and Liederstrauss.
- ¹²P.M. Friesen, The Mennonite Brotherhood..., 712.
- ¹³See James Urry, The Closed And The Open (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford, 1978), 492-508 on Wuest, 516-518 on Melville.
- ¹⁴Philipp Friedrich Hiller, Geistliches Liederkaestlein (Stuttgart, 1762 and 1767). Each of the two parts in this collection contained 366 hymns, one hymn for each day of the year.
- ¹⁵ME II, 551-552.
- ¹⁶Glaubensstimme der Gemeinde des Herrn (Hamburg, 1849) was the official hymnbook of the German Baptist Church. A second, revised edition appeared in 1894 with the title Neue Glaubensstimme... It was this second edition that was printed in the Dreiband (see below p. 4).

¹⁷There were only 58 texts in common between the Gesangbuch and the Neue Glaubensstimme. The Gesangbuch also contained only 1 hymn by Hiller, #61, "O Jesu meine Wonne".

¹⁸Gesangbuch zum gottesdienstlichen und haeuslichen Gebrauch in den Mennoniten-Gemeinden Russlands. This hymnal contained 725 hymns (texts only) and went through 4 printings in Russia. It was reprinted a fifth time in Germany in 1929, for use by Russian Mennonite congregations in Canada.

¹⁹Rufinus (obviously a pseudonym), "Gemeindegesang, Kirchenlied, Choral", Friedensstimme XII, No. 23 (March 19, 1914), 3.

²⁰Friedensstimme XII, No. 24 (March 22, 1914), 2.

²¹"Choir-singing among the Mennonite Brethren in Russia", ME I, 564.

²²This information is based on interviews with Gerhard Lohrenz, Isaac P. Kruger and Cornelius Klassen. I wish to express my gratitude to these men for their assistance!

²³My source study to date has revealed that Russian Mennonites borrowed from at least 50 different songbooks!

²⁴Some of these hand-written choirbooks have been preserved in the Mennonite Historical Library in Newton, Kansas and in the MB Archives in Winnipeg. The latter possess a large collection, containing 105 songs, written by Helene Neufeld, Liebenau (Lichtenau?) between 1874 and 1904.

²⁵On Isaak Born see A.H. Unruh, Die Geschichte der Mennoniten-Bruedergemeinde (Winnipeg, 1955), 256.

²⁶On H.J. Braun see ME I, 407.

²⁷On K.G. Neufeld see the "Lebensverzeichnis" written by J.C. Penner (Center for MB Studies, Fresno) and the obituary in Zionsbote, July 10, 1942, p. 12.

²⁸See ME III, 850.

²⁹See ME III, 96.

³⁰On the development of the Saenger Fest tradition among Russian Mennonites see Wesley Peter Berg, "Choral Festivals and Choral Workshops Among the Mennonites of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 1900-1960, with an Account of Early Developments in Russia", Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, U. of Washington, 1979.

³¹Based on interviews with Gerhard Lohrenz, Isaac P. Kruger, Cornelius Klassen and Nicolai J. Fehderau.

³²Two of the most popular composers of Chorlieder were Hans Georg Naegeli and Franz Abt. Compositions of this type were found in collections like Ernst Gebhardt, Zions Perlenchoere (2 volumes); Ignaz Heim, Volksgesaenge fuer den Gemischten Chor.

³³ This category includes songs like "So nimm denn meine Haende" and "Haare meine Seele". See Hermann Petrich, Unser geistliches Volkslied, 2. Edition (Gueterlosh, 1924).

³⁴ These are the German counterpart to the American Gospel song, written by people like Dora Rappard, Ernst Gebhardt and Wilhelm Kniepkamp.

³⁵ Larger work in the Liederperlen included Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" (II Teil, #90) and Haydn's "Die Himmel erzaehlen" (VIII. Teil, #4).

³⁶ The Russian songs are all of a religious or patriotic (National Anthem) nature. Over 100 Russian folk songs were included in the school song books Liedersammlung and Sangesblueten.

³⁷ American sources included books like Evangeliums-Saenger; Die kleine Palme No. 1 und 2; Palme No. 3; Jubeltoene-Hosianna-Hallelujah; Liederlust und Psalter and Lieder-Perlen (E.A. Hofmann).

