

Excerpts from “Sunday Morning Hymn Leading with a Shape-Note Twist,” class paper based on interview with Marty Broome, songleader at the Dasher Church of Christ, Lowndes County, by Billy Esra, PERS 2690, Fall, 2000, Laurie Kay Sommers, instructor.

The Dasher Church of Christ sings hymns from *Praise for the Lord*, a shape-note songbook that employs the seven-shape notation system. Each note on the scale, do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti, has its own unique shape....According to Steel, “From 1846 on, many tunebooks...were printed in seven shapes representing the seven syllables of the Italian system...Seven-shape notation is still in wide use in the southern United States, where it is used for gospel songbooks and some denominational hymnals” (Warren Steel, “Sacred Harp Singing FAQ,” 1997, www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/~mudws/faq/).



Before delving into the specific biographical details of Marty Broome, song leader for the Dasher Church of Christ, the history of the church requires definition. ...The historical story begins in Europe.

In 1732 Charles II of England granted a charter to the ‘trustees for the Establishment of the Colony of Georgia, in America.’ One of the purposes of

these trustees was to furnish a 'refuge for the distressed Salzburgers and other Protestants." The first of the Salzburgers formed their own community and called in Ebenezer in the county of Effingham, March 1734 (Dasher Church of Christ Directory, "Our History, The Dasher Church of Christ, 1999, page 4).

Religious zeal, heavily influenced by the New Testament in the Bible, was elemental to the Salzburger community. "The movement to restore New Testament teaching to the extent of breaking denominational fellowship was effected by Herman Dasher" (Dasher Church of Christ, 1999, page 4). Dasher and his followers, including about 30 of the Salzburgers, came to Lowndes County in 1832. Richard Wisenbaker gave the church land for a church building. Originally the Corinth Church of Christ, the Dasher Church of Christ "met on the land donated by Wisenbaker until 1952 when it was moved about one quarter of a mile to its present location facing Georgia Christian School, in the community of Dasher, Georgia" (Dasher Church of Christ, 1999, page 4). Many families, including the Wisenbakers, McLeods, and Copelands, have been a part of the church and community for several generations.

Marty Broome and his family, though, have only attended the Dasher Church of Christ for one and one half years....Music holds a strong presence in the Broome family. Marty himself plays guitar, plays piano by ear, participates in various gospel quartets, and leads music at church....Marty claims, "I come from a long line of people that are interested in music."...All of Marty's brothers lead music; even Marty's son, who is only 13, continues this family tradition of music and song leading....

Marty definitely enjoys song leading. In fact, he even teaches music leadership classes at the Church of Christ. He knows quite a bit about shape notations and its function in music, but he is not so sure that the congregation holds the same type of knowledge.

Most people that attend, even Dasher Church of Christ--and they've been singing shapenotes all of their lives--don't really know what shapenotes are. They know that this is what they sing and this is what these notes always look like all of their lives, and all of their grandparent's lives (Broome interview 11-12-2000).

They learn the songs by memorization. This folk tradition, along with the lack of instruments and four-part harmony, is a part of this community's cultural heritage that has been passed down from generation to generation. To the

members of the Dasher Church of Christ, shapenotes are not unusual. The seven-shape notation system and musical styles of singing without instruments are just part of the Sunday morning and evening ritual.

****Note:** this seven-shape singing tradition is not a Salzburger tradition, but rather a musical style introduced through the Church of Christ denomination and part of the larger tradition of using seven-shape notation both for church hymnals and singing conventions.