

CHAPTER 4

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AFFECT AND MEANING OF THE SOUNDS OF BOER VOCAL MUSIC

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter gave the reader an insight into the experiences that faced the Boers as they were thrust headlong into the vortex of their people's destruction. Despite the fact that the information gained from Chapter 3 was important, a lacuna was identified that would allow for this knowledge to be of assistance in understanding affect and meaning in Boer vocal music. For the purpose of this study the lacuna was identified as an aural void that exists between cultural-history and musicology. This lacuna had to be addressed before affect and meaning in Boer vocal music could be assessed.

This chapter and Chapter 5 will map the theoretical territory of the aural void in order to move cultural history towards an accommodation with musicology. This has to be done since musicology traditionally has little to say on the role of music's meaning in the social and cultural circumstances of people, while other disciplines, such as cultural history, have little to say on the role of music's sounds in generating and articulating social and cultural meanings. According to Shepherd and Wicke (1997:16), "both approaches tend to keep separate music's sounds from the social and cultural processes that are of consequences for them."

4.2 MAPPING THE THEORETICAL TERRITORY OF THE AURAL VOID

A spectrum of personal and communal perceptions and responses to the unfolding events was highlighted in Chapter 3. This chapter and the next will show how the sounds and the lyrics of the songs were a vehicle for the Boers to articulate their responses to the events facing them. The researcher, however, is faced with defining Boer vocal music divorced from the immediate reality of conditions during

the war and the sounds of the songs. It thus becomes necessary to rely heavily on research regarding the meaning of sound.

In any oppressive situation there is evidence to show that the oppressed listen, perform and use the sounds of music for intrinsic rewards. Music becomes an expression of personal emotion and the singer and listener use it as a tool to ease the unbearable situation in which they find themselves. Shepherd and Wicke (1997:12) explain this phenomenon by stating that musical meaning is located within psychological constants presumed to be innate in humans: “The ability to evoke meaning is facilitated through a conformity between the structures of music and the structures of the mind.”

It is interesting to consider a few references that emphasise sound within the Boer culture. These references highlight the fact that there is little to suggest that the sounds of Boer vocal music were important for anything other than intrinsic value. This could be attributed to the fact that the main purpose of the sound was to assuage the anguish of reality. The result was that the aesthetic value of vocal music was secondary to the intrinsic value. This is especially evident from many references to the sounds of Boer religious vocal music, as slow, unmusical and mournful.

A diary entry by C.M. Blankwaard about a visit to General de Wet after the War, describes the sounds of the religious vocal music during devotions as “*ernstig met langzaam, eentonig gezang, begeleid door de sleepende, dreunende tonen van het orgel*” (FAD A80). (Translation: sombre with slow, monotonous singing accompanied by a dragging, droning sound of the organ.)

Sister Izedinova echoes these sentiments regarding unmusical singing. According to her, she often heard the strains of religious vocal music and national anthems coming from Commandos and “[t]he sound was unharmonious, for the Boers are in general not a musical people, but they sang with great inspiration and the effect at night and in such circumstances was a powerful one” (Izedinova 1977:67). Commandant Ludwig Krause also speaks about the fact that many of the men in

his Commando were in the habit of singing around midnight or in the early hours of the morning and “their voices were not too musical” (Taitz 1996:48). A Miss Lorenz, wrote about a burial in the Arcadia Concentration Camp where “a young Boer, assisted by a friend, began singing in a harsh, dragging tone after which we all joined in” (Schoeman 1998:158).

The opinions expressed in the above and other references, highlight the fact that the aesthetic value of the sounds of Boer vocal music was secondary to the intrinsic value. Insights into processes of affect and meaning in Boer vocal music will thus necessitate an objective analysis by capturing the *meaning* of the sounds in this chapter and the next. The aural void will therefore be addressed by emphasising the meaning of sound in a cultural context. The findings of Chapter 3 were thus important in addressing the aural void, as vocal music cannot be looked at outside the society within which it functions. Shepherd and Wicke (1997:3) support this when they state that, “the meanings of a society are encoded and creatively articulated by music ... [and it is] an activity central rather than peripheral to people and society.”

Chapter 3 highlighted two important facets in the Boer personality, namely religion and patriotism. It can thus be understood that most of their vocal music was connected to religious beliefs or patriotism.

4.3 VOCAL MUSIC TO EXPRESS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The Boers were a rural society and their music was primarily vocal music organised in relation to the needs of the religious meetings, the home, and the community. Their main social diversion was the Church, and the singing of religious music was thus an integral part of the Boer repertory and as such a vehicle of spiritual sustenance. Lagerwall (1996:4) stresses this affective role of the sound of religious music when she says: “although there is nothing intrinsic in music which makes it specifically religious, the use of music (deliberate or unintentional) in a religious setting can elicit certain responses and connotations.”

