

Shape-Note Gathering 2011

Ozark Folk Center
Mountain View, Arkansas
July 7-9, 2011

Schedule of Events

Thursday, July 7

9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. In-service Workshop for teachers and others interested in the roots, evolution, and practice of shape-note singing. Special attention will be given this year to specific Yankee Tune Smiths and their contribution to this art form. Presented by Holly Ruth Gale and sanctioned for in-service credit by Arch Ford Educational Cooperative. Special Guest Lecturers include Gaylon Powell, and Dan Brittain

7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. General Singing. Gaylon Powell – Moderator for this event. All presenters are invited to lead songs from their chosen books at this session. Various announcements will be at this time.

Friday, July 8

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Morning Session

9:30 a.m.: Introductions, announcements, and welcome from Ozark Folk Center.
Charley Sandage and Carl Adkins

Featured Leaders:

9:40 a.m.: **Dan Brittain** - *Missouri Harmony*
10:20 a.m.: **Laura Boosinger** - *Christian Harmony, "Walker book"*

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch Break

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Afternoon Session

Featured Leaders:

1:00 p.m.: **Dan Brittain and Gaylon Powell** - *Sacred Harp, "Denson book"*
1:40 p.m.: **Bill Hogan** - *Christian Harmony, "Deason book"*

2:20 p.m. - 2:40 p.m.: Break

2:40 p.m.: **Charley Sandage** - Seven Shape System – *The Good Old Songs, "Cayce book"*
3:20 p.m.: **Gaylon Powell** - *Sacred Harp, "Cooper book"*

4:00 pm Dinner Break

Evening is free for folks to go to the program at the Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. or look around the Mt. View and the square.

7:30 p.m.: Group to sing at the Auditorium.

Saturday, July 9

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Morning Session

General Singing

All Leaders and Styles Present

Gaylon Powell - Moderator

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 p.m.- 3:00 p.m. General Singing

All Leaders and Styles Present

Gaylon Powell – Moderator

Closing

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On behalf of the Ozark Folk Center and the Executive and Coordinating Committees for this event thank you for being a part of the Shape-Note Gathering.

**Executive Committee:**

Charley Sandage – Chair

John Gale

Mark Tew

Carl Adkins

Holly Ruth Gale

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What is "The Shape-Note Gathering?" This gathering is designed to keep alive the various shape-note traditions and this early American art form. It is designed to share, teach, and celebrate Shape-note music with those who are new to it and those who have known it all their lives. You may have recently heard this type of singing in the movie "Cold Mountain". Shape-note singers from different styles, repertoires, and traditions, along with people who have never sung by shapes will all be able to participate in the general sessions. Welcome and enjoy!

What is Shape-Note Music? Simply put, it is music that uses an individually shaped note-heads for each syllable in the scale. Different disciplines of Shape-Note music use varying and sometimes different shapes. Typically this music has its own distinctive sound and has often been called music for singing, not just for listening. Shape-note forms originated in colonial New England and influenced the development of participatory music in America's culture as the frontier moved steadily westward. New interest in old traditions has created something of a national movement in recent years. Solfege, naming the notes of the scale, a component of shape-note singing, has been used in formal choral music instruction for centuries. This Gathering has the four shape, and two types of seven shape being used. Visual examples are in the back of this program.



Presenters' Biographies & Session Descriptions (In order of sessions)

Dan Brittain is a native of Phoenix, Arizona. He has degrees in music education, composition, and conducting. He has been a career military band officer and is presently a music and band teacher in Jasper, Arkansas. Dan became acquainted with *Sacred Harp* music in 1966 and became an active singer 1970 when he was stationed in Georgia. He began writing shaped-note music in 1971. He has tunes in *The Sacred Harp*, *The Sacred Harper's Companion*, *The New Millennium Harp*, *September Psalms*, and *2005 Missouri Harmony*. He was the chief engraver for the *2005 Missouri Harmony* tunebook, a project that began in 2001.

The Missouri Harmony was the most popular of all frontier tunebooks, with a history going back to 1820 when singing master Allen Carden introduced it into his St. Louis school. The 185 selections in the *Missouri Harmony*, compiled from earlier tunebooks, were old favorites used in churches and singing schools which sometimes convened in taverns.