³⁸ Frohe Botschaft was Ernst Gebhardt's most popular collection, going through 140 printings between 1875 and 1912 (see A.J. Bucher, Ein Saenger des Kreuzes, Basel, 1912). This book of 115 songs contained 90 Gospel Songs, most of them taken from the collections of Ira D. Sankey, as well as 23 songs of German origin and 2 of French origin.

³⁹ This Russian Mennonite Dreiband should not be confused with the American Dreiband discussed below on p. 5.

⁴⁰ Henry J. Gerbrandt, Adventure in Faith (Altona, 1970), 301.

⁴¹ Ibid., 79-80, 301-303.

⁴² This Dreiband was published at least 20 years before the Russian Mennonite Dreiband. Jubeltoene was copyrighted in 1871; Hallelujah in 1883. No date is given for the middle volume, Hosianna.

⁴³ Gerbrandt, Adventure in Faith, 80.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 302.

⁴⁵ Johann G. Rempel, "Der Gesang in der Rosenorter Gemeinde", Der Bote, XXVII (October 4, 1950), 5.

⁴⁶ Hymns by Bernhard Harder are found at #354, 255, 427, 429, 571.

⁴⁷ Konferenz der Mennoniten in Kanada, Jahrbuch (1955), 183.

⁴⁸ Gerbrandt, Adventure in Faith, 303.

⁴⁹ Berg, "Choral Festivals...", 55.

⁵⁰ Mennonite Brethren Church - Winkler, Manitoba: 1888-1963, p. 27-29.

⁵¹ Berg, "Choral Festivals...", 27-279.

⁵²Ibid., 69-85.

⁵³Ibid., 73.

⁵⁴Protokoll-Buch von der Kreis Saenger Vereinigung zu Winkler, Manitoba, p. 1 (MB Archives, Winnipeg).

⁵⁵Berg, "Choral Festivals...", 79.

⁵⁶Interviews with Ben Horch, December 30, 1982 and June 28, 1983.

⁵⁷Protokoll-Buch...Winkler, p. 16.

⁵⁸The minutes of the Protokoll-Buch stop in 1936. A detailed program of the workshop in Winnipeg is given in the Mennonitische Rundschau, June 2, 1937; three of the major lectures given at the workshop were printed in the June 23, 1937 edition of the Rundschau.

⁵⁹Taken from a program in the possession of J.H. Enns (Waterloo) and from an interview with Nicolai J. Fehderau (Kitchener). I wish to thank both of these men for sharing valuable materials from their own personal collections with me!

⁶⁰N.J. Fehderau, "Verzeichnis der Lieder & Gelegenheiten die der Chor der K.M.B. Gemeinde gesungen & vorgetragen hat", a record of all songs sung by the choir between March 22, 1931 to September 9, 1965.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²The books of the Kitchener and Waterloo churches were made available to me by N.J. Fehderau and J.H. Enns; the manuscript from the Vineland Church, written by Jacob Kutz is in the MB Archives, Winnipeg.

⁶³N.J. Fehderau, "Verzeichnis..."

⁶⁴Cited by Berg, "Choral Festivals...", 129. A summary of the MMYO's activities is found on pp. 128-147 of Berg's dissertation.

⁶⁵Ibid., 155.

⁶⁶Ibid., 157.

⁶⁷The Canadian Mennonite, XIII, No. 49 (December 14, 1965), 1. The writer of this report indicates that the idea of such a joint venture was first suggested in the previous year (1954) by Henry Wiebe, the brother of George Wiebe (Henry took George's place at CMBC during his year of study in Detmold, 1964-65). In 1965, it was Victor Martens who approached George about the possibility of performing Bach's Christmas Oratorio together.

⁶⁸A performance of Brahms's Requiem on February 24, 1968, directed by Bill Baerg.

⁶⁹Other leaders at the Church Music Seminars have included Dr. Charles Hirt (1977), Lloyd Pfautsch and Mary Oyer (1979), Howard Swann and John Kemp (1981) and Alice Parker (1983). It should be noted that all of these are Americans.