Almost every kind of worship is connected with vocal music, which is regarded as one of the essential means of conjugation. According to Lagerwall (1996:3), “Music’s capacity to express emotion ... makes it a prime vehicle for the worshipper to identify with the deepest core of his or her faith ... [worship] has always functioned in this way, linking experience to faith in an atmosphere of emotional commitment.”

Due to the importance of Boer religious beliefs, it can be understood why religious vocal music played an important role for survival in circumstances where existence and beliefs were being threatened. Pretorius (1999:157) echoes this when he writes about the Boers on Commando, stating that during the “disruption of normal relationships and bewildering psychological experiences, it is not surprising that the vast majority of them [the Boers] were highly susceptible to the gospel message.”

An understanding of the experiential world of the Boer in Chapter 3 leads to an understanding of the possible role of religious music. There were many references to daily devotions where religious music played an important part. Singing and the sounds of their vocal music could have helped the interned subconsciously circumvent the conditions they had to face. In a sense it was escapism from the reality of internship and could indirectly have helped to bring order out of chaos as the sounds of the songs could have reminded them of the order of their existence before the war.

The number of hand-notated scores highlights the fact that the Boers were a people who depended on God and through their vocal music they could reinforce this belief. Since the 1880s there had been a debate about the infiltration of modern revivalist songs into the Boer church music. The polemic surrounding the introduction of these songs will not be entered into, as it is a study on its own. It is, however, very clear from the contents of many of the *Liederebundels* that the church vocal music sung by the Boers could broadly be divided into two styles:

- ❖ *Psalmen en Gezangen*
- ❖ Revival songs

4.3.1 *Psalmen en Gezangen*

The Boers who preferred singing the *Psalmen* (Psalms) and *Gezangen* had a traditional, conservative attitude. The French theologian Jean Calvin established the strongly held religious beliefs for them and the church vocal music they sang was based on Biblical texts. They wanted to retain the styles that had been handed down from previous generations by singing from *Het Boek van Psalmen* (1898) and *Het Boek van Gezangen* (1898). According to Lagerwall (1996:4) “this group usually tends to keep the church separate from the ‘world’. Their perception of music and worship is that it must be of a high standard and sinners are to be educated ‘up’ to this standard.”

As the Psalms are direct settings from the Bible it is understandable that the message, together with the sound of the Psalm was important to the religious Boer. *Gezangen*, which are based on Biblical passages and thoughts, would have been valued as much as the Psalms. These Boers with religious traditions based on dogmatic Calvinism would have shunned the revival songs because they were the fabrications of men and did not contain the authority of the Bible. The conservative, rural Boers in the camps would have found it difficult to reconcile themselves with the emotionalism and conviction found in revival songs.

Many Boers could also have considered the revival songs as a threat to their cultural identity as their forefathers had not passed them down. Diary entries reveal that many Boers were very critical of the revival songs sung in the prisoner of war camps (ABWMA 4789, ABWMA 5103, FAD A621, FAD A84, TAD W 81/3, TAD A1531). The contents of songbooks show that in some camps only Psalms and *Gezangen* and songs with religious texts were notated, leading one to believe that they did not sing revival songs. This was especially evident in the Shahjahanpur Camp in India where choir books for members of the Excelsior Choir do not contain any revival songs. This can be seen in Example 4.1, which gives the contents of a choir book belonging to D. Rothmann, a member of the Excelsior Choir. Similarly a choir book belonging to another member of the choir, J.J. van Niekerk, also only contains Psalms and *Gezangen* (ABWMA 3766/1).

Example 4.1

Inhoud: Excelsior Krijgsgevangene Zang Vereeniging

Inhoud		Inhoud		
Namen	Bladzij	Namen	Bladzij	
A	Alles wat adem heeft	14	Morgen moet ik fort on	6
B	Bij de Gezellen mijns moeder	14	Mah singel	9
B	Bondslied	17	Mijn Vaderland (Kriegsgevangene)	53
D	Bede (Zendinglied)	26	Ons Vaderland (D. van der Merwe)	37-39
D	Im Schöner Wald	3	Ons Oude God leeft nog	56
D	De al oude tyding	45	Psalm 25 (Lees)	22
E	Das Meer	2	Do 25 (Zing)	52
E	Eine Krone	4	Do 36	50
E	Englen zang	12	Do 42	31
E	Gezang 49	57	Do 66	32
E	Do 62	55	Do 81	33
E	Do 83	28	Do 84	34
E	Do 84		Do 116	34
G	Do 160	29	Do 126	24-25
G	Do 180	30	Do 134	33
G	Do 181	35	Do 146	28
G	Geloofs Room	44	Reddings Boot	23
G	Glaube Liebe Hoffnung	46	Stille rodt de Zee	26
G	Geloof Liefde Hoop	47	De Transvaalse O'lied	10
G	Glaidenroslein	18	Wroot en Blulp	27
G	Hof liefelyk zyn op de borgen	18	Vrij staatsche volkshied	11
G	Kerolied	13	Vryheid die ik minne	15
G	Lof en aanbidding	20-21	Worte had ze nich	5
G	Lofgezang	41	Waldes Andacht	7
G	Levensmed	49	Zijn finaus	1
G	Mijn Aerdet	19	Zoete met my Jezus	43

(ABWMA 5848/1)

4.3.2 Revival songs

The second style of Boer religious vocal music was the more liberal revival songs. The musical styles of these songs resembled those of non-church music and were easier to sing than the Psalms and *Gezangen*. Their sounds were said to arouse the emotions of those singing and listening to them (TAD A1751, TAD A1665).