Laura Boosinger is an award-winning performer and recording artist whose primary focus is the interpretation of traditional music from the Southern Appalachian region. Her performances have included The Tennessee Homecoming at The Museum of Appalachia, MERLEFEST and The Smithsonian Folklife Festival. She garnered the title of "*Most Outstanding Performer*" at Asheville's "Mountain Dance and Folk Festival." In January of 2004 Laura represented Western North Carolina in England and Scotland as part of a tour to promote tourism in WNC. Her teaching of old-time banjo and shaped-note singing is featured at festivals throughout the Southeast. Laura's newest recording, "Let Me Linger," is a collection of tunes learned from NC Heritage award winners Luke and Harold Smathers. Laura is also performing with Bluegrass legend, George Shuffler. George was considered the third Stanley Brother as he performed with Ralph and Carter Stanley for over 20 years. George and Laura have been presenting Heritage programs to students throughout the state and were featured at the Appalachian Festival in Cincinnati, OH. One reviewer remarked that their new recording, "*Mountain Treasures*," has a "well burnished patina and is played with a polish that comes from deep rooted passion." For more information about Laura visit her web site at www.lauraboosinger.com.

The Christian Harmony, is a collection of sacred songs first published in 1866 by William Walker. Its early-American shape-note system is based on what was then a recent Italian import, the seven-note scale. The original *Christian Harmony*, often referred to as the "North Carolina book," is used mainly in western North Carolina and upstate South Carolina. In Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, singers use the Deason-Parris revision.

Charley Sandage has worked as a teacher and administrator in a number of Arkansas schools and colleges, a writer and producer for Arkansas Educational Television, and the first program director for the Ozark Folk Center. He grew up singing seven-shape music in the Primitive Baptist Church and, as a teenager, traveled to singing schools in several states with Roland Green and other teachers. Over the years, Charley has taught singing schools and helped to coordinate recording events. He is a member of the planning committee for the Ozark Folk Center Shape-note Gathering and leads the local shape-note group.

The Seven-Shape System for singing by syllables originated in Italy almost a thousand years ago, and re-emerged alongside the four-shape system in frontier America during the early 1800's. The unaccompanied, seven-shape tradition persists among Church of Christ congregations as well as among Primitive Baptists.

Dan Brittain and Gaylon Powell will present this session. (See *Missouri Harmony* for Dan's biography and *B. F. White Sacred Harp "Cooper Book"* for Gaylon's.)

Benjamin Franklin White published the original *Sacred Harp* songbook in 1844. Then, as now, the *Sacred Harp* scale was seven tones represented by four shapes, with three shapes being repeated up the scale. Each voice part appears on its own staff. This session uses the "Denson" book.

Bill Hogan was born in Demopolis and grew up in Phil Campbell, Alabama, singing in church choirs and with family. Bill's mother played piano at church and his father was a band and church choir director. He graduated from Auburn University and worked in Mobile for 20 years in the chemical industry. He met and married Nancy when they played music together in the Westminster Winds Recorder Ensemble. He enjoys music of all types. In 1996, he began singing Cooper B. F. White Sacred Harp. He started local groups in Mobile and Wetumpka, Alabama, was named a Christian Harmony Singing Master in 2009 and has taught numerous introductions to shape-note singing. In a 3 evening workshop, Laura Boosinger introduced Bill and others to the North Carolina Christian Harmony. Bill Green of Mobile taught Bill the basics of Sacred Harp home visits. Elder Donald Smith of Little Hope taught Bill the spirit of Alabama Christian Harmony and John Etheridge introduced Bill to the art of keying for the shape-note class.

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African American Shape-Note Singing has its origins in the American singing school movement which grew out of the Great Awakening of the early 1800's. In the 19th early 20th Centuries, singing school masters traveled from town to town holding singing schools or "institutes" lasting from two weeks to several months. Shape-Note singers have been part of the African American community in Mississippi for over a hundred years. The Black *Sacred-Harp* State Singing Convention uses the *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti* scale, whereas in other states, the *fa, sol, la, fa, sol, la, mi* scale is used. The fact that the Black *Sacred Harp* singers of Mississippi transpose the four note scale to even notes as they sing is a result of their decision to use B. F. White's four-note *Sacred Harp* songbook published in 1844 with the rudiments outlined in William Walker's seven-note *Christian Harmony* songbook published in 1866. The consequences of this adapted singing style has made the Black *Sacred Harp* State Singing Convention one of the most outstanding and exceptional within the shape-note genre.

Gaylon Powell, of Austin, Texas, was raised in a family whose roots run deep in the *Sacred Harp* tradition of central Texas. He has shared that tradition with others by teaching singing schools in Texas for most of his adult life. For the past couple of years, Gaylon has also been teaching an annual week-long singing school in southwestern Arkansas using the seven-shape notation system. He observes that *Sacred Harp* singing is gospel singing that can be a wonderful religious experience.

The B. F. White *Sacred Harp*, known as "the Cooper book," descends from a 1902 revision by W. M. Cooper of Dothan, Alabama. It is widely used in southern Georgia, northern Florida, and the Gulf region extending to Texas. It has a strong following among white singers but is also favored by African American singers in those areas.
