

### Special Session: Analysis of Large Datasets in American Vernacular Religious Music

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Scholars have studied American vernacular religious music for nearly a century, but have only recently applied analytical methods to datasets relating to this interdisciplinary field. The papers in this session draw on machine-learning techniques, quantitative music analysis, and music information retrieval to answer new questions about two related aspects of vernacular religious music—folk hymns and shape-note singing—in historical and contemporary settings. A folk hymn is a hymn tune derived from oral tradition. Shape-note singing is group a cappella sacred music that includes some folk hymns and has a distinctive style of music notation and harmonization. *The Sacred Harp* (1844) is the best-known shape-note book and is in wide circulation today. Two sources provide data for the investigation of the tradition. The database “Southern and Western Sacred Music and Influential Sources (1700-1870)” indexes 60,000 sacred music pieces from over 550 sources. *The Minutes and Directory of Sacred Harp Singings* (1995-2015), a record of individuals’ song choices at thousands of Sacred Harp singings, provides access to the granular choices made by a geographically dispersed community. These data sources enable these papers’ investigations of melodic and harmonic variants, structure in singers’ song choices, and correspondences between chosen and historically instructed tempos.