Examples were found in the Boer *Zionsliederebundel* and *De Kinderharpbundel*, many of which were attributed to Ira Sankey (1840-1908). Sankey's tours with the evangelist Dwight Moody were considered to be of the greatest revivalist movements in Britain and America. Sankey's roles were that of singer and collector of songs, and even though he had no musical knowledge and his compositions were generally considered to be inferior, his songs became very popular at all their revivals and also in South Africa (Sankey [Internet] 2004).

The fact that there are many revival songs notated in Boer songbooks leads the researcher to believe that these songs were very popular and served as a tool for survival in the circumstances the Boers had to face in the camps. William McLoughlin (cited in van Niekerk 1970:26) attributes the popularity of the sounds of the Sankey songs to their variety in style, the simplicity of the tunes and words. According to him, if you "[d]etermine the pleasure you get from a circus quick-step, a Negro minstrel, sentimental ballad, a college chorus and a hymn all in one, you have some gauge of the variety and contrast." The researcher is of the opinion that the revivalist and Sankey songs addressed the emotional needs of the Boers in the camps and as such were a coping mechanism in dire circumstances. Lagerwall (1969:48) concurs with this opinion, stating that Sankey songs "were legitimate because they were true folk songs and satisfied the need for refuge and consolation in difficult times."

Example 4.2 gives the contents of a songbook hand-notated by H.J. Storm in the Diyatalawa Camp. This book, with the exception of Psalm 146, contains only revival songs. He wrote *Zionslied*, *Kinderharp* and *Eng. Z* at the top of the contents page when he referred to these songs. The Boers often wrote about the Sankey songs as *Engels Zankey*, even though they had Afrikaans-Nederlands words.

Example 4.2

Inhoudt - Liederebundel: H.J. Storm

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Inhoudt

		Kranslied	Kinderkerk	Eng. B.
50A.	Wijt zij reeds reinig	39	55	398
68.	Werk want de nacht komt dale	40	140	141 66
69	Rijst op,	41	135	123 15
58	Hooft tien duizend harp	42	.	677
71	Transvaalsche Volkslied	43	.	.
73	Jesus mij Heiland der E. H.	44	53	481
75	Hoe liefpelijk zijn op de berge	45	232	.
79	De Heiland is geboren (Kerstlied)	46	.	116
81	Lieve Heer die in den Hemel <small>(Kerstlied)</small>	47	.	91
83	Laat ons dan heen gaan	48	.	83 <small>nuw</small>
89	Wij worden vergaderd	49	160	387
6	Mannen broeders	50	136	130 7
91	Vertel mij toch van Jesus	51	99	174 14
92	Zions toekomst	52	.	.
164	Spreek Heiland spreek,	53	.	.
45	O die vreugde,	54	.	.
97	Welkom zalige dag der rust	55	134	.
99	U-Is-Heeren dag	56	132	.

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Bladzij	147	33 4 133	Bladzij	Kinderen	Pag. 3.
100	Psalm 146				
101	Ik heb een vader in beloofdeland	145			
102	Kindren spreek van zegen	181			
104	De rust plaats.	153		111	
105	In de schaduw.	218		535	
106	Hier de middag glans der zon	51			
107	Ben slecht een wakendrager		132	33	
109	In het graf geborgen	77		317	
110	Mijn Heiland sterf op.	48		367	
111	Is het in mij				
114	Leid ons heilig huis waarts				
115	Hier op aard. is leed	151	104		
116	Is het in mij			422	
117	Rijz opwaart naar boven	183			
118	Ik denk als ik hoor	164			
119	Stroomen van zegen.	-	-	522	
120	Heiland als een Heider.	-	142	98	
121	Eek nu eek oogenblik	62	126	84	
122	Hoe wat is deet hoor van stemmen				
124	Gedenk aan mij O Heer.				
125	Is mijn naam ook wel daar			285	

(ABWMA 3238/2).

Subsequent chapters will highlight the fact that many camp songbooks catered for differing opinions regarding religious music as well as the emotional needs of the interned. These books contain revival songs as well as *Psalmen en Gezangen*. Songbooks for Diyatalawa choirs are good examples of books with a variety of vocal religious music (ABWMA 64/3, ABWMA 3419/9, Cleave [s.a]).

There is evidence of many choirs established in prisoner of war camps and a large part of their purpose was hymn singing.

