Sing Gabriel's
*Kairos For All*
Tunebook!

group singing of
a new collection of tunes by Allen Gabriel Kastelle

Beckham Hall
Wesleyan University
Middletown, CT USA

Thursday, February 27, 2014  7 pm

Program
the tunebook.

Really, the tunebook is the program, and I hope you hold it in your hand. A page number will be hollered, a starting pitch will be negotiated and shared, and we'll sing. Or be with the singers and hear the singing. As you like.

THANKS so much for gathering on a cold winter night!

Your presence and voice and ears make this event-- I just get us all on the same page-- so thank you!!
How old-fashioned. Yet how early, for a near future! And ever, in between. Tunebooks are an interesting technology. Before widespread recordings and radio and all the electronical what-not that's followed, people were perhaps more active musically. When they wanted to hear music, they gathered and made the sound themselves. Arguably, the first mass popular culture of the United States was borne in tunebooks. Their proliferation in the later 18th century and onwards has been incredible. I think they're still a great technology. And when the globe changes and systems fail and masses of people are on the move, sooner and nearer than we might think, simple durable portable un-powered technologies like the tunebook might come into their own again. I'm writing for these past and future times.

I feel the same way about modes-- simple diatonic modes, the kind you can find in just the white keys of a piano-- the kind which can be expressed in the shape notes! So old-fashioned. And yet, how ahead of their time. Timeless. Always. And now. Very rich vocabulary, actually. I hope I demonstrate that richness with my tunebook. So many moods, so many styles, yet strict "modal integrity" throughout-- not a single accidental, a single mis-step into the pitches in between. (I can explain the apparent variance)

One cluster of tunebook traditions has continued since the Revolutionary era to the present day in unbroken, continuous practice-- I mean the group singing of sacred word outside of worship as in the New England singing school tradition. Or the shape-note singing tradition. Or in "old harp" singing-- even, "Sacred Harp" singing"-- references to tunebook titles, or a single most famous and enduring title, continuously in print and sounded by gathered people since 1844. It's hard to find a single term to encompass all the variety which has existed just within the "tradition" / traditions. Maybe "hollow square" musics?

More and more, and partly as a result of work on this project, I focus on the physical arrangement of singers in a room which has been widespread for at least most of a couple centuries, that is, the hollow square. Compositionally, the instrument for which I'm writing music is the hollow square. I'm thinking of it all as hollow square music, hollow square traditions. The hollow square is an array of human bodies. Hollow in the middle so everyone can face a leader there, and each other. No particular place for a separate "audience". It's more than just a musical idea-- it's culture, traditions, architecture, religion, socializing, history, journeys, migrations. I love the whole messy complex of it all, and have been singing actively with Denson Book Sacred Harpers since 1995, and from their spread influence in wider culture, at first unbeknownst to me, ever since very early childhood.

Although there is a mixture of older and newer works in my tunebook, the collection is newly formatted and a thing of itself, striving for some range and balance of stations in our journeys, outer and inner. Making the collection and its ordering have been surprisingly full of perspectives and revelations about trends and strengths and omissions in my works. Very much more I would like to do and include. Lord willing, we may see expanded editions. Meanwhile, we have Gabriel's KAIROS FOR ALL tunebook, and we should sing! Thanks!!