4.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOIRS IN PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS

Chapter 3 highlighted the fact that practically all cultural activities during the war ceased in the two republics of South Africa, while cultural activities amongst the prisoners of war thrived. Various amateur choirs were established, especially amongst the about 4 000 Afrikaners in the Diyatalawa Camp in Ceylon. These choirs sang mostly religious music. Chapter 6 will give many examples of four-part religious vocal music for choirs. According to Henning (1975:32), this was an unusual occurrence as, almost until the beginning of the war, choir singing was regarded with suspicion. Added to this was the fact that most Boers lived on isolated farms, which was not conducive to choir singing. This leads researchers to suppose that choirs that sang in four-part harmony were often products of the prisoner of war camps as, before the war, almost all religious vocal music was sung in unison. None of the *Psalmen en Gezangen* books consulted by the researcher contain songs in four-part harmony. However, many Sankey songs are written in four-part harmony.

Henning (1975:32) is of the opinion that choirs were established because singing was so important to Boers. It allowed them to honour God, enrich themselves and keep their morale high in tragic circumstances. The social function of the choir could also explain the establishment of these choirs. According to Muller (1994:444) song performance is inherently social as each person is united through a common sense of history and a collective emotion and, through song, they are able to articulate their emotions. According to Wishart (cited in Shepherd & Wicke

1977:130) sound is so important because “it enters into our experience as part of an immediate concrete reality; it impinges on us and in so doing affects our state.”

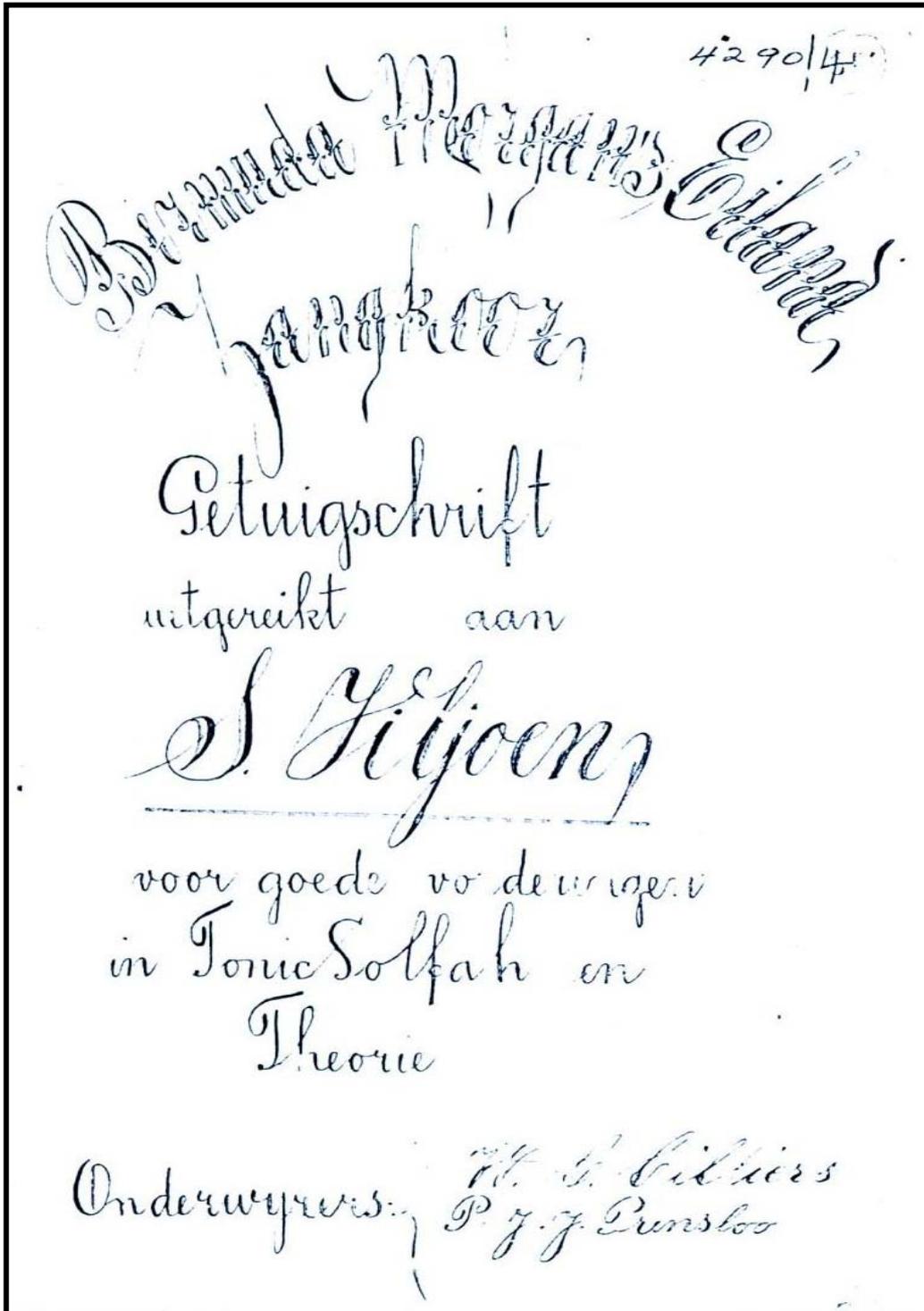
Little was said about the aesthetic sound of the choir performances in diaries, while much of what is written indicated that, through choir performance, participants and listeners were involved in an experience that allowed them to forget, for that moment, their state of degradation. There is evidence to suggest that in order to sing in the choirs, members needed to learn how to read and write music. The more knowledgeable choir members possibly taught sol-fa and theory. A certificate presented to S. Viljoen, a member of the Morgan’s Island Choir for progress in these fields, can be seen in Example 4.3.

There are many examples of choir books, all hand-notated. Some of these books contain songs notated in different handwritings indicating that different choir members compiled them for a particular choir. The value attached to vocal music can be seen in the number of songs notated in the books. Some books have up to one hundred notated songs, although not all in the same handwriting. It is interesting to note that the best examples of staff notated choir books come from inmates in Shajahanpur, India. This could suggest that there were some inmates in the camp who had learnt music theory before arriving there and therefore could instruct others in the camp.

There were many music concerts held in all the prisoner of war camps. The programmes invariably included items by the camp choirs. Example 4.4 shows the programme for a *Gewyd-Concert* (Religious Concert) in the Diyatalawa Camp. The programme has items by three different camp choirs, namely the choirs conducted by G. v. Deventer, P. de Lint and L. Fourie. This is clear evidence that choir singing was a popular pastime.

Example 4.3

Theory certificate: S. Viljoen



(ABWMA 4290/4)

Programma
van het
Gewyd - Concert

te worden gehouden in het Diyatalawa-kamp op Dinsdag
aând den 26^{sten} Aug: 1902, na 'roff call'

<p>1. <u>Ps. 116: 8; Gebed</u> door <u>G. v. Deventer</u></p> <p>2. <u>"Het kleine woord dat groot is"</u> Koor v. <u>G. v. Deventer</u></p> <p>3. <u>Aanspraak: "Hoe kon hij die zelf</u> <u>naar het kending veld gaat, kending-</u> <u>[werk doen!]</u> <u>M. Odendaal.</u></p> <p>4. <u>"Ik ben de opstanding."</u> Koor v. <u>P. de Lint.</u></p> <p>5. <u>Samenspraak: "De Kiden -</u> <u>[Apostel.]"</u> <u>L. Fourie</u> <u>en</u> <u>Jan Kok.</u></p> <p>X 6. <u>"Do londaar en het lied"</u> Quartet <u>G. v. Deventer.</u></p> <p>X 7. <u>"Maak zacht."</u> Koor v. <u>L. Fourie</u></p> <p>8. <u>"Alleen in Afrika: Kort ver-</u> <u>haal van het leven van een ken.</u> <u>[dingarbeester]</u> <u>J. M. L. Steyn.</u></p>	<p>9. <u>"Halleluja oor het Kruis"</u> Quartet v. <u>P. de Lint</u></p> <p>10. <u>"Ik ben de opstanding en het leven."</u> Koor v. <u>T. Schalkwijk.</u></p> <p>11. <u>Voordracht: "Het leven van</u> <u>Millie Keethling."</u> <u>M. de Wet.</u></p> <p>X 12. <u>Avondang:</u> ^{gebied} Quartet v. <u>S. Dippenaar</u></p> <p>X 13. <u>Voorstuk: "Mijn best mijn al"</u> <u>O. van Oostrum</u></p> <p>X 14. <u>"Er ruischt langs de wolken"</u> Quartet v. <u>O. v. Oostrum.</u></p> <p>15. <u>"Maakt en bidt":</u> Koor v. <u>P. de Lint.</u></p> <p>16. <u>Voorstuk: "Blue Bells"</u> <u>O. v. Oostrum.</u></p> <p>17. <u>Ger. 155: 5; Dankgebed</u> <u>P. v. Straaten.</u></p>
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4.5 SONGS TO EXPRESS PATRIOTISM

Chapter 3 drew attention to the singing of patriotic songs on many occasions. The power of this type of song is that it communicates moods and thoughts of people from similar ideological and cultural backgrounds through its sounds. The sound is an emotional experience that excites patriotic fervour. “A stirring, patriotic song during wartime can encode, unify and intensify the thoughts of an entire nation” (Tame 1988:149). Similarly, E.O. Wilson (cited in Storr 1992:20) states that singing of patriotic songs “serves to draw groups together, direct the emotions of the people, and prepare them for joint action.”

Most of these songs idealise a remembrance of the past and in this way serve to negate the present situation. The sound of patriotic songs reminds the singers of their common heritage and, as such, is a source of comfort. Many examples were given in Chapter 3 where the Boers demonstrated patriotic fervour. Through the songs they could express a strong ideology that emphasised the group over the individual, the sharing and working together for immediate survival and even more so for the future.

Krause highlighted the power of the patriotic song when he spoke about farm families who had been told to pack and prepare to be deported to a concentration camp the next day as their farms were to be burnt and destroyed. His Commando sang patriotic songs with the women and children and then took them away to safety before the British returned. Krause observed that the sounds of these songs gave them courage to face the future away from their farms (Taitz 1996:135).

Resistance took many forms and there are countless accounts of singing of the *Volkslieder* by woman and children in concentration camps carrying OVS and ZAR flags (Fisher 1969:184). Patriotic fervour also formed the core idea and gave cohesion to the youth organisations. The British must have been aware of the affective power of music because, on the Bermudas, young Boer boys were never allowed to sing patriotic songs and were severely punished and beaten if they did (ABWMA 5074/5).

Many of these songs are also historical records as they portray the context that generated the song and, as such, are records for posterity. The sounds of songs of freedom and honour proved to be of great benefit to the demoralised Boers in the camps. There are also examples of some secular songs in songbooks.

4.6 SECULAR SONGS

Secular songs helped to boost the morale of the inmates. The singing and sounds of these songs also brought some relief from the stark realities of camp-life and helped to relieve boredom. The lyrics often provided comic relief as they were frequently altered and the underlying messages mocked the enemy. There is also an element of catharsis in these types of songs, because the Boers were able to put their normally repressed feelings into song, without fear of reprisals from the enemy, who could not understand their language. A few examples of songbooks will be given to show that singing was a popular pastime and it can thus be assumed that the sounds of the songs had special meaning for the Boers.

Many holograph songbooks contain both patriotic and secular songs. Example 4.5 is a holograph songbook that belonged to J. Bosman in the St Helena Camp. There is no arithmetic in the book, as the cover suggests, but it contains the words of many English secular songs.

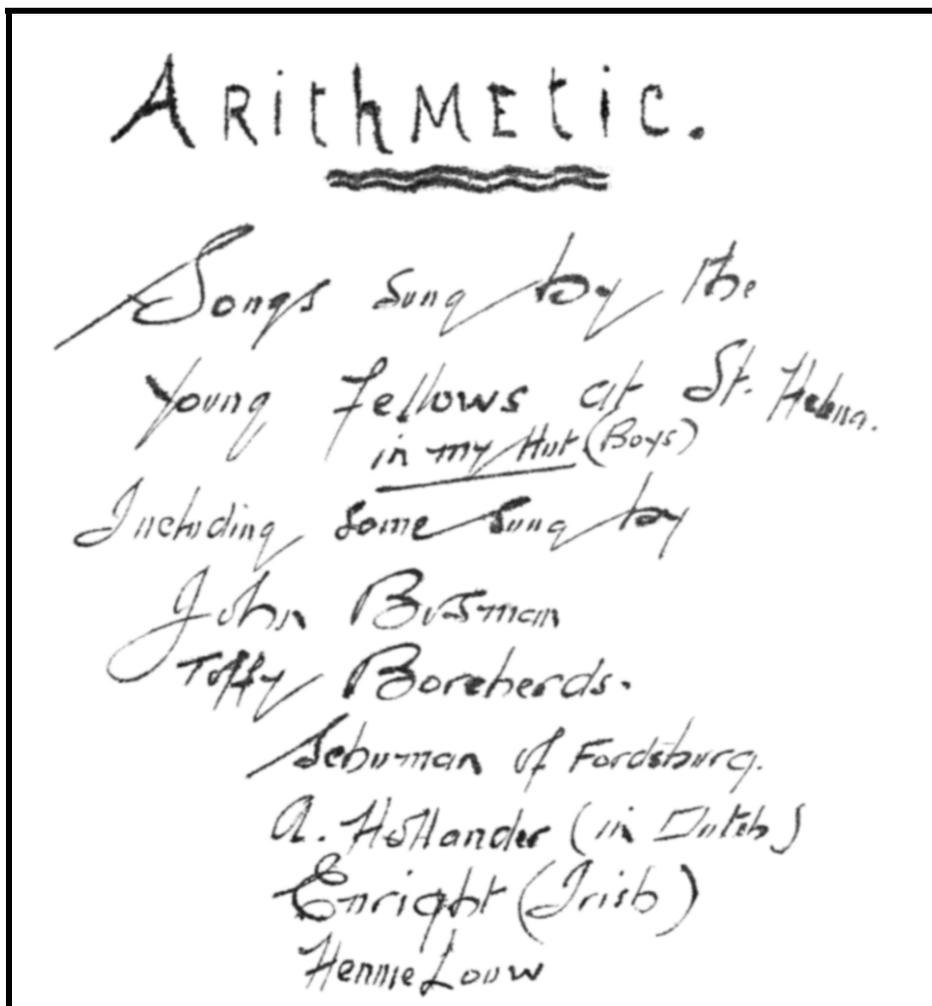
J. H. L. Schumann was very familiar with staff notation, as can be seen in his three hand-notated manuscripts. Schumann wrote the majority of the song lyrics, with a few examples written by other inmates. These books are of great value as they articulate experiences of the war and allow the performer and listener the opportunity to empathise with the conditions faced by the Boers. Example 4.6 illustrates the amount of attention Schumann paid to the outside cover of his manuscripts.

Example 4.7 demonstrates the pride attached to the collection of songs sung in the prisoner of war camp in Trichinopoly, India. The inscription on the book, *God en de Mauser* (Translation: God and the Boer rifle), is significant because it once

again highlights the belief that the Boers had that God would be with them in this war. The book also contains secular songs.

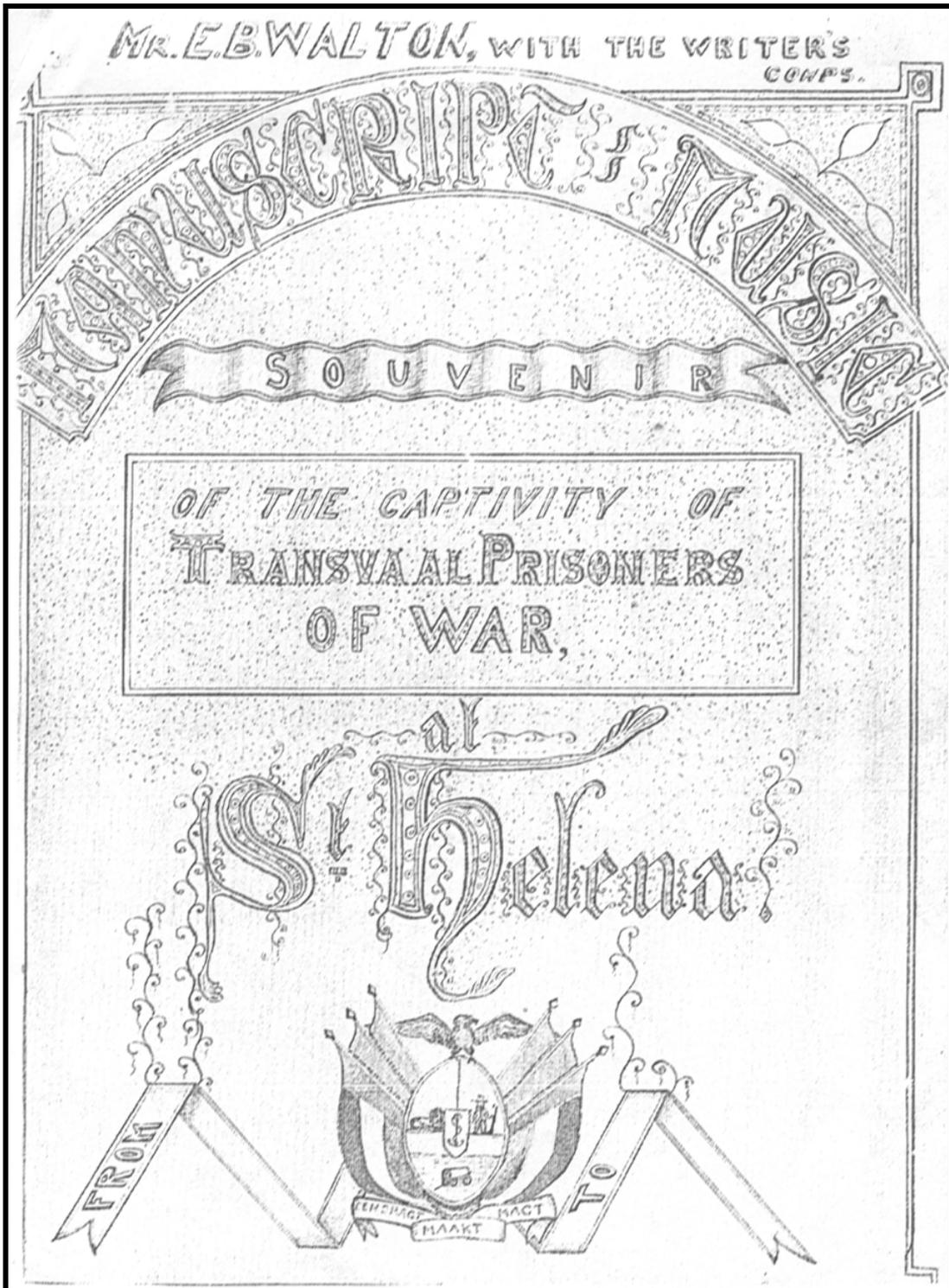
There were even songbooks for men fighting in the Commandos, as can be seen from Example 4.8. This book, which was printed, has many humorous secular songs. This once again emphasises the importance of singing and the sound of their songs to the Boers. The songbook would not have been printed if it was not considered important for the men on Commando to have the words of songs to sing from.

Example 4.5 Holograph Songbook: J. Bosman



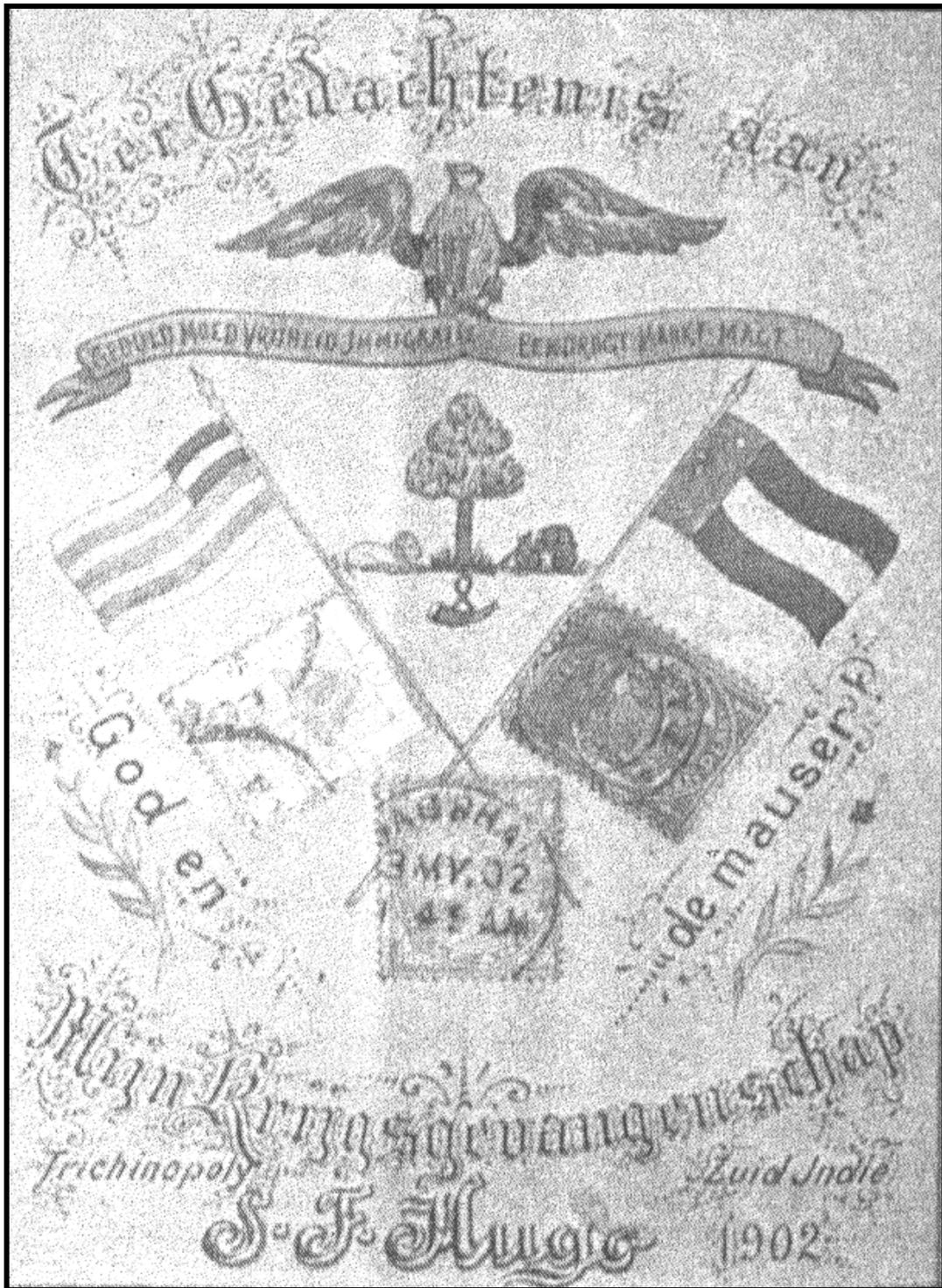
(TAD A1793/2)

Example 4.6 Manuscript: J.H.L. Schumann



(NLSA 559/3)

Example 4.7 Songbook: S.F. Hugo



(Lategan & Potgieter 1988:119)

Example 4.8

Orange Free State Songbook 1901



(ABWMA 6350/2)

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrated how the Boers used the sounds of their vocal music as a vehicle to articulate their responses to events of the war. Shepherd and Wicke (1997:97) highlight the importance of the sound of music when they argue that it functions in a manner distinct from language and, despite this, it is as fundamental as language to the formation of human societies.

Whilst recognising the importance of the sounds of Boer vocal music, it is important to link the sounds to the lyrics of the songs in order to understand vocal music as a socially and culturally constituted form of human expression. Chapter 5 will thus assess the lyrics of Boer vocal music. By linking sounds and lyrics, the aural void will be addressed and allow for insights into processes of affect and meaning